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TATTERED ALLIANCE: DONALD TRUMP AND EUROPE

VASCO RATO

Tattered Alliance:
Donald Trump and Europe

Vasco Rato

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Abstract

Donald Trump's term as President of the United States coincided with a demanding period in transatlantic relations fraught with tensions and personality clashes. Euro-American ties frayed as both sides became embroiled in bitter recriminations over NATO, the European Union, transatlantic trade and the norms of the liberal order. Many of the conflicts could have been avoided had the parts chosen to avoid a polarization of positions. They did not. This paper traces the crisis and its consequences, suggesting that European and Americans share responsibility for the most turbulent crisis witnessed in the Atlantic community since the Second World War.

Resumo

O mandato de Donald Trump como presidente dos Estados Unidos coincidiu com um período exigente nas relações transatlânticas, repleto de tensões e confrontos de personalidade. Os laços euro-americanos desgastaram-se enquanto ambos os lados se envolveram em amargas recriminações sobre a NATO, a União Europeia, o comércio transatlântico e as normas da ordem liberal. Muitos dos conflitos poderiam ter sido prevenidos se as partes envolvidas tivessem evitado uma polarização de posições. Não o fizeram. Este artigo descreve a crise e suas consequências, sugerindo que europeus e americanos partilham a responsabilidade pela mais turbulenta crise vivida na comunidade Atlântica desde a Segunda Guerra Mundial.

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Preface: A Political Pox

Relish the opportunity to be an outsider. Embrace that label – being an outsider is fine, embrace the label – because it’s the outsiders who change the world and who make a real and lasting difference,

Donald Trump, Liberty University

Much as it started, Donald Trump’s presidency ended in a swirl of controversy. The president’s insistence that the November 2020 vote had been widely plagued by irregularity and fraud, his refusal to cooperate with the Biden transition team and his unremitting Twitter firestorms brought to fruition a mandate unlike no other in recent memory. If Trump remained true to form until the bitter end, so did the legacy national media. After years of hostile coverage, media outlets took it upon themselves to declare a Biden victory while the vote tally continued under dispute.¹ Pressuring the sitting president to concede the outcome of the suffrage, television networks took the unprecedented step of cutting away from a live transmission as Trump addressed the nation for the first time since election day to comment the results of the vote.² Charging Trump with blatantly lying to the public, the media once again revealed the extreme partisanship that had transformed journalists into arbitrators of political claims.

By any measure, the final weeks of Trump’s four-year mandate were particularly divisive as the president saw himself faulted for inciting the invasion of the Capitol on January 6, 2021.³ Characterizing the incident as an insurrection, the president’s

1 For a thoughtful overview of the media’s coverage of the Trump presidency, see, Jon Allsop and Pete Vernon, “How the press covered the last four years of Trump”, *Columbia Journalism Review*, Special Report, October 23, 2020, available at: https://www.cjr.org/special_report/coverage-trump-presidency-2020-election.php. Three very different books offering insights into Donald Trump’s contentious relations with the White House media corps are: Sean Spicer. *The Briefing: Politics, The Press, and the President*. Washington: Regnery, 2018; Major Garrett. *Mr. Trump’s Wild Ride. The Thrills, Chills, Screams, and Occasional Blackouts of an Extraordinary Presidency*. New York: All Points Books, 2018; and Jonathan Karl. *Front Row at the Trump Show*. New York: Dutton, 2020.

2 See, for example, Sean O’Grady, “Was it right for TV networks to cut away from Trump’s speech?”, *Independent*, November 6, 2020, available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/independentpremium/politics-explained/trump-news-conference-us-election-2020-biden-press-today-b1642374.html>.

3 On the events of January 6, see, Laurel Wamsley, “What We Know So Far: A Timeline Of Security Response At The Capitol On Jan. 6”, *NPR*, January 15, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/15/956842958/what-we-know-so-far-a-timeline-of-security-at-the-capitol-on-january-6>; “Senate Hearing on January 6 Capitol Attack, Transcript February 23”, *Rev*, February 23, 2021, available at: <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/senate-hearing-on-january-6-capitol-attack-transcript-february-23>; and “Counting Electoral Votes: An Overview of Procedures at the Joint Session, Including Objections by Members of Congress,” *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, December 8, 2020, available at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/documents/capitol-riot-documents-you-should-read-part-1/06.pdf>. On some of the crimes and legal issues arising from the events of January 6, see, “Federal Criminal Law: January 6, 2021, Unrest at the Capitol”, *CRS/Congressional Research Service, Legal Sidebar*, January 12, 2021, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB10564>.

adversaries accused him of promoting a *coup d'état*.⁴ To many appalled viewers, the images of the assault on the Capitol confirmed that Trump had sullied the nation and its institutions. He had provoked the national humiliation that, throughout his mandate, he had sought to counter. While not a fitting end to any presidency, perhaps neither was such a tumultuous finale entirely unexpected. Yet, politically motivated accusations of insurrection were wildly exaggerated. For while Trump undoubtedly contributed to a climate of polarization and distrust of the electoral process, it was equally self-evident that only an abusive interpretation of the president's words could sustain the charge that he had called for the overthrow the government.⁵ Those invading the Capitol may have been inspired by Trump's rhetoric, but to impeach a president for the criminal actions of an unruly mob smacked of unprincipled political opportunism.

The events of January 6 did however serve the political interests of the Democrat party and of a section of the congressional Republican Party (GOP) led by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Heading for decisive Senate election run-offs in Georgia, Democrats saw impeachment as an opportunity to neutralize Trump's support for the Republican candidates in that state and to create a favorable political climate as Joe Biden entered the White House. Establishment Republicans saw the impeachment proceeding as the first step toward purging the party of *trumpism* and, perhaps more importantly, impeding Trump himself from contesting the 2024 GOP presidential nomination. The ongoing Republican civil war for control of the party's soul was clearly evident as McConnell took to the Senate podium to deliver an extraordinary speech following the impeachment decrying the former president's "disgraceful dereliction of duty" and holding him "practically and morally responsible" for provoking the riot.⁶

4 Examples of the "coup argument" may be found in, *inter alia*, Fiona Hill, "Yes, It Was a Coup Attempt. Here's Why", *Politico*, January 11, 2021, available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/01/11/capitol-riot-self-coup-trump-fiona-hill-457549>; Joshua Chaffin, Courtney Weaver and James Politi, "A coup d'état attempted by Trump: America's failed insurrection", *Financial Times*, January 8, 2021, accessed at: <https://www.ft.com/content/5c471c49-de90-4f5f-9c91-19be0daa491c>; Charles T. Call, "No, it's not a coup – It's a failed 'self-coup' that will undermine US leadership and democracy worldwide", *Brookings*, January 8, 2021, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/08/no-its-not-a-coup-its-a-failed-self-coup-that-will-undermine-us-leadership-and-democracy-worldwide/>; and Clayton Besaw and Matthew Frank, "Was as it a coup? No, but siege on US Capitol was the election violence of a fragile democracy", *The Conversation*, January 7, 2021, available at: <https://theconversation.com/was-it-a-coup-no-but-siege-on-us-capitol-was-the-election-violence-of-a-fragile-democracy-152803>.

5 For the transcript of Trump's January 6 speech to his supporters on the Ellipse prior to the assault on the Capitol, see, Brian Naylor, "Read Trump's Jan. 6 Speech, A Key Part of Impeachment Trial", *NPR*, February 10, 2021, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/10/966396848/read-trumps-jan-6-speech-a-key-part-of-impeachment-trial>. For a reflection on the role played by Trump, see, Michael Conklin, "Capitol Offense: Is Donald Trump Guilty of Inciting a Riot at the Capitol?", *JSRN*, January 15, 2021, consulted at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3767085.

6 See, Lloyd Green, "Mitch McDonnell's impeachment speech was just a hostage video", *The Guardian*, February 14, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/feb/14/mitchmcconnell-trump-impeachment-speech-hostage-video>. For the transcript of Senator McDonnell's speech, see, "McConnell Speech After Trump's Impeachment Trial Acquittal", *U.S. News and World Report*, February 14, 2021, available at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2021-02-14/read-mcconnell-speech-after-trumps-impeachment-trial-acquittal>.

Seeing that congressional Republicans had rallied behind Trump, McConnell, invoking the unconstitutionality of the impeachment process, was left with little choice but to vote to acquit the former president. At the same time, he expressed his belief in Trump's guilt and all but suggested that criminal charges be levied in the courts.

Donald Trump replied on 28 February 2021, when he took to the stage at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). In a two-hour speech before enthusiastic supporters, he attacked the Biden administration and articulated what in effect was an opposition agenda designed to ensure a Republican takeover of Congress in the 2022 midterm elections.⁷ Just as critically, the former president went on the offense against Mitt Romney, Elizabeth Cheney and the Senate and House members backing the impeachment process. Although falling short of calling for McConnell's outright removal, Trump suggested that his recent endorsement of the Kentucky Senator had been decisive for sealing his latest re-election.⁸ Most important of all, by acknowledging that "I may even decide to beat them a third time", Trump hinted at his willingness to seek the 2024 GOP nomination.⁹ The CPAC speech made it clear that Donald Trump was the dominant player in Republican Party politics. Indeed, in the days preceding the speech his GOP adversaries acknowledged Trump's dominance. Even Mitt Romney bowed to political reality and conceded that if Trump wanted the nomination it was his for the taking.¹⁰ Similarly, McConnell, having denounced the former president's "disgraceful dereliction of duty" and holding him "practically and morally responsible" for the Capitol riot just a few weeks before, asserted that he was willing to support Trump if he chose to seek the nomination.¹¹ At CPAC, Donald Trump emerged as the undeniable victor of the civil war for the party's soul.¹²

Balanced, impartial judgments of Donald J. Trump and his presidency are not abundant at this point in time. Given the former president's propensity for generating tremendous loyalty and, arguably, even greater disdain, perhaps such an expectation is

7 For the full transcript of the speech, see, Justin Vallejo, "Donald Trump CPAC speech", *Independent*, March 1, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-cpac-speech-2021-b1809208.html>.

8 Ibid. On Trump's endorsement of Senator McDonnell, cf., Daniel Desrochers, "Trump goes after McGrath, backs McConnell on first day of 2020 Senate campaign", *Lexington Herald Leader*, July 9, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article232479012.html>.

9 See, Justin Vallejo, "Donald Trump CPAC speech", op. cit.

10 See, Quint Forgey, "Romney: Trump will win 2024 GOP nomination if he runs", *Politico*, February 24, 2021, available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/24/mitt-romney-trump-2024-gop-nomination-471316>.

11 See, Matthew Choi, "McConnell would support Trump if he got 2024 Republican nomination", *Politico*, February 25, 2021, available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/25/mcconnell-would-support-trump-2024-471672>.

12 For a discussion, see, Eric Levitz, "Trump's Reconquest of the GOP May Have an Upside for Democracy", *New York Magazine*, February 24, 2021, consulted at: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/02/trump-gop-civil-war-voter-id-laws-democracy-reform.html>; and Jonah Goldberg, "What GOP civil war? Trump's party is just rounding up the stragglers", *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2021, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-03-01/cpac-republicans-trump-allegiance>.

quite unreasonable. Polemics accompanied Trump from the moment he declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination until the last day of his mandate. While a hostile national media overblew much of the controversy, much was also self-inflicted. Donald Trump commanded fierce loyalty from a legion of supporters unconcerned with the controversies stirred by his policy inconsistencies, tweets, self-centeredness and boorish comportment. At times, these flaws were acknowledged, only to be summarily dismissed as minor failings, and, ultimately, matters of presentation rather than of substance. To his followers, these flaws were either fake news disseminated by a partisan press driven to unseat the president or the machinations of a “deep state” seeking to stymie the country’s regeneration. From the perspective of his backers, Trump was viciously attacked precisely because he sought to free the United States from the clutches of callous political and cultural elites divorced from mainstream American life. Because the former president dared to represent the values and interests of genuine patriots, the country’s elites deliberately and systematically maligned his character and achievements. Trump could do no wrong and Washington’s corrupt “swamp” was inevitably seen as responsible for all of his shortcomings and failures. Friends and allies simply advised the nation to “let Trump be Trump”¹³.

Also under the sway of extreme partisanship, Donald Trump’s detractors saw him as nothing less than a political pox of biblical proportions inexplicably descending upon the United States. He was a fascist or, in a slightly milder version, an unreconstructed authoritarian bent on subverting the constitution and the country’s democratic institutions.¹⁴ He was also a racist and a misogynist bent on creating a dystopia in a not too distant horizon. Because he colluded with Russia to undermine the 2016 election, he obviously deserved to be impeached. He was an illegitimate office-holder, a usurper bent on undoing American democracy and, surely, destroying the pillars of modern civilization. No intention was benign; no motive was left unquestioned. In addition to being an unequivocal political failure, the Trump presidency was deemed a moral failing. Unsurprisingly, in such a climate of ardent, acritical partisanship, politics was understood in terms of a categorical “us versus them”, of “good versus evil”¹⁵. Under these conditions, political tribes subscribed to two competing and irreconcilable narratives

13 See, Michael Wolff. *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*. London: Little, Brown, 2018, pp. 46-47; and Corey R. Lewandowski and David N. Bossie. *Let Trump Be Trump: The Inside Story of His Rise to the Presidency*. New York: Hachette, 2017.

14 See, for example, Nick Cohen, “If Trump looks like a fascist and acts like a fascist, then maybe he is one”, *The Guardian*, January 16, 2021, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/16/if-trump-looks-like-a-fascist-and-acts-like-a-fascist-then-maybe-he-is-one>. Robert Reich wrote that “Trump has finally reached a point where parallels between his presidential campaign and the fascists of the first half of the 20th century – lurid figures such as Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Oswald Mosley, and Francisco Franco – are too evident to overlook”, see, Robert Reich, “The American fascist”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 9, 2016, available at: <https://www.csmonitor.com/Business/Robert-Reich/2016/0309/Opinion-The-American-fascist>.

15 See, for example, Corina Lacatus “Populism and the 2016 American Election: Evidence from official press releases and Twitter”, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2019, pp. 223-228.

congealing through social media and cable news. Consequently, compromise invariably broke down in a political system designed to oblige the factions to negotiate differences and reach consensus.

As witnessed by the 74 million plus votes he received in 2020, mainstream voters were unconvinced by narratives purporting to explain the rise of Donald Trump and the nature of his presidency. Although his four-year mandate was particularly tumultuous, the US economy boomed until the onset of the coronavirus crucible. And while the country was not entirely at peace as a result of military commitments assumed by previous administrations, no new wars had been entered into. Yet, public life seemed, somehow, askew. There was a general sense of abnormality in American politics, as if things were not as they should be. Perhaps such a sensation was to be expected during a moment of profound, systemic change. Perhaps a generalized sentiment of dislocation was unavoidable as the United States sought to adapt to a world no longer conforming to the certainties prevalent in the recent past. Perhaps the the president just did not seem fit for the chief executive office; did not seem, in a word, presidential.

Trump was a radical political actor in a country generally averse to radicals. He may not have been a conscious or willing radical, but his presidency nonetheless unleashed a revolutionary moment. Yet, like all revolutions, *trumpism* generated a Thermidorian reaction as the months turned into years. In fact, the counter-revolution descended upon the nation's streets and halls of power even before Donald Trump was sworn in as the country's forty-fifth president on January 20, 2017. Since Hillary Clinton had won the popular vote, protestors, and the defeated Democrat candidate herself, argued that the president's Electoral College victory lacked legitimacy.¹⁶ And since the electoral system permitted such a political catastrophe, it was logically necessary to abolish the Electoral College. Once Trump was designated as a usurper of power, opponents began demanding his immediate removal from office. Less than two months after he was sworn in as chief executive, Democrat Maxine Waters was calling for his impeachment.¹⁷

Rage against Donald Trump flourished even prior to the November 2016 vote. During the presidential campaign, the nation's cultural elites made no secret of their disdain for the GOP candidate. Hollywood icon Robert De Niro released a political

16 For Hillary Clinton's version of the campaign and its outcome, see, Hillary Rodham Clinton. *What Happened*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017. Also, Jessica Taylor, "Is Hillary Clinton Trying to Question the Legitimacy of Donald Trump Winning?" *NPR*, December 12, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.npr.org/2016/12/12/505286051/is-hillary-clinton-trying-to-question-the-legitimacy-of-donald-trump-winning>; and Louis Nelson, "Clinton won't rule out challenging legitimacy of 2016 election", *Politico*, September 18, 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/18/hillary-clinton-trump-challenge-2016-election-legitimacy-242848>. On voter confidence in the results of the 2016 vote, see, Betsy Sinclair, Steven S. Smith and Patrick D. Tucker, "It's largely a Rigged System?: Voter Confidence and the Winner Effect in 2016", *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 2018, pp. 854-868.

17 See, Harriet Agerholm, "Donald Trump told to 'get ready for impeachment' by senior Democrat Maxine Waters", *Independent*, March 22, 2017, available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/maxine-waters-donald-trump-democrat-congresswoman-california-get-ready-impeachment-a7642681.html>.

commercial that, at a minimum, defied previous standards of accepted civility. Resorting to coarse language, the actor declared that Trump was “so blatantly stupid. He’s a punk. He’s a dog. He’s a pig. A con. A bullshit artist. A mutt who doesn’t know what he’s talking about. I’d like to punch him in the face”¹⁸. The crudeness of the message was a harbinger of worse to come. Shortly after the president’s inauguration, Madonna, before a crowd gathered at the Washington, DC Women’s March mused about “blowing up” the White House¹⁹. A few months later, just as political speech seemed to have descended to an unprecedented low, Johnny Depp managed to take it lower still by asking, “when was the last time an actor assassinated a president?”²⁰. Compared to Depp’s fantasies of a political killing, De Niro’s desire to punch Trump in the face seemed rather quaint.

These outlandish reactions from some of America’s foremost cultural references evinced the extent to which the 2016 presidential race polarized the country and radicalized public discourse.²¹ As Trump settled into the White House, they also indicated that democratic norms and political civility were being discarded at a bewildering pace. While it is true that the president’s opponents frequently pushed the limits of acceptable political speech, it is equally true that Trump also did not shy away from controversy and excess. His political career was dogged by Russiagate, Stormy Daniels, Access Hollywood, Charlottesville, impeachment, the pandemic, the massive protests that followed George Floyd’s death and, finally, the January 6 storming of the Capitol. Trump seemed to relish the controversy. Liberally displayed in mass rallies and in a torrent of tweets, *trumpian* rhetoric certainly did not contribute to bringing the country together; indeed, it was designed to polarize. Irrespective of opinion regarding Trump’s policies, little doubt subsists that he was a profoundly divisive figure.

Foreign policy was not spared by the Trump revolution; indeed, it was one of the areas most touched by it. While seeking the GOP presidential nomination, Donald Trump was quite clear about his intention to pursue a different path on the world stage. Since foreign policy both impacts and is impacted by domestic politics, Trump’s vivid rhetoric

18 See, Daniel Kreps, “See Robert De Niro Eviscerate Trump: ‘I’d Like to Punch Him in the Face’”, *Rolling Stone*, October 8, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/see-robert-de-niro-eviscerate-trump-id-like-to-punch-him-in-the-face-111689/>.

19 See, Sharon Bernstein, “Singer Madonna defend ‘blowing up the White House’ remark”, *Reuters*, January 23, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-women-madonna-idUSKBN15704A>.

20 See, Rachel Elbaum, “Johnny Depp Raises ‘Last Time an Actor Assassinated a President’”, *NBC News*, June 23, 2017, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/pop-culture-news/johnny-depp-when-was-last-time-actor-assassinated-president-n775881>.

21 The climate did not change much throughout the president’s mandate. Commenting the November 2020 presidential contest, the writer Deborah Eisenberg, in the pages of *The New York Review of Books* wrote: “If the most powerful position on earth is to be filled either by one of the worst humans the gene pool has ever devised or by one of the most mediocre, you’d think the choice would be clear. But apparently it is not, and the world waits in anguished anticipation for the votes of US citizens to be cast and tallied”. See, Jerry Brown, Christopher R. Browning, Deborah Eisenberg, Ben Fountain, Ian Frazier, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Annette Gordon-Reed, “On the Election – I”, *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 67, No. 18, November 19, 2020, p. 11.

in defense of the national interest in a *bobbesian* world was obviously destined – at least partially – for domestic consumption²². Claiming to speak on behalf of the “common man”, Trump insisted that “bad trade deals” were either to be wholly renegotiated or summarily abandoned, allies would no longer be permitted to free-ride on America’s blood and treasure and resources ascribed to nation-building – as well as international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization – were to be sharply curtailed.²³ Although Trump’s intentions were transparent, there was always the temptation – at home and abroad – not to take him at his word. Denial set in as many observers dismissed the candidate’s campaign rhetoric and promises as unabashed pandering to an anxious electoral base.²⁴ Several others suggested that once he apprehended the complexity and ambiguity inherent to America’s leadership role in the world, Trump would default to the policies pursued by his predecessors.²⁵ Still others suggested that his cabinet officers would blunt the most heterodox policies, thus guaranteeing that the president’s decisions would not provoke ruptures with past foreign policy orientations.²⁶

While they should have anticipated the forthcoming turmoil, America’s allies were nonetheless taken aback by the new approach to the world outlined by the Trump administration. After Theresa May’s failed attempt to cultivate Trump, Emmanuel Macron sought to emerge as the president’s closest European ally. In contrast, Trump’s terse relationship with German chancellor Angela Merkel began coldly and deteriorated further²⁷. Shinzō Abe attempted to pull close to the American ally and, considering Trump’s negative views of Japan dating to the 1980s, did so more successfully than

22 For the classic statement, see, Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of the Two-Level Games”, *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1988, pp. 427-460.

23 See, Thomas Weiss, “The UN and Multilateralism under Siege in the ‘Age of Trump’”, *Global Summitry*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2018, pp. 1-17, available at: <https://academic.oup.com/globalsummitry/article/4/1/1/5301678?login=true>.

24 See, Alexandra Homolar and Ronny Scholz, “The Power of Trump-speak: Populist Crisis Narratives and Ontological Security”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2019, pp. 344-364.

25 Some of president Trump’s political adversaries seemed to believe that such moderation had been initiated with the April 2017 Syrian airstrike. For instance, Illinois Democrat Senator Dick Durbin claimed the strike was “an indication they are moving toward what used to be the center stripe, mainstream on foreign policy... What you’re seeing is moderation of the views of Donald Trump at least in his White House foreign policy that differ from what we heard on the campaign trail. On the campaign trail he didn’t back off an inch”. See, Joe Gould, “Trump says NATO ‘no longer obsolete’ in series of foreign policy reversals”, *Defense News*, April 12, 2017, available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2017/04/12/trump-says-nato-no-longer-obsolete-in-series-of-foreign-policy-reversals/>.

26 This perspective permeates the interpretation of events in two books focusing on the relationship between President Trump and Secretary of Defense Mattis. See, Peter Bergen. *Trump and His Generals: The Cost of Chaos*. New York: Penguin Press, 2019; and Guy Snodgrass. *Holding the Line: Inside Trump’s Pentagon With Secretary Mattis*. New York: Sentinel, 2019.

27 See, Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay. *The Empty Throne: America’s Abdication of Global leadership*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2018, pp. 63-67.

most European leaders.²⁸ India's Narendra Modi became a reliable ally, unlike Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Canada's Justin Trudeau would become a perennial Trump *bête noire* in an undisguisable mutual animosity that clearly extended beyond policy differences.²⁹ Surprises did occur. Relations with Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mexico's populist left-wing president, were cordial and developed into an effective working arrangement. Much the same may be said of Trump's relationship with Vladimir Putin, although policy choices were heavily constrained by Russiagate³⁰. Perhaps most surprisingly of all was Trump's reaching out to Kim Jong-un, a remarkable (or reckless) but largely inconsequential attempt to supersede decades of hostility on the Korean peninsula.

Donald Trump obtained a number of unequivocal victories in the realm of foreign policy. The Middle Eastern initiative sealing the peace between Israel and the United Arab Emirates was the first of various breakthroughs in a region more familiar with impasse and strife. Despite its ambiguities and yet another betrayal of America's Kurdish allies, Trump's policy in Syria succeeded in avoiding an additional regional imbroglio for the United States. Relations with Russia could certainly have deteriorated further as the Congress and the Democrats, motivated by domestic political advantage, sought a harder line on Putin and pursued the "collusion" hypothesis during three long years. As the China threat became increasingly self-evident, Australia, India Japan – joining

28 On Shinzō Abe's early relationship with president Trump, see, Tobias S. Harris. *The Iconoclast: Shinzō Abe and the New Japan*. London: Hurst and Company, 2020, pp. 269-288. On Trump's long-held views on Japan that ultimately colored much of his understanding of international relations, see, Jennifer Miller, "Let's Not Be Laughed at Anymore: Donald Trump and Japan from the 1980s to the Present", *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2018, pp. 138-168.

29 See, for instance, Krishnadev Calamur, "Trump Calls Trudeau 'Two-Faced' After Video Shows Leaders Apparently Mocking Him", *NPR*, December 4, 2019, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/04/784549243/trump-calls-trudeau-two-faced>; and Colin Robertson, "Donald Trump has ushered in a new global order. Here's how Canada can protect itself," *The Globe and Mail*, 22 January 2019, available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-donald-trump-has-ushered-in-a-new-global-order-heres-how-canada-can/>. For an overview of a tumultuous four-year relationship, see, "Canada-U.S. Relations Updated February 10, 2021"; *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, February 2021, consulted at: https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2021-02-10_96-397_4fb3a7ee2a996a33027f72931f52b8abf3cbcaec7.pdf; and Stephen Blank and Monica Gattinger, "Canada-US Relations Under President Trump: Stop Reading the Tweets and Look to the Future", In Norman Hilmer and Philippe Lagassé (eds). *Canada Among Nations 2017: Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 83-101; and Jocelyn Coulon. *Un Selfie avec Justin Trudeau: regard critique sur la diplomatie du premier ministre*. Montréal: Québec Amérique, 2018.

30 On Russiagate, see, Michael S. Schmidt. *Donald Trump v. The United States: Inside the Struggle to Stop the President*. New York: Random House, 2020. Narratives favorable to Trump are to be found in: Lee Smith. *The Plot Against the President: The True Story of How Congressman Devin Nunes Uncovered the Biggest Political Scandal in US History*. New York: Center Street, 2019; and Lee Smith. *The Permanent Coup: How Enemies Foreign and Domestic Targeted the American President*. New York: Center Street. 2020.

the US in the revived Quad – reinforced their ties with the United States.³¹ Indeed, the administration's first, rudimentary steps toward defining an Indo-Pacific strategy constituted an important overdue building block for a new regional order.³² Last, but certainly not least, Trump forged a broad consensus on China policy that is unlikely to be reverted in the coming years.³³ By any measure one cares to use, these were impressive achievements.

Since Donald Trump broke with the assumptions guiding US behavior in the world stage in the decades following World War II, a balanced and systematic understanding of his foreign policy is not free of pitfalls. His departure from the bipartisan consensus on foreign policy was expressed during the GOP primaries and through concrete White House policy choices. Whatever else may be said about the former president, he cannot be accused of having deceived the electorate as to where he stood in international politics and what he intended to do once installed in the Oval Office. Despite the myriad concerns caused by *trumpism* among US allies, there was an underlying coherence to Trump's foreign policy and a determination to redefine the country's vital relationships and revise the international liberal order. Most allies, and the Europeans in particular, seemed to have believed that Trump's dire view of the liberal order was anomalous,

31 Indeed, one of the pledges contained in the 2007 *National Security Strategy* was “to increase quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India”. See, The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, December 2017, p. 46, available at: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>. Also, cf., Kevin Rudd, “The Convenient Rewriting of the History of the Quad”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, March 26, 2019, consulted at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/The-Convenient-Rewriting-of-the-History-of-the-Quad>; and Huong Le Thu (ed.), *Quad 2.0: New Perspectives for the Revised Concept*. Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2019, p. 2, accessed at: https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/201902/SI134%20Quad%202.0%20New%20perspectives_0.pdf?MI2ECFvmUJTTFzK.RsBIsskCRRaAqEmfP.

32 On the Indo-Pacific, cf., Timothy Doyle and Dennis Rumley (eds.), *The Rise and Return of the Indo-Pacific*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019; Rory Medcalf, *Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020; Richard Javand Heydarian, *The Indo-Pacific: Trump, China, and the New Struggle for Global Mastery*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; and Oliver Turner and Inderjeet Parmar (eds.), *The United States in the Indo-Pacific: Obama's Legacy and the Trump Transition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. Also, The Department of Defense, “Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region”, June 1, 2019, accessed at: <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>; and Department of State, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision”, November 4, 2019, p. 6, available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>.

33 For a critical appreciation of the new consensus, see the open letter to addressed to president Trump by China specialists, including M. Taylor Fravel, J. Stapleton Roy and Ezra Vogel, “Opinion: China is not an enemy”, *The Washington Post*, July 2, 2019, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/making-china-a-us-enemy-is-counterproductive/2019/07/02/647d49d0-9bfa-11e9-b27f-ed2942f73d70_story.html. The Chinese reaction to the letter is found in: “Rationality should be anchor for China-US ties”, *Global Times*, July 14, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1157858.shtml>. As well, cf., Jessica Chen Weiss, “A World Safe for Autocracy? China's Rise and the Future of Global Politics,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 4, 2019, pp. 92-102; and Mel Gurtov, “The Dangerous New US Consensus on China and the Future of US-China Relations”, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 2019, pp. 1-11.

unrepresentative of broader American historical and political trends. His worldview was, in short, dismissed as a personal eccentricity. As a result, a host of European states, with Germany at the forefront, came to the conclusion that the Trump presidency simply had to be endured. As long as Trump remained in office, the only solution was to hope for the best and avoid the worst. All would return to normal once the upstart businessman left the White House. It was a self-deceiving view that brought untold disillusionment as the Euro-American relationship spiraled into a cycle of incessant recrimination and enduring mutual suspicion.

Donald Trump's problematic relationship with Europe began during the campaign for the Republican nomination and intensified when he portrayed the June 2016 Brexit referendum as a "great victory" for British voters expressing their "sacred right" to regain their independence and reassert control over their national destiny.³⁴ The presumptive GOP nominee suggested that the vote had been part of a wider rebuke of open immigration and of a callous cosmopolitan "global elite".³⁵ The logical inference was that he too would emerge victorious when the American voter was given the opportunity to "reject today's rule by the global elite and embrace real change that delivers a government of, by and for the people".³⁶ A more serious issue arose when, in an interview granted to *The New York Times* shortly before officially receiving the GOP nomination, he characterized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as "obsolete" because it was not sufficiently involved in combating terrorism, later hinting that the United States' commitment to Article 5 – providing for the collective defense of all member-states in case of attack – could be contingent upon allies having "fulfilled their obligations to us"; that is to say, meeting the 2% of gross GDP defense spending target established at the 2014 Wales NATO summit³⁷. For decades, alliance burden-sharing had been an

34 Trump, visiting Scotland in mid 2016, said: "I think really people see a big parallel. A lot of people are talking about that. Not only the United States but other countries. People want to take their country back. They want to have independence in a sense... You see it all over Europe and many other cases where they want to take their borders back. They want to take their monetary [sic] back. They want to take a lot of things back. They want to have a country again. I think you are going to have this more and more. I really believe that. And it is happening in the United States". See, Ewen MacAskill, "Donald Trump arrives in UK and hails Brexit vote as 'great victory'", *The Guardian*, June 26, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/24/donald-trump-hails-eu-referendum-result-as-he-arrives-in-uk>.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 See, "Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey's Coup Attempt and the World", *The New York Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html>. For similar statements, see, "A transcript of Donald Trump's meeting with *The Washington Post* editorial board", *The Washington Post*, March 21, 2016 available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/03/21/a-transcript-of-donald-trumps-meeting-with-the-washington-post-editorial-board/>.

ongoing point of contention between NATO member-states³⁸. Barack Obama's Defense Secretary had gone as far as to predict a "dim, if not dismal, future" if Europeans failed to augment their defense expenditure³⁹. Yet, no other American president took criticism of NATO as far as Trump. And while his position in relation to the Atlantic Alliance was to evolve in the subsequent months, the damage was done.

Trump's transactional understanding of transatlantic security mirrored his conviction that the United States was being taken advantage of by free-riding allies. In late May 2017, during the president's first visit to Europe, Trump's speech at the Brussels NATO summit noticeably omitted an explicit endorsement of Article 5⁴⁰. Barely a month later, visiting Poland, he declared that the United States "has demonstrated not only with words, but with its actions, that it stands behind Article 5"⁴¹. Such a reaffirmation of NATO security guarantees – or, seen from a different perspective, such a blatant contradiction – did not prevent the president from maintaining pressure on the allies. During his speech at the 2018 NATO Brussels summit, Trump indicated that that member-states should increase military spending to 4 percent of gross GDP, double the commitment reached at the Wales summit.⁴² Although based on anonymous sources and denied by the White House, a story appearing in the *The New York Times* on 15 January 2019 claimed that the president

38 For background on burden-sharing in NATO, see, for instance, Jyoti Khanna and Todd Sandler, "NATO Burden Sharing: 1960–1992", *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol. 7. No. 2, 1996, pp. 115-133; Keith Hartley and Todd Sandler, "NATO Burden-sharing: Past and Future", *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 36, No. 6, 1999; Alan Tonelson, "NATO Burden-sharing: Promises, Promises", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2000, pp. 31-38; and Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, "Toward a 'post-American' alliance? NATO burden sharing after Libya", *International Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 2012, pp. 313-327.

39 See, for example, US Department of Defense, "The security and defense agenda (future of NATO)", Speech by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Brussels, June 10, 2011, available at: <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1581> and Michael Birnbaum, "Gates rebukes European allies in farewell speech", *The Washington Post*, 10 June 2011, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gates-rebukes-european-allies-in-farewell-speech/2011/06/10/AG9tKeOH_story.html.

40 See, Thomas Wright, "Trump Remains a NATO Skeptic", *The Atlantic*, May 27, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/trump-nato-article-five-israel-saudi-arabia/528393/>. Also, see, Michael D. Shear, Mark Landler and James Kanter, "In NATO Speech, Trump Is Vague About Mutual Defense Pledge", *The New York Times*, May 25, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/25/world/europe/donald-trump-eu-nato.html?searchResultPosition=1>. For the full speech, see, "Remarks by President Trump at NATO Unveiling of the Article 5 and Berlin Wall Memorials – Brussels, Belgium", NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, May 25, 2017, accessed at: <https://ru.usembassy.gov/remarks-president-trump-nato/>.

41 See, "In Warsaw, Trump Reaffirms Article 5 Commitment, Criticizes Russia's 'Destabilizing Behavior'", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 6, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/trump-europe-trip-poland-warsaw-visit/28597961.html>.

42 See, Ewen MacAskill and Pippa Crerar, "Donald Trump tells Nato allies to spend 4% of GDP on defence", *The Guardian*, July 11, 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/11/donald-trump-tells-nato-allies-to-spend-4-of-gdp-on-defence>.

had also raised the possibility of abandoning NATO unless the Europeans assumed a greater proportion of the financial burden.⁴³

Despite the administration's ambiguous and contradictory statements, its key strategic documents pointed to foreign policy continuity in relation to the transatlantic alliance. For instance, the December 2017 *National Security Strategy* recognized that a "strong and free Europe is of vital importance to the United States. We are bound together by our shared commitment to the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law", concluding that the "United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable and can help defend our shared interests and ideals. The United States remains firmly committed to our European allies and partners"⁴⁴. Specifically, with respect to NATO, the *National Security Strategy* reiterated that the "alliance of free and sovereign states is one of our great advantages over our competitors, and the United States remains committed to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty"⁴⁵. In a similar vein, the Pentagon's February 2018 *National Defense Strategy* stressed the strategic value of NATO in "defending freedom, deterring war, and maintaining the rules which underwrite a free and open international order"⁴⁶. Irrespective of the administration's discomfort with the asymmetries of burden-sharing, NATO continued to be viewed as an essential pillar of the international liberal order.

Such assurances did not allay the concerns of those convinced that Trump's transactional approach to international politics represented a fundamental threat to NATO⁴⁷. Yet a more nuanced, historically rooted appreciation suggests that the divisions

43 See, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper, "Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. From NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia", *The New York Times*, January 14, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>. In response, in January 2019, a bipartisan coalition of Democrats and Republican in the House of Representatives passed the *NATO Support Act* by an overwhelming margin of 357 to 22 votes. The text of the Act stated that the House: "(i) strongly supports the decision at the NATO Wales Summit in 2014 that each alliance member would aim to spend at least 2 percent of its nation's gross domestic product on defense by 2024; (ii) condemns any threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and democracy of any NATO ally; and (iii) welcomes the Republic of Montenegro as the 29th member of the NATO Alliance. See "H.R.676 — 116th Congress (2019-2020)", available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/676/text>.

44 See, The White House, "National Security Strategy of the United States of America", December 2017, op. cit., p. 48.

45 Ibid., p. 48.

46 Cf. Department of Defence, "Summary of the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge", 2018, p. 8, available at: <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

47 For instance, Gorm Rye Olsen claims that NATO's centrality within US strategic culture, a public opinion favorable to the alliance and strong backing from Congress restrained an "impulsive" and "unpredictable" Donald Trump, explaining why the United States remained in NATO. See, Gorm Rye Olsen, "Donald Trump and NATO: Limitations on the Power of an Unpredictable President", In Fulvio Attinà (ed.), *World Order Transition and the Atlantic Area: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Analysis*. Cham: Springer, 2021, pp. 123-141; and Uri Friedman, "Trump vs. NATO: It's Not Just About the Money", *The Atlantic*, July 12, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/07/trump-nato-allies/564881/>.

within the alliance should never have been dramatized by the member-states.⁴⁸ Tensions within the alliance were not unprecedented and vital national interests indicated that NATO would not collapse as a result of the airing of differences. The problem was that the burden-sharing discussion rapidly morphed into a debate over America's security guarantee. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise since the transatlantic relationship was broadly affected by a shift in US strategic priorities. Focused on the Indo-Pacific, America was keen to steer clear of problems in other regions, including Europe. In this context, and attending to the asymmetry of power between the United States and Europe, Trump believed European leaders should be more committed to meeting their defense and security goals.⁴⁹ In theory at least, Europeans were in agreement with the conclusion but not the methods employed by the administration.

A generalized European conviction that Washington had become an unreliable ally soon emerged. Emmanuel Macron expressed such a view when he warned Europeans that it was time to "wake up" because America could no longer be relied upon to defend its NATO allies⁵⁰. The French president added that what "we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO" and, consequently, Europe stood on "the edge of a precipice"⁵¹. Unless Europeans began to think strategically as a "geopolitical" power, there was a "considerable risk that in the long run we will disappear geopolitically or at least that we will no longer be in control of our destiny"⁵². Since Trump's America "turned its back on us", and as risks posed by China, Russia and Turkey augmented, Macron was of the opinion that Europe had to abandon its self-perception as an "economic power"⁵³. Rather, Europe's strategic power could only be harvested if "military sovereignty" was achieved⁵⁴. Despite her disagreements with Trump, Angela Merkel, a self-declared Atlanticist, was manifestly unwilling to subscribe Macron's "drastic words, that [were] not my view of cooperation in NATO... I don't think that such sweeping judgments are necessary, even if we have problems and need to pull together"⁵⁵. Bearing a fair share of the responsibility for the downturn of transatlantic relations, Merkel nonetheless refused to accompany Macron's hasty march toward a precipice of Europe's own making.

48 See, Joyce P. Kaufman, "The US perspective on NATO under Trump: lessons of the past and prospects for the future", *International Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 3, 2017, pp. 251-266.

49 See, Alina Polyakova and Benjamin Haddad, "Europe Alone: What Comes After the Transatlantic Alliance", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 4, 2019, pp. 109-120.

50 Cf. "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead", *The Economist*, November 7, 2019, available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 See, Angélique Chrisafis, "Macron criticized by US and Germany over Nato 'brain death' claims", *The Guardian*, November 7, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/07/macron-warns-of-nato-brain-death-as-us-turns-its-back-on-allies>.

Ultimately, Trump's unabashed support for Brexit, general skepticism of the European Union project and doubts relative to the terms under which NATO's security guarantee was to be extended impelled a deepening of European security and defense cooperation. Announced a few days after the Brexit referendum, the June 2016 EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) proposed a "strategic autonomy" diminishing dependence on American security guarantees⁵⁶. The same concern led European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to advocate a European Defense Fund (EDF) financed by the EU budget⁵⁷. Even though these initiatives were significant, it was certainly hyperbolic for the European Commission to claim, in a June 2017 document versing the future of European defense, that "more has been achieved over the last two years than in the last sixty"⁵⁸.

Transatlantic divergences were not restricted to security issues. Barack Obama's liberalizing approach to trade was exemplified by his administration's commitment to negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the US-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). In contrast, Donald Trump's transactional understanding of trade led him to conclude that the global trading system was "unjust" because it rested upon "outdated and imbalanced trade agreements"⁵⁹. Free trade deals entered into by the United States such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) were spurned by Trump as "stupid trade" because their terms compromised American economic growth. Trade relations were thus to be revised in accordance with US interests, particularly those of vulnerable workers whose quality, well-paying blue-collar jobs had been dislocated to developing countries. Quite naturally, negotiations surrounding the TPP and the TTIP were to be discontinued. Characterized by the president as a failure, the World Trade Organization (WTO) was to be reformed while unfair trade practices were to be combated by a reaffirmation of American sovereignty; in effect, by applying US trade law and assigning a more robust role to the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

56 For the full document, see, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, *European Union Global Strategy (EUGS)*, June 2016, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf. For a discussion, cf., Nathalie Tocci, "The Making of the EU Global Strategy", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2016, pp. 461-472; Karen E. Smith, "A European Union Global Strategy for a Changing World?", *International Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2017, pp. 503-518; and Ana E. Juncos, "Resilience as the New EU Foreign Policy Paradigm: A Pragmatist Turn?", *European Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-18.

57 Jean-Claude Juncker's speech outlining the proposal, see, European Commission, "State of the Union Address 2016: Towards a better Europe – a Europe that protects, empowers and defends", Strasbourg, Press Release, September 14, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_16_3043.

58 See, "Questions and Answers: the Future of European Defence", European Commission Memo, June 7, 2017, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_17_1517.

59 Kristen Hopewell, "Trump and Trade: The Crisis in the Multilateral Trading System", *New Political Economy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2021, pp. 271-282, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/13563467.2020.1841135?needAccess=true>.

Since Donald Trump viewed trade as a zero-sum game, American trade deficits suggested that trading partners were violating the rules of reciprocal trade. Indeed, in an interview granted to *CBS News*, the president described the EU as the United States’ “biggest foe” precisely because of its “unfair” trading practices⁶⁰. Selected tariffs – for example, on German automobiles – were seen as a possible remedy for balancing the transatlantic trade relationship. Invoking Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, empowering the president to solicit a Department of Commerce investigation on the consequences for national security resulting from the importing of specific goods, Trump, on 1 June 2018, imposed a 25% tariff on steel imports and a 10% tariff on aluminum imports from the European Union. Although Section 232 was bitterly contested, the administration maintained that it conformed to international trade law because WTO members may protect “essential security interests”⁶¹. Be that as it may, the essential point to retain is that the Trump administration’s understanding of national security led it to identify the European Union as a threat needing to be addressed through coercive economic statecraft.

I am critical of various aspects of *trumpism*; less critical in relation to others. Trump’s record is mixed, just like that of any other president. This essay is neither an impassioned defense of Donald Trump nor an indictment of his presidency. Too much ink has already been wasted on such sterile polemics. On both sides of the Atlantic, stereotypes and media caricatures have obstructed empirical debate. Exacerbated political passions have dominated the American political landscape, making dispassionate judgments of the Trump presidency an exceedingly difficult undertaking. This work, therefore, attempts to understand and analyze recent events in a disinterested manner. The essay is opportune for two reasons. First, we may not have seen and heard the last of Donald John Trump as a relevant political actor. Second, and more importantly, Trump’s four years in office

60 See, “‘I think the European Union is a foe’, Trump says ahead of Putin meeting in Helsinki”, *CBS News, Face the Nation*, July 15, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-interview-cbs-news-european-union-is-a-foe-ahead-of-putin-meeting-in-helsinki-jeff-glor/>

61 The administration contended that Section 232 conformed to international trade law. If the Commerce Department’s investigation determined that certain imports adversely effected national security, the president could, so the administration argued, adjust the level of imports or decide for tariffs or quotas. Rachel F. Fefer writes that: “While unilateral trade restrictions may appear to be counter to U.S. trade liberalization commitments under the WTO agreements, Article XXI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which predates and was one of the foundational agreements of the WTO, allows WTO members to take measures to protect ‘essential security interests’”. See, Rachel F. Fefer (coord.), “Section 232 Investigations: Overview and Issues for Congress”, *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, April 2, 2019, p. 5, available at: https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20190402_R45249_3483d505901bab746f84e294ba4d807c59739c59.pdf.

witnessed one of the most – if not *the* most – tumultuous period in transatlantic relations. It is essential we understand the issues to avoid future turbulence. This reason alone is sufficient to justify the writing of these pages. Lastly, this essay is not a polemic and should not be read as such, but my opinions are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions I may be affiliated with.

Part 1: The Road to the White House

The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts

William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

The American republic has witnessed more than its fair share of presidential elections tainted by outlandish lies, yellow journalism, dirty tricks, stuffed ballot boxes, eccentric personalities, vitriol and violence⁶². For instance, in 1800, in the aftermath of a particularly savage campaign pitting Thomas Jefferson against the Federalist John Adams, Jefferson and his running mate Aaron Burr both obtained an equal number of Electoral College votes. The House of Representatives then held 36 separate rounds of balloting before awarding the presidency to Jefferson, an outcome producing the Twelfth constitutional amendment, threats of secession and a deadly duel⁶³. In 1824, by way of a “corrupt bargain”, Andrew Jackson, having attained a plurality of the popular vote and the Electoral College, was defeated in the House of Representatives by John Quincy Adams, a result triggering demands for the president to be selected in accordance with the verdict of the popular vote⁶⁴. In 1876, with Democratic nominee Samuel Tilden winning the popular suffrage and leading in the Electoral College, southern leaders brokered a backroom deal to grant the presidency to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes⁶⁵. In more recent decades, at least until Donald Trump surged on the scene, elections became tamer affairs disputed by two moderate big-tent political parties whose policy differences did not surpass the boundaries set by a loose bipartisan consensus on broad national and international goals. Republicans and Democrats differed as to policy priorities and instruments, not the general aims to be achieved.

62 For context, see, James A. Morone. *Republic of Wrath: How American Politics Turned Tribal, From George Washington to Donald Trump*. New York: Hachette, 2020.

63 At the time, separate Electoral College votes were cast for the offices of president and vice-president. Although Aaron Burr ran on the same ticket as Thomas Jefferson, the two men tied in the Electoral College vote for president. John Adams finished third and Burr proceeded to lobby delegates to award him the presidency. After a tumultuous process, the House of Representatives ultimately attributed the office to Jefferson. For an academic treatment of the 1800 election and its consequences, see, James Roger Sharp. *The Deadlocked Election of 1800: Jefferson, Burr, and the Union in the Balance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010. A recent lively and non-academic interpretation of the personalities involved, their quarrels and convergences is to be found in: Winston Groom. *The Patriots: Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and the Making of America*. Washington: National Geographic, 2020.

64 Four years later, Andrew Jackson came back to defeat John Quincy Adams. On the 1824 race, see, Donald Ratcliffe. *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and the 1824's Five-Horse Race*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015.

65 See, Michael F. Holt. *By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008.

Measured by modern standards, the 2016 presidential race was unlike any other in recent memory⁶⁶. Even though American politics are usually followed with keen expectation in all four corners of the globe, the campaign managed to generate unprecedented interest. As the race unfolded, the world was transfixed. China's rise, Russia's geostrategic assertiveness, the startling result of the Brexit referendum and the populist revolution sweeping various regions of the globe meant that the November 2016 contest was bound to have significant repercussions for international politics. Interest in the contest was also stimulated by the atypical protagonists seeking their respective parties' nominations. Indeed, fascination with America's electoral choices was discernable from the first days of the long primary season. On the left, the duel pitting Hillary Clinton against Bernie Sanders promised nothing short of a herculean struggle between two dissonant visions of the Democrat party: a traditionalist centrist, liberal wing squaring off against a dynamic and irreverent socialist insurgency.⁶⁷ On the foreign policy front, the differences separating the candidates were equally substantial. Representing the foreign policy establishment, Clinton upheld the post-1945 consensus on America's role in the world. Sanders invariably distanced himself from the main tenets of the consensus, particularly with respect to trade and military interventionism abroad.⁶⁸

While the Democratic contest was undoubtedly gripping, the Republican race proved nothing less than mesmerizing⁶⁹. The initial primary field was unusually crowded as an unprecedented 17 aspirants stomped the country in search of the 1,237 delegates needed to secure the nomination at the July 2016 GOP National Convention. Representing shades of party opinion, practically all claimed Ronald Reagan's ideological mantle and adhered to Republican orthodoxy of international primacy, free trade and democracy

66 On the 2016 race, see, *inter alia*, Roger Stone. *The Making of the President 2016: How Donald Trump Orchestrated a Revolution*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2017; Joel Pollak and Larry Schweikart. *How Trump Won: The Inside Story of a Revolution*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2017; Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes. *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign*. New York: Crown, 2017; Doug Wead. *Game of Thorns. The Inside Story of Hillary Clinton's Failed Campaign and Donald Trump's Winning Strategy*. New York: Hachette, 2017; Katy Tur. *Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to the Craziest Campaign in American History*. New York: Dey St., 2017; and Steven E. Schier and Todd E. Eberly. *How Trump Happened: A System Shock Decades in the Making*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

67 On Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter and the left-wing grass-roots activist movements shaping the Democratic primary race, see, Sarah Jaffe. *Necessary Trouble: Americans in Revolt*. New York: Bold Type Books, 2016.

68 On the foreign policy proposals of both candidates, see, Stephen Collinson, "How would Bernie Sanders deal with the world?", CNN, February 6, 2016, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/05/politics/bernie-sanders-foreign-policy-hillary-clinton/index.html>; Scott Horsley, "Understanding Bernie Sanders' Foreign Policy Approach", NPR, April 14, 2016, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2016/04/14/474134063/understanding-bernie-sanders-foreign-policy-approach>; and Amir Handjani, "Commentary: Hillary Clinton's foreign policy problem", *Reuters*, June 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-clinton-foreign-policy-commentary-idUSKCN0YU2UT>.

69 On the background of the Republican party prior to this race, see, Tim Alberta. *American Carnage: On the Front Lines of the Republican Civil War and the Rise of President Trump*. New York: Harper, 2019; and Julian E. Zelizer. *Burning Down the House: Nent Gingrich, The Fall of a Speaker, and the Rise of the new Republican Party*. New York: Penguin Press, 2020.

promotion. Ted Cruz, the last candidate to stand in Trump's way of the nomination, was unequivocal in assuming the Reaganite mantle, claiming that the former president understood that "simply giving voice to values of American people has power, and speaking the truth with a smile has enormous potency. It's what Reagan did every day and what I'm trying to do in this campaign"⁷⁰. Most also accepted the Reaganite view that immigration worked to the country's benefit and, accordingly, supported some version of immigration reform. The man emerging as the favorite was, however, a disruptive challenger whose policy proposals, demeanor and temperament were quite alien to the Republican mainstream.

When primary season finally came to a close, Democrat voters had opted for the candidate embodying the establishment. Occupying the national stage since the early 1990s, Hillary Clinton was the consummate insider: a former First Lady, New York Senator, 2008 presidential aspirant and Barack Obama's first Secretary of State. She was also the first woman to be nominated as the presidential candidate of one of the two main parties, a fact that, in itself and irrespective of the final outcome, made the November ballot a historic event. On the opposite side, Republicans anointed a boisterous, disruptive New York real estate developer and tabloid celebrity devoid of political or military experience.⁷¹ A Democrat turned Republican that in 2000 had sought the Reform Party presidential nomination, Donald Trump was Hillary Clinton's antithesis: an anti-establishment maverick voicing the concerns of the forgotten "common man" alienated from the country's political and cultural elites. From his policies to his unique style of political communication, everything about Donald Trump heralded a rupture with mainstream republicanism.

The differences in the respective candidates' approach to foreign policy were equally stark. The Democrat was an unabashed true believer in the international liberal order, a free trader and a multilateralist known for her advocacy of the use of military force in Libya during her stint as Barack Obama's Secretary of State. Trump's approach consubstantiated a break with the core assumptions underlying that same post-1945 liberal order⁷². Donald Trump was the "nationalist" taking on Hillary Clinton's "globalism"⁷³. Naturally, Clinton was the resounding favorite of a foreign policy

70 See, Ben Jacobs, "Ronald Reagan and... Barack Obama? Ted Cruz reveals presidential role models", *The Guardian*, December 2, 2015, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/02/ted-cruz-ronald-reagan-barack-obama-iowa-presidential-campaign>.

71 On Trump's personality and background, see, David Cay Johnston. *The Making of Donald Trump*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2016; Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher. *Trump Revealed: An American Journey of Ambition, Ego, Money, and Power*. New York: Scribner, 2016; and Conrad Black. *Donald J. Trump: A President Like No Other*. Washington: Regnery, 2018.

72 See, Joseph S. Nye, "Will the Liberal Order Survive? The History of an Idea", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 1, 2017, pp. 10-16; and Stewart M. Patrick, "Trump and World Order: The Return of Self-Help", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 2, 2017, pp. 52-57.

73 See, Robert J. Merry, "Trump vs. Hillary is Nationalism vs. Globalism, 2016", *The National Interest*, May 4, 2016, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-vs-hillary-nationalism-vs-globalism-2016-16041>.

establishment embedded in the country's national security apparatus, media, universities and think tanks. Trump, in contrast, was unwilling to temper his profound contempt for the ideas, policies and institutions dominating the country's foreign policy-making circles. His dismissal of the establishment was also evinced by his undisguisable distrust of the intelligence community, claiming, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency had been colonized by his political rivals⁷⁴. The proverbial outsider, Trump lacked foreign policy credentials; the consummate insider, Clinton possessed them in abundance. A nemesis of the establishment, Trump was adamant that new foreign policy approaches and priorities had to be adopted if America was to avoid further national decline. Guarantor of the *status quo*, Clinton proposed to carry on much as she had in the recent past.

Oddly, as the campaign unfolded, the septuagenarian billionaire seemed to be the one most attuned to the national *zeitgeist*. Rather unsurprisingly, Hillary Clinton was sanctified by the media while Donald Trump was demonized as the foreign policy establishment became increasingly unnerved by his denouncement of free trade, free-riding allies and inconclusive overseas wars. As the campaign progressed, his rallies morphed into celebratory, populist acclamations of a real estate mogul out to demolish the nation's elites and empower the "common man". Resuscitating American vigor meant breaking with the business as usual approach to domestic and foreign policies. In turn, the "common man" unswervingly backed the candidate's assault on the Washington "swamp" and endorsed his pledge to banish the establishment to the political wilderness. For the American voter, never in recent decades had the choice of national political destinies been posed so clearly.

1.1. The Trump Tsunami

America's political landscape was irrevocably upended when Donald J. Trump formally announced his intention to seek the 2016 Republican nomination for president of the United States. Since the early 1990s, rumors alluding to a Trump presidential bid periodically found their way into the national media.⁷⁵ Most pundits, however, dismissed a Trump run as utterly outlandish, comparable to other unconsummated White House bids from vanity proto-candidates such as Warren Beatty and Mark Cuban⁷⁶.

74 See, Shane Harris, "Donald Trump's Salvo at CIA is Unusual Move for a President-Elect", *The Wall Street Journal*, December 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trumps-salvo-at-cia-is-unusual-move-for-a-president-elect-1481419714>; and Cory Bennett, "How Democrats became CIA defenders", *Politico*, December 12, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/democrats-cia-intelligence-trump-232540>.

75 An excellent source for Donald Trump's positions prior to entering the 2016 presidential race is, Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms. *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

76 See, "Warren Beatty May Run for President", *Associated Press*, September 8, 1999, consulted at: <https://apnews.com/article/206d2896f2250e6c7618cc3685d22719>; and Clare Duffy, "Mark Cuban was seriously weighing a run for president last month. Here's why he decided against it", *CNN*, June 4, 2020, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/04/business/mark-cuban-presidential-bid-axe-files/index.html>.

Granted, in recent years politically inexperienced celebrities of various stripe had met with notable political success. Populist wrestler Jesse Ventura captured the Minnesota governorship and Arnold Schwarzenegger managed to catapult himself into the same office in California. Understandably, these victories were derided as freak local outcomes produced by dysfunctional state politics in unique, circumscribed moments in time. Most observers were of the opinion that the country's chief executive office was an altogether different, and considerably more serious, matter.

Donald Trump, so the mainstream consensus seemed to hold, was an entertainer and an unabashed self-promoter thriving on publicity. Visibly, he enjoyed being mentioned as a potential presidential hopeful; but in the final analysis, would never actually submit himself to the inordinate scrutiny demanded of a viable national candidate. Successful real estate tycoons, particularly those amassing substantial fortunes in the rough and tumble Manhattan market, simply could not withstand the financial and ethical vetting demanded of a serious contender. Little doubt existed that Trump was sufficiently wealthy to self-finance a political campaign and contest a handful of primaries. Predictably, his anti-establishment message would earn him a measure of support from disgruntled voters, perhaps even propelling him to the top tier of the field in a handful of primary races. However, the exigencies of electoral competition would rapidly impose themselves on a political novice ostensibly more interested in fame and notoriety than in the minutia of policy briefs.

Even if Trump decided to enter the 2016 primary sweepstakes, a seemingly immovable obstacle had been thrust in his path to securing the GOP nomination. Virtually everyone assumed that 2016 was the year of Jeb Bush, heir to a dynasty that had given the country two presidents. For a party craving respectability after eight years of Barack Obama, Jeb Bush, although far from being a galvanizing figure, was, on paper, an ideal candidate. Reflecting the professionalism of his organization, the candidate had gotten off the ground early and had developed position papers on virtually every conceivable issue. Not least important, party donors deposited their trust in Bush, thus allowing him to accumulate a sizable campaign chest. An atmosphere of inevitability permeated the candidacy and it was assumed that a challenge to the Bush family was tantamount to political self-immolation. Prudent politicians entering the primaries could, at best, aspire to obtain national name recognition, jostle for a seat at the cabinet table or be contemplated for the vice-presidential slot. But, when all was said and done, Jeb Bush's political experience, ideological moderation and family connections would assure his nomination as GOP standard-bearer. In short, the Republican Party was in safe hands and the primaries seemed slated to coronate the moderate former Florida governor unequivocally backed by the party's establishment.

As with all best laid plans, events would not transpire as expected. The unforeseen, seismic upheaval occurred on 15 June 2015, when, accompanied by his wife Melania, Donald Trump descended the gilded escalator of Manhattan's Trump Tower skyscraper

to agitate the stale waters of the GOP primary season.⁷⁷ By any measure, the launching of the New York billionaire's campaign originated a political tsunami. If Jeb Bush was an inoffensive, seasoned ideological moderate, Trump erupted on the scene as a mercurial, firebrand populist whose rhetoric and comportment immediately sent shockwaves throughout the political and media establishments. At first, the announcement was not taken seriously since the sheer odds against such an improbable figure becoming president of the United States made Trump's decision appear to be a publicity stunt congruent with the man's past dealings with the national media. Most commentators therefore continued to believe the announcement was just one more act of shameless self-promotion by a celebrity famous for hosting the "The Apprentice" throughout fourteen television seasons, a stint that had made Trump a household name in the United States.⁷⁸ Such, at any rate, was the dominant view from the nation's office towers, newsrooms and political corridors.

Before he descended the staircase of Trump Tower to declare his candidacy, it had been unclear whether the businessman would actually seek the Republican nomination or – if he ran at all – do so as an independent. Years before, in 1999, claiming the GOP had become "just too crazy right", he altered his party registration to position himself for the Reform Party nomination.⁷⁹ Concomitantly, in the closing months of 1999 and early 2000, an exploratory campaign committee was established by Roger Stone to test the billionaire's appeal to Reform activists. The putative campaign consisted largely of media appearances and the publication of *The America We Deserve*, in whose pages Trump acknowledged that he was "considering a run for the presidency".⁸⁰ Claiming that the resolution of America's problems required leaders capable of speaking truth to voters, Trump described himself as a straight talker using plain "language to speak my mind"⁸¹. Reform members proved unreceptive and, in March 2000, he withdrew from the race as Pat Buchanan, uncharitably dismissed by Trump as a "Hitler lover", sealed the party's endorsement.⁸²

77 See, Michael Kruse, "The Escalator Ride That Changed America", *Politico*, June 14, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/06/14/donald-trump-campaign-announcement-tower-escalator-oral-history-227148>.

78 See, Emily Nussbaum, "The TV that Created Donald Trump", *The New Yorker*, July 31, 2017, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/07/31/the-tv-that-created-donald-trump>; and James Poniewozik, "Donald Trump Was the Real Winner of The Apprentice", *The New York Times*, September 28, 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/28/arts/television/trump-taxes-apprentice.html>.

79 See, Francis X. Clines, "Trump Quits Grand Old Party for New", *The New York Times*, October 25, 1999, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/25/us/trump-quits-grand-old-party-for-new.html>. A permanent presence in the tabloids, Donald Trump was urged to consider a run for the Reform Party nomination by Jesse Ventura, winner of the 1998 Minnesota governorship race as a third-party candidate. Trump claimed that "I really believe the Republicans are just too crazy right" when he disclosed his intention to register with the Independence Party, the New York wing of the Reform Party. He expected to make a final decision by March 2000. See, Francis X. Clines, "Trump Quits Grand Old Party for New", *The New York Times*, October 25, 1999, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/25/us/trump-quits-grand-old-party-for-new.html>.

80 See, Donald Trump. *The America We Deserve*. New York: Renaissance Books, 2000, p. 15.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

82 See, Francis X. Clines, "Trump Quits Grand Old Party for New", *op. cit.*

Donald Trump's dalliance with presidential politics during the 1990s does not suffice to explain his decision to enter the fray in 2016. Revealingly, during the second 2020 candidates' debate, Trump admitted to Joe Biden that "I got into this race because of you and Obama"⁸³. The disclosure was unsurprising because, after all, policy differences with the Obama administration were manifold and recurrent. However, it appears as if the decisive moment tipping the balance in favor of a run occurred following Barack Obama's public goading of Trump during the April 30, 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner. During the event, held at the Washington Hilton, the president mercilessly belittled the tycoon.⁸⁴ Ridiculing Trump's involvement in the the "birther campaign", Obama observed that "no one is happier, no one is prouder to put this birth certificate matter to rest than The Donald. And that's because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter – like, did we fake the moon landing? What really happened in Roswell? And where are Biggie and Tupac?"⁸⁵. As Trump sat awkwardly in the audience, the president, making no effort to conceal his utter disdain for the businessman, went on to add that "we all know about your credentials and breadth of experience. For example – no, seriously –, just recently, in an episode of *Celebrity Apprentice*, at the steakhouse, the men's cooking team cooking did not impress the judges from Omaha Steaks. And there was a lot of blame to go around. But you, Mr. Trump, recognized that the real problem was a lack of leadership. And so ultimately, you didn't blame Lil' Jon or Meatloaf. You fired Gary Busey. And these are the kind of decisions that would keep me up at night. Well handled, sir. Well handled"⁸⁶. Plainly incensed, Trump remained stone-faced as the president's mocking generated sustained laughter in the room. Even the event host, comedian Seth Mayer, taunted and dismissed the New York billionaire as "a joke".

While these personal slights seem to have impelled Trump to enter the Republican primaries, he also appeared to be equally motivated by the long-held conviction that "the world is laughing at America's politicians"⁸⁷. A fundamental motive driving Donald Trump's entry into the political arena, this sense of national humiliation permitted him to deftly mobilize the innumerable pent up frustrations and grievances so pervasive within the Republican base and in the country's heartland. No wonder then that his populist rhetoric struck a cord with sectors of the working and middle classes that saw America

83 See, Meg Wagner, Kyle Blaine, Jessica Estepa, Melissa Macaya and Fernando Alfonso III, "Final 2020 presidential debate", *CNN*, November 23, 2020, consulted at: https://edition.cnn.com/politics/live-news/presidential-debate-coverage-fact-check-10-22-20/h_2fc9e195e9344aa6d15c23d64efd3.

84 For the full text of Obama's speech, see, The White House, "The President's Speech at the White House Correspondents' Dinner", May 1, 2011, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/05/01/president-s-speech-white-house-correspondents-dinner>.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 See, Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms. *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View*, p. 32.

as having failed them.⁸⁸ Yet, it would be disingenuous to posit that candidate Trump was solely motivated by grievance, that he lacked an overarching vision for the nation.

Generally neglected by the pundits were Trump's long-held and rather consistent core political beliefs, insistently aired in interviews throughout the decades. As a matter of fact, the critical theme of national humiliation was already present in Trump's 2 September 1987 paid advertisement in the form of an "open letter" addressed to the American people. Placed in the pages of the *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *The Boston Globe*, it outlined the manner in which allies were taking advantage of the United States and exhorted the public "not let our great country be laughed at anymore"⁸⁹. Just as Obama had so thoroughly humiliated Trump during the Correspondents' Dinner, Trump maintained that the United States was being humiliated by the rest of the world. Much as Trump had risen to meet Obama's unstated challenge to run for the presidency, so the United States would be compelled to confront the monumental challenges posed by the outside world.

Mirroring his generic understanding of human beings and social relations, Trump's transactional view of international politics impeded him from criticizing those countries he understood to be taking advantage of the United States. They were simply pursuing their self-interest and, as critically, should not be expected to behave otherwise. After all, politics and business were not altruistic endeavors. For Trump, the real culprits for this unbearable state of affairs were to be found entrenched in the American political establishment. More precisely, the United States was humiliating itself because the nation's elites allowed foreign interests to take undue advantage of the country and its people. Barack Obama, the country's chief executive and driver of Washington's pernicious external policies, was therefore the main culprit responsible for the humiliation. To end that state of affairs, the "swamp politicians" holding sway over foreign policy would have to be swept from power by an authentic, regenerative popular movement.

While party elites – including past GOP presidents – championed globalization and free trade, the New Yorker aired his dissatisfaction with free trade treaties and the asymmetrical nature of America's relations with its traditional allies. In the decades preceding the announcement of his candidacy, he spoke out frequently on the country's industrial decline, which he considered a byproduct of free trade and globalization.⁹⁰ In the September 1987 paid newspaper advertisement, Trump was already insisting that "Japan

88 See, *inter alia*, Thomas Frank. *What's the Matter With Kansas? How Conservatism Won the Heart of America*. New York: Frank Thomas, 2004; Arlie Russell Hochschild. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press, 2016; J.D. Vance. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: HarperCollins, 2016; Eric Kaufmann. *Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration and the Future of White Majorities*. London: Allen Lane, 2018; and Ashley Jardina. *White Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

89 See, Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms. *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View*, pp. 32-33.

90 See, Jacob M. Schlesinger, "Trump Forged His Ideas on Trade in the 1980s – and Never Deviated", *The Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-forged-his-ideas-on-trade-in-the-1980sand-never-deviated-1542304508>.

and other nations” were “taking advantage of the United States”⁹¹. As it was, with free-riding allies such as Japan and Saudi Arabia safely under the protection of Washington’s security umbrella, the “world is laughing at America’s politicians as we protect ships we don’t own, carrying the oil we don’t need, destined for allies who won’t help”⁹². In sum, to assure economic renewal, Trump was proposing that it was necessary to “(E)nd our huge deficits, reduce our taxes, and let America’s economy grow unencumbered by the cost of defending those who can easily afford to pay us for the defense of their freedom”⁹³. With American deficits ballooning, it was time for allies to pay for their defense and enter into more balanced trade arrangements with the United States. Almost thirty years later, these themes would be taken up during his 2016 campaign.

The neophyte presidential aspirant covered an array of talking points that any GOP candidate was expected to embrace. Like his fellow Republicans, he was an unabashed booster of American capitalism and a firm devotee of US military might. Congruent with the party’s anti-Washington bias, Trump proudly assumed that he was not a politician, a euphemism meant to denote that he was a genuine, authentic outsider “telling it as it is”. Unlike the nation’s mainstream politicians, he claimed to be un beholden to special interests and did not invoke political codes and Washingtonian doublespeak to dissimulate his intentions or deceive the public at large. He would reiterate this straightforwardness during his inaugural address by proclaiming that the “time for empty talk is over”⁹⁴. That very authenticity, of course, provided Trump with a convenient shield when controversy erupted. An off-hand comment about “shooting somebody on Fifth Avenue and not losing votes” was invariably justified as a moment of authenticity on the part of a courageous politician “saying what he means” or, alternatively, rapidly dismissed as the tactless utterance of an undisciplined candidate prone to rhetorical excess.⁹⁵ Either way, Trump’s outspokenness only endeared him further to his base, for whom the tycoon’s plainness of speech was nothing short of an unequivocal repudiation of *bien pensant* cultural and political elites glaringly “out of touch” with the concerns of the heartland and, much worse, plainly disdainful of the problems and anxieties confronting the beleaguered “common man”. Stepping outside of political convention and the boundaries of accepted discourse thus became a political virtue rather than an object of derision and censure.

Neither was the newly-minted candidate a typical Republican when it came to values and social policy. His boorish comportment – indicative of a crass, narcissistic

91 See, Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms. *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View*, p. 32.

92 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

93 Ibid., p. 33.

94 See, The White House, “The Inaugural Address”, January 20, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>.

95 See, Jeremy Diamond, “Trump: I could shoot somebody and I wouldn’t lose votes”, CNN, January 24, 2016, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/23/politics/donald-trump-shoot-somebody-support/index.html>.

and domineering personality – unsettled most Republicans. His personal life, particularly his marital history, evinced his remoteness from the traditionalist values espoused by social conservatives and evangelical voters. Speaking before a gathering of conservative Christians in Ames, Iowa, he explained that his three marriages fell apart because of “a work thing, it wasn’t a bad thing... It was very hard for anybody to compete against the work”, but quickly went on to clarify that “I was actually a great father. I was a better father than I was a husband”⁹⁶. Although not particularly religious, he claimed that “I go to church. Do I do things that are wrong? I guess so... If I do something wrong, I try to do something right, I don’t bring God into that picture”⁹⁷. Although not bringing “God into that picture” was an odd manner of expressing his views on forgiveness, redemption and his personal relationship with God, evangelical primary voters were not alienated. Obama-era polemics versing gendered bathrooms and gay marriage drew the wrath of the right, but were dismissed by Trump as largely irrelevant matters. Considerably more liberal on social issues than the party’s base or his fellow candidates for the nomination, he would come to adopt mainstream conservative positions on judicial nominations, abortion and other social issues as the campaign progressed. These pledges, particularly his commitment to appointing judges screened and endorsed by the Federalist Society, proved sufficient to mollify conservative misgivings over his more unorthodox views and behavior.⁹⁸

At first, Trump’s Republican rivals failed to grasp that the businessman’s candidacy was a substantial challenge to – and rebuke of – the standard-bearers of GOP orthodoxy. Political pundits perpetuated the “Trump as novelty” narrative, dismissing him as an entertainer who, throughout his entire career, had resorted to uncouth behavior and bombastic statements to command media attention.⁹⁹ His antics would, in the short term, drive the media’s unquenchable thirst for ratings and profits, but, as the campaign

96 See, Jonathan Martin and Alan Rappoport, “Donald Trump Says John McCain Is No War Hero, Setting Off Another Storm”, *The New York Times*, July 18, 2015, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/us/politics/trump-belittles-mccains-war-record.html>.

97 Ibid.

98 See, Lawrence Baum and Neal Devins, “Federalist Court: How the Federalist Society Became the De Facto Selector of Republican Supreme Court Justices”, *William & Mary Law School Scholarship Repository*, *Popular Media*, 407, 2017, consulted at: [http://becknetnewsite.s3.amazonaws.com/New-Yorker-The-Conservative-Pipeline-to-the-Supreme-Court.pdf](https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=popular_media&sei-redir=1&referer=https%253A%252F%252Fscholar.google.com%252Fscholar%253Fhl%253Dpt-PT%2526as_dt%253D0%25252C5%2526q%253Dt trump%252Bjudges%252Bfederalist%252Bsociety%2526btnG%253D#search=%22trump%20judges%20federalist%20society%22;JeffreyToobin,“TheConservativePipelinetotheSupremeCourt”,<i>TheNewYorker</i>, April 17, 2017, available at: <a href=); and Jason Zengerle, “How the Trump Administration is Remaking the Courts”, *The New York Times Magazine*, August 22, 2018, available at: <https://www.law.uh.edu/faculty/thester/courses/Statutory2019/How%20the%20Trump%20Administration%20Is%20Remaking%20the%20Courts%20-%20The%20New%20York%20Times.pdf>.

99 See, Barbara Bickart, Susan Fournier and Martin Nisenholtz, “What Trump Understands About Using Social Media to Drive Attention”, *Harvard Business Review*, March 1, 2017, consulted at: <https://hbr.org/2017/03/what-trump-understands-about-using-social-media-to-drive-attention>.

unfolded and primary victories failed to materialize, media interest would surely dissipate. Deprived of the much-needed oxygen infused by the media, the candidacy would invariably fizzle out. Trump, in effect, was an epiphenomenon ultimately condemned to political irrelevance. Taking their cue from the mainstream national media, most of Trump's primary competitors dismissed his run as a publicity stunt fueled by the billionaire's resentment, sense of entitlement and outsized ego. Most were secure in the knowledge that *trumpian* populism was an inconsequential force that would rapidly expire and, in the end, the nomination would be entrusted to a moderate, mainstream Republican. Such, at least, was the faulty reasoning prevalent during the early months of the primary campaign season.

1.2. Making America Great, Again

On June 15, 2015, during the hour-long announcement of his presidential candidacy, Donald Trump pledged to 'Make America Great Again'. Denoting the candidate's resolve to reconstitute the nation's former greatness, the slogan was meant to summarize an entire political program of national renewal.¹⁰⁰ Contrary to the charges levied against Trump, a man woefully uninformed of the country's political history, 'Make America Great Again' was not indicative of a putative authoritarian drift.¹⁰¹ Nor was it a thinly disguised code for white supremacy or any other such delusion.¹⁰² In point of fact, 'Make America Great Again' was originally introduced by Ronald Reagan in his 1980 campaign and, in 1992,

100 Trump's understanding of "making America great" may be found in his "programmatic" book *Great Again*. See, Donald J. Trump. *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*. New York: Threshold Editions, 2015. Also, cf., Jason A. Edwards, "Make America Great Again: Donald Trump and the redefining of the US role in the World", *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2018, pp. 176-195.

101 Much ink has been devoted to making the argument that Donald Trump was a fascist. For example, Christopher Mathias, "A Fascist Trump Rally in Greenville", *Huffington Post*, July 18, 2019, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/fascist-trump-rally-greenville-ilhan-omar-send-her-back_n_5d30529fe4b0419fd328b270?ri18n=true; and Nick Cohen, "If If Trump looks like a fascist and acts like a fascist, then maybe he is one", *The Guardian*, January 16, 2021, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/16/if-trump-looks-like-a-fascist-and-acts-like-a-fascist-then-maybe-he-is-one>. More thoughtful substantial arguments viewing *trumpism* from the perspective of fascism are Timothy Snyder. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. London: The Bodley Head, 2017; and Madeleine Albright. *Fascism: A Warning*. London: William Collins, 2018. The historian and Third Reich specialist Richard J. Evans provides a sensible rebuttal of these views in Richard J. Evans, "Why Trump isn't a fascist?", *New Statesman*, January 13, 2021, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2021/01/why-trump-isnt-fascist>.

102 On this issue, cf., for example, Reihan Salam, "White Fright: Does Donald Trump represent the ascendancy of white nationalism on the American right?", *Slate*, September 4, 2015, consulted at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/09/donald_trump_and_white_nationalism_does_the_candidate_s_rise_represent_the.ht; and Janelle Bouie, "How Trump happened", *Slate*, March 13, 2016, accessed at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/cover_story/2016/03/how_donald_trump_happened_racism_against_barack_obama.html?via=gdpr-consent.

was adopted by Bill Clinton.¹⁰³ As employed by Trump, the slogan was simply meant to express the notion that the decline of US international power was reversible once the policies at the root of the country's domestic problems were discarded. Inverting decline was achievable only if those problems – job losses resulting from deindustrialization, the inequities of free trade, Islamic terrorism, undocumented immigration, media bias and woke cultural elitism – were addressed in a frontal manner uninhibited by politico-ideological correction. These themes defined Trump's candidacy and, unsurprisingly, later constituted the bedrock assumptions orienting White House policy.

Donald Trump's ostensibly quixotic presidential announcement provoked stupefaction amongst both his political opponents and the media. As was to be expected, his speech immediately ignited a storm of criticism, primarily due to his captious remarks centering on Mexican immigration. Remarkably, the candidate claimed that "(W)hen Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with [them]. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people"¹⁰⁴. Such pronouncements were bound to generate universal rebuke and, obviously, drew the vast media attention so unabashedly coveted by the candidate. All else was ignored as cable news and social networks began a four-year obsession with Donald Trump's every word and deed, thus providing him with free media coverage worth hundreds of millions of dollars.¹⁰⁵ The outrage sparked by Trump's words may have been justified, but media focus on *trumpian* rhetoric obfuscated the fact that the ills he was describing clearly resonated with a significant section of the public.¹⁰⁶ From the moment the candidacy was launched, the real political and sociological meaning of *trumpism* was largely drowned out in a cacophony of indignation and virtue-signaling serving merely to bolster his candidacy and, later, his presidency.¹⁰⁷

103 In an ironic twist, Bill Clinton, campaigning for his wife in 2016, characterized the very same slogan he had used in the past as "a dog whistle for white Southerners". See, Jessica Chasmar, "Bill Clinton vowed to 'make America great again' in 1992, now says slogan is racist", *The Washington Times*, September 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/sep/9/bill-clinton-vowed-to-make-america-great-again-in-/>.

104 See, "Donald Trump announces a presidential bid", *The Washington Post*, June 16, 2015, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/>.

105 The value of the free media obtained by Trump varies widely. On the top end of the scale, estimates place that value at approximately 5 billion dollars. See, Emily Stewart, "Donald Trump Rode \$5 Billion in Free Media to the White House", *The Street*, November 20, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.thestreet.com/politics/donald-trump-rode-5-billion-in-free-media-to-the-white-house-13896916>.

106 See, Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne*, pp. 36-37. Also, cf., Pew Research Center, "Clinton, Trump Supporters Have Starkly Different Views of a Changing Nation", August 18, 2016, available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/08/18/clinton-trump-supporters-have-starkly-different-views-of-a-changing-nation/>.

107 The most insightful, albeit supportive understanding of Trump and *trumpism*, is to be found in Victor Davis Hanson. *The Case for Trump*. New York: Basic Books, 2019. Also of interest is Hanson's *The New Yorker* interview, cf., Isaac Chotiner, "The Classicist Who Sees Donald Trump As A Tragic Hero", *The New Yorker*, February 20, 2019, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/the-classicist-who-sees-donald-trump-as-a-tragic-hero>.

Receiving far less attention were Trump's claims that Mexico and China were siphoning off American blue-collar manufacturing jobs.¹⁰⁸ His message emphasized the decrease in the living standards of a large swath of the American working and middle classes victimized by elites outsourcing well-paying jobs to countries offering low-cost labor. Significantly, he refused to place the blame for this abysmal state of affairs on either Mexico or China, suggesting that both, although gaming existing trade rules, were merely pursuing their legitimate self-interest in a zero-sum world. Granted, the Chinese and Mexican governments exploited an international order created and maintained by American blood and treasure, but rather than feigning indignation by pointing the finger at foreign states, Trump decried his own country's inept elites. Consistent with the views expressed by him over the preceding decades, Trump assigned primary responsibility for America's ills to domestic elites, to their absence of foresight and general failure of leadership. The Obama administration's willingness to acquiescence to unfair trade relationships dating to the 1990s made the sitting president directly responsible for the devastation of American industry and the concomitant impoverishment of America's most vulnerable workers.

Trump's understanding of the country's woes lent itself to the conclusion that decline was not an unavoidable byproduct of America's inherent flaws; rather, the nation's problems derived from a globalist foreign policy that effectively sacrificed US prosperity and power. The difference is critical because, for many, particularly on the left, American decline was the result of a highly flawed society burdened with an equally unsound political system. At the dawn of the century, Emma Goldman had already voiced this view by depicting the nation as a land of "sorrow, tears, and grief"¹⁰⁹. Proponents of this narrative maintained that national shortcomings – race relations, poverty, mammoth corporate power and environmental degradation – masked the intrinsic flaws of US society. Rampant capitalism, rugged individualism, sexism and institutional racism pre-dating the founding of the republic were all identified as root causes of the United States' moral and political corruption.¹¹⁰ Foreign policy, in turn, was conceived as a mirror of those exact same sins since the US exported its national failings to the rest of the world.¹¹¹ Considered from this prism, redemption was impossible in the absence of a radical overhauling of American capitalism and of the country's deep-rooted socio-political hierarchies. Such arguments, in one form or another, had been invoked by the progressive movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the 1960s New Left, Occupy Wall Street and, most recently, Black Lives Matter.

108 See, Justin R. Pierce and Peter K. Schott, "The Surprisingly Swift Decline of US Manufacturing Employment", *American Economic Review*, Vol. 106, No. 7, 2016, pp. 1632-1662.

109 See, Emma Goldman. *Anarchism and Other Essays* (second ed.). New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910, p. 55; and Loretta Kensing, "Radical Lessons: Thoughts on Emma Goldman, Chaos, Grief, and Political Violence Post-9/11/01", *Feminist Teacher*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2009, pp. 50-70.

110 For an influential and popular treatment of this narrative of United States history, see, Howard Zinn. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2015.

111 One of the most prolific proponents of this view is Noam Chomsky. See, *inter alia*, Noam Chomsky. *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003; and Noam Chomsky. *Who Rules the World?* New York: Penguin, 2016.

Needless to say, Donald Trump's reading of America's role in the world was antithetical to this progressive narrative.¹¹² From his perspective, decline was the logical outcome of multilateral trade agreements generating massive economic problems, unsatisfactory levels of economic growth, weakening competitiveness, lax immigration laws, and asymmetric burden-sharing between the US and its free-rider allies. Repealing or renegotiating "unfair" trade agreements thus became the core assumption underlying policies designed to stem the national decline. Similarly, Washington's relations with its adversaries and allies, including economic and trade relations, were to be restructured so as to eliminate unwarranted burdens compromising America's industrial base and US workers' salaries and living standards. To return to the grandeur of past eras of American greatness, Trump sought to consummate a break with the policies of his predecessors and breach the underlying bipartisan consensus sustaining them. This approach was president Trump's lodestar as he navigated the contingencies of his four-year mandate.

Candidate Trump's views relative to the challenges facing the United States were not entirely unprecedented. They had, in effect, been foreshadowed by Pat Buchanan's 1990s insurgent campaigns for the GOP presidential nomination.¹¹³ During that decade, 'Pitchfork Pat' and the 'Buchanan Brigades' declared open war on the nation's cultural and political establishments, their world-view and the policies sustaining the bipartisan foreign policy consensus. Announcing his candidacy in New Hampshire, in early December 1991, Buchanan brazenly challenged a sitting president generally lauded for his management of the unwinding of the Cold War and the subsequent dismemberment of the Soviet Union. Entering the race ten weeks before the scheduled primary vote, Buchanan characterized George H.W. Bush as a "globalist" and claimed that the "first challenge we face, then, is economic, presented by the rise of a European super state and a dynamic Asia led by Japan. The 20th Century was the American Century, but they intend to make the 21st, the century of Europe or the century of Asia".¹¹⁴ Concluding

112 Cf. Cary C. Jacobson, "The Triumph of Polarized Partisanship in 2016: Donald Trump's Improbable Victory", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 132, No. 1, 2017, pp. 9-41.

113 Pat Buchanan's ideas are developed in various books and articles. See, for example, Patrick J. Buchanan. *The Great Betrayal: How American Sovereignty and Social Justice Are Being Sacrificed to the Gods of the Global Economy*. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1998; Patrick J. Buchanan. *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002; Patrick J. Buchanan. *State of Emergency. The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006; and Patrick J. Buchanan. *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?* New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011. On the impact of *buchananism* in American politics, cf., Timothy Stanley. *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012.

114 Of President Bush, Buchanan said: "George Bush served bravely in America's great war. He is a man of graciousness, honor, and integrity, who has given half a lifetime to his nation's service. But the differences between us now are too deep. He is yesterday and we are tomorrow. He is a globalist and we are nationalists. He believes in some *Pax Universalis*; we believe in the Old Republic. He would put America's wealth and power at the service of some vague New World Order; we will put America first. So, to take my party back and take our country back, I am today declaring my candidacy for the Republican nomination for the President of the United States". See, "A Crossroads in Our Country's History", New Hampshire State Legislative Office Building, December 10, 1991. The full text of the speech is available at: <http://www.4president.org/speeches/buchanan1992announcement.htm>.

that Americans “must not trade in our sovereignty for a cushioned seat at the head table of anyone’s New World Order”, Buchanan called for a renewed patriotism placing the needs of Americans first “in every negotiation, be it arms control or trade”, making it plain that “the American side seeks advantage and victory for the United States”¹¹⁵.

Unveiling the slogan ‘Make America First Again’, Buchanan mercilessly lashed out against GOP orthodoxy on trade, immigration and foreign military interventionism. Speaking on behalf of “forgotten Americans” victimized by prejudicial trade deals, open-border immigration and foreign military adventures, Buchanan appealed to the “people of this country” to “recapture our capital city from an occupying army of lobbyists, and registered agents of foreign powers hired to look out for everybody and everything except the national interest of the United States”.¹¹⁶ Anticipating a crucial *trumpian* theme, Buchanan demanded to know why the US should “be required to carry indefinitely the full burden of defending rich and prosperous allies who take America’s generosity for granted as they invade our markets?”¹¹⁷. This populist, anti-establishment message seduced 37% of New Hampshire voters and the candidacy – urging the party faithful to “take back” the country from the cultural influence of liberals, secularists and multiculturalists – went on to amass nearly 3 million votes as it pursued its crusade against president Bush.

Albeit less successfully, Pat Buchanan revisited these exact same themes in 1996. Deriding the nation’s political class, he set out to dispute the GOP nomination with establishment hopefuls Bob Dole and Phil Gramm. His unapologetic nationalist rhetoric and social conservatism resonated with the party base and, as a result, he placed first in Alaska’s January 29 nonbinding straw poll. A week later, in the Louisiana caucus, the first official contest of the primary season, Buchanan’s electoral insurgency overpowered Gramm, a native of neighboring Texas. More importantly, in the crucial Iowa caucuses, Buchanan lost to Bob Dole by a mere three percentage points and, one week later, managed to wrangle a stunning one-point victory over Dole in New Hampshire. However, the celebrations would be ephemeral as Buchanan went on to win just one more primary state. Marshaling significant resources, the party establishment successfully defused the populist uprising and Bob Dole went on to be anointed as the Republican standard-bearer against the incumbent Bill Clinton.

Four years later, Buchanan broke with the Republicans to pursue the nomination of the Reform Party, created in 1995 by prickly Texas businessman Ross Perot after his unsuccessful 1992 independent bid for the presidency.¹¹⁸ Perot’s intromission into the 1992 contest, and his presence on the debate stage with the Republican and Democrat nominees provided him with a ready-made national audience for his populist, free

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 On Ross Perot, the 1992 race for the White House and its consequences, see, Ronald B. Rapoport and Walter J. Stone. *Three’s a Crowd: The Dynamic of Third Parties, Ross Perot, and Republican Resurgence*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008.

enterprise, anti-free trade views. Obtaining a remarkable 18.9% of the popular vote, Perot deprived George Bush of the presidency and allowed Bill Clinton to enter the Oval Office. In 2000, much to Donald Trump's consternation, Buchanan succeeded in winning the Reform nomination, but his November showing – fewer than 500,000 votes nationwide – was an undisguisable disappointment. Buchanan did, however, gather 3,407 votes in Palm Beach County, Florida, a state ultimately won by George W. Bush by a slim margin of 537 votes. In an ironic twist of fate, George W. Bush took the White House with the unintended aid of the same man that had challenged and weakened politically his father in 1992. Yet, in a more fundamental sense, the Republican Party, and the American right as a whole, was profoundly transformed by the three Buchanan insurgencies, whose core ideas were rehabilitated by Trump a generation later.

1.3. A Normal Country

Donald Trump maintained that the core function of the American state resided in the maximization of the physical and material welfare of its citizens.¹¹⁹ No other policy goal was achievable unless the state was successful as a security provider; that is, the primary function of the state was to assure the physical safety of the homeland and foment economic prosperity. During his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Trump succinctly declared that the “most basic duty of government is to defend the lives of its own citizens. Any government that fails to do so is a government unworthy to lead”¹²⁰. There was nothing particularly singular or novel about this understanding of the state's role and responsibilities. Basically, Trump envisioned a “normal” state defining and pursuing a set of relatively limited national interests. It was also plain that such a view marked a radical departure from the assumptions underlying American foreign policy in the post-World War II period. After 1945, Democrats and Republicans, to a lesser or greater degree, subscribed to Madeleine Albright's conception of the United States as the “indispensable nation” because Americans “stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us”.¹²¹ This rather crude exceptionalist understanding of the country, its international

119 Cf., Ian Hanchett, “Trump: Federal government's top three functions are security, healthcare, and education”, *Breitbart*, March 29, 2016. Consulted at: <http://www.breitbart.com/video/2016/03/29/trump-federal-governments-top-three-functions-are-security-healthcare-and-education>.

120 See, “Donald Trump's complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-convention-speech-transcript-20160721-snap-htmlstory.html>.

121 See, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Interview on NBC-TV “The Today Show” with Matt Lauer, Columbus, Ohio, February 19, 1998, As released by the Office of the Spokesman U.S. Department of State, available at: <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/980219a.html>. See, also, Madeleine Albright. *Madame Secretary: A Memoir*. New York: Miramax Books, 2003; and Thomas W. Lippman. *Madeleine Albright and the New American Diplomacy*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

role and responsibilities clashed with Trump's limited view of the state and America's global obligations. Trump's America would, in sum, cease to define itself as a "crusader state" seeking to remake the world in its own image.¹²²

While Trump's notion of a "normal state" pursuing vital national interests constituted a departure from decades of US foreign policy, it is equally true that his approach harkened to an earlier and much forgotten pre-Cold War tradition of American statecraft. In his influential *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine called for rebellion and independence for an America where humankind could "begin the world over again" by creating a new political community.¹²³ Paine's vision guided the Founders as they fashioned new republican institutions. In the dawning years of the formative republic, in his 'Farewell Address', George Washington famously advised his countrymen to forgo "permanent alliances" since the "great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connexion as possible"¹²⁴. America's third president, Thomas Jefferson was no less adamant in recommending "(P)ease, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations – entangling alliances with none"¹²⁵. Similarly, John Quincy Adams cautioned against the temptation to go "abroad in search of monsters to destroy"¹²⁶. These were prudent warnings made during the first years of the new republic by seasoned revolutionaries *cum* statesmen wary of venturing beyond their ill-defined, porous and insecure borders.

Even though the Founders discouraged foreign adventures, exceptionalism was deeply ingrained in the country's remotest political traditions¹²⁷. Puritan settlers imbued with the spirit of moral certitude conceived a "new Jerusalem", a "city on a hill" acting as

122 See, *inter alia*, Walter A. McDougall. *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin Harcourt, 1997; and Tony Smith. *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

123 The full quote is as follows: "We have it in our power to begin the world again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the events of a few months". A digital copy of *Common Sense* is available at: <http://pinkmonkey.com/dl/library1/sense.pdf>.

124 See "Transcript of President George Washington's Farewell Address (1796), consulted at: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=15&page=transcript>.

125 See, Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801, available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp.

126 See, John Quincy Adams, "An Address Celebrating the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1821", available at: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/speech-on-independence-day/>.

127 Said to have originated with Alexis De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, the term "American Exceptionalism" denotes the idea that the United States is unique in its origins, historical development, and, most important, distinct religious and political institutions. See, for instance, Seymour M. Lipset. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-edged Sword*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996. Politically, it suggests that American commitment to liberty, democracy and markets makes it distinct, as expressed, for example, in Reagan's "shining city on the hill". The notion of American exceptionalism in foreign policy suggests that the US rejects power politics and liberal values. See, Stanley Hoffmann, "The American Style: Our Past and Our Principles", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1968, pp. 362-376.

a beacon for the rest of the world.¹²⁸ In a similar vein, Abraham Lincoln, in his December 1862 Annual Message to Congress, upheld the union as the “last, best hope of earth”¹²⁹. Exceptionalism in the form of Manifest Destiny drove rogues, adventurers and pioneers westward to conquer the frontier and extend American virtue and institutions to the new, recently acquired territories.¹³⁰ Venturing outside of the nation’s borders, commercial traders and Protestant missionaries likewise disseminated their rather singular views of God and country throughout the four corners of the globe.¹³¹ Exceptionalism was also embedded in the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed by Washington to shield the new state from European encroachment and to carve out a hemispheric sphere of influence. Formally defensive in nature, the doctrine was a means of averting the intrusion of European great power rivalry into the Western Hemisphere and, thus, was understood as a vehicle for reducing the likelihood of the United States being drawn into unwanted wars.¹³²

After the 1898 Spanish-American war, US global expansion took a new turn as Washington’s political class wrestled with the fate of the colonial possessions inherited from Spain.¹³³ Imperialists insisted that the country’s interests were best served by assuming sovereignty over Spain’s lost colonies¹³⁴. In particular, the Philippines were identified as an indispensable military base for projecting power in the region and as the key trading *entrepôt* for American commercial interests in Asia. Imperialists also contended that Europeans would colonize the islands if the archipelago was not retained, as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Fearing that direct control of the Philippines repudiated the

128 The expression “shining city on a hill” is frequently used in conservative political discourse and is usually associated with Ronald Reagan. However, in his sermon, John Winthrop actually said “we will be as a city on a hill”. The nuance is not irrelevant. See, John Winthrop, “Dreams of a City on a Hill, 1630”, available at: <https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/colliding-cultures/john-winthrop-dreams-of-a-city-on-a-hill-1630/>. For a discussion, see, Daniel T. Rodgers. *As a City on a Hill: The Story of America’s Most Famous Lay Sermon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

129 See, President Abraham Lincoln’s Second Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862, available at: <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/sotu/lincoln.html>.

130 See, Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”, 1893, available at: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf>. Also, Wilbur R. Jacobs, “National Frontiers, Great World Frontiers, and the Shadow of Frederick Jackson Turner”, *The International History Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1985, pp. 261-270; and Martin Ridge, “The Life of an Idea: The Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis”, *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1991, pp. 2-13. For a revisionist understanding, see, William Appleman Williams, “The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1955, pp. 379-395.

131 For an interesting overview, cf., Mark R. Amstutz. *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

132 See, Jay Sexton. *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2011; and Kori Schake. *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 39-58.

133 See, H. Wayne Morgan. *America’s Road to Empire: The War with Spain and Overseas Expansion*. New York: Wiley, 1965; and Ernest R. May. *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1961.

134 Walter A. McDougall. *Promised Land, Crusader State*, pp. 111-121.

reasons that had legitimized the war against the Spanish, the anti-imperialist camp urged the United States to remain faithful to its core values and thus promote independence and self-determination for all peoples of the world.¹³⁵ Ultimately, the Senate annexed the Philippines, a decision that drove Emilio Aguinaldo to embark on a decades-long campaign to expel the American occupier.¹³⁶

Victory over Spain induced President William McKinley, Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of State John Hay to proclaim their Open Door Policy in the Far East.¹³⁷ The policy remained unacknowledged by the European powers until the US committed troops to assist France, Germany, and England in quelling China's Boxer Rebellion.¹³⁸ Once the Boxers were squashed, the powers relented and conceded American access to the coveted Chinese market. At the same time, closer to home, influence in Central America was extended and consolidated as president Theodore Roosevelt set out to fulfill Washington's dream of a canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. To that end, Roosevelt offered the Colombian government ten million dollars for a 100-year lease on Panama. When Bogotá refused the proposal, the president secretly underwrote a Panamanian independence uprising. Victorious rebels proclaimed a sovereign republic on 3 November 1903 and, two weeks later, on November 18, signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla treaty and subsequently authorized the American construction of the Panama Canal.¹³⁹

As is well known, Theodore Roosevelt enthusiastically adhered to the proverb 'speak softly and carry a big stick, and you will go far'. As the United States amassed considerable naval capacity and utilized its pristine Great White Fleet to project power to the four corners of the globe, American imperialism became ascendant. In the immediate neighborhood, the president was not one to shy away from brandishing the Big Stick as the occasion demanded.¹⁴⁰ A propitious occasion arose when European

135 See, Robert L. Beisner. *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968; and E. Berkeley Tompkins. *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970.

136 On the Philippine-American War, see, Stanley Karnow. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. New York: Random House, 1989; Brian McAllister Linn. *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000; and David J. Silbey. *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2007.

137 Secretary of State Hay proposed an "open market" for all merchants trading in China, irrespective of nationality and called upon Great Britain, France, Japan, Germany and Russia to refrain from establishing colonies in China. Upon the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion, Hay, on 3 July 1900, circulated another note to the powers, calling for respect for the "territorial and administrative integrity" of China. The rebellion was not to be used by the powers as a pretext for "carving up" China into colonies. The Open Door policy exposed the limits inherent to America's foreign policy because Washington lacked adequate military resources to enforce its interests in China. See, Robert B. Zoellick. *America in the World. A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*. New York: Twelve, 2020, pp. 97-111.

138 On this matter, see, David J. Silbey. *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*. New York Hill and Wang, 2012.

139 James F. Vivian, "The 'Taking' of the Panama Canal Zone: Myth and Reality", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1980, pp. 95-100.

140 See, Fareed Zakaria. *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1998.

powers seeking to collect debts owed by Latin American states threatened, in violation of the Monroe Doctrine, military action against the delinquent debtors and, thereby, sparked the Venezuela and Santo Domingo crises. Roosevelt reacted to these European encroachments in America's backyard by delineating the 1905 Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaiming that it was incumbent upon the United States to right the "wrongdoings" of Western Hemisphere countries.¹⁴¹ Washington thus proclaimed itself as the ultimate arbiter and guarantor of regional stability; in short, the United States embraced hegemony over the Americas, but continued to tread lightly when it came to Europe, the heart of the international balance of power system. Relative weakness convinced the United States to maintain a prudent distance from a continent whose traditional powers were being challenged by an emerging Wilhelmitic Germany.

America's legacy of aloofness from European affairs was discarded when Woodrow Wilson, an anti-imperialist eager to distance himself from the foreign policy of his immediate predecessors, entered the Great War to "make the world safe for democracy". At the Versailles Conference, Wilson sought to reorder the Europe-centric international system in accordance with the principles of self-determination, collective security and democracy enshrined in his Fourteen Points.¹⁴² The results obtained by the former Princeton professor at the Paris Conference were mixed, but the ailing president was dealt a expressive political defeat in 1920 when, after 55 days of acrimonious debate led by Henry Cabot Lodge – the patrician Republican Massachusetts Senator vehemently opposed to Article Ten of the League Covenant requiring all League members to come to the aid of any other member-state under attack –, the Senate refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty and League of Nations membership¹⁴³. The decision to retrench from Europe precipitated two more decades of relative isolation from continental great power politics and the tragic consequences that it engendered.¹⁴⁴

Adolf Hitler's September 1939 invasion of Poland shattered Europe's precarious peace and, in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the Second World War against the Axis powers. Once hostilities came to a close in 1945, American disengagement became impossible to sustain in the face of Soviet expansionism and the undoing of Europe's balance of power. Even the victorious European nations –

141 See, Matthias Maass, "Catalyst for the Roosevelt Corollary: Arbitrating the 1902–1903 Venezuela Crisis and Its Impact on the Development of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2009, pp. 383-402; Cyrus Veaser, "Inventing Dollar Diplomacy: The Gilded-Age Origins of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2003, pp. 301-326; and Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony*, Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 146-182.

142 See, Patricia O'Toole. *The Moralists: Woodrow Wilson and the World He Made*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018; Margaret MacMillan. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2003; and Tony Smith. *Why Wilson Matters: The Origin of American Liberal Internationalism and its Crisis Today*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 87-94.

143 See, Waldo W. Braden, "The Senate debate on the League of Nations, 1918-1920: An overview", *The Southern Speech Journal*, Vol. 25, No.4, 1960, pp. 273-281. Senator Lodge's views are to be found in Henry Cabot Lodge. *The Senate and the League of Nations*. Farmington Hills: Gale, 2013.

144 See, E. H. Carr. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*. New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2016.

in particular, France and Britain – emerged utterly exhausted from the conflagration and were manifestly incapable of conserving their respective international roles and responsibilities.¹⁴⁵ Freedom for India in 1947 foreshadowed the dismantlement of the remaining European global empires. Centuries-old empires were rolled back as Holland, France and Great Britain reluctantly ceded independence to their prized colonial possessions. The crumbling of empire was not an exclusively European phenomenon. In the Far East, Imperial Japan's unconditional surrender and Mao Zedong's 1949 civil war triumph over Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Guomintang created a security vacuum that could only be filled by either the United States or the Soviet Union. Checking Soviet power in Asia required the containment of communist influence in Europe, where Joseph Stalin's Red Army, occupying the eastern half of the continent, had established formidable facts on the ground.¹⁴⁶ Stalin's incontrovertible realities obliged the United States to fashion a post-war security order designed to contain the Soviet Union and secure America's newfound wealth and power. An "empire by invitation" was thus founded in Western Europe.¹⁴⁷

Erroneously characterized as an altruistic undertaking, the American-dominated post-1945 international order consolidated US leadership through a panoply of norms, institutions and, for the first time in the nation's history, institutionalized multilateral alliances – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).¹⁴⁸ Washington's power and influence were extended to Europe and Asia through newly fashioned multilateral mechanisms enshrining American values and amiable to US interests. In exchange, for it was indeed nothing short of a grand bargain, the United States assumed asymmetrical burdens in terms of blood and treasure. The US market was made accessible to friendly nations undergoing economic recovery and American security commitments were bolstered by military forces deployed to a web of bases spanning the globe. Assuming the role of global hegemon, what G. John Ikenberry terms a "liberal Leviathan", the United States promoted international peace, stability and prosperity by way of free trade, multilateral institutions and liberal

145 For an insightful analysis, see, Mark Mazower. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998, pp. 41-75.

146 See, George Kennan (X), "The sources of Soviet conduct", *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 26, No. 2, 1947, pp. 566-582. On George Kennan's contribution to the "containment doctrine", see, for instance, David Mayers. *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

147 See, Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1986, pp. 263-277, available at: <https://www.ies.be/files/private/17%20Lundestad%20-%20Empire%20by%20Invitation.pdf>. An interesting take on this issue can be found in Thomas F. Madden's *Empires of Trust*. Madden argues that, like republican Rome, the contemporary United States is an "empire of trust" exercising control over other polities through a mutual understanding of how power is to be used. Restraint and responsibility are the shared presuppositions. Similarities between the the United States and Rome – culture, self-image, and national character – led, in both cases, to their dominance. See, Thomas F. Madden. *Empires of Trust: How Rome Built – and America Is Building – a New World*. New York: Dutton, 2008.

148 See, Stephen E. Ambrose. *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

norms.¹⁴⁹ All gained from the liberal order, but the United States gained most of all as it consolidated its power and international leadership.¹⁵⁰

By the time Donald Trump began his campaign to conquer the White House, the international liberal order had become an object of broad public disenchantment. As a matter of fact, it is not excessive to posit that Trump's appeal stemmed precisely from his narrow understanding of US national interests evoking an earlier time when the United States was a "normal country" unencumbered by vast international commitments. Walter Russell Mead's description of a 'Jacksonian' nationalist-populist tradition in US politics captures the essence of Trump's foreign policy lineage. Rooted in president Andrew Jackson's broad political outlook and *praxis*, the approach encompasses a vigorous ethno-nationalism, virulent anti-elitism and a robust commitment to the values prevalent in the American folk community.¹⁵¹ In an anarchical world populated by rival states and a "ruthless, formidable enemy abroad with a fifth column in the United States", the country survived and prospered only to the extent that it remained "vigilant and armed"¹⁵². Force however was to be used in a judicious fashion to uphold vital interests and geostrategic advantage rather than to attain objectives of a secondary, non-vital nature such as nation-building and democracy promotion. Because benefits from development and trade are unequally distributed, international relations are understood by Jacksonians as a competitive, zero-sum undertaking. American blue-collar workers whose manufacturing jobs were so readily outsourced to developing states by denationalized corporations driven exclusively by profit maximization in a globalized economy soon emerged as the most penalized sector of US society. In a world of rationalization, downsizing and integrated supply chains, and with competitors, adversaries and enemies determined to weaken or overturn entirely American hegemony, the sole response was to build overwhelming military strength and pursue an 'America First' agenda.

Trump's Jacksonian reading of the national interest meant that substantive threats to US security were not to be found in the wreckage of failed Middle Eastern states, the barren mountains of Afghanistan nor in the remote villages of Crimea and South

149 See, G. John Ikenberry. *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

150 See, G. John Ikenberry. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; and Daniel Immerwahr. *How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States*. London: Bodley Head, 2019.

151 See, Walter Russell Mead. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World*. New York: Knopf, 2001; Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal World Order", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 2, 2017, pp. 2-7; Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy", *The National Interest*, 58, 1999/2000, pp. 5-29. Also, Michael Clarke and Anthony Ricketts, "Donald Trump and American Foreign Policy: The Return of the Jacksonian Tradition", *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2017, pp. 366-379; Tiago Moreira de Sá and Diana Soller. *Donald Trump: o método no caos*. Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2018, pp. 11-46; and Daniel S. Hamilton, "Trump's Jacksonian foreign policy and its implications for European security", *Ulbrief* No. 2, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/butiken/ui-brief/2017/hamilton-ui--brief.-05-23.pdf>.

152 See, Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy", p. 21.

Ossetia¹⁵³. As for the immediate neighborhood, US vital interests were never truly at stake in Haiti or other such “shithole countries” in need of national reconstruction. Said differently, core national interests were not synonymous with policing the remotest corners of the globe nor with nation-building endeavors favored by the foreign policy establishment.¹⁵⁴ Although Trump was severely criticized for his reference to “shithole countries”, nothing suggests that his electoral base was offended by a remark that, however improper, expressed the president’s conviction that Washington need not immerse itself in every one of the planet’s conflicts. Neither did Trump subscribe to the existence of a broad, universal human interest. Much less to the view that the US must act to safeguard universal human rights in far-flung lands. Again, in this respect, Trump’s world-view was not especially novel since such a focus on national citizenship and the concomitant disavowal of “duties beyond borders” were mainstays of the Westphalian international system and of the Jacksonian tradition.¹⁵⁵ The future was, for Trump, remarkably similar to the pre-1945 world that the United States had boldly set out to remake decades before.

1.4. Dynamiting the Swamp Consensus

Because establishment policies undermined national security, Washington was seen by Donald Trump as an irremediably corrupt political “swamp” in need of “draining”¹⁵⁶. National elites, particularly those finding a home in the Democratic Party, had pursued immigration policies that, directly or indirectly, were undoing America’s social fabric as the party attempted to fashion a multicultural society at odds with the fundamental values of state and society. As a result, deep social and political cleavages had arisen compromising the country’s unity, patriotism and sense of purpose. Controversial it may have been, but this interpretation of recent American political history underpinned the intense animosity to open borders and undocumented immigration voiced by Trump and the social coalition backing his bid for office. Rather than viewing Trump’s immigration policy through the lens of racism, it is therefore more accurate to consider it through the prism of traditional views of citizenship and state responsibilities.

President Trump’s narrow views regarding the role of the state and immigration rested squarely upon the premise that the allocation of finite resources was meant to ensure the improvement of US nationals’ life chances, particularly those of the less

153 See, Bob Woodward. *Fear: Trump in the White House*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018, pp. 124-128.

154 Trump broke with the *clintonite* view of nation-building prevalent in the 1990s. Roland Paris notes that nation-building translated into political liberalization and the creation of market economies. The fundamental aim was to shift political conflicts to the arena of electoral competition rather than having them resolved by civil war. Markets, in turn, would create peace through prosperity. See, Roland Paris. *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

155 See, Stanley Hoffmann. *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Relations*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981.

156 See, Susan B. Glasser, “Trump Takes on the Blob”, *Politico*, March / April 2017, consulted at: <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/03/trump-foreign-policy-elites-insiders-experts-international-relations-214846>.

privileged blue collar workers adversely impacted by a globalization process commanded by “cosmopolitan elites”¹⁵⁷. Undocumented immigration, he argued, placed downward pressure on the most vulnerable workers, as attested to by the prolonged stagnation of real wages in the United States. This point was emphasized during Trump’s acceptance speech to the GOP National Convention, when he explained that “(D)ecades of record immigration have produced lower wages and higher unemployment for our citizens, especially for African-American and Latino workers. We are going to have an immigration system that works, but one that works for the American people”¹⁵⁸. Controlling the nation’s borders – synonymous with stemming the tide of undocumented immigration – was therefore an essential component of the president’s strategy for inverting American decline.¹⁵⁹

The argument for hard borders was reiterated during a September 2017 speech delivered by the president to the United Nations General Assembly, where he claimed that “over the long term, uncontrolled migration is deeply unfair to both the sending and the receiving countries. For the sending countries, it reduces domestic pressure to pursue needed political and economic reform, and drains them of the human capital necessary to motivate and implement those reforms. For the receiving countries, the substantial costs of uncontrolled migration are borne overwhelmingly by low-income citizens whose concerns are often ignored by both media and government”¹⁶⁰. Stated in these terms, the anti-immigration argument was economic and cultural, but also openly dismissive of the proposition that “human security” and “global governance” schemes made the modern nation-state superfluous. This perspective, in turn, justified the building of border security “walls” and drove populist repudiation of an internationalist foreign policy deemed to be exceedingly lax on illegal immigration.

Undocumented immigration mobilized a base intensely hostile to political correctness, identity politics, wokeness, censure culture and, as a corollary, policies promoting diversity. Trump’s base of support generally believed that the national elites’ embrace of ethnic, racial, gender and other identities amounted to a concerted assault on the country’s “Anglo-Saxon” origins and traditions. Popularly labeled as “white culture”, the values, heritage and traditions of a substantial part of the country appeared to be the sole ethno-linguistic patrimony that the proponents of “diversity” were unwilling

157 Candidate Trump, in his “Phoenix speech”, outlined the fundamental elements of his immigration policy. See, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech”, *The New York Times*, September 1, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/politics/transcript-trump-immigration-speech.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

158 See, “Donald Trump’s complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-convention-speech-transcript-20160721-snap-htmlstory.html>.

159 Cf., “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech”, *The New York Times*, op. cit.

160 See, The White House, “Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, September 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>.

to celebrate.¹⁶¹ Rather, “white America” became synonymous with the exclusion of a socioeconomic “lower class” whose pedestrian, low-brow culture and tastes were, in the words of Barack Obama, marked by a “clinging to guns and religion”¹⁶². Portrayed as ignorant and culturally backward, white working-class Americans were assigned collective responsibility for most if not all of the social ills and the injustices perpetuated throughout the nation’s history. Convinced the Democrat party had been the main driver of this narrative, Trump’s supporters set out to reaffirm their particular group values and identity.¹⁶³

Republican distrust of Democrat intentions ran deep because, since the late 1960s, the party had ostensibly assembled an electoral coalition encompassing minorities and “alternative” social movements. As the new progressive coalition congealed, the white, unionized working class – a pivotal pillar of the Democrat coalition forged by Franklin Roosevelt during the New Deal – began to desert the party. The era of civil rights allowed the GOP to make electoral inroads in southern states that, since Reconstruction, had been solidly Democratic. To offset the losses in the Deep South provoked by the GOP’s “southern strategy”, Democrats were forced to shore up support amongst

161 On this issue, see, for example, Reihan Salam, “White Fright: Does Donald Trump represent the ascendancy of white nationalism on the American right?”, *Slate*, 4 September 2015, consulted at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/09/donald_trump_and_white_nationalism_does_the_candidate_s_rise_represent_the.ht.

162 Barack Obama’s controversial remarks were as follows: “You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing’s replaced them. And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate and they have not. And it’s not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations”. See, Mayhill Flower, “Obama: No Surprise That Hard-Pressed Pennsylvanians Turn Bitter”, *Huffington Post*, November 17, 2008, consulted at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obama-no-surprise-that-ha_b_96188.

163 See, Robert D. Francis, “Him, Not Her: Why Working-class White Men Reluctant about Trump Still Made Him President of the United States”, *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, Vol. 4, 2018, pp. 1–11, available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2378023117736486>. Also of interest are: Joshua Holland, “Stop Obsessing over White Working-class Voters”, *Rolling Stone*, November 16, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/stop-obsessing-over-white-working-class-voters-107707/>; Michael Tesler and John Sides, “How Political Science Helps Explain the Rise of Trump: The Role of White Identity and Grievances”, *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/03/how-political-science-helps-explain-the-rise-of-trump-the-role-of-white-identity-and-grievances/>; Andrew J. Cherlin, “The Downwardly Mobile for Trump”, *The New York Times*, August 25, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/opinion/campaign-stops/the-downwardly-mobile-for-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>; and Nate Cohn, “Why Trump Won: Working-class Whites”, *The New York Times*, November 9 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/upshot/why-trump-won-working-class-whites.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

ethnic minorities in the northern cities.¹⁶⁴ However, the 1968 elections demonstrated how terribly fragile the Democrat coalition had become as Richard Nixon successfully appealed to white working class patriotism, law and order and conservative values.¹⁶⁵ Nixon's message resonated with a significant part of the "white working class", which, once again, defected to the Republicans in 1972 after George McGovern moved the party sharply to the left. McGovern's rainbow coalition of minorities and anti-Vietnam War activists was victorious in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, leaving Richard Nixon free to sweep the rest of the country and the White House.¹⁶⁶

Chastened by McGovern's dismal failure, the Democrats nominated a moderate, religious former Georgia governor as their 1976 presidential standard-bearer. With the GOP reeling from the fallout of the Watergate scandal that brought asunder the Nixon presidency in 1974, Democrats regained working class voters and made considerable inroads in the south. A native son of Georgia and a devout Southern Baptist, Jimmy Carter, running as a political outsider, comforted blue collar voters enticed by George Wallace's nativist, "law and order" populism.¹⁶⁷ However, the Democrat victory would be fleeting since Jimmy Carter's disastrous presidency paved the road for a revitalized conservative movement under Ronald Reagan's leadership.¹⁶⁸ Attracted by an optimistic message of national renewal, a significant number of those conservative, blue-collar white voters flocked back to the GOP and remained there until the 1992 election. That year, Bill Clinton captured the White House after twelve years of Republican rule because his southern roots and outlook, pro-growth economics and centrist politics convinced many "Reagan Democrats" to return to the Democrat party fold. The country's first post-Cold War president, Clinton set out to triangulate politics and establish a new center that, in

164 For the classic statement on the realignment underpinning the southern strategy, see, Kevin Phillips. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. New York: Arlington House, 1969. For a discussion, see, for example, Angie Maxwell. *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Votes in the South Changed America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

165 On the 1968 campaign pitting Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace, see, Michael A. Cohen. *American Maelstrom: The 1968 Election and the Politics of Division*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Richard Nixon won 301 Electoral College votes to Humphrey's 191 and Wallace's 46. Running with the controversial Air Force general Curtis LeMay on the American Independent Party slate, Wallace was the winner in five southern states: Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, obtaining a total of 46 electoral votes. Wallace won 13.5% of the popular vote, over 10 million votes.

166 Richard Nixon was the first Republican to sweep the southern states and his landslide was almost complete. He took 60.7% of the popular vote and won every state except Massachusetts and the District of Columbia. McGovern took just 37.5% of the popular vote, losing to Nixon by almost 18 million votes. This was the largest margin of the popular vote separating the candidates of any post-1945 presidential election. It was also the first presidential election held in the aftermath of the ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment lowering the voting to 18 from 21. On the 1972 race, see, Theodore H. White. *The Making of the President, 1972*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010.

167 See, Dan T. Carter. *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the new Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

168 For a recent, exhaustive treatment of Ronald Reagan's rise, see, Rick Perlstein. *Reaganland: America's Right Turn, 1976-1980*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020.

the realm of foreign policy, produced a robust, enduring consensus resting on free trade, globalization and democratic enlargement.¹⁶⁹

Bill Clinton's centrism forced Republicans to compete for moderate and minority voters, the imperative underpinning George W. Bush's advocacy of an inclusive "compassionate conservatism"¹⁷⁰. Certainly not a populist approach, Bush's pragmatic vision of the party nonetheless constituted a noticeable shift away from the country club republicanism of years past. Yet, as a consequence of the momentous challenges posed by the post-9/11 wars, Bush would preside over a colossal expansion of the federal government manifestly at odds with the GOP's tradition of "small c" conservatism¹⁷¹. At the same time, Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 electoral successes convinced the Democrats that a heterogeneous coalition of minorities and social movements perpetuating party rule into the foreseeable future had ceased to be an unattainable pipedream.¹⁷² Boosters of this strategy pointed out that demographic changes encouraged the formation of a broad, winning electoral coalition congregating African-American, Hispanic, LGBT+,

169 On the Clinton Doctrine, see, *inter alia*, Charles William Maynes, "A Workable Clinton Doctrine", *Foreign Policy*, No. 93, 1993-1994, pp. 3-21; Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine", *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, 1997, pp. 1110-1127; William G. Hyland. *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*. Westport: Praeger, 1999; Samuel R. Berger, "A Foreign Policy for the Global Age", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 6, 2000, pp. 22-39; John Dumbrell, "Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton's Foreign Policy Reconsidered", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2002, 43-56, available at: https://www.ollie-dc.org/uploads/PDFs/2020_Fall/703_Nathan/17-WasThereaClintonDoctrinePresident ClintonsForeignPolicyReconsidered.pdf; and Nicolas Bouchet. *Democracy Promotion as US Foreign Policy: Bill Clinton and Democratic Enlargement*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

170 See, Jesse Norman and Janan Ganesh, "Compassionate Conservatism. What it is, Why we need it", *Policy Exchange*, London, 2006, accessed at: <https://www.policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/compassionate-conservatism-june-06.pdf>; Steven M. Teles, "The Eternal Return of Compassionate Conservatism", *National Affairs*, Fall 2009, available at: <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-eternal-return-of-compassionate-conservatism>; "President George W. Bush on Compassionate Conservatism: A conversation with President George W. Bush", *The Catalyst*, George W. Bush Institute, Issue 12, Fall 2018, available at: <https://www.bushcenter.org/catalyst/opportunity-road/george-w-bush-on-compassionate-conservatism.html>; and Graham Vyse, "Compassionate Conservatism Won't Be Back Anytime Soon", *The New Republic*, March 30, 2018, consulted at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/147694/compassionate-conservatism-wont-back-anytime-soon>.

171 See, Daniel Beland and Alex Waddan, "Taking 'Big Government Conservatism' Seriously? The Bush Presidency Reconsidered", *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 2008, pp. 109-118; Alex Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", In Iwan Morgan and Philip John Davies (eds.). *Assessing George W. Bush's Legacy: The Right Man?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 165-183. For conservative criticism of George W. Bush, see, for instance, Bruce Bartlett. *Imposter: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy*. New York: Doubleday, 2006; and Richard A. Viguerie. *Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other "Big Government" Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause*. Los Angeles, Bonus Books, 2006.

172 See, Ruy Teixeira and John Halpin, "The Obama Coalition in the 2012 Election and Beyond", Center for American Progress, December 2012, available at: https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ObamaCoalition-5.pdf?_ga=2.212933076.1539192833.1617819215-313465897.1587161715.

environmentalist and other progressive forces.¹⁷³ As Democrats stealthily moved away from “working-class concerns” to an “identity politics” sustained by new constituencies, Republicans countered with a narrative of a “real America” betrayed by its urban, cosmopolitan coastal elites. Predictably, a sizable portion of “white America” voters viewed this post-liberal, progressive Democrat project as a barely disguisable attempt to disenfranchise them from “mainstream” society and marginalize them in their own country.¹⁷⁴

Spawned by stagnant blue-collar wages and an increasing income gap, class resentments were compounded by the Democrat party’s agenda of identity politics and wokeness, viewed as an elitist world-view devised in the country’s universities and penetrating the broader society through media and social networks.¹⁷⁵ With the advent of social media, what arguably was once an attempt to alert against unintended offense metastasized into a culture of censure. As a consequence, identity politics came to be understood as an assault on the fundamental beliefs and values of the white working class clinging to its “guns and religion”. Trump’s supporters maintained that the GOP establishment too had acquiesced to the political correction prevalent throughout the Obama years. It mattered little if this interpretation corresponded to reality; the fact of the matter was that such a narrative was absorbed by voters who saw in Trump’s candidacy an unconditional defense of “genuine Americanism”. Imprudently dismissing this section of the voting population as “a basket of deplorables”, Hillary Clinton reinforced the perception that Democrat party elites had definitively turned their backs

173 See, Gary C. Jacobson, “The 2008 Presidential and Congressional Elections: Anti-Bush Referendum and Prospects for the Democratic Majority”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 124, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-30; Robert Newby, “The ‘New Majority’ Defeats White Nationalism? Assessing Issues of Race and Class in the Obama Presidency”, *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2010, pp. 371-386; and Philip J. Davies, “Obama’s Electoral Record: The Emerging Democratic Majority?”, In Edward Ashbee and John Dumbrell (eds.). *The Obama Presidency and the Politics of Change*. Cham: Springer, 2017, pp. 51-65.

174 See, Jerome Karabel, “The Roots of the Democratic Debacle”, *Huffington Post*, December 12, 2016, at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-roots-of-the-democratic-debacle_us_584ec983e4b04c8e2bb0a779.

175 See, Katherine Cramer, “For Years, I’ve Been Watching Anti-elite Fury Build in Wisconsin. Then Came Trump.” *Vox*, November 16, 2016, available at: <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2016/11/16/13645116/rural-resentment-elites-trump>. Derek Thompson writes that: “Initially, political correction configured an attempt to purge sexism and racism from everyday language. Similarly, gun control was intended to resolve a pressing urban problem costing thousands of lives. Both generated profound hostility in those parts of the country where those issues were not of paramount importance. See, Derek Thompson, “Who are Donald Trump’s supporters, really? Four theories to explain the front-runner’s rise to the top of the polls”, *The Atlantic*, March 1, 2016, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/who-are-donald-trumps-supporters-really/471714/>; and Lucian Gideon Conway III, Meredith A. Repke and Shannon C. Houck, “Donald Trump as a Cultural Revolt Against Perceived Communication Restriction: Priming Political Correctness Norms Causes More Trump Support”, *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2017, pp. 244-259, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317217285_Donald_Trump_as_a_Cultural_Revolt_Against_Perceived_Communication_Restriction_Priming_Political_Correctness_Norms_Causes_More_Trump_Support.

on the concerns and aspirations of the “heartland” and of the “common man” castigated by the forces of globalization¹⁷⁶.

Clinton’s callous “basket of deplorables” reference was immediately interpreted as a manifestation of the Democrats’ sense of cultural superiority and disdain for traditionalist America.¹⁷⁷ Such a sign of cultural arrogance, mirroring Obama’s snide “guns and religion” remark, paved the way for Donald Trump to attract and mobilize voters saturated with an out of touch political elite that had led the country to an unmitigated disaster. Violently attacked by this elite, Trump adopted a maximalist, anti-political correctness rhetoric designed to jolt and provoke establishment sensibilities. And the more those elites attacked Trump’s unconventional discourse, the more the culturally alienated gravitated to the Republican candidate. Rather than a source of weakness, the barrage of criticism from the cultural elite – primarily represented by Hollywood and the national media – became a fountain of political strength and generated unwavering loyalty toward the GOP candidate. In this complex *milieu*, Trump effectively emerged as the defender of what scarce political, economic and cultural power the white working class still managed to retain. In swing-states, where the margin separating defeat from victory was slim, the mobilization of the culturally excluded proved decisive for handing the presidency to the GOP.¹⁷⁸

On the eve of Donald Trump’s presidential run, the country – and the Republican Party – had undergone a tremendous change. After four decades, the Reaganite party of free trade, small government, immigration and internationalism evinced profound strains and cleavages. Frequently disparaged by Trump and his supporters as Republicans In Name Only (RINOs), most party elders and officeholders remained faithful to the broad tenants of an outdated small government conservatism. But the signs of a percolating populist rebellion against the GOP establishment proved impossible to contain. George W. Bush’s turn to “compassionate conservatism”, big government, financial bailouts and unending wars fueled profound dissatisfaction with the Republican *status quo*, a sentiment expressed by Sarah Palin’s 2008 vice-presidential campaign and, later, by the

176 See, Amy Chozick, “Hillary Clinton calls many Trump backers ‘deplorables’ and GOP pounces”, *The New York Times*, September 10, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/us/politics/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

177 See, Ben Jacobs, “Hillary Clinton regrets ‘basket of deplorables’ remark as Trump attacks”, *The Guardian*, September 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/10/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-donald-trump>; and Ian Buruma, “Trump’s Deplorables”, *Project Syndicate*, October 6, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/americans-who-support-trump-by-ian-buruma-2016-10>.

178 See, Jim Tankersley, “How Trump won: The revenge of the working-class whites”, *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2016, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/09/how-trump-won-the-revenge-of-working-class-whites/>. Also, Helena Bottemiller Evich, “Revenge of the Rural Voter”, *Politico*, November 13, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/hillary-clinton-rural-voters-trump-231266>; and Chad Shearer, “The Small Town–Big City Split That Elected Donald Trump”, *Brookings Institution*, November 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/11/11/the-small-town-big-city-split-that-elected-donald-trump/>.

emergence of the grassroots Tea Party.¹⁷⁹ That discontentment was extendable to John McCain and Mitt Romney, both viewed by many GOP activists as establishment figures whose ideological waffling led to the loss of winnable presidential races. A new strain of populist Republican politics thus injected a new vigor into a complacent party.

179 On the Tea Party, see, Kate Zernike. *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2010; Jill Lepore. *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010; Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol and John Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2011, pp. 25-43; Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto. *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013; Ronald P. Formisano. *The Tea Party: A Brief History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012; and Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost. *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Part 2: New World Dawning

Buy the ticket, take the ride

Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

Rarely are American elections decided on issues of foreign policy.¹⁸⁰ Genuinely bewildering for anyone living outside of the United States and subject to the global repercussions of US actions in the broader world, this fundamental truth was made explicit by Bill Clinton during his 1992 campaign. Running against a foreign policy president widely lauded for his experience and judgment, Clinton insisted that it was the economy – in James Carville’s celebrated formulation, “it’s the economy, stupid!” – that ultimately determined electoral choices. Even so, Clinton found himself obliged to discuss foreign policy because George Bush’s response to the 1989 Tiananmen massacre had thrust America’s China policy into the presidential race. Bill Clinton reproached Bush for “coddling dictators from Baghdad to Beijing” and accused the sitting president of timidity in confronting the “butchers of Beijing”¹⁸¹. He then pledged that, if elected, future renewals of China’s Most Favored Nation status would be predicated on Beijing’s acceptance of human rights related conditions. Soon after entering the White House, Clinton jettisoned his campaign pledges and embarked on a crusade to incorporate China into the US-led international liberal order.

Bill Clinton’s doctrine of “enlargement” decisively shaped the world that, years later, Donald Trump was determined to refashion because he saw it as having failed the United States and its citizens. Trump may not have possessed a comprehensive knowledge of international affairs, but throughout the decades prior to running for the Republican presidential nomination, he did express a number of long-held convictions about the world and America’s role. According to Trump’s world-view, the root causes of America’s decline were to be found in the globalist policies pursued by past presidents guided by a foreign policy establishment firmly entrenched in both the Democrat and Republican parties.

At the core of that internationalist consensus was a multilateral view of trade expressed through a doctrine of free trade, World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and numerous trade accords entered into by the United States during the previous decades. Critically, China’s entrance into the WTO and the country’s blatant disregard for international trade rules undermined American competitiveness and wrought havoc upon the most vulnerable of America’s workers. The result was a hollowing out of America’s industrial base and an international trade environment extremely averse to US national

180 This is not a new phenomenon in American politics. For context, cf., Stephen Hess, “Politics: Does Foreign Policy Really Matter?”, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 4. No. 1, 1980, pp. 96-112; and Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest (eds.). *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Bill Clinton*. Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 2017.

181 See, James Kirchick, “Dems marching backward on foreign policy”, *Politico*, November 26, 2007, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2007/11/dems-marching-backward-on-foreign-policy-007039>.

interests. This being the case, the immediate foreign policy task was to renegotiate or withdraw from prejudicial trade treaties obstructing a level playing field for American companies and workers. Economic statecraft, including sanctions and tariffs, was to be the mechanism for generating greater balance in international economic relations.

In Trump's conception of the world, no clear line of demarcation separated friend from foe. His transactional, zero-sum understanding of international relations preempted such a distinction. To a large extent, allies were even more threatening because of their duplicitous free-riding on American blood and treasure since the end of the Second World War. If at one time the international liberal order had promoted American prosperity and security, Trump was not convinced that it continued to do so. A number of countries – including European Union states, Japan and Saudi Arabia – had, for decades, benefitted from American security guarantees that they had not paid for. These countries had become prosperous as America's working and middle classes saw their wages stagnate and their tax burdens increase. Inverting US decline therefore meant that friend and foe alike would be forced to refashion their relations with the United States. Only in this manner was it possible to transcend the "national humiliation" decried by Donald Trump and his supporters.

The underlying problem with Donald Trump's argument was that he was essentially proposing a reordering of international affairs by moving away from the norms and institutions of the international liberal order created and perpetuated by past American presidents. Not that Trump was preaching a wholesale restructuring of that order. He was, however, proposing a fundamental change in the way the United States saw itself in the world and the way it dealt with other nations. Abandoning its exceptionalism and "indispensability", America under Trump was to become, once again, a "normal" state. However, there was little European backing for his revisionist project. With the exception of populist governments and parties, American allies were vocal in opposing Donald Trump's efforts to refashion the transatlantic relationship. Indeed, resistance to these changes amassed even before Trump entered the White House.

For all intents and purposes, Europe's paucity of trust in the administration was detectable from the day president Trump set foot in the White House. Remarks relative to NATO's "obsolescence", the undermining of European Union cohesion by welcoming Brexit and assorted threats of economic sanctions, particularly on the German automobile industry, were sure signs of deeper disagreements to come. Trump was particularly belligerent in relation to Germany, all but accusing the chancellor of destroying "European culture" with her 2015 immigration policy. As the campaign unfolded, Trump's radical foreign policy vision became apparent to all, especially since the Republican candidate was uncommonly transparent regarding his intentions. As a matter of fact, his statements provoked vigorous reactions from many European political figures as the campaign unfolded. Trump was obviously on a collision course with the continent's political establishment, but his message was not rebuffed by all. He was embraced by continental populists as an ally against the forces of globalism entrenched in Brussels and in major European capitals. Facing challenges from domestic populist

parties, European elites effectively transformed Trump and his policy proposals into a national political issue. By “nationalizing” *trumpism* to ward off populist insurgencies, Europeans too contributed to the subsequent downturn of transatlantic relations.

2.1. Lifting the Policy Veil

With primary season underway, the time had arrived for Donald Trump to unveil his foreign policy. His first and most comprehensive campaign speech on the matter was delivered on 27 April 2016 during an event sponsored by the Center for the National Interest held at Washington’s Mayflower Hotel. Voicing blunt criticism of Barack Obama’s foreign policy record, the GOP candidate proclaimed that his approach replaced “randomness with purpose, ideology with strategy, and chaos with peace”¹⁸². Said differently, guided by blind ideology and incapable of defining a hierarchy of priorities, Obama’s foreign policy had largely produced chaos and further decline.¹⁸³ Pledging that his foreign policy would “return us to a timeless principle”, Trump outlined a policy direction designed to advance the “interests of the American people, and American security, above all else”¹⁸⁴. Resting on this intransigent pursuit of US vital interests, Trump’s new direction was imperative because, “after the Cold War, our foreign policy veered badly off course. We failed to develop a new vision for a new time. In fact, as time went on, our foreign policy began to make less and less sense... Logic was replaced with foolishness and arrogance, and this led to one foreign policy disaster after another”¹⁸⁵. In other words, hubris had replaced realism, a change accounting for disasters such as the forever wars, the abandonment of Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak to an uncertain fate, the imprudent use of force in Libya to topple Muammar Qaddafi and Obama’s equivocations over the “line in the sand” drawn in the inhospitable Syrian deserts. Attributable directly to the Obama White House, this panoply of strategic blunders “gave ISIS the space it needs to grow and prosper” and, when all was said and done, corroded America’s international credibility and standing.¹⁸⁶

If Trump chose to highlight Obama’s failures, he also conceded that their origin predated the sitting president’s mandate. They, in fact, resided in the bipartisan post-Cold War foreign policy consensus that Obama had willingly and enthusiastically propagated. Driven by exceptionalism, the establishment’s foreign policy had led the United States to embark on costly, disastrous overseas crusades in search of monsters to destroy. According to Trump, it “all began with the dangerous idea that we could make Western democracies

182 See, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Foreign Policy Speech, *The Fiscal Times*, April 27, 2016”, consulted at: <https://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2016/04/28/Transcript-Donald-Trump-s-Foreign-Policy-Speech-April-27-2016>

183 See, Jason A. Edwards, “Make America Great Again: Donald Trump and the redefining of the US role in the World”, op. cit.

184 See, “Transcript of Donald Trump’s Foreign Policy Speech, *The Fiscal Times*, April 27, 2016, op. cit.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western Democracy. We tore up what institutions they had and then were surprised at what we unleashed. Civil war, religious fanaticism; thousands of American lives, and many trillions of dollars, were lost as a result”¹⁸⁷. In effect, Trump was distancing himself from the enlargement strategy defined by Bill Clinton and pursued by all of his successors, including the last GOP president. A visible consequence of enlargement was the overextension of American resources and military capabilities severely weakened by “wasteful spending, massive debt, low growth, a huge trade deficit and open borders...We’re rebuilding other countries while weakening our own”¹⁸⁸. Given the situation at hand, it was necessary to halt the “theft of American jobs” and, in so doing, amass the “resources we need to rebuild our military and regain our financial independence and strength”¹⁸⁹.

America’s strength was also being sapped by free-riding allies that “look at the United States as weak and forgiving and feel no obligation to honor their agreements with us”¹⁹⁰. The allies’ continued refusal to pay a “fair share” of collective security costs meant that “the US must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves” unless the situation was satisfactorily resolved¹⁹¹. Overseas security commitments thus became plainly transactional, dependent on burden-sharing frameworks acceptable to the White House. Concurrent with his denouncement of allied free-riding, Trump suggested that US international leadership was being undone by the perception that the country had ceased to be a predictable, dependable partner. Claiming that president Obama “dislikes our friends and bows to our enemies” because the United States “no longer has a clear understanding of our foreign policy goals”, Trump accused the sitting president of having been insufficiently demanding in his nuclear negotiations with Iran.¹⁹² That weakness was compounded by hostility toward Israel, a traditional friend “snubbed and criticized by an administration that lacks moral clarity”¹⁹³. Obama’s weakness and unreliability, in turn, meant that “our rivals no longer respect us” and, as a result, “think they can get away with anything”¹⁹⁴. Synthetically, he concluded that if “president Obama’s goal had been to weaken America, he could not have done a better job”¹⁹⁵.

Having reached this point, Trump acknowledged that it was incumbent upon Obama’s successor to delineate “a coherent foreign policy based upon American interests, and the shared interests of our allies”¹⁹⁶. A step toward doing so was “getting out of the nation-building business, and instead focusing on creating stability in the world”¹⁹⁷. America’s

187 Ibid.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

mission was not to change the world; it was to manage stability in those regions where national vital interests were in play. A crucial element of this strategic turn in the nation's foreign policy was the containment of radical Islam, which "may require the use of military force". Critically, Trump was of the view that the struggle "also takes place in our homeland" because there "are scores of recent migrants inside our borders charged with terrorism. For every case known to the public, there are dozens more. We must stop importing extremism through senseless immigration policies"¹⁹⁸. Tighter immigration standards, including the polemical "Muslim ban", were therefore seen as components of the broader, ongoing campaign against international terrorism.

Ultimately, national security presupposed the rebuilding of a debilitated military so that US "military dominance must be unquestioned"¹⁹⁹. But since military primacy was, by itself, insufficient to assure the nation's security, "(W)e are also going to have to change our trade, immigration and economic policies to make our economy strong again – and to put Americans first again", a change meant to guarantee that "our own workers, right here in America, get the jobs and higher pay that will grow our tax revenue and increase our economic might as a nation"²⁰⁰. Inverting decline was, first and foremost, premised upon a refashioning of US international economic and trade policies.²⁰¹ Claiming the mantle of presidential leadership, Trump was thoroughly convinced that "I am the only person running for the presidency who understands this problem and knows how to fix it"²⁰². Decline, in short, could only be inverted by Donald Trump's self-proclaimed but as yet untested national leadership.²⁰³

Two months later, in late June 2016, the Mayflower Hotel general foreign policy speech was complemented with a fuller exposition of Donald Trump's views on trade. At a campaign event held in Monessen, Pennsylvania – a hollowed-out industrial city –, Trump effectively dynamited the decades-old bipartisan foreign policy consensus regarding free trade and globalization. His point of departure was that the ostensible surrender of US workers' interests to foreign states constituted nothing less than a "total betrayal" of the American worker by hapless politicians pursuing globalization, a phenomenon characterized by the candidate as "moving our jobs, our wealth and our factories to Mexico and overseas"²⁰⁴. Since Bill Clinton's decision to allow "China's entrance into the World Trade Organization had enabled the greatest job theft in the history of our country", the middle class was "wiped out totally" by a globalization

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 See, Ruchir Sharma, "The Comeback Nation: U.S. Economic Superiority Has Repeatedly Proved Declinists Wrong", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 3, 2010, pp. 70-81

202 See, "Transcript of Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech", *The Fiscal Times*, April 27, 2016, op. cit.

203 Donald Trump was accompanied by seasoned Republicans in arguing for new leadership as a priority. See, for instance, Eliot Cohen, Eric Edelman and Brian Hook, "Presidential Priority: Restore American Leadership," *World Affairs Journal*, Vol. 179, No. 1, 2016, pp. 7-14.

204 See, "Read Donald Trump's Speech on Trade", *Time*, June 28, 2016, available at: <https://time.com/4386335/donald-trump-trade-speech-transcript/>

process making the “financial elite, who donate to politicians, very, very wealthy”²⁰⁵. These Democrat party donors – and Hillary Clinton’s backers in particular – were the same “people who rigged the system” against the American blue-collar worker, the same people bent on preempting his change agenda.

Portrayed as the poster child of the globalized elite, Hillary Clinton was likewise accused of conducting a campaign of “fear” and of endorsing the “lie” that Trump’s approach to trade would “start a trade war” when, in fact, the country already was in “a trade war, and we’re losing badly”²⁰⁶. In conformity with Trump’s conviction that the “negotiation of great trade deals is the quickest way to bring our jobs back to our country”, America’s economic interactions with the world were to be reconfigured through the abandonment of existing trade agreements and, when necessary, by the imposition of tariffs or other restrictions on trade.²⁰⁷ Repeating familiar charges made on the stump, Trump posited that the adoption of a new path was unavoidable since his Democrat rival had brought the US “into a job-killing deal with South Korea” and had “unleashed a trade war against the American worker when she supported one terrible trade deal after another – from NAFTA, to China”²⁰⁸. Succinctly summarizing the problem, he asserted that “NAFTA was the worst trade deal in the history – it’s like – the history of this country”²⁰⁹. Inverting what Trump characterized as nothing less than a national “catastrophe” logically required the immediate overhauling of “two trade deals pushed by Bill and Hillary Clinton” and the cessation of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations.

Donald Trump’s severest criticism was reserved for the TPP because it posed the “greatest danger yet” to the national interest and represented a “death blow for American manufacturing”²¹⁰. His harshest outburst against the TPP had occurred a few weeks earlier during a 6 June 2016 campaign rally in Ohio, when he stressed that the “Trans-Pacific Partnership is another disaster done and pushed by special interests who want to rape our country, just a continuing rape of our country. That’s what it is, too. It’s a harsh word: It’s a rape of our country”²¹¹. The looming danger for national security resided in the likelihood of China entering “the Trans-Pacific Partnership through the back door at a later date”²¹². Hillary Clinton could not be trusted to confront these rising threats because, prior to her decision to come out in opposition to the TPP, she had “praised or pushed the TPP on 45 separate occasions, and even called it the gold standard. Hillary

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid.

211 See, Adam Taylor, “A timeline of Trump’s complicated relationship with the TPP”, *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/04/13/a-timeline-of-trumps-complicated-relationship-with-the-tpp/>.

212 See, “Read Donald Trump’s Speech on Trade”, *Time*, June 28, 2016, op. cit.

Clinton was totally for the TPP just a short while ago”²¹³. For all intents and purposes, Trump was claiming that his rivals’ opportunistic move to distance herself from the proposed treaty was a mere ploy so that “she can rush to embrace it again and she will at the earliest opportunity...ask Hillary if she is willing to withdraw from the TPP her first day in the office and unconditionally rule out its passage in any form”²¹⁴. Pledging to obtain a “fair deal for the American people”, the GOP candidate declared that the “era of economic surrender” overseen by the former Secretary of State and her legion of fellow globalists “will finally be over”²¹⁵. Having reached the conclusion that “there’s no way to fix TPP”, Trump again pledged to withdraw from the negotiations if elected²¹⁶.

Donald Trump’s economic nationalism was rooted in the premise that the nation’s decline was “the consequence of a leadership class that worships globalism over Americanism. This is a direct affront to our Founding Fathers...They wanted this country to be strong. They wanted it to be independent and they wanted it to be free”²¹⁷. Positing that the nation’s globalist foreign policy consensus amounted to a betrayal of the foundational principles of the republic, he went on to underscore that the United States would be neither prosperous nor free while its political class “allowed foreign countries to subsidize their goods, devalue their currencies, violate their agreements and cheat in every way imaginable”²¹⁸. Because such a dire state of affairs made America more “dependent on foreign countries than ever before”, the time had come to emulate the Founders and “declare our economic independence once again”²¹⁹. That is to say, interrupting the vicious spiral of decline demanded an immediate return to enhanced national sovereignty as well as a reduction of taxes, the deregulation of companies smothered by governmental meddling and the castigation of “foreign countries that cheat to export their goods to us tax-free”²²⁰. In the long-term, Trump’s economic sovereignty, deregulation and tax reform program was expected to foster the creation of quality, well-paying jobs at “which we used to be the best in the world and now we’re getting close to the bottom”²²¹.

In contrast to the nationalist agenda for renewal Donald Trump was keen to bring to the White House, a Hillary Clinton victory amounted to a perpetuation of the *status quo*, effectively guaranteeing that “nothing is going to change. The inner cities will remain poor. The factories will remain closed. The borders will remain open. The special interests will remain firmly in control”²²². Having identified the perils accruing from a Democrat presidential triumph, Trump challenged the electorate “to imagine a much better life and

213 Ibid.

214 Ibid.

215 Ibid.

216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 Ibid.

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid.

a life where you can believe in the American dream again”²²³. Reaffirming his faith in the power of individual leadership, he managed to strike an optimistic note by alleging that America’s decline “does not have to be this way. We can turn it around and we can turn it around fast” so long as his seven-step plan to invert deindustrialization and bring jobs back to America was successfully implemented.²²⁴ The candidate’s message was thus one of deliverance, a vision of an alternative national destiny that needed not anchor the country to the gradual but inexorable decline it was traversing under the orientation of the globalists.

Essentially an affirmation of economic sovereignty and the primacy of American trade law, Donald Trump’s seven step plan included withdrawal from TPP negotiations, the appointment of “the toughest trade negotiators to fight on behalf of American workers” and the use of “every tool under American and international law” to undo existing trade abuses. He also promised to “tell our NAFTA partners that I intend to immediately renegotiate the terms of the agreement to get a better deal by a lot”²²⁵. If, perchance, Canada and Mexico resisted the reopening of negotiations, “I will submit under Article 2205 of the NAFTA Agreement that America intends to withdraw from the deal”²²⁶. The remaining points of the plan – 5 through 7 – largely targeted China. Trump pledged to immediately “instruct” his Treasury Secretary to “label China a currency manipulator, which should have been done years ago” and, concomitantly, the US Trade Representative was to open “trade cases against China, both in this country and the WTO” because Beijing’s “unfair subsidy behavior is prohibited by the terms of its entrance into the World Trade Organization and I intend to enforce those rules and regulations”²²⁷. Lastly, Trump warned that unless China ceased its “illegal activities, including its theft of American trade secrets, I will use every lawful presidential power to remedy trade disputes, including the application of tariffs consistent with Section 201 and 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, and Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962”²²⁸. In short, if elected, the Republican would resort to all available policy instruments at his disposal to counter Beijing’s – and the European Union’s – gaming of international trade rules. All of these points would, in one form or another, become official White House policy.

Resorting to such robust economic statecraft was unavoidable because the gaming of international trade rules was facilitated by an ineffectual, “broken” WTO²²⁹. Radical measures were called for precisely because little solace was to be found in unenforceable international trade rules and a WTO Dispute Settlement Body detrimental to US

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

228 Ibid.

229 See, Jacob M. Schlesinger and Alex Leary, “Trump Denounces Both China and WTO”, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 26, 2019, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-presses-wto-to-change-china-s-developing-country-status-11564166423>.

interests since “we give up all of our economic leverage to an international commission that would put the interests of foreign countries above our own. It would further open our markets to aggressive currency cheaters – cheaters, that’s what they are, cheaters”²³⁰. Simply stated, American decline was impossible to invert within the constraints imposed by a multilateral trade regime demarcated by largely inoperative WTO rules and an unworkable dispute mechanism. ‘America First’ economic nationalism and a preference for bilateral ties were thus not to be understood as choices; within an international liberal order no longer amiable to US interests and power, they were, quite simply, national imperatives.

2.2. A Campaign Unlike Any Other

Although Trump’s quest for the 2016 GOP presidential nomination overturned conventional political wisdom, his unorthodox campaign strategy proved to be an indisputable winning formula. From the moment the candidate announced his bid for the nomination, and excluding a brief interlude in early November 2015 when he found himself in a statistical tie with Ben Carson, Trump consistently led the national polls.²³¹ His utterly unpredictable rallies, many of which were broadcast live in their entirety, made for compelling television. Drawing large, rambunctious crowds, Trump launched violent rhetorical assaults against the Democrats, the “fake news media”, the nation’s political establishment and his Republican rivals. “Crooked” Hillary was savaged and, on various occasions, as the crowds chanted “lock her up”, Trump, jokingly or not, appealed to Vladimir Putin to hack her email.²³² Perhaps even more unexpectedly, the billionaire conducted an unceasing scorched earth campaign against the GOP establishment, coining unflattering monikers – ‘Low Energy’ Jeb, ‘Little Marco’ and ‘Lyn’ Ted’ – to belittle and dismiss his rivals. Not even past GOP presidential candidates John McCain and Mitt Romney were spared Trump’s wrath. One month into the campaign, attending a mid July 2015 Christian conservative forum in Ames, Iowa, he asserted that McCain, critical of the New Yorker’s stance on immigration, was “not a war hero” because the Arizona Senator had been wounded and captured after his plane was shot down over North Vietnam in October 1967. Of the former naval pilot who refused early release

230 See, “Read Donald Trump’s Speech on Trade”, *Time*, June 28, 2016, op. cit.

231 See, Real Clear Politics polls at: https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/us/2016_republican_presidential_nomination-3823.html.

232 Donald Trump made the following statement: “I will tell you this, Russia: If you’re listening, I hope you’re able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing”. The candidate’s remarks drew widespread criticism, including from leading Republicans. For instance, although not mentioning Trump specifically, a spokesman for House Speaker Paul Ryan affirmed that “Russia is a global menace led by a devious thug. Putin should stay out of this election”. See, Michael Crowley and Tyler Pager, “Trump urges Russia to hack Clinton’s email”, *Politico*, July 27, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/trump-putin-no-relationship-226282>.

while being held as a prisoner of war for over five years in the infamous Hanoi Hilton, Trump merely demurred that “I like people who weren’t captured”²³³.

Confronted with such a vile attack on the party’s 2008 presidential nominee, Trump’s rivals for the nomination were quick to pounce. Rick Perry retorted that “Donald Trump owes every American veteran and, in particular, John McCain an apology” and recommended he withdraw from the race because his comments made him unfit to be Commander-in-Chief.²³⁴ Lindsey Graham, a close friend of McCain’s, chided Trump for being disrespectful of prisoners of war and, predicting the likely behavior of GOP primary voters, quipped: “Here’s what I think they’re going to say: ‘Donald Trump, you’re fired’”²³⁵. Wisconsin’s Scott Walker, having until then refrained from criticizing Trump, forcibly declared that “I unequivocally denounce him”²³⁶. More contained and refusing to “say something bad about Donald Trump”, Ted Cruz nonetheless made his disagreement plain by acknowledging that McCain was “an American hero”²³⁷. The paradox was that this uncompromising defense of John McCain by GOP senior figures further convinced primary voters that Trump was the sole Republican willing to break with a complacent party establishment whose deference toward Obama plainly inhibited it from combating the president’s despised policy agenda.

Additional controversy loomed on the horizon following the December 2015 San Bernardino *jihadist* shooting, the deadliest terrorist attack on US soil since 9/11²³⁸. During a rally held in South Carolina, Donald Trump called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out

233 See, Jonathan Martin and Alan Rappoport, “Donald Trump Says John McCain Is No War Hero, Setting Off Another Storm”, *The New York Times*, July 18, 2015, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/us/politics/trump-belittles-mccains-war-record.html>.

234 See, Patrick Svitek, “Perry Calls for Trump to Leave Presidential Race”, *The Texas Tribune*, July 18, 2015, available at: <https://www.texastribune.org/2015/07/18/perry-wants-trump-out-presidential-race/>.

235 See, John Hafner, “Donald Trump’s criticism of John McCain sets off a GOP firestorm”, *Des Moines Register*, July 18, 2015, available at: <https://eu.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/elections/presidential/caucus/2015/07/18/trump-slams-mccains-war-hero-status-family-leadership-summit/30343519/>.

236 See, Noah Bierman, “Donald Trump says John McCain ‘not a war hero’; Republican rivals denounce him”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2015, consulted at: <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-trump-mccain-20150718-story.html>

237 See, Jonathan Martin and Alan Rappoport, “Donald Trump Says John McCain Is No War Hero, Setting Off Another Storm”, op. cit.

238 The worst terrorist attack on US soil after 9/11, the “San Bernardino shooting” transpired on December 2, 2015 when Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, a married couple, killed and wounded dozens of people. Self-radicalized, the couple was not part a terrorist group or network. See, Andrew Blankstein and Alastair Jamieson, “San Bernardino Shooters Used Four Guns, Explosive Device: ATF”, *NBC News*, December 3, 2015, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/san-bernardino-shooting/san-bernardino-shooters-used-four-guns-explosive-device-atf-n473286>; and Paloma Esquivel, Louis Sahagún and Richard A . Serrano, “How the massacre in San Bernardino set off a surreal day for hundreds”, *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2015, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/local/crime/la-me-sb-shooting-20151203-story.html>.

what is going on”²³⁹. Unremarkably, the pronouncement drew immediate and widespread condemnation both at home and abroad. Disputing elections with the surging anti-immigration *Front National*, French Socialist Prime-Minister Manuel Valls took to Twitter to state that “Trump, like others, stokes hatred and conflations: our ONLY enemy is radical Islamism”²⁴⁰. Valls thus equated Trump with radical right *Front National* leader Marine Le Pen, considered a neo-fascist by many in France²⁴¹. A particularly outlandish commentary was made by the Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper columnist Chemi Shalev: “the sight of thousands of supporters waving their fists in anger as Trump incited against Muslims and urged a blanket ban on their entry to the United States could have evoked associations with beer halls in Munich a century ago”²⁴². Trump’s position was certainly controversial, but the analogy with Nazi politics was, to say the least, ill-considered. It was also counterproductive since the demonization conveyed by such excessive charges further convinced Trump’s supporters that domestic and foreign elites had effectively abandoned any semblance of impartiality, thus lending credence to Trump’s self-anointment as champion of America’s ostracized “common man”.

At home, the “Muslim ban” was rapidly seized upon by Trump’s political rivals. Perhaps the most contained, Ted Cruz recognized that “that is not my policy” and add that “we need a Commander-in-Chief that perceives what the threat is and that targets all of our resources to protecting this nation against radical Islamic terrorism”²⁴³. Particularly unsympathetic, Lindsey Graham observed that “Donald Trump today took xenophobia and religious bigotry to a new level”²⁴⁴. Clearly exasperated, Jeb Bush simply described his rival as “unhinged”²⁴⁵. The GOP establishment also distanced itself from Trump when

239 See, Jessica Taylor, “Trump Calls For ‘Total And Complete Shutdown Of Muslims Entering’ U.S”, *NPR*, December 7, 2015, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/07/458836388/trump-calls-for-total-and-complete-shutdown-of-muslims-entering-u-s>.

240 See, “Valls attacks Trump for anti-Muslim rhetoric”, *Euro.Islam.Info*, January 4, 2016, consulted at: <https://more.bham.ac.uk/euro-islam/2016/01/04/valls-attacks-trump-for-anti-muslim-rhetoric/>.

241 See, Annie Gowan, “The world reacts to Trump’s proposed ban on Muslims entering the U.S.”, *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2015, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-world-reacts-to-trumps-proposed-ban-on-muslims-entering-us/2015/12/08/50eea1dc-9d4a-11e5-9ad2-568d814bbf3b_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_5. On Le Pen’s party, see, *inter alia*, Valérie Igounet. *Le Front National: de 1972 à nos jours, le parti, les homes, les idées*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2014; Joël Gombin. *Le Front National: va-t-elle diviser la France?* Paris: Wyrolles, 2016; Michel Eltchaninoff. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. London: C. Hurst and Co., 2018; and Jonathan Marcus. *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1995.

242 See, Chemi Shalev, “Trump’s anti-Muslim Outrage Makes Him al-Baghdadi’s Useful Idiot”, *Haaretz*, December 8, 2015, consulted at: <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-trumps-anti-muslim-outrage-makes-him-al-baghdadis-useful-idiot-1.5433757>.

243 See, Patrick Svitek, “Cruz on Trump’s Muslim Ban: Not My Policy”, *The Texas Tribune*, December 7, 2015, accessed at: <https://www.texastribune.org/2015/12/07/cruz-trumps-muslim-ban-s-not-my-policy/>.

244 See, Sabrina Siddiqui and Ben Jacobs, “Trump faces backlash from both parties after call to bar Muslims entering US”, *The Guardian*, December 8, 2015, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/07/donald-trump-muslim-ban-backlash-jeb-bush-chris-christie>.

245 See, Maxwell Tani, “Unhinged: Republicans are slamming Donald Trump’s ‘outrageous’ proposal to stop Muslims from entering the US”, *Business Insider*, December 7, 2015, available at: <https://www.businessinsider.in/Unhinged-Republicans-are-slamming-Donald-Trumps-outrageous-proposal-to-stop-Muslims-from-entering-the-US/articleshow/50084309.cms>.

Speaker Paul Ryan affirmed that “I do not think it is reflective of our principles, not just as a party, but as a country”²⁴⁶. In a similar vein, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called the proposal “completely and totally inconsistent with American values”²⁴⁷. James Mattis, Trump’s future Defense Secretary, remarked that America’s allies would think “we have lost faith in reason”, adding that it “is causing us great damage right now, and it’s sending shock waves through this international system”²⁴⁸. Similarly, Indiana’s Governor, Mike Pence, in an 8 December 2015 tweet, observed that “calls to ban Muslims from entering the US are offensive and unconstitutional”²⁴⁹. Subsequently bowing to political realities, most of these men remained silent or came to support the president’s executive order putting the ban into effect.

As the campaign unfolded and Trump retained his front-runner status in the polls, scions of the Republican establishment publicly distanced themselves from the candidate. As he broke with traditional Republican priorities and policies, leading neoconservatives such as Max Boot and Bill Kristol openly expressed their disdain for the candidate. The former called him “a bully, braggart, and boor”; the latter characterized him as “loathsome”, “a con man”, “a charlatan and a demagogue” whose policy proposals were “soiling the robe of conservatism”²⁵⁰. When Kristol attempted but failed to recruit an independent candidate to confront Trump in the general election, the billionaire labeled him a “loser”, a “dummy” and a “lightweight”²⁵¹. Exercising colossal influence in Republican foreign policy circles, Kristol, Boot and other leading neoconservatives eventually flocked to the “Never Trump” camp and, implicitly or explicitly, endorsed

246 See, Jake Sherman, “Ryan breaks with Trump on Muslim immigrant ban”, *Politico*, June 14, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/ryan-trump-muslim-ban-224312>.

247 See, Deirdre Walsh, Jeremy Diamond and Ted Barrett, “Priebus, Ryan and McConnell rip Trump anti-Muslim Proposal”, *CNN*, December 8, 2015, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/08/politics/paul-ryan-trump-comments-not-who-we-are-as-a-party/>.

248 See, Carla Marinucci, “Ex-military leaders at Hoover Institution say Trump statements threaten America’s interests”, *Politico*, July 15, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2016/07/schultz-top-military-leaders-issue-warning-on-us-leadership-and-trump-103858>; and Bryan Bender and Andrew Hanna, “Trump picks General ‘Mad Dog’ Mattis as defense secretary”, *Politico*, January 12, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/james-mattis-trump-defense-secretary-232077>.

249 For the Pence tweet, see, <https://twitter.com/govpencein/status/674249808610066433>.

250 See, Max Boot, “Trump is a character test for the GOP”, *USA Today*, February 29, 2016, available at: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2016/02/29/trump-tests-republicans-max-boot/81123934/>. For Kristol’s remarks, Michael Crowley, “Last Man Standing”, *Politico Magazine*, July/August 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/2016-bill-kristol-republicans-conservative-movement-donald-trump-politics-214025>.

251 See, Sophie Tatum, “Kristol, Trump trade fresh blows after talk of independent candidate”, *CNN*, May 31, 2016, consulted at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/29/politics/bill-kristol-donald-trump-independent-candidate/index.html>.

Hillary Clinton.²⁵² Significantly, the Bush family maintained a prudent distance from Trump after Jeb Bush withdrew from the race on February 20, 2016. Visibly detached from the electoral contest, presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush refrained from openly criticizing Trump after he obtained the Republican nomination, but neither man endorsed him.²⁵³

The campaign sparked a particularly bitter personal feud between Donald Trump and Mitt Romney that would reach its zenith on March 3, 2016. On that day, in a speech delivered at the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah, the former GOP presidential standard-bearer affirmed that “(D)ishonesty is Donald Trump’s hallmark” and challenged his audience to reflect on “Donald Trump’s personal qualities. The bullying, the greed, the showing off, the misogyny, the absurd third-grade theatrics. Now, imagine your children and your grandchildren acting the way he does”²⁵⁴. Assertive in his judgment, Romney concluded that “Donald Trump is a phony, a fraud” and claimed that his “promises are as worthless as a degree from Trump University”²⁵⁵. A few hours later, during a campaign stop in Portland, Maine, Trump replied that, in 2012, Romney “was begging for my endorsement. I could’ve said, ‘Mitt, drop to your knees,’ and he would’ve dropped to his knees”²⁵⁶. Not one to pass up on the opportunity to have the last word, on June 11 Trump tweeted that “Mitt Romney had his chance to beat a failed president but he choked like a dog”²⁵⁷. Indeed, Trump did have the absolute last word days after the November 8 election when he again took to Twitter to reveal that “Mitt

252 See, Chris Deaton, “Kristol Explains ‘Never Trump’ Argument”, *Washington Examiner*, March 19, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/tag/donald-trump?source=%2Fweekly-standard%2Fkristol-explains-never-trump-argument>. Kristol and Boot were not alone. In a letter signed by 122 self-avowed “members of the Republican national security community”, the signatories concluded that Trump “as president, he would use the authority of his office to act in ways that make America less safe, and which would diminish our standing in the world. Furthermore, his expansive view of how presidential power should be wielded against his detractors poses a distinct threat to civil liberty in the United States. Therefore, as committed and loyal Republicans, we are unable to support a Party ticket with Mr. Trump at its head. We commit ourselves to working energetically to prevent the election of someone so utterly unfitted to the office. The 122 signatories – including Robert D. Blackwill, Daniel A. Blumenthal, Max Boot, Eliot A. Cohen, Chester A. Crocker, Daniel Drezner, Niall Ferguson, Renel Marc Gerech, Robert Kagan, Stephen Krasner, Matthew Kroenig, Daniel Pipes and Kori Schake. See, “Open Letter on Donald Trump from GOP National Security Leaders” *War on the Rocks*, March 2, 2016, available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/open-letter-on-donald-trump-from-gop-national-security-leaders/>.

253 George W. Bush maintained this position in 2020. See, Edward-Isaac Dovere, “What George W. Bush Plans to Do About Trump”, *The Atlantic*, October 16, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/george-w-bush-trump-2020/616713/>.

254 See, “Text: Mitt Romney speech slamming Donald Trump”, *Reuters*, March 3, 2016, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-romney-text-idUSMTZSAPEC33H4C498>.

255 Ibid.

256 See, Rebecca Shabad, “Trump: Romney begged me for the 2012 endorsement”, *CBS News*, March 3, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-mitt-romney-begged-me-for-the-2012-endorsement-election-2016/>.

257 For the tweet, see, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-june-11-2016>.

Romney called to congratulate me on the win. Very nice!”²⁵⁸. Or perhaps that was not his last word. Surprisingly, after all of these bitter exchanges, another humiliation awaited Romney when he agreed to submit himself to two predictably unsuccessful interviews for Secretary of State²⁵⁹.

As Trump accumulated primary victories, leading Republicans, albeit plainly uncomfortable with Trump’s rhetoric, endorsed his candidacy. Expecting Trump to self-immolate prior to the GOP Convention, some party notables remained decidedly ambivalent about the front-runner. John McCain, a case in point, protested that Trump did not have “unfettered license to defame those who are the best among us”, but still refused to withdraw his May 2016 endorsement of the presumptive nominee.²⁶⁰ During the Convention, only Ted Cruz abstained from explicitly endorsing Trump, stating merely that “(I) f you love our country, and love your children as much as I know that you do, stand and speak and vote your conscience, vote for candidates up and down the ticket who you trust to defend our freedom and to be faithful to the Constitution”²⁶¹. Doubt remained as to whether the Texas Senator saw Trump fulfilling those criteria, but it was widely assumed that he did not. Predictably, Cruz’s prime-time speech was received by the delegates with boisterous jeering and was finally interrupted by Trump’s raucous entrance into Cleveland’s Quicken Loans Arena. Senior Republicans may not have rallied behind Trump, but the delegates made it clear that the base had been wholly seduced and converted to *trumpism*. Acutely aware of the GOP political winds, in coming years Cruz would emerge as one of president Trump’s staunchest backers.

The July 18-21 Republican National Convention allowed Donald Trump to restate his foreign policy vision. His acceptance speech began by recalling the “domestic disaster” and the “international humiliation” resulting from “the images of our sailors being forced to their knees by their Iranian captors at gunpoint... Another humiliation came when President Obama drew a red line in Syria – and the whole world knew it

258 See, Nik DeCosta-Klipa, “Mitt Romney called to congratulate Donald Trump on his election night win”, *Boston Globe*, November 13, 2016, available at: <https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2016/11/13/mitt-romney-called-to-congratulate-donald-trump-on-his-election-night-win>.

259 See, Margaret Carlson, “Trump makes Mitt Romney grovel for secretary of state”, *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-trump-mitt-romney-secretary-state-20161205-story.html>.

260 See, David Smith and Ben Jacobs, “Unfit to be president: Obama hammers Trump with harshest comments yet”, *The Guardian*, August 3, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/02/barack-obama-donald-trump-president-republican-party>. Running for reelection, Senator McCain endorsed Trump in early May 2016, claiming that “You have to draw the conclusion that there is some distance, if not a disconnect, between party leaders and members of Congress and the many voters who have selected Donald Trump to be the nominee of the party. You have to listen to people that have chosen the nominee of our Republican Party. I think it would be foolish to ignore them”. See, Manu Raju, “McCain on Trump: ‘Foolish’ to ignore will of GOP voters”, *CNN*, May 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/08/politics/john-mccain-donald-trump/>.

261 See, “Full Text: Ted Cruz’s 2016 Republican National Convention Speech”, *ABC News*, July 21, 2016, accessed at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/full-text-ted-cruzs-2016-republican-national-convention/story?id=40768272>.

meant absolutely nothing”²⁶². For Trump, these and other similar events confirmed that “(T)o make life safe for all of our citizens, we must also address the growing threats we face from outside America”²⁶³. The statement bears emphasizing because, contrary to what is frequently claimed, it suggests Trump’s foreign policy was never isolationist.²⁶⁴ Rather, he espoused a minimalist engagement aiming to preserve national vital interests, prestige and primacy by means other than those favored by the globalist foreign policy establishment. To achieve these goals, the United States needed to reclaim its sovereignty and, by so doing, weaken the tenets of an international liberal order damaging to the United States. Trump was not proposing disengagement from the affairs of the world; rather, he sought to pursue bilateralism to loosen the constraints imposed by outdated multilateral norms and institutions. That vision placed him on a collision course with a number of America’s traditional allies, particularly Europeans bent on preserving the international liberal order.

Assigning joint responsibility to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the foreign policy failings of the preceding years, Trump, in the same Convention speech, noted that the Democrat nominee’s “bad instincts and her bad judgment” were “what caused the disasters unfolding today”²⁶⁵. He then proceeded to draw a contrast between the present “disaster” and the geopolitical conditions inherited by Hillary Clinton when she began her stint at the State Department: “ISIS was not even on the map. Libya was stable. Egypt was peaceful. Iraq was seeing a really big, big reduction in violence. Iran was being choked by sanctions. Syria was somewhat under control”. Posing the question “what do we have?” in the aftermath of Clinton’s and Obama’s stewardship of the country, Trump enumerated a host of purported failings and humiliations: “ISIS has spread across the region, and the entire world. Libya is in ruins, and our ambassador and his staff were left helpless to die at the hands of savage killers. Egypt was turned over to the radical Muslim Brotherhood, forcing the military to retake control. Iraq is in chaos. Iran is on the path to nuclear weapons. Syria is engulfed in a civil war, and a refugee crisis now threatens the West. After 15 years of wars in the Middle East, after trillions of dollars spent and thousands of lives lost, the situation is worse than it has ever been before”²⁶⁶. In short,

262 For the Convention speech, in its entirety, see, “Donald Trump’s complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-convention-speech-transcript-20160721-snap-htmlstory.html>.

263 Ibid.

264 See, for instance, Brian Bennett, “President Trump Showed His Contradictory Foreign Policy Doctrine in Iraq. Call It ‘Hawkish Isolationism’”, *Time*, December 27, 2018, consulted at: <https://time.com/5489044/donald-trump-iraq-hawkish-isolationism/>; and Julia G. Young, “Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present”, *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2017, pp. 217-235, available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/233150241700500111>. For a recent discussion on isolationism, cf., Charles A. Kupchan, *Isolationism: A History of America’s Efforts to Shield Itself from the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

265 See, “Donald Trump’s complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, op. cit.

266 Ibid.

“the legacy of Hillary Clinton” was “death, destruction, terrorism and weakness”²⁶⁷. Claiming that her “legacy does not have to be America’s legacy”, Trump maintained that the country’s problems “will last only as long as we continue relying on the same politicians who created them in the first place”²⁶⁸. True to his conviction that America’s decline could be inverted by a bold leader willing to break with the establishment, Trump concluded that “a change in leadership is required to produce a change in outcomes”²⁶⁹.

Pointing to the conceptual roadmap that would redeem America from the disasters of the Obama years, Trump announced that “Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo. As long as we are led by politicians who will not put America first, then we can be assured that other nations will not treat America with respect. The respect that we deserve. The American people will come first once again”²⁷⁰. Trump again insisted that globalist elites driven by a cosmopolitan internationalist outlook had effectively abandoned nationalism and, as a corollary, the pursuit of the national interest for the benefit of the “common man”. Nationalism, in this sense, was not the toxic “blood and soil” variety so familiar from the European experience. Rather, it was understood as the empowerment of “average Americans” unduly sacrificed by a political establishment promoting corporate interests and a globalist foreign policy agenda willingly dismissive of the nation’s vital interests. Restoring the United States’ rightful place on the world stage presupposed a shift in the exercise of power in Washington away from the entrenched interests of the “swamp” to the interests of the “common man”. Claiming this redemptive mission as his own, Trump declared that “I have joined the political arena so that the powerful can no longer beat up on people who cannot defend themselves”²⁷¹. Even more importantly, Trump immodestly claimed to be uniquely qualified to undertake such a task, the only person capable of rescuing the United States since “(N)obody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it”²⁷². Quite incredibly, a billionaire “insider” turned “outsider” was preparing to use his knowledge of the “swamp” to drain it.

The GOP nominee then set out his priorities: defeating “the barbarians of ISIS” and, more controversially, upholding his pledge to “immediately suspend immigration from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism until such time as proven vetting mechanisms have been put in place. We don’t want them in our country”²⁷³. Rather than the generic ban on Muslims traveling to the United States advocated in December 2015, Trump now claimed that it was necessary to temporarily suspend “immigration” from countries either harboring *jihadist* organizations or plagued by terrorist activity. As crucially, Trump also sought to contain the political damage provoked by his previous

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

269 Ibid.

270 Ibid.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

observation that NATO was “obsolete”. Although he had referred specifically to the obsolescence of NATO’s traditional Cold War mission, Hillary Clinton, in a campaign speech in Milwaukee, on March 28, inaccurately claimed that Trump “wants us to pull out of NATO”²⁷⁴. Attempting to clarify the polemic, Trump reiterated his belief that the Atlantic Alliance had “not properly” confronted terrorism and that various “member countries were not paying their fair share” of defense expenditure²⁷⁵. Adopting a more conciliatory stance, he conceded that NATO’s decision to set up “a new program in order to combat terrorism” represented a “true step in the right direction”²⁷⁶. On both the “obsolescence” of NATO and the “Muslim ban” issues, Trump was apparently moderating his previous declarations.

At any rate, the president’s main priority was the restructuring of trade policy because “America has lost nearly one-third of its manufacturing jobs since 1997, following the enactment of disastrous trade deals supported by Bill and Hillary Clinton”²⁷⁷. Seen from his perspective, international trade was the key foreign policy campaign issue because Hillary Clinton “supported the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which will not only destroy our manufacturing, but it will make America subject to the rulings of foreign governments. And it’s not going to happen. I pledge to never sign any trade agreement that hurts our workers, or that diminishes our freedom or our independence. We will never, ever sign these trade deals. America first again. America first. Instead, I will make individual deals with individual countries”²⁷⁸. Enunciating the broad outlines of his trade policy, the GOP nominee was also alerting the voters as to the consequences of a Clinton victory at the polls. Last but not least, Trump pledged to “rebuild our depleted military”, adding that “countries that we are protecting, at a massive cost to us, will be asked to pay their fair share” of the costs accruing from the preservation of stable security arrangements²⁷⁹. Little doubt remained that America’s “free-riding” allies had been placed on notice.

2.3. Not Fit To Be President

Soon after Donald Trump received the Republican nomination, president Barack Obama responded to Trump’s speech with a searing indictment of the GOP nominee

274 See, David Smith, “At CNN town hall, Trump doubles back on promise to support Republican nominee – as it happened”, *The Guardian*, March 29, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2016/mar/29/us-election-live-ted-cruz-donald-trump-kasich-sanders-clinton?page=with%3Ablock-56fa9c6ee4b0465523578e1b>. During the October 4, 2016 debate at Longwood University against Mike Pence, Hillary Clinton’s vice-presidential running mate, Tim Kaine made the following claim: “That’s why Donald Trump’s claim that he wants to — that NATO is obsolete and that we need to get rid of NATO is so dangerous”. See the full debate on *YouTube* at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJAjR_EGZ0.

275 See, “Donald Trump’s complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, op. cit.

276 Ibid.

277 Ibid.

278 Ibid.

279 Ibid.

delivered at the Philadelphia Democratic National Convention. Going on the offensive, the outgoing president defined the November 2016 election as “not just a choice between parties or policies; the usual debates between left and right. This is a more fundamental choice – about who we are as a people, and whether we stay true to this great American experiment in self-government”²⁸⁰. Framing the upcoming vote as an existential choice, Obama insinuated that US democracy would be irrevocably compromised by a Trump victory because “(H)e’s just offering slogans, and he’s offering fear. He’s betting that if he scares enough people, he might score just enough votes to win this election”²⁸¹. Rejecting the politics of fear and affirming that Americans “are not a fragile or frightful people”, Obama went on to chide Trump by noting that the country’s “power doesn’t come from some self-declared savior promising that he alone can restore order. We don’t look to be ruled... America has never been about what one person says he’ll do for us”²⁸². Although not explicitly stated, the unmistakable inference was that Trump was nothing more than an authoritarian demagogue squarely at odds with America’s enduring democratic values and traditions. The perceptible threat posed to the republic by a Trump victory was, in Obama’s opinion, precisely what made the general election an existential choice.

The president’s unsparing chastisement of Donald Trump naturally resonated with the Democrat base, but it was politically inconsequential because moderate and undecided voters were unswayed by such unabashed partisanship. As for likely Republican voters, Obama’s words provided yet more proof – if any was still required – that Trump was on a collision course with the despised Washington “swamp”. Attempting to sow divisions within GOP ranks, Obama acknowledged that “(T)here have been Republican presidents with whom I disagreed but I didn’t have a doubt that they could function as president”²⁸³. The unmistakable reference to George W. Bush was followed by the observation that the Cleveland GOP Convention “wasn’t particularly Republican – and it sure wasn’t conservative. What we heard was a deeply pessimistic vision of a country where we turn against each other, and turn away from the rest of the world. There were no serious solutions to pressing problems – just the fanning of resentment, and blame, and anger, and hate. And that is not the America I know”²⁸⁴. Remarkably, and foreshadowing the “deplorables” moniker subsequently employed by Clinton, a sitting president arrogantly

280 See, “Full text: President Obama’s DNC speech”, *Politico*, July 27, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/dnc-2016-obama-prepared-remarks-226345>.

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid.

283 Obama added that “I think I was right and Mitt Romney and John McCain were wrong on certain policy issues but I never thought that they couldn’t do the job. And had they won, I would have been disappointed but I would have said to all Americans: this is our president and I know they’re going to abide by certain norms and rules and common sense, will observe basic decency, will have enough knowledge about economic policy and foreign policy and our constitutional traditions and rule of law that our government will work and then we’ll compete four years from now to try and win an election”. See, David Smith and Ben Jacobs, “Unfit to be president: Obama hammers Trump with harshest comments yet”, *The Guardian*, August 3, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/02/barack-obama-donald-trump-president-republican-party>.

284 See, “Full text: President Obama’s DNC speech”, *Politico*, July 27, 2016, op. cit.

dismissed divergent opinions and policy choices as “resentment, blame, anger and hate”. Irrespective of the rhetorical excess, Obama was correct in one key respect: the centrist Republican Party that he had confronted in the recent past had given way to an altogether new *trumpist* party uninterested in obtaining the establishment’s certificate of good behavior.

Sharpening the contrast between the two nominees, Obama somewhat ingenuously characterized Hillary Clinton as “a mother and grandmother who’d do anything to help our children thrive; a leader with real plans to break down barriers, blast through glass ceilings, and widen the circle of opportunity to every single American”²⁸⁵. Obviously, the extravagant praise heaped on Clinton was not extended to Trump, whom Obama curtly dismissed as “not really a plans guy. Not really a facts guy, either. He calls himself a business guy, which is true, but I have to say, I know plenty of businessmen and women who’ve achieved success without leaving a trail of lawsuits, and unpaid workers, and people feeling like they got cheated”²⁸⁶. More sensibly, Obama emphasized Clinton’s vast political experience, noting that “nothing truly prepares you for the demands of the Oval Office. Until you’ve sat at that desk, you don’t know what it’s like to manage a global crisis, or send young people to war. But Hillary’s been in the room; she’s been part of those decisions”²⁸⁷. The president then added, rather hyperbolically, that “there has never been a man or a woman more qualified than Hillary Clinton to serve as President of the United States of America. . . . And if you’re concerned about who’s going to keep you and your family safe in a dangerous world – well, the choice is even clearer. . . . She is fit to be the next Commander-in-Chief”²⁸⁸. Obama’s emphasis on political experience conformed to voter expectations in past elections, but it was a colossal misjudgment of the country’s mood in 2016.

In contradistinction with Hillary Clinton’s breadth of experience, Obama intimated that Trump was plainly not apt to serve as Commander-in-Chief because he “calls our military a disaster. Apparently, he doesn’t know the men and women who make up the strongest fighting force the world has ever known”²⁸⁹. Perhaps even more worrisome, he posited that Trump was insensitive to the hope and promise represented by America throughout the world because “he must not hear the billions of men, women, and children, from the Baltics to Burma, who still look to America to be the light of freedom, dignity, and human rights”²⁹⁰. Trump’s unawareness of America’s true political essence manifested itself when “he cozies up to Putin, praises Saddam Hussein, and tells the NATO allies that stood by our side after 9/11 that they have to pay up if they want our protection”²⁹¹. Trump, in short, failed to understand America’s place in the world and the

285 Ibid.

286 Ibid.

287 Ibid.

288 Ibid.

289 Ibid.

290 Ibid.

291 Ibid.

fact that the country's "soft power" was a vital source of national strength. Immodestly claiming that the United States was "stronger and more respected" than when he took office, Obama countered his GOP critics by proclaiming that "America is already great. America is already strong. And I promise you, our strength, our greatness, does not depend on Donald Trump"²⁹². By framing the choice in these terms, Obama denied America's decline, but unwittingly contributed to transforming the 2016 election into a *de facto* referendum on national decline and the need to revitalize the country. President Obama had shifted the debate to territory where Donald Trump was politically most comfortable.

In addition to seeking to justify his problematic foreign policy record, Obama's endorsement of his party's nominee aimed to make an unattractive, polarizing candidate a more palatable figure. Yet, the electorate did not consider Hillary Clinton empathic, politically "genuine" nor particularly trustworthy.²⁹³ Rather, she was perceived by the general public as an entitled elitist and the foremost champion of the foreign policy elites. Moreover, having entered the 2016 race tainted by the Benghazi debacle and the contradictory, unconvincing explanations surrounding the death of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, the former Secretary of State found herself straddled with a host of damaging political vulnerabilities.²⁹⁴ Consequently, as the campaign unfolded, she increasingly shied away from her previous foreign policy internationalism, recanting on her support for TPP and shifting the focus of her campaign to domestic issues. As she did so, quite predictably, doubts resurfaced as to her core convictions. At any rate, it would all to be to no avail since Bernie Sanders' surprisingly strong performance

292 Ibid.

293 On voter perceptions of the candidates, see, Henry Louis Gates, Jr, "Hating Hillary", *The New Yorker*, February 18, 1996, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/02/26/hating-hillary>; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1998, 1–20; Nicholas Kristof, "Is Hillary Clinton Dishonest?", *The New York Times*, April 23, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/opinion/sunday/is-hillary-clinton-dishonest.html?searchResultPosition=1>; Harry Enten, "Americans' Distaste for Both Trump and Clinton Is Record-breaking." *FineThirtyEight*, May 5 2016, available at: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americans-distaste-for-both-trump-and-clinton-is-record-breaking/>; Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "The Deep Disgust for Hillary Clinton that Drives So Many Evangelicals to Support Trump." *The Washington Post*, October 9, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/10/09/the-deep-disgust-for-hillary-clinton-that-drives-so-many-evangelicals-to-support-trump/>; Melissa Chan, "Donald Trump More Trustworthy Than Hillary Clinton, Poll Finds", *Time*, November 2, 2016, consulted at: <https://time.com/4554576/donald-trump-trustworthy-hillary-clinton/>; and Rasmussen Reports, "Did Voters Vote for Trump or Against Clinton?" November 11, 2016, available at: https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/elections/election_2016/did_voters_vote_for_trump_or_against_clinton.

294 For Hillary Clinton's version of the Benghazi events, see, "Terrorist Attack in Benghazi: The Secretary of State's View", Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, January 23, 2013, Serial No. 113–11, available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg78250/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg78250.pdf>.

during the primaries and Trump's unexpected capture of the Republican nomination indicated that the US foreign policy consensus no longer commanded pervasive popular support.²⁹⁵ Rather than the political advantage suggested by Obama, Hillary Clinton's vast political experience and close identification with the foreign policy establishment turned out to be her Achilles' heel.

Attesting as to just how toxic the campaign had become by the Summer of 2016, the Democratic National Convention also generated a bitter controversy involving the parents of 27-year-old Army Captain Humayun Khanthe, the victim of a terrorist suicide attack perpetrated near the Iraqi locality of Baqubah on June 8, 2004. Born in the United Arab Emirates to Pakistani parents, the Purple Heart and Bronze Star recipient came to the United States as a young boy and joined the military after 9/11. His Gold Star parents, Khizr and Ghazala Khan, appeared together at the Convention podium to address the delegates. During his emotion-laden presentation, Khizr Khan raised the delegates to their feet when he brandished a pocket US constitution and wondered aloud if the Republican nominee had ever read it before calling for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.²⁹⁶ His wife, by his side on stage, did not speak at the gathering, later claiming that she thought herself incapable of maintaining her composure while speaking of her slain son.²⁹⁷ Visibly incensed by the speech and claiming to have been "viciously attacked", Trump intimated that Hillary Clinton's staff had prepared Khan's remarks and suggested that Ghazala Khan had, presumably by her husband, been forbidden from addressing the Convention.²⁹⁸ It was, of course, an indirect form of claiming that Muslim men subjugate their wives and deprive them of fundamental constitutional rights, including the freedom of speech. In a roundabout fashion, Trump too was asking if Khan had read the constitution his son had died to uphold.

295 See, Peter Trubowitz and Peter Harris, "The End of the American Century? Slow Erosion of the Domestic Sources of Usable Power", *International Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 3, 2019, pp. 619-639. Rather than considering the relative power capabilities between the US and its competitors, Trubowitz and Harris argue that the main obstacle to US leadership are domestic. Their concept of "usable power" encompasses three domestic-level factors – hyper-partisanship, the lack of a robust strategic narrative and the "erosion of a social contract of inclusive growth". Claiming that America's "usable power" has declined, the authors conclude that the US will find it next to impossible to implement a grand strategy of any sort.

296 Will Drabold, "Watch the Father of Fallen Muslim Soldier Ask Donald Trump if He Has Read the Constitution", *Time*, July 28, 2016, consulted at: <https://time.com/4429891/dnc-khizr-khan-donald-trump-constitution/>.

297 See her opinion piece in *The Washington Post*, cf., see, Ghazala Khan, "Trump criticized my silence. He knows nothing about true sacrifice", *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2016, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ghazala-khan-donald-trump-criticized-my-silence-he-knows-nothing-about-true-sacrifice/2016/07/31/c46e52ec-571c-11e6-831d-0324760ca856_story.html.

298 See, Maggie Haberman and Richard A. Opiel Jr., "Donald Trump Criticizes Muslim Family of Slain U.S. Soldier, Drawing Ire", *The New York Times*, July 30, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/31/us/politics/donald-trump-khizr-khan-wife-ghazala.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Predictably, the Khan affair generated an ugly polemic that persisted throughout the better part of two weeks and provided Barack Obama with the opportunity to once again lash out at Donald Trump.²⁹⁹ During a White House joint press conference with Singapore's prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, he seized on the quarrel to admonish mainstream Republicans, stating that "(I)here has to be a point at which you say this is not somebody I can support for president of the United States, even if he purports to be a member of my party"³⁰⁰. Going a step further, Obama posited that "somebody who makes those kinds of statements doesn't have the judgment, the temperament, the understanding to occupy the most powerful position in the world"³⁰¹. As if Obama's opinion was insufficiently clear by that point, he went on to describe the Republican candidate as "unfit" and "woefully unprepared" for the presidency because "he doesn't appear to have basic knowledge around critical issues in Europe, in the Middle East, in Asia"³⁰².

Ever sensitive to criticism, Trump reacted to Obama's remarks by linking the president to his former Secretary of State. In a statement released to the press, the Trump campaign claimed that "Obama-Clinton have single-handedly destabilized the Middle East, handed Iraq, Libya and Syria to ISIS, and allowed our personnel to be slaughtered at Benghazi"³⁰³. Pointing out multiple administration foreign policy failures, the statement went on to conclude that "(I)hey have produced the worst recovery since the Great Depression. They have shipped millions of our best jobs overseas to appease their global special interests. They have betrayed our security and our workers, and Hillary Clinton has proven herself unfit to serve in any government office"³⁰⁴. A few hours later, Trump doubled down, tweeting that "President Obama will go down as perhaps the worst president in the history of the United States!"³⁰⁵.

The political change promised by Donald Trump on the stump presupposed the overhauling of foreign policy priorities as well as a complete break with the personnel associated with the Obama White House. After all, draining the "swamp" was synonymous

299 Months later, seeking to dampen the polemic, the Trump campaign emitted a statement describing Captain Khan was a hero deserving to be honored in the same manner as any other fallen soldier. In December 2018, President Donald Trump signed a bill sponsored by Tom Garrett (R-VA) naming a US Postal Service office after captain Khan. The office is in Charlottesville, where Khan attended the University of Virginia. See, Eli Watkins, "Trump signs bill naming post office for Capt. Humayun Khan", CNN, December 25, 2018, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/24/politics/donald-trump-humayun-khan/index.html>.

300 See, David Smith and Ben Jacobs, "Unfit to be president: Obama hammers Trump with harshest comments yet", *The Guardian*, August 3, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/02/barack-obama-donald-trump-president-republican-party>.

301 Ibid.

302 Ibid.

303 See, Domenico Montanaro, "Obama Calls Trump 'Unfit' To Be President, Questions Why Republicans Still Endorsing", *NPR*, August 2, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.npr.org/2016/08/02/488383580/obama-calls-trump-unfit-to-be-president-questions-why-republicans-still-endorsin>.

304 Ibid.

305 See, John Parkinson, "President Obama Reads Donald Trump's Mean Tweet on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live'", *ABC News*, October 25, 2016, available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-obama-reads-donald-trumps-tweet-jimmy-kimmel/story?id=43032859>.

with removing the Clinton-Obama policy practitioners from office. Speaking in Ashburn, Virginia, the GOP nominee advised president Obama to “look at the world: it’s a mess. I don’t want to use the people who are involved currently”³⁰⁶. Lauding his own foreign policy team, widely criticized for its paucity of experience in international affairs, Trump insisted that his “people are better”³⁰⁷. Yet, it was not entirely evident that these choices for sensitive national security posts inspired confidence, not least because Trump had broken with virtually all Republican defense and foreign policy experts. In this fashion, Trump sought to transform inexperience into a virtue. Abundant experience in the “swamp” had ceased to be an asset for office seekers; indeed, as Hillary Clinton was soon to discover, it had become a monumental liability.

306 See, “Donald Trump in Ashburn, VA – August 8, 2016”, *Factbase*, August 8, 2016, consulted at: <https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-speech-ashburn-va-august-8-2016>

307 Ibid.

Part 3: Setting the World Ablaze

The sense of greatness keeps a nation great; And mighty they who mighty can appear.

William Watson, *The Sudanese*

Disbelief swept the ranks of the Republican and Democrat parties when the *Associated Press* called the 8 November 2016 election for Donald Trump. As Hillary Clinton's supporters descended into a bewildered state of denial, Trump's backers were simply incredulous. Perhaps the outcome surprised no one more than Trump himself for, in the weeks and days prior to the vote, polls and pundits, with few exceptions, predicted the exact opposite: an unmitigated, crushing Republican rout. Academics and data journalists had estimated Clinton's probability of winning the suffrage as anywhere in the range of 71 to 99 percent.³⁰⁸ Even on election day, *The Huffington Post* confidently claimed that there existed a 98.2% probability of a Clinton victory. When the final Electoral College vote was tallied, Trump had actually won 306 to Clinton's 232. However, the forecasts were accurate in one respect: Trump fell short in the popular vote, obtaining 62.98 million votes (46.0%) to Clinton's 65.84 million (48.1%), a net difference of 2.86 million.³⁰⁹ Plainly, the GOP candidate had been swept to power by a movement that, on election day, translated into exceptional voter mobilization in key swing states needed to push Trump beyond the 270 electoral vote threshold. It seemed that Donald Trump's "basket of deplorables" had successfully carried their political champion to the White House.³¹⁰

The suffrage exposed the deep chasm separating a large portion of the American population from an insulated foreign policy establishment advocating globalism and apparently confirmed the American public's reluctance to underwrite the nation's international commitments.³¹¹ The outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis had compounded post-9/11 apprehension over homeland security and the burgeoning cost of the nation's interminable wars, making voters visibly less accepting of the financial burdens accruing

308 See, Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury*, 2018, p. 18. Also, Josh Katz, "Who Will Be President?", *The New York Times*, November 8, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/upshot/presidential-polls-forecast.html>. For an analysis of the 2016 polls, see, Courtney Kennedy, Mark Blumenthal, Scott Clement, Joshua D. Clinton, Claire Durand, Charles Franklin, Kyle McGeeney, Lee Miringoff, Kristen Olson, Douglas Rivers, Lydia Saad, G. Evans Witt and Christopher Wlezien, "An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls in the United States, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 82, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 1-33.

309 Libertarian Gary Johnson won 3.3% and Green candidate Jill Stein obtained 1.1%. Clinton's 2.1% popular vote margin of victory, compares with Obama's 3.9% advantage over Romney. Clinton's raw vote was down only slightly from Obama's 65.9 million in 2012, while Trump was over 2 million above the ballots received by Mitt Romney.

310 See, John Sides, Michael Tesler and Lynn Vavreck, "The 2016 U.S. Election: How Trump Lost and Won", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2017, pp. 34-44.

311 See, Richard Fontaine, "Great-Power Competition Is Washington's Top Priority—but Not the Public's: China and Russia Don't Keep Most Americans Awake at Night", *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2019, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-09-09/great-power-competition-washingtons-top-priority-not-publics>

from global leadership. Barack Obama understood these constraints as he sought to reconcile US leadership with the need to reduce the monumental cost of external commitments. But untangling the Gordian knot proved to be an onerous undertaking. Although Obama's retrenchment strategy garnered popular approval, the foreign policy establishment, advocating continued US involvement in Syria, Libya, Ukraine, and Afghanistan, periodically decried his weakness and lack of leadership. Often torn between irreconcilable demands, his efforts not infrequently resulted in strategic incoherence and policy failure.³¹²

The post-1945 international order is, arguably, best symbolized by the United Nations, whose creation sprang from a generic aspiration for a more stable and peaceful world.³¹³ Yet, the organization's September 2020 diamond jubilee was, as far as commemorative ceremonies go, a truly somber affair. The usual General Assembly Fall meetings, complete with an unending parade of dignitaries, gave way to a dirge of virtual, pre-recorded speeches. Arguing that the world faced a new "1945 moment", Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a call for enhanced global cooperation.³¹⁴ Although the United States was not explicitly singled out for rebuke, it was an open secret that Guterres was less than enthralled with president Trump's approach to international relations.³¹⁵ Acknowledging a mounting Sino-American rivalry, he urged member-states to "do everything to avoid a new Cold War" because the "world cannot afford a future where the two largest economies split the globe in a great fracture – each with its own trade and financial rules and Internet and artificial intelligence capacities"³¹⁶.

The UN chief, however, was not forthcoming as to the specific steps that should be taken to avoid a new Cold War. In a veiled reference to the lessons apprehended from the outbreak of the Second World War, he recalled that both populism and

312 Barack Obama and his officials claim that a "long-view" evaluation of the administration's record will prove Obama was fundamentally correct in his approach and policies. See, for example, Barack Obama. *A Promised Land*. New York: Crown, 2020; Ben Rhodes. *The World As It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House*. New York: Random House, 2018; Derek Chollet. *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World*. New York: Public Affairs, 2016; and Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, April 2016, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

313 For the conventional view on the founding and purpose of the United Nations, see, Paul Kennedy. *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. New York: Vintage, 2006. For a different view, see, Mark Mazower. *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

314 See, António Guterres, "Address to the Opening of the General Debate of the 75th Session of the General Assembly", September 22, 2020, available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2020-09-22/address-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session-of-the-general-assembly>.

315 On this issue, see, Thomas G. Weiss, "The United Nations and Sovereignty in the Age of Trump", *Current History*, Vol. 117, No. 795, 2018, pp. 10-15; Thomas G. Weiss, "The UN and Multilateralism under Siege in the 'Age of Trump'", *Global Summitry*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2018, pp. 12-14; and David M. Herszenhorn, "Guterres and Trump embody clashing visions at UN summit", *Politico*, September 24, 2019, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/antonio-guterres-donald-trump-clash-united-nations/>.

316 Ibid.

nationalism had failed and, in effect, “often made things manifestly worse”³¹⁷. He was, of course, expressing the conventional view positing that nationalism and protectionist trade policies enacted throughout the 1930s were the root causes of the conflagration detonated by Adolf Hitler’s *blitzkrieg* on Poland. Or perhaps it was a non-too-subtle denunciation of populist and nationalist politicians that, over the years, had used annual General Assembly meetings to articulate an alternative vision of international relations. Viewed from this prism, president Trump was, evidently, the main target of Guterres’ admonition.

Shortly after, Trump defiantly reiterated the nationalist discourse all too familiar from his past General Assembly addresses. If his listeners perchance expected a shift in policy, or a tempering of the president’s rhetoric, they were to be severely disappointed. Trump doubled down and recapitulated the same themes and policies outlined in his previous United Nations speeches. Reminding his audience that the US unfailingly pursued its narrow self-interest, he counseled other nations to do likewise.³¹⁸ Illustrating the point, he invoked America’s military might and capacity to forge “peace through strength”, claiming that the nation’s “weapons are at an advanced level, like we’ve never had before, like, frankly, we’ve never even thought of having before”³¹⁹. Turning his attention to the “China virus” and the escalating rivalry with Beijing, the president declared that the world must hold China “accountable” for having “unleashed this plague” and characterized China as the world’s vilest polluter³²⁰. Not unexpectedly, he also disowned the “terrible” Paris Treaty and Barack Obama’s Iranian nuclear deal, both exemplifying misguided agreements prejudicial to US vital interests.

Following Donald Trump’s uncompromising speech, China’s Xi Jinping seized the moment to once again present himself as the guardian of the current international order. In a revealing turn, the Chinese communist leader depicted World War II as the ‘World Anti-Fascist War’, a reference meant to underscore that China, one of the victorious powers of the Second World War, was likewise a founding member of the international order that Xi now ostensibly sought to uphold³²¹. Disavowing “protectionism” and “unilateralism”, Xi repudiated the ‘America First’ approach in no uncertain terms, claiming that “(B)urying one’s head in the sand like an ostrich in the face of economic globalization or trying to fight it with Don Quixote’s lance goes against the trend of

317 Ibid.

318 See, The White House, “Remarks by President Trump to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, September 22, 2020, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-75th-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>.

319 Ibid.

320 Ibid.

321 See, “Xi Jinping’s speech at high-level meeting to mark UN’s 75th anniversary”, *CGTN*, September 22, 2020, available at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-09-22/Full-text-Xi-Jinping-addresses-high-level-meeting-for-UN-anniversary-TYvH4vvVDO/index.html>. On how the Chinese Communist Party’s is changing the country’s narrative of World War II to bolster nationalism and reinforce regime legitimacy, see, Rana Mitter. *China’s Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020.

history³²². As if his message of historical inevitability was insufficiently clear, Xi went on to point out that the “world will never return to isolation, and no one can sever the ties between countries”³²³. Although not explicitly referring Trump by name, the Chinese leader was demonstrably reprimanding the United States and the president’s ‘America First’ agenda.

This indirect exchange between the American and Chinese heads of state bore witness to the acerbated tensions of the moment, but also indicated a pivotal disagreement regarding the future of the international liberal order. Ironically, assorted core elements of the post-1945 order – free trade and multilateralism being the most obvious – began to be endorsed by China just as the United States became increasingly skeptical of their overall value and desirability.³²⁴ This is not to suggest that Beijing actually defends the liberal order as it is presently understood in the West; it does not.³²⁵ But it does sanction those specific elements of the global order that, in the past two decades, so decisively contributed to China’s rise. Coincidentally, these were the same elements Donald Trump was determined to reform or abandon entirely because they were judged to no longer serve America’s vital interests.

3.1. Greatness and Recurring Declinism

Tectonic geopolitical shifts refashioning the global order were underway long before Donald Trump stepped through the gates of the White House. His rise to power did, however, expose the fragility of a decades-old international order created by the United States and its allies in the aftermath of World War II and extended to new regions during the post-Cold War unipolar moment. President Trump’s foreign policy was a symptom of, and a tentative response to, the structural changes undermining the country’s traditional role in world affairs. Said differently, the president was reacting, albeit at times incoherently, to shifts in world politics that had made America’s traditional role largely

322 See, “Xi Jinping’s speech at high-level meeting to mark UN’s 75th anniversary”, *CGTN*, September 22, 2020, op. cit.

323 Ibid.

324 See, Hopewell, Kristen. *Breaking the WTO: How Emerging Powers Disrupted the Neoliberal Project*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.

325 See, Liza Tobin, “Xi’s Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and its Allies”, *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2018, pp. 155-166, available at: <https://2llqix3cnhb21kcxpr2u9o1k-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TNSR-Vol-2-Issue-1-Tobin.pdf>. See, also, Nadège Rolland, “China’s Vision for a New World Order” The National Bureau of Asian Research, *NBR Special Report #83*, January 2020, available at: https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/sr83_chinasvision_jan2020.pdf. Also, Vasco Rato. *De Mao a Xi: o ressurgimento da China*. Lisbon: Alêtheia Editores, 2020.

untenable.³²⁶ Although Trump certainly did not identify with the international *status quo*, it was actually Barack Obama who began to redefine America's broad role in what Obama termed a "multi-partner world"³²⁷. For his part, Trump sought to check national decline by revising a liberal order that, in fact, was crumbling even before the president entered the Oval Office in early 2017.

Albeit espoused by a businessman turned neophyte politician, the thesis positing that the United States had entered a period of national decline was unoriginal.³²⁸ Such a reading of national power has a rather long pedigree; in fact, declinism in some form or other has been a mainstay of American political discourse since the earliest days of the republic. Samuel Huntington, for instance, identified as many as five "waves of declinism" in the post-1945 period alone.³²⁹ Denouncing this persistence of declinist sentiment during the 2016 campaign, president Obama chided Trump for telling "voters there's a 'real America' out there that must be restored. This isn't an idea that started with Donald Trump. It's been peddled by politicians for a long time – probably from the start of our republic"³³⁰. Obama was essentially correct in his appreciation, although he failed

326 There is a vast literature on the shortcomings/crisis of the international liberal order. Some of the more interesting recent works include: John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal World Order", *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2019, pp. 7-50; Graham Allison, "The Truth about the Liberal Order: Why it Didn't Make the Modern World", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 4, 2018, pp. 124-133; John J. Mearsheimer. *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018; Patrick Porter. *The False Promise of Liberal Order. Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump*. Cambridge: Polity, 2020; and Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon. *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

327 See, Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, 2007, pp. 2-16. For an evaluation of Barack Obama's foreign policy views at the time of his election to the presidency, see, for example, Patrick Keller, "Barack Obama's Foreign Policy: What can NATO expect from the next US President?", *Research Paper*, Research Division, NATO Defense College, No. 43, November 2008, available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94350/rp_43en.pdf.

328 On this subject, cf., Michael Hunt, "American Decline and the Great Debate: A Historical Perspective," *S.AIS Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1990, pp. 27-40; Joseph S. Nye. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature Of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990; Joseph Nye, "The Decline of America's Soft Power", *Foreign Affairs*, 2004, Vol. 83, No. 3, pp. 16-20; Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline" *The American Conservative* May 1, 2010, consulted at: <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/graceful-decline/>; Christopher Lane, "This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the *Pax Americana*", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1, 2012, pp. 203-213; Josef Joffe, "Declinism's Fifth Wave", *The American Interest*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2012; and Michael Daniels, "American 'Declinism': A Review of Recent Literature", *Parameters*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2014/2015, pp. 135-140. Two forceful rebuttals to declinism are found in Alan W. Dowd, "Declinism", *Policy Review*, No. 144, 2007, pp. 83-97; and Josef Joffe. *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics. And a Half Century of False Prophecies*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.

329 Samuel Huntington identified the first wave as beginning with the break of US nuclear monopoly after the USSR exploded its first device. See, Samuel Huntington, "The US-Decline or Renewal?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 2, 1988, pp. 76-96.

330 See, "Full text: President Obama's DNC speech", *Politico*, July 27, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/dnc-2016-obama-prepared-remarks-226345>.

to elaborate as to why these ideas were a staple of US politics or why, during his 2008 quest for the White House, he too so readily embraced declinist arguments.³³¹

Grounded in a teleological understanding of history, declinism underdetermines the possibility of transcending the problems of the present. Current obstacles and challenges are projected into an unchanging future, producing a deterministic conviction that decline is irreversible if the country continues in the “same direction”. A strain of pessimism, this linear understanding of history and politics provides fertile ground for a populist, anti-establishment discourse holding dominant elites responsible for the country’s dire fate. Unsurprisingly, populists therefore insist that the first and necessary step for inverting decline is the removal of elites that, through their lack of vision or their sheer incompetence, are faulted for implementing policies sapping the country’s might. No wonder then that populism is an engrained, longstanding tradition in American political life that invariably shadows waves of declinism.³³² They are, in effect, two sides of the same coin.

In the post-World War II period, fears of national decline were especially pronounced during the late 1950s. McCarthyism and the “Red Scare” were manifestations of such anxieties. The 1957 Sputnik launching, so it was believed at the time, heralded the superiority of Soviet scientific and technological achievement. On the economic front, the 1950s and 60s witnessed impressive Soviet rates of growth as the United States wrestled with three recessions during Dwight Eisenhower’s two presidential mandates. Extrapolating from these trends, it was not unreasonable to believe that, as Nikita Khrushchev famously boasted to Western diplomats, “we will bury you”³³³. John F. Kennedy’s presidential interlude pointed to a ‘New Frontier’ as the nation dreamt of the wondrous possibilities offered by Camelot, one of which was the launching of a space race to overtake the Soviet Union. The country’s mood altered in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination as Lyndon Johnson embroiled a traumatized nation in the Vietnamese quagmire. By 1972, the dread of mounting Soviet power led Richard

331 For a view positing that Obama, in fact, did not embrace declinism, cf., Andrew Moran, “Barack Obama and the Return of ‘Declinism’: Rebalancing American Foreign Policy in an Era of Multipolarity”, In Edward Ashbee and John Dumbrell (eds.). *The Obama Presidency and the Politics of Change*. Cham: Springer, 2017, pp. 265-287.

332 On American populism, see, *inter alia*, Chris Stirewalt. *Every Man a King: A Short, Colorful History of American Populists*. New York: Hachette, 2018; John B. Judis. *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Parties*. New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016; Michael Kazin. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. New York: Basic Books, 1995; Robert C. McMath. *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992; Christopher Lasch. *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991; and George McKenna. *American Populism*. New York: Putnam, 1974.

333 The comment was made on 18 November 1956, at the Polish embassy in Moscow, in a reception for Władysław Gomułka. Referring to the capitalist states, Khrushchev said: “About the capitalist states, it doesn’t depend on you whether or not we exist. If you don’t like us, don’t accept our invitations, and don’t invite us to come to see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you!”. See, “Foreign News: We Will Bury You!”, *Time*, November 26, 1956, available at: <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,867329,00.html>.

Nixon to undertake his unprecedented opening to “Red China” so as to balance against the Soviet Union.³³⁴ Nixon’s bold and unexpected initiative was an unequivocal sign that power relations were shifting, thus impelling the United States to fashion new if unexpected alliances capable of containing a menacing Soviet empire.

In the latter half of the 1970s, declinism was once again ascendant. As Washington withdrew from Indochina and Moscow’s juggernaut roamed unabated in the developing world, Japan was identified as the greatest long-term threat to American power.³³⁵ Yet, rather than emerging as the world’s leading economy, Japan sank into decades of immobility and stagnation.³³⁶ At the same time, throughout four distressing White House years, Jimmy Carter wrestled with innumerable challenges: the energy crisis, the conjugation of inflation and stagnation (stagflation) and, most damaging of all, the president’s visible incapacity to resolve the Iranian hostage crisis arising from the overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.³³⁷ All of these intractable problems were compounded by the return of the Panama Canal, Ethiopia’s alignment with Moscow, the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979. All seemingly indicated a precipitous decline of US power concurrent with the consolidation of Soviet geopolitical gains throughout the developing world. Indeed, Jimmy Carter’s tenure as chief executive was so underwhelming that Edward Kennedy challenged the sitting president for the Democrat nomination.

As president Carter’s mandate came to an agonizing end, it was tempting to conclude that America’s best days lay in a fading past. Understandably, given this *milieu* of heightened anxiety and pessimism, the 1980 presidential candidates could not elude a debate over

334 On this matter, see, Chris Tudda. *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969-1972*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. Also, Richard Nixon. *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978, pp. 880-881; and Henry Kissinger. *White House Years*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979, p. 764.

335 This concern was fueled by books arguing that an emerging Japan would rival the United States. See, for example, Herman Kahn. *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenges and Responses*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1971. Twenty years later, George Friedman and Meredith LeBard, in their *The Coming War with Japan*, still argued the United States and Japan would likely confront each other militarily within 20 years (that is, by 2011). The authors maintained that, just as in 1941, Japan needed to access foreign export markets and Southeast Asia’s minerals. To secure these objectives, Japan would have to banish the United States from the western Pacific. See, George Friedman and Meredith LeBard. *The Coming War with Japan*. New York: St. Martin’s 1991.

336 Attempts to explain the failure of Japan to arise as a challenger to US power include, for example, Richard Katz. *Japan, The System That Soured: The Rise and Fall of Japan’s Economic Miracle*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998; and Dick Beason and Dennis Patterson. *The Japan That Never Was: Explaining the Rise and Decline of a Misunderstood Country*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

337 On the fall of the Shah, see, Andrew Scott Cooper. *The Fall of Heaven: The Pahlavis and the Final Days of Imperial Iran*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2016. On the hostage crisis, see, Mark Bowden. *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America’s War with Militant Islam*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006.

whether the United States was spiraling into irreversible decline.³³⁸ Predictably, in 1980 Democrats and Republicans presented candidates offering voters radically contrasting political agendas. Ronald Reagan's seemingly naïve 'Let's Make America Great Again' campaign slogan was meant to emphasize and deepen the contrast with Carter's "national malaise"³³⁹. The Republican's trademark optimism promised national redemption under a new, self-confident leadership whose faith in America seemed limitless. Departing from the consensus of the period, Reagan attributed Soviet strategic gains to Carter's lack of fortitude in confronting Moscow's expansionism rather than to communism's inherent superiority. Like Trump after him, Reagan offered a vision of national renewal consubstantiated by a break with Washington's inert elites and pledged to re-launch the American economy through a policy mix of less government, deregulation and tax cuts.³⁴⁰ In the realm of foreign policy, the new GOP president discarded the *détente* formulated by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, promoting instead an assertive posture resting on a colossal military buildup designed to check Moscow's power in far-flung lands.³⁴¹

Irrespective of Ronald Reagan's undeniable political successes, his policy reorientation ultimately proved insufficient to neutralize the prophets of declinism. By the late 1980s, the ongoing erosion of American hegemony had become an integral component of a new declinist consensus consolidated by the 1987 publication of Paul Kennedy's massively influential *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.³⁴² As talk of decline migrated from the academy to the mainstream, Kennedy's bleak understanding of US power was extensively debated during the 1988 presidential election. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of the presidential vote, history intervened, as it often does, in quite an unexpected fashion. The 1989 *annus mirabilis* witnessing the collapse of European communism saw declinism rapidly supplanted by a joyous triumphalism best illustrated by Francis Fukuyama's widely-read *The End of History?*. Positing that the global alternatives to liberal democracy and market capitalism had been historically superseded, Fukuyama heralded "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human

338 On the 1980 presidential race, see, Andrew E. Busch. *Reagan's Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005. On the transition from the Nixon GOP to the Reagan GOP, see, Rick Perlstein. *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

339 For the background and a positive evaluation of Carter's speech, see, Robert A. Strong, "Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1986, pp. 636-650, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40574414?mag=jimmy-carter-and-the-meaning-of-malaise&seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents.

340 See, Meg Jacobs, "'Ronald' Trump: Why 2016 Is Looking a Lot Like 1980", *The Daily Beast*, May 24, 2016, at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/05/24/ronald-trump-why-2016-is-looking-a-lot-like-1980>.

341 On the crucial role played by Democrat Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, whose fierce opposition to president Carter's Soviet policy introduced many of the themes and issues that came to mark the Reagan Administration's posture toward the Soviet Union. See, Robert G. Kaufman. *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

342 Paul Kennedy. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. New York: Random House, 1987.

government”³⁴³. Conflict in the post-historical world would continue unabated, but the United States, as the world’s preeminent liberal democracy, was destined to play a central role in the unfolding post-historical drama.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the termination of the Cold War, America ceased to confront a peer competitor. Charles Krauthammer depicted this “unipolar moment” of unbridled American supremacy by noting that preeminence rested on the fact that the United States “is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself”³⁴⁴. As a consequence of its vast power, the country’s physical safety ultimately resided in its “strength and will to lead a unipolar world, unashamedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them”³⁴⁵. In a unipolar international system, America was the universal sheriff, the rule-giver and rule-enforcer making the world safe for markets and democracy.³⁴⁶ Extremely seductive, such advice was rapidly taken to heart by US policymakers and, by the end of the 1990s, much of the foreign policy discussion centered on America as the “indispensable” power, as a benevolent hegemon ordering the international system for the sake of freedom, democracy, human rights, markets, nation-building and multilateralism. All of these goals were, incidentally, also in the national interest of the United States.

Not unexpectedly, US primacy encouraged febrile dreams of an American empire, a discussion gaining a new lease on life following the tragic events of 9/11. Harking back to the turn of the century, Niall Ferguson observed that “many parts of the world would benefit from a period of American rule” and recommended that the US should unabashedly embrace its imperial vocation.³⁴⁷ A century after Theodore Roosevelt had yielded his “Big Stick”, his imperialist shadow returned to haunt American foreign policy. Considerably more ambitious, Michael Ignatieff made a case for a global “humanitarian empire” encompassing free, self-governing countries willing to use military force to initiate long-term nation-building in failed states.³⁴⁸ Accompanying this imperial impulse, a doctrine of “humanitarian intervention” progressively made its way in international diplomatic and legal circles. In the ruins of the former Yugoslavia, the doctrine was

343 See, Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest*, No. 16, 1989, p. 1. Rebuttals of Fukuyama now fill volumes, but an interesting point of view may be found in: Robert Kagan. *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*. New York: Knopf, 2008.

344 See, Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1990/1991, p. 24.

345 Ibid. p 33. Ten year later, Krauthammer “revisited” the unipolar moment. See, Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited”, *The National Interest*, No. 70, 2002/03, pp. 5-17.

346 See, for instance, Richard N. Haas. *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997.

347 See, Niall Ferguson. *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005, p. 2.

348 See, Michael Ignatieff. *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. New York: Vintage, 2003.

implemented by boots on the ground in Kosovo and deemed applicable – even if selectively, as Rwanda demonstrated – to other far-flung lands.³⁴⁹

Quite predictably, even as they prosecuted a global war on terror, American officials rebuffed the notion that the US harbored imperial ambitions. At West Point, in June 2003, president Bush forcibly – perhaps too forcibly – declared that “America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish”³⁵⁰. Months later, in November of the same year, the president yet again reiterated the proposition that the US possesses “no territorial ambitions. We don’t seek an empire. Our nation is committed to freedom for ourselves and for others”³⁵¹. Imperium, of course, need not be synonymous with territorial expansion and direct control; in a globalized world imperium assumed the form of an ongoing Americanization of national cultures and economies.³⁵² And whereas the proposition that America was committed to freedom for itself was uncontroversial; that it was committed to nothing but freedom for others was readily contradicted by historical experience as well as by Washington’s post-9/11 embrace of thuggish autocrats enlisting in the war on terror.

Although US preeminence was at its zenith as the Bush Administration prepared to topple Saddam Hussein, two major powers were unwilling to acquiesce to an America-centric world. A rising China and a revanchist Russia gradually but persistently began to contest US influence and power. As George W. Bush maneuvered to assemble a coalition to dislodge Iraq’s Baathists, an “anti-war” counter-coalition congregating Russia, China, France and Germany congealed to block military action in the Middle East. The substantial political damage inflicted on the Bush administration by the “anti-war” camp, particularly at the United Nations Security Council, shook the pillars of Euro-American

349 See, Samantha Power. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books, 2002; Alex J. Bellamy. *Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to End Mass Atrocities*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009; Gareth Evans. *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institutional Press, 2008. On the early discussion of humanitarian intervention focusing on Kosovo, see, *inter alia*, Simon Duke, “The State and Human Rights: Sovereignty Versus Humanitarian Intervention,” *International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1994, pp. 25-48; Sean D. Murphy. *Humanitarian Intervention: The United Nations in an Evolving World Order*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996; Ruth Gordon, “Humanitarian Intervention by the United Nations: Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti,” *Texas International Law Journal*, 31, 1996, pp. 43-56; Catherine Guicherd, “International Law and the War in Kosovo,” *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1999, pp. 19-34; and Richard B. Builder, “Kosovo and the ‘New Interventionism’: Promise or Peril?” *Journal of Transnational Law & Policy*, 9, 1999, pp. 153-182.

350 See, The White House, “President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point”, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 1, 2002, available at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>

351 See, George W. Bush, “Remarks at a White House Reception for Veterans”, November 11, 2002, *The American Presidency Project*, UC Santa Barbara, available at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-white-house-reception-for-veterans>. Also, Michael Cox, ‘Empire by Denial: The Strange Case of the United States’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1, 2005, pp. 15-30.

352 The parallels between Rome and the United States make for an interesting discussion, and very different views and conclusions. See, for example, Cullen Murphy. *Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007; and Thomas F. Madden. *Empires of Trust: How Rome Built – and America Is Building – a New World*. New York: Dutton, 2008.

relations and provoked the “near-death” of the transatlantic alliance.³⁵³ Incredibly, at the same time, a few, mostly American, academics concluded that a nascent European Union profoundly divided over Iraq was destined to supplant the United States as the “next superpower”³⁵⁴. Flattered by such magical thinking, continental elites entertained the possibility that a leading international role was reserved for for the European Union as American power waned. More nuanced than most, Robert Cooper’s *The Breaking of Nations* emphasized Europe’s normative power and fretted that global commitments elicited by the war on terror raised the specter of American overextension.³⁵⁵

Coming in the aftermath of the bitter experiences endured in Somalia and Haiti during the early 1990s, American efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq revealed the country’s unsuitability for prolonged occupation and nation-building. The Afghan and Iraqi quagmires thus largely dissipated the imperial impulse driving George W. Bush’s “freedom agenda”. The consequences of the 2003 Iraqi war, as well as the impressive rise of Asia, led Fareed Zakaria, in 2008, to describe a “post-American” world where the United States retained its status as the most powerful nation, but was severely circumscribed by the rise of the “rest”³⁵⁶. Zakaria mirrored the spirit of the times as George W. Bush, in the twilight months of his presidency, confronted a global financial meltdown that prompted Russian belligerence in the “near abroad” and convinced China’s communist leadership that the tide of history had definitively turned against the United States.³⁵⁷ A watershed historical moment was at hand.

In this context, throughout the weeks and months of the 2008 race for the White House, Barack Obama argued that the United States had entered a phase of accelerated decline. As a result of structural shifts in international politics, the immediate challenge confronting the new president was not one of reversing the emerging multipolar system. Such was an impossible undertaking. Rather, the fundamental task was to outline a grand

353 See, Elizabeth Pond. *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004; William Shawcross. *Allies: The United States, Britain, Europe and the War in Iraq*. London: Atlantic Books, 2003; Laurent Cohen-Tanugi. *An Alliance at Risk: The United States and Europe since September 11*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003; and João Marques de Almeida and Vasco Rato. *A Encruzilhada: Portugal, a Europa e os Estados Unidos*. Lisbon: Bertrand Editora, 2004.

354 From that period, see, *inter alia*, T. R. Reid. *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004; Jeremy Rifkin. *The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*. New York: Penguin, 2004; Rockwell A. Schnabel with Francis X. Rocca. *The Next Superpower?: The Rise of Europe and its Challenge to the United States*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005; Mark Leonard. *Why Europe will Run the 21st Century*. London: Fourth Estate, 2005; and John McCormick. *The European Superpower*. London: Palgrave, 2007. More sanguinely, Charles Krauthammer suggested that “while a unified Europe may sometime in the next century act as a single power, its initial disarray and disjointed national responses to the the crisis in the Persian Gulf again illustrate that “Europe” does not yet qualify even as a player on the world stage”. See, Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

355 See, Robert Cooper. *The Breaking of Nations. Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century*. Atlantic Books, 2003.

356 See, Fareed Zakaria. *The Post-American World*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

357 On the crisis, see, Adam Tooze. *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*. London: Allen Lane, 2018.

strategy capable of managing America's relative decline and the global consequences unleashed by such a novel circumstance.³⁵⁸ Given this irreversible waning of US power, Obama set out to reconfigure the country's international role and commitments in accordance with a new, increasingly unfavorable correlation of power. He therefore campaigned on the promise to extricate the United States from its ongoing wars and advocated the pursuit of a "humble" foreign policy.³⁵⁹ Never understood as a choice, Obama's retrenchment was presented as an inevitability, a view summarized in the administration's 2015 *National Security Strategy* in the following terms: "In an interconnected world, there are no global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone. American leadership remains essential for mobilizing collective action to address global risks and seize strategic opportunities. Our closest partners and allies will remain the cornerstone of our international engagement"³⁶⁰.

In 2016, Trump, like Obama eight years before him, was adamant in claiming that America was rapidly descending into national decline. However, unlike the Democrat president, he did not consider it irreversible. Irrespective of this fundamental difference, their views on the indispensability of promoting the country's economic renewal were largely coincidental. Obama grasped that such renewal was the *sine qua non* condition for permitting an orderly management of decline through retrenchment; Trump, in contradistinction, saw it as the first and necessary step for reversing the descent into enduring decline. To the extent that he was convinced that decline was reversible through a radical overhauling of the country's political leadership, Trump foresaw a considerably less bleak future than the one anticipated by Obama's rather dismal vision. While Obama believed that, at best, decline was manageable through a robust network of alliances and the concomitant strengthening of liberal rules and institutions, Trump concluded that the internationalist bias driving US foreign policy was itself a prime cause of the nation's woes. Armed with this conviction, he posited that it was necessary to abandon the "globalist" approach of his immediate predecessors. Sovereignty and vital national interests were to be placed firmly at the center of a new, nationalist foreign policy.³⁶¹

358 For example, see, Robert Singh. *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy: The Limits of Engagement*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. The 2008 financial crisis convinced the leadership that capitalism was in accelerated decline and, as a corollary, "socialist renewal" was the only viable path open to China. In practical terms, this meant that the country's export-driven model of growth needed to "bring the state back in" and promote policies meant to attenuate social inequalities and accentuate the Chinese Communist Party's guidance in economic development.

359 On the Obama Doctrine, see, Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, April 2016, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>; and Colin Dueck. *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

360 See, The White House, "National Security Strategy", February 2015, p. 3, available at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf.

361 Cf., Robert Kagan, "The Twilight of the Liberal World Order", *The Brookings Institution*, January 24, 2017. Consulted at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order>.

3.2. In a Palace of Dreams

Appreciating the uniqueness of the Trump presidency requires a cursory appreciation of the nature of the bipartisan consensus guiding US foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. Regardless of the differences separating Trump's predecessors, all (including Ronald Reagan) expressed absolute fidelity to the international order created after 1945. Although a simplification of US foreign policy traditions, it may still be said that more "realistic" positions rivaled with more "idealistic" approaches throughout the Cold War decades.³⁶² Realists such as Richard Nixon were guided by national interest pragmatism and sought to preserve international security through the balance of power. Idealists such as Carter favored cooperation within a framework of liberal norms, multilateral institutions, human rights and democratic values. The essential point worth retaining is that the broad bipartisan consensus in foreign policy superseded the divergences separating "realists" and "idealists", always more a matter of degree rather than of kind. Both shared the conviction that the United States, the principal architect of the liberal order, could not abdicate from its leading international role.³⁶³ Both pressed for the continuation of American primacy sustaining the liberal order. Both understood that free trade and broad multilateral mechanisms, including treaty alliances, were indispensable for conserving American power and international stability. Both subscribed to the notion that the enlargement of democracy and markets resulted in the creation of "zones of peace" – such as the European Union –, reinforcing the liberal order and, therefore, making US military intervention less likely.³⁶⁴ Consequently, there arose a relentless, inexorable pressure to promote political liberalism and free trade through international institutions, an impulse most clearly manifested in the foreign policies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Holding office during a period marked by the absence of significant constraints on the expansion of the liberal order, Bill Clinton laboured to forge a new, post-Cold War bipartisan consensus resting on American economic and military preponderance and international leadership. Primacy would be maintained and employed to achieve the country's core mission, which, according to National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, was to enlarge the "community of free nations" so that, in the final analysis, the US

362 For an excellent discussion, cf. Walter Russell Mead. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*. New York: Knopf, 2001. See also Thomas I. Cook and Malcolm Moos, "Foreign Policy: The Realism of Idealism", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2, June 1952, pp. 343-356.

363 On the post-1945 liberal order, see, for example, John G. Ruggie. *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996; G. John Ikenberry. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; G. John Ikenberry. *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: American Power and International Order*. Cambridge: Polity, 2006; Gideon Rose, "What Obama Gets Right: Keep Calm and Carry the Liberal Order On", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 5, 2015, pp. 2-12; G. John Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal Order?", *International Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 1, 2018, pp. 7-23; Hans W. Maull, "The Once and Future Liberal Order", *Survival*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2019, pp. 7-32; and Kori Schake. *America vs the West: Can the Liberal Order be Preserved?* London: Penguin, 2019.

364 See, Arie M. Kacowicz, "Explaining Zones of Peace: Democracies as Satisfied Powers?", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 1995, pp. 265-276.

would become “more secure, prosperous and influential”³⁶⁵. Defined by the president as “our former adversaries”, China and Russia were to be absorbed into the “international system as open, prosperous, stable nations”³⁶⁶. All of this was within reach because, for Clinton, globalization was a benign process whose widening and deepening would, so the argument went, produce a complex, integrated and “flat” world fomenting economic well-being and democratization.³⁶⁷ Such a compelling conclusion rested on president Clinton’s fairly superficial belief that “the more people know, the more opinions they are going to have; the more democracy spreads”³⁶⁸.

Convinced that the intensification of trade flows would ultimately generate socio-economic change propitious to democratization, and subscribing to the neo-Kantian proposition that democracies do not wage war against each other, American policymakers on both sides of the ideological divide committed the United States to the expansion of democracy and markets as a means of securing a lasting peace. Since the spread of globalization fostered democracy, it stood to reason that international security would be enhanced by the resulting “inter-democratic peace”³⁶⁹. Mutually reinforcing,

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- 365 Anthony Lake, Bill Clinton’s first Director of the National Security Council, outlined the main pillars of the Clinton Doctrine in a speech given on September 21, 1991, at the Johns Hopkins University. See, Antony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement”, September 21, 1993, available at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>. Also, on the Clinton Doctrine, see, The White House, “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement”, February 1996, available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=444939>. For a discussion, see, Douglas Brinkley, “Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, 1997, pp. 110-127; and J. Dumbrell, “Was There a Clinton Doctrine? President Clinton’s Foreign Policy Reconsidered”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 22, 2002, pp. 43-56.
- 366 See, The White House, “Remarks by the President on Foreign Policy”, Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Francisco, California, February 26, 1999, available at: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/clintfpts.htm>.
- 367 See, Thomas L. Friedman. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. Years before Friedman’s book was published, various academics were skeptical of the “flattening” effects of globalization and pointed out the asymmetric and often contradictory nature of the globalization process. See, for instance, Benjamin R. Barber. *Jihad vs. McWorld: How the Planet Is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together and What This Means for Democracy*. New York: Crown Books, 1995.
- 368 According to Clinton, “The more people know, the more opinions they’re going to have; the more democracy spreads – and keep in mind, more than half the world now lives under governments of their own choosing – the more people are going to believe that they should be the masters of their own fate”. See, The White House, “Remarks by the President at the World Economic Forum”, Davos, Switzerland, January 29, 2000, available at: https://1997-2001.state.gov/travels/2000/000129clinton_wef.html.
- 369 There is an unending literature exploring the positive correlation – for it is a correlation – between democracy and peace. For some of the pioneering works, see, *inter alia*, Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs” (Part 1), *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1983, pp. 205-235; Michael Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4, 1986, pp. 1151-1169; Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, “Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3, 1993, pp. 624-638; Raymond Cohen, “Pacific Unions: A Reappraisal of the Theory That Democracies Do Not Go to War with Each Other”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1994, pp. 207-223; Michael Doyle. *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997; John R. Oneal and James Lee Ray, “New Tests of the Democratic Peace: Controlling for Economic Interdependence, 1950-85”, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 1997, pp. 751-775; John M. Owen. *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997; and Stephen van Evera. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. Also, Vasco Rato, “Mas são mesmo mais pacíficas?”, *Política Internacional*, No. 18, 1998, pp. 93-114.

democratization and globalization – both deemed desirable from a normative perspective –, likewise served to boost US national security. The new foreign policy orthodoxy thus claimed that no noticeable contradiction existed between democracy promotion and the fulfilment of America’s vital national interest. The United States found itself in the envious position of not needing to choose between promoting its values or its naked self-interest, the main line of contention between Cold War realists and idealists. Still, as National Security Advisor Lake conceded, democracy promotion would, on occasion, be tempered by power constraints; that is, non-democratic regimes would at times have to be supported so as to assure the advancement of broad US national interests.³⁷⁰

The enlargement doctrine played out differently in the world’s many regions. During Russia’s tortuous transition to markets and democracy, Western political and financial support was channeled to Boris Yeltsin’s reformist camp. Perhaps the sole viable policy available at the time, the failed effort to democratize Russia led to the emergence of an autocratic Vladimir Putin bent on avenging the country’s post-Soviet “humiliation” at the hands of a West that had brought NATO and the EU to Russia’s doorstep. In Europe, this *clintonian* approach was pursued by way of continental integration through the expansion of NATO and the EU to Central and Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia’s descent into ethno-nationalism and bloody “ethnic cleansing” did raise doubts about the brave new world emerging in Europe’s Balkan periphery.³⁷¹ However, Bill Clinton found solace for his inaction in the region’s “ancient hatreds” described in Robert D. Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts*, a book decisively shaping Clinton’s view of the region.³⁷² Reluctantly, Americans and Europeans confronted by the horrors vividly displayed on the nightly news, intervened in Bosnia and, later, in Kosovo.

As for the People’s Republic of China, the new foreign policy orthodoxy posited that engagement with Beijing would generate internal political change leading to acceptable – that is, relatively benign – Chinese behavior on the world stage.³⁷³ The key premise

370 See, Antony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement”, op. cit.

371 See, Michael Ignatieff. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. New York: Noonday Press, 1995, pp. 19-56.

372 See, Robert D. Kaplan. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Also, Michael Kaufman, “The Dangers of Letting a President Read”, *The New York Times*, May 22, 1999, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/22/books/the-dangers-of-letting-a-president-read.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

373 Expressing this view, Bill Clinton, in 1997, claimed that: “Isolation of China is unworkable, counterproductive, and potentially dangerous. Military, political, and economic measures to do such a thing would find little support among our allies around the world and, more importantly, even among Chinese themselves working for greater liberty. Isolation would encourage the Chinese to become hostile and to adopt policies of conflict with our own interests and values. It will eliminate, not facilitate, cooperation on weapons proliferation. It would hinder, not help, our efforts to foster stability in Asia. It would exacerbate, not ameliorate, the plight of dissidents. It would close off, not open up, one of the world’s most important markets. It would make China less, not more, likely to play by the rules of international conduct and to be a part of an emerging international consensus”. See, The White House, “Remarks by the President in Address on China and the National Interest”, *Voice of America*, Washington, DC, October 24, 1997, consulted at: https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eap/971024_clinton_china.html.

underpinning the *clintonite* “China consensus” posited that engagement, understood as China’s integration into a robust, globalized capitalist international economy, would stimulate growth and produce a flourishing middle class whose interests would drive it to demand greater participation in national politics. Multiple societal pressures on the state would, in turn, ignite institutional change since the communist regime, seeking to survive, had no alternative but to accommodate the novel middle class. In short, incrementing pluralism in an increasingly complex Chinese society would spark liberalizing reform and, in the most optimistic of outcomes, full democratization. Voicing the exuberant optimism underlying his enlargement strategy, Clinton remarked that “what is the best thing to do to maximize the chance that China will take the right course, and that, because of that, the world will be freer, more peaceful, more prosperous in the 21st century? I do not believe we can bring change to China if we isolate China from the forces of change”³⁷⁴. Seen in this light, America’s material self-interest, understood as investment opportunities and market access, was a force for promoting democracy and markets, globalization’s twin pillars.

In practical terms, Clinton’s enlargement strategy proposed the inclusion of China in the liberal order through strategic engagement, free trade, globalization and – Beijing’s ultimate prize – World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. Convinced that trade policy was an instrument for nourishing China’s “peaceful rise”, US policymakers looking to bring Beijing into the international community as a stakeholder accepted asymmetries in the bilateral Sino-American relationship. Eager to validate Washington’s globalist outlook, the Chinese communist elite readily pledged itself to the pursuit of a “peaceful rise” within the parameters of the existing liberal order.³⁷⁵ However, because Clinton and Lake saw change as fundamentally unilinear, they failed to entertain the eventuality of America being profoundly impacted by globalization and, more specifically, by China’s absorption into the globalized international order.

Incredible as it may seem from the vantage point of the present, these rather naïve ideas and policies – denounced by Trump as “unfair” and advantageous to the Chinese side – structured the foreign policy establishment consensus in the United States and Europe. Regardless of the differences separating the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, neither truly abandoned the essential pillars and underlying assumptions of this internationalist vision. During the 2016 presidential contest, it became increasingly clear that the strategy – uncompromisingly defended by Hillary Clinton – had failed to correspond to long-held expectations. Rather than a responsible international stakeholder,

374 See, The White House, “Remarks by the President on Foreign Policy”, op. cit.

375 Cf., State Council White Paper, “China’s Peaceful Development Road”, *People’s Daily*, October 22, 2005, available at: http://en.people.cn/200512/22/eng20051222_230059.html. For a discussion, see, David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft Power Push: The Search for Respect”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 4, 2015, pp. 99-107; Henry Kissinger, *On China*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2011, pp. 499-513; Zheng Bijian, China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great-Power Status”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5, 2005, pp. 18-24; and Barry Buzan, “China in International Society: Is ‘Peaceful Rise’ Possible?”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2010, pp. 5-36.

China morphed into an assertive rival and Russia was challenging – in words and deeds – American hegemony and Western liberal values. It was precisely this foreign policy legacy that Donald Trump set out to overturn when he entered the race for the White House.

Donald Trump was certainly not the first American politician to raise his voice against the established consensus on foreign policy. Throughout the immediate post-Cold War period, globalist views were, on several occasions, challenged from the margins of American politics. Pat Buchanan, in 1992 and 1996, mounted “insurgent campaigns” for the GOP presidential nomination, introducing a set of themes that would subsequently be revived by Donald Trump. Exhibiting the same muscular nationalism later personified by Trump, Buchanan advocated national retrenchment and an isolationist foreign policy. Anticipating Trump’s positions on trade, Buchanan championed the imposition of customs barriers and proposed to revoke NAFTA. He also defended limitations on illegal immigration and, most importantly, warned of the inherent risks posed by the emergence of the People’s Republic of China. Evidently, Buchanan was not the sole Republican seeking to undo the internationalist consensus shared by the Democrat and GOP establishments. A veteran of several primary presidential campaigns, including the 2008 and 2016 Republican races, Congressman Ron Paul advocated a return to the gold standard, greater isolationism and an end to overseas military interventions.³⁷⁶ The latter point was crucial because it was at the very heart of the *clintonian* consensus uniting Republican hawks and liberal internationalists on the right of the Democrat party arguing for the enlistment of American military power in the promotion of markets and democracy.³⁷⁷

On the other side of the politico-ideological spectrum, the left wing of the Democrat party also evinced a deep discomfort with the free trade and external interventionism agendas promoted by the *clintonites*. In 1992, enthusiastically backed by major labor unions, Iowa senator Tom Harkin raised the protectionist banner as he entered the party’s presidential sweepstakes. In 2004, John Edwards’ economic nationalism similarly drew attention to the nefarious consequences of free trade for working class Americans. Although the 2004 nomination would ultimately be won by John Kerry, Edwards – who would fall to scandal four years later while running for the presidential nomination – was designated as the party’s vice-presidential candidate. Important Democrat constituencies supported the anti-free trade agenda. Unions maintained that labor markets had been

376 See, Tim Mak, “Ron Paul: Close foreign military bases”, *Politico*, November 20, 2011, available at: <https://www.politico.com/blogs/politico-now/2011/11/ron-paul-close-foreign-military-bases-040970>; and Christopher Caldwell, “The Antiwar, Anti-Abortion, Anti-Drug-Enforcement-Administration, Anti-Medicare Candidacy of Dr. Ron Paul”, *The New York Times*, July 22, 2007, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/22/magazine/22Paul-t.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

377 For an example of this position, cf., Peter Beinart. *The Good Fight: Why Liberals – and Only Liberals – Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006. The Democrat most closely associated with this approach was Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, whose hawkish foreign policy views were virtually indistinguishable from John McCain’s. Perhaps for that reason McCain considered nominating Lieberman as his vice-presidential running mate in 2008. See, James Kirchick, “The Last Liberal: The Legacy of Joe Lieberman”, *World Affairs*, Vol. 175, No. 5, 2013, pp. 52-58.

liberalized to the detriment of blue collar workers. Environmentalists viewed free trade with suspicion since deregulation, so they argued, undermined the nation's stringent environmental standards. This simmering distrust of globalization was articulated with much force by the progressive wing of the Democrat party in 2016 and 2020, when Bernie Sanders spearheaded a campaign bearing greater resemblance to *trumpian* rhetoric and policy prescriptions than to the 1990s centrist Democrat positions represented by Hillary Clinton in 2016. No wonder then that Sanders and Trump lambasted Clinton for her support of the 2003 military intervention targeting Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime and her backing of the TPP, two issues symbolizing the globalist foreign policy consensus.

When all was said and done, it fell upon Trump to raise the nationalist banner against the active politician who best embodied post-Cold War internationalism. Defender of a foreign policy rooted in the fundamental norms and institutions underpinning the liberal order, including free trade, multilateralism and robust US treaty alliances, Hillary Clinton readily embraced the role of spokesperson for the foreign policy establishment. The 2016 campaign therefore represented an unmistakable choice between a candidate promoting the continuation of the post-war bipartisan consensus and a heterodox challenger intending to debunk several pillars of the establishment's foreign policy edifice. Indeed, it would have been difficult to find two candidates so perfectly exemplifying the contrasts separating both sides of the foreign policy divide.

In the post-9/11 world, globalization gradually morphed from an economic into a broad "security" issue. While the Bush and Obama administrations retained their commitment to multilateral institutionalism, by 2008 the global financial crisis, the Middle Eastern wars and the rise of Asia indicated that the fundamental pillars of the international liberal order were unraveling. By 2016, countries as diverse as Modi's India, Erdoğan's Turkey and Putin's Russia had taken sharp nationalist turns.³⁷⁸ Western democracies were not immune to this wave of discontentment and contestation as populists fueled nationalist mobilization so as to undermine perceived ills wrought on by globalization.³⁷⁹ This Western backlash intensified as off-shoring of manufacturing shifted jobs and value chains from Europe and the United States to China and other developing countries. As off-shoring augmented, globalist "cosmopolitan elites" seemed oblivious to the woes of anxious working and middle classes. Fearful of downward mobility, these social groups provided populist politicians with ready-made constituencies holding free trade and globalization responsible for their plight. Disenchantment with globalization thus emerged as one of the main causes of the generalized crisis of liberal democracy.

When Trump arrived at the White House, a coherent, structured alternative to the internationalist consensus had yet to take shape, but the new president believed himself

378 See, Timothy Snyder. *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*. New York: Duggan Books, 2018.

379 See, Vasco Rato, "Canários na Mina: a democracia, a globalização e o populismo", *Nação e Defesa*, No. 155, April 2020, pp. 87-113.

to be in possession of a mandate authorizing him to repudiate the infamous Washington foreign policy blob. Subscribing to the adage that the best defense is a good offense, Trump outlined an aggressive economic statecraft largely at odds with the main underpinnings of the international liberal order.³⁸⁰ During the early months of the administration, the president's anti-globalist, economic nationalism effectively securitized what until then were economic and trade issues. Addressing these concerns, Trump's economic and trade agendas advocated either the renegotiation or the outright withdrawal from NAFTA, TPP and TTIP.³⁸¹ His 'America First' approach exhibited only the most cursory commitment to multilateral institutions and contemplated protectionist policies directed at foes and allies alike. With the publication of the 2017 *National Security Strategy*, White House policy evolved from simple protectionism to the pursuit of a broad geopolitical rivalry encompassing trade, technology, political and security competition with China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. Last but not least, preoccupations with democracy and human rights were noticeably absent from White House priorities and the "principled realism" of the Trump administration.

380 On economic statecraft, see, *inter alia*, Juan C. Zarate, "Harnessing the Financial Furies: Smart Financial Power and National Security," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2009, pp. 43-59; Robert Zoellick, "The Currency of Power", *Foreign Policy*, October 8, 2012, accessed at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/08/the-currency-of-power/>; Juan Zarate. *Treasury's War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Statecraft*. New York. PublicAffairs, 2013; Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris. *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*. New York: The Council of Foreign Relations, 2016; and David A. Baldwin. *Economic Statecraft: New Edition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. Geo-economics is frequently used as a synonym for economic statecraft. In an article published in 1990 in the *The National Interest*, Edward N. Luttwak wrote that "the waning of the Cold War is steadily reducing the importance of military power in world affairs" and, therefore, "the methods of commerce are displacing military methods". That "method of commerce" combined with the logic of conflict meant that "states are inherently inclined to strive for relative advantage against like entities on the international scene, even if only by means other than force" was best characterized as geo-economics. See, Edward N. Luttwak, "From Geopolitics to Geo-economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce", *The National Interest*, No. 20, 1990, pp. 17-23.

381 Donald Trump's trade policy was outlined in *The President's 2017 Trade Policy Agenda* and the *2017 Trade Policy Agenda and 2016 Annual Report of the President of the United States on the Trade Agreements Program*. See, Office of the United States Trade Representative, "The President's 2017 Trade Policy Agenda", March 2017, available at: <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/files/reports/2017/AnnualReport/Chapter%20I%20-%20The%20President%27s%20Trade%20Policy%20Agenda.pdf>; and Office of the United States Trade Representative, "2017 Trade Policy Agenda and 2016 Annual Report of the President of the United States on the Trade Agreements Program", March 2017, available at: <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/files/reports/2017/AnnualReport/AnnualReport2017.pdf>. For an overview of Trump's early trade policy, see, Christoph Scherrer and Elizabeth Abernathy, "Trump's Trade Policy Agenda", *Interconomics*, ISSN 1613-964X, Springer, Heidelberg, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2017, pp. 364-369, available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/213153/1/364-369-Scherrer.pdf>; and Kristen Hopewell, "Trump and Trade: The Crisis in the Multilateral Trading System", *New Political Economy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2021, pp. 271-282, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/13563467.2020.1841135?needAccess=true>.

3.3. A Warning to the World

President Trump cast off the moorings of US foreign policy during his 20 January 2017 ‘America First’ inauguration address.³⁸² Delivered from the steps of the Capitol, the president’s speech reflected a transactional view of international affairs and a noticeably restrictive reading of US national interests manifestly at odds with long-standing Washingtonian orthodoxy. Unusual in both content and style, the address began with the assertion that America’s citizens were being called upon to collaborate in “a great national effort to rebuild our country and to restore its promise for all of our people”³⁸³. To that end, the president announced that “we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People”, an urgent imperative at that point in time because “a small group in our nation’s Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost”³⁸⁴. Defaulting to a typically populist lexicon, he added that Washington’s politicians “prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country”³⁸⁵. A populist “us versus them” – an immaculate people pitted against corrupt elites – dichotomy was thus firmly established as a guiding premise of the administration’s approach to national and international affairs.³⁸⁶

Consistent with Donald Trump’s campaign rhetoric, the speech reaffirmed the nature of the political contract binding the GOP president to the “forgotten men and women of our country” that “will be forgotten no longer”³⁸⁷. Power was being confiscated from the establishment and handed to the “common man” previously victimized by the dysfunctional policies pursued by callous, unresponsive elites. In this respect, *trumpism* was meant to be a genuinely revolutionary movement. The torturous plight of the “forgotten” – Trump’s “American carnage” leading to foreign enrichment at

382 For the full inauguration address, see, The White House, “The Inaugural Address”, January 20, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>.

383 Ibid.

384 Ibid.

385 Ibid.

386 A vast academic literature on populism grows daily. In English, some of the more insightful works include: Chantal Mouffe. *For a Left Populism*. London: Verso, 2018; Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017; Jan-Werner Müller. *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016; Benjamin Moffitt. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016; Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso, 2005; Francisco Panizza. *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London: Verso, 2005; Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2004, pp. 542-563, available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x/full>; Yves Mény and Yves Surel, (eds.). *Democracy and the Populist Challenge*. New York: Palgrave, 2002; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985; Margaret Canovan, “People, Politicians, and Populism”, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1984, pp. 312-327; and Margaret Canovan. *Populism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981.

387 For the full inauguration address, see, The White House, “The Inaugural Address”, January 20, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>.

“the expense of American industry” – stopped “right here and stops right now” because by electing Donald Trump the nation took the first, necessary step to invert decline.³⁸⁸ All was slated to change as the new administration issued “a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power... From this moment on, it’s going to be America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families”³⁸⁹. Borders were to be insulated “from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength”³⁹⁰. As a result of this new course, president Trump held out the promise that “America will start winning again, winning like never before”³⁹¹.

Particularly grievous was the fact that US might was being sapped by prosperous allies free-riding on America’s open markets and security guarantees. For far too long, the president maintained, US taxpayers had “(S)ubsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military; We’ve defended other nation’s borders while refusing to defend our own; and spent trillions of dollars overseas while America’s infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay”³⁹². Trump was, in effect, claiming that while allied states had become prosperous, in no small part due to their access to the US market, the costs of maintaining alliances and the international liberal order were borne by an increasingly impoverished American “common man”. In short, Trump asserted that other countries became “rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon... The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world”³⁹³. As a consequence of such a massive transfer of national wealth to overseas beneficiaries, an overhauling of US foreign policy was an urgent task if decline was to be checked.

President Trump asserted that the country’s foreign policy would henceforth be orientated by “the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first”³⁹⁴. As a corollary of this foundational principle of international relations, the new administration expected that other nations – friend and foe alike – would similarly pursue their narrow national interest. Regarding foreign military interventionism, nation-building and democracy promotion – hallmarks of the foreign policy establishment consensus –, the United States would henceforth refrain from seeking “to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow”³⁹⁵. Operationalizing this principle a few months before, Trump, offering his thoughts on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s management of a coup attempt in Turkey, declared that “(W)

388 Ibid.

389 Ibid.

390 Ibid.

391 Ibid.

392 Ibid.

393 Ibid.

394 Ibid.

395 Ibid.

hen the world sees how bad the United States is and we start talking about civil liberties, I don't think we are a very good messenger"³⁹⁶. In the future, American exceptionalism was to rely on the force of example rather than on the power of force.

Although Washington could not dispense allies and friends, such relationships were to be transactional in nature and designed to attain specific objectives such as uniting "the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth"³⁹⁷. Domestically, Trump's new direction in foreign policy would nourish the bonds of patriotism because American nationalism would be revitalized inasmuch as "through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other"³⁹⁸. 'America First' was thus understood as much more than an approach to foreign policy; it provided a roadmap for surmounting pernicious group loyalties and societal divisions fostered by an "identity politics" corroding the nation's unity, prosperity and power. Inverting national decline demanded a new comportment abroad dictated by narrow interest that was itself predicated on the building of a new patriotism at home.

A few months later, the generic foreign policy orientation outlined in the president's inaugural address was clarified and given greater conceptual grounding. Speaking before the delegates gathered at the United Nations' 2017 General Assembly Fall meeting, Trump warned of "growing dangers that threaten everything we cherish and value"; specifically, terrorists and extremists, nuclear-armed rogue regimes and authoritarians seeking "to collapse the values, the systems, and alliances that prevented conflict and tilted the world toward freedom since World War II"³⁹⁹. He also identified a number of transnational threats to peace and stability, including international criminal networks that "traffic drugs, weapons, people; force dislocation and mass migration; threaten our borders; and new forms of aggression exploit technology to menace our citizens"⁴⁰⁰.

Donald Trump's basic understanding of international politics was summarized in the following terms: "we are renewing this founding principle of sovereignty. Our government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens – to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights, and to defend their values. As President of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries will always, and should always, put your countries first"⁴⁰¹. More critically, in a world of competing nation-states the US "can no longer be taken advantage of, or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return. As long as I hold this office, I will defend America's interests above all else"⁴⁰². Restating the general premises

396 See, David E. Sanger and Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack", *The New York Times*, July 20, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/donald-trump-issues.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

397 See, The White House, "The Inaugural Address", January 20, 2017, op. cit.

398 Ibid.

399 See, The White House, "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly", September 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>.

400 Ibid.

401 Ibid.

402 Ibid.

of his January 2017 inaugural address, this declaration expressed Trump's core conviction that "the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition"⁴⁰³. And since sovereignty was the main driver of world politics, it logically followed that global governance schemes much in favor at the UN and elsewhere were an inadequate base for building and sustaining a stable world order.

Once American interests were to be aggressively pursued, 'America First' could never be synonymous with isolationism. As long as the United States was straddled with upholding interests in the four corners of the planet, isolationism could never be seriously entertained. But if 'America First' required continued engagement with the outside world, it was clearly incompatible with the multilateralism espoused by previous administrations, the United Nations and many of America's traditional allies.⁴⁰⁴ Positing that the United Nations was founded to shape a "better future", Trump claimed that the organization had been meant to incarnate the "vision that diverse nations could cooperate to protect their sovereignty, preserve their security, and promote their prosperity"⁴⁰⁵. Acknowledging that the UN was "built on the noble idea that the whole world is safer when nations are strong, independent, and free", decades of grim experience demonstrated that, now as in the past, "success depends on a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity, and peace for themselves and for the world"⁴⁰⁶. Since international cooperation was made possible by the existence of "strong, sovereign nations", the United States would henceforth "not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch"⁴⁰⁷.

Echoing his White House predecessors, the president affirmed that post-1945 America "did not seek territorial expansion, or attempt to impose our way of life on others"; rather, "we helped build institutions such as this one to defend the sovereignty, security, and prosperity for all"⁴⁰⁸. Albeit exaggerating America's altruism in world affairs to the point of historical revisionism, Trump was signaling that Washington's new power-holders were not yet prepared to disavow multilateral institutions. Consistent with Trump's transactional views, the usefulness of these bodies was derived from their efficacy in protecting "our nations, their interests, and their futures"⁴⁰⁹. Said differently, multilateralism was accepted only insofar as it preempted "threats to sovereignty, from the Ukraine to the South China Sea. We must uphold respect for law, respect for borders, and respect for culture, and the peaceful engagement these allow"⁴¹⁰. To the extent that Trump was convinced that international organizations – including the United Nations

403 Ibid.

404 See, Thomas Weiss, "The UN and Multilateralism under Siege in the 'Age of Trump'", op. cit.

405 See, The White House, "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly", September 19, 2017, op. cit.

406 Ibid.

407 Ibid.

408 Ibid.

409 Ibid.

410 Ibid.

– were straying from the core values, rules and purposes underpinning the liberal order, multilateralism was increasingly unpalatable to the administration.

But what, exactly, were those unambiguous threats the president believed needed to be confronted? Perhaps the most salient of these was “a small group of rogue regimes that... respect neither their own citizens nor the sovereign rights of their countries”, foremost of which was “the depraved regime in North Korea”⁴¹¹. Warning that the United States reserved for itself the right to adopt all measures necessary to defend itself and its allies from a nuclearized North Korea, Trump asserted that, if forced, “we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime. The United States is ready, willing and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary”⁴¹². Although subsequently opting for a strategy of engagement with Pyongyang, Trump, at this point in time, proclaimed that it was “time for all nations to work together to isolate the Kim regime until it ceases its hostile behavior”⁴¹³. Manifestly skeptical of the efficacy of international institutions to achieve this goal, Trump was not prepared to exclude them outright from playing a role in neutralizing threats to regional stability. Yet, in the final analysis, sovereignty meant not being constrained from acting when faced with looming threats. Vital national interests were not to be subordinated to formal process.

North Korea was not the sole country fomenting regional instability. Another troublesome regime in Trump’s crosshairs was the Islamic Republic of Iran, depicted as “a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of a democracy...whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed, and chaos”⁴¹⁴. Claiming that Obama’s 2015 nuclear deal “was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into”, Trump advised the Iranian leadership to “stop supporting terrorists, begin serving its own people, and respect the sovereign rights of its neighbors”⁴¹⁵. Unless the *ayatollahs* willingly modified their appalling behavior, Tehran too would be subject to increased pressure and isolation, an approach fundamentally at odds with the strategy of engagement and regime normalization underpinning Barack Obama’s nuclear deal.⁴¹⁶ Lastly, Trump observed that the “Venezuelan people are starving and their country is collapsing. Their democratic institutions are being destroyed”⁴¹⁷. Describing the situation in the country as “completely unacceptable”, the president noted that Washington was encumbered with the responsibility to “help them regain their freedom, recover their

411 Ibid.

412 Ibid.

413 Ibid.

414 Ibid.

415 Ibid.

416 See, Matthew Kroenig, “The Return to the Pressure Track: The Trump Administration and the Iran Nuclear Deal”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2018, pp. 94-104.

417 The White House, “Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, September 19, 2017, op. cit.

country, and restore their democracy”⁴¹⁸. Venezuela too would be subject to Trump’s maximum pressure strategy of economic statecraft.⁴¹⁹

Confronting these regimes through multilateral institutions was possible and desirable. What remained open to dispute was the extent to which international institutions and multilateral processes were capable of providing adequate responses to the crises. The doubt was especially pertinent in regard to the United Nations because in “some cases, states that seek to subvert this institution’s noble aims have hijacked the very systems that are supposed to advance them. For example, it is a massive source of embarrassment to the United Nations that some governments with egregious human rights records sit on the UN Human Rights Council”⁴²⁰. The indirect reference to China and other autocracies was meant to highlight the irony of a body charged with the defense of human rights finding itself under the tutelage of regimes notoriously dismissive of those rights. Said differently, since the United Nations was not a reliable forum through which international action could be channeled, unilateral US action against rogue regimes was virtually unavoidable.⁴²¹ Unilateral action was not the White House’s preferred course of action, but, on occasion, it was the only choice available because liberal norms had ceased to find expression in multilateral organizations charged with upholding them. It was not that the Trump administration had abandoned liberal norms; it was that the international institutions designed to uphold them had failed.

Donald Trump was not the first American president in recent memory to shift foreign policy to a more nationalist, unilateralist underpinning. Generally forgotten is the fact that George W. Bush came to power in 2001 promising a non-ideological foreign policy orientated by a narrower understanding of the national interest. In a *Foreign Affairs* article outlining this new approach, Condoleezza Rice observed that “it is simply not possible to ignore and isolate other powerful states that do not share” the American values then driving Bill Clinton’s foreign policy⁴²². Alerting to the potential dangers accruing from a

418 Ibid.

419 For a critical appreciation of Trump’s Venezuelan policy, see, Geoff Ramsey and David Smilde, “Recalibrating U.S. Policy in Venezuela: Learning from Failure and Seizing Opportunities”, *WOLA: Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas, Policy Memo*, December 2020, available at: <https://www.wola.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Recalibrating-US-Policy-in-Venezuela-Ramsey-Smilde.pdf>.

420 See, The White House, “Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, September 19, 2017, op. cit.

421 Ibid. Given the organization’s limitations, Trump was disinclined to bear the onerous costs of sustaining these institutions, which he believed were unequally distributed. He noted that “The United States is one out of 193 countries in the United Nations, and yet we pay 22 percent of the entire budget and more... The United States bears an unfair cost burden, but, to be fair, if it could actually accomplish all of its stated goals, especially the goal of peace, this investment would easily be well worth it”.

422 See, Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting the National Interest”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 2000, pp 45-62. Eight years later, Rice argued that after 9/11 “the United States was swept into a fundamentally different world. We were called to lead with a new urgency and with a new perspective”. This change meant, in effect, that United States policy must focus on promoting democracy, human rights and economic development, especially in the poorest countries. Rice acknowledged that “In 2000, I decried the role of the United States, in particular the U.S. military, in nation building. In 2008, it is absolutely clear that we will be involved in nation building for years to come”. See, Condoleezza Rice, “Rethinking the National Interest: American Realism for a New World”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 4, 2008, pp. 2-26.

“thinly stretched military” left “close to a breaking point” following eight years of *clintonian* overseas interventionism, she advised against nation building because the military was “not designed to build a civilian society”⁴²³. New realities generated by the September 11 al-Qaeda attacks made it impossible to pursue this nationalist impulse chartered during the first months of the Bush administration. After September 11, the president’s “pragmatic realism” was promptly replaced by neoconservative interventionism and a “freedom agenda” that came to define his presidency.⁴²⁴ Even though 9/11 forced a shift to a more assertive military interventionism, ultimately America’s reliance on free trade and multilateralism would not be significantly altered by the al-Qaeda attacks. Although Washington’s post-9/11 foreign policy was received critically – as was the Bush Doctrine sustaining it –, the fact remains that Bush’s foreign policy did not signal a discontinuity with the broad strategic aims of his predecessors.⁴²⁵

Trump’s words at the United Nations in 2017 likewise made it plain that the trade deals of the previous decades did not conform to the principle that “trade must be fair and it must be reciprocal”⁴²⁶. Given the president’s belief that domestic growth constituted the sole defense against the turbulence and inequities of the contemporary world, the promotion of a robust and sustainable economy became his national security priority. Addressing the issue was of the utmost urgency because widespread scientific and technological innovation was being incorporated in the everyday economy at a dizzying pace. The increasing relevance of big data, artificial intelligence, robotics and other breakthroughs was bound, sooner rather than later, to provoke a colossal impact on the nature of production, consumption, leisure and, ultimately, personal and organizational interactions. Faced with such vertiginous, inexorable change, many of America’s most vulnerable workers found themselves exposed to intense job insecurity, dislocation and redundancy. Mounting anxiety over the economic and social consequences of technological innovation fanned Trump’s populist appeal and his foreign policy choices.⁴²⁷

423 Ibid.

424 Cf., *inter alia*, Alexander Moens. *The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush: Values, Strategy, and Loyalty*. New York: Routledge, 2004; and George W. Bush. *Decision Points*. New York: Random House, 2010.

425 See, Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003; and Melvyn P. Leffler, “Bush’s Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 144, 2004, p. 22. On the Bush Doctrine, see, *inter alia*, John Lewis Gaddis, “Bush’s Security Strategy”, *Foreign Policy*, 133, 2002, pp. 50-57; Robert Jervis, “Understanding the Bush Doctrine”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 118, No. 3, 2003, pp. 365-388; Robert G. Kaufman. *In Defense of the Bush Doctrine*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007; John Lewis Gaddis. *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004; Thomas Carothers, “Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1, 2003, pp. 84-97; Robert Jervis, “Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot be Sustained”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 120, No. 3, 2005, pp. 351-377; and G. John Ikenberry, “The End of the Neo-Conservative Movement”, *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2004, pp. 7-22.

426 See, David P. Fidler, “President Trump, Trade Policy, and American Grand Strategy: From Common Advantage to Collective Carnage”, *Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-31.

427 See, Georg Löffmann, “America First and the Populist Impact on US Foreign Policy”, *Survival*, Vol. 61, No. 6, 2019, pp. 115-138.

Not surprisingly then, the abandonment of cornerstone agreements sustaining globalization came to dominate Trump's foreign policy agenda. Maintaining that he was not opposed to free trade in any fundamental sense, the president was equally adamant in rebuffing "stupid trade" and "unfair treaties", expressions used liberally to depict agreements such as NAFTA, an accord that, from his perspective, failed to adequately safeguard America's vital interests. As a matter of fact, he went so far as to paint NAFTA as the "worst" commercial agreement ever entered into by the United States.⁴²⁸ Notoriously hyperbolic, this judgment, and the view of trade from which it sprang, was nonetheless shared by a significant part of the American population. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise since complex multilateral treaties such as NAFTA and the TPP are rarely – if ever – scrutinized in detail by the press. Nor are they comprehensively debated and explained to the public by the politicians approving them. Voters invariably evaluate free trade accords by their perceived impacts on individuals and communities rather than by their aggregate outcomes. In communities castigated by de-industrialization and the loss of "good jobs", free trade and globalization were, quite understandably, blamed for hard times.

Once in office, the Trump administration set out to restructure the terms of international trade with the aim of fostering American growth, a particularly urgent task given the vast wreckage provoked by the 2008 financial crisis. To generalized disbelief, during the presidential campaign Trump claimed that it was entirely feasible for the American economy to attain annual growth of 3/4 percent, a doubling of the rate recorded during the previous decade.⁴²⁹ As soon as the new administration unshackled US firms from the multiple constraints imposed by existing free trade treaties, sustainable growth would take off.⁴³⁰ However, since international commerce represented a mere 13 percent of total American GDP, deep structural economic reform would be required to boost the remaining 87 percent. Accordingly, Trump argued for domestic policies designed to generate a favorable investment climate: tax cuts, a massive reduction of regulatory costs and an unprecedented public works stimulus program to be submitted to Congress. Foreign policy, in short, was placed in the service of rebuilding the American economy.

3.4. Reclaiming Economic Statecraft

The White House's December 2017 *National Security Strategy* made economic statecraft the cornerstone of the administration's foreign policy. By way of an introduction to

428 Cf., Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Alan Rappeport, "After calling Nafta 'worst trade deal', Trump appears to soften stance", *The New York Times*, March 30, 2017. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/business/nafta-trade-deal-trump.html>

429 See, Paul R. La Monica, "Donald Trump wants 4% GDP growth. 3% will do", *CNN*, March 22, 2017, consulted at: <http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/22/investing/trump-economy-gdp>.

430 Cf., Doug Palmer, "Trump on trade: Scrutinize NAFTA, other deals for 'abuses'", *Politico*, March 28, 2017, available at: <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/28/trump-trade-naphtha-abuses-237777>.

the document, the president proclaimed that “the United States will no longer tolerate economic aggression or unfair trading practices” arising from the rules structuring the international economic order.⁴³¹ Having stated this intention, the *National Security Strategy* then reiterated the view that economic tools “can be important parts of broader strategies to deter, coerce, and constrain adversaries”⁴³². Outlining Trump’s vision of economic statecraft in greater detail, *The President’s 2017 Trade Policy Agenda*, emitted by the Office of the US Trade Representative, justified the shift in trade policy in the following terms: “in 2016 voters in both major parties called for a fundamental change in direction of US trade policy. The American people grew frustrated with our prior trade policy not because they have ceased to believe in free trade and open markets, but because they did not all see clear benefits from international trade agreements. President Trump has called for a new approach, and the Trump Administration will deliver on that promise”⁴³³.

Legitimized by the outcome of the 2016 vote, that new approach, in turn, was summarized in this manner: “the overarching purpose of our trade policy – the guiding principle behind all of our actions in this key area – will be to expand trade in a way that is freer and fairer for all Americans. Every action we take with respect to trade will be designed to increase our economic growth, promote job creation in the United States, promote reciprocity with our trading partners, strengthen our manufacturing base and our ability to defend ourselves, and expand our agricultural and services industry exports. As a general matter, we believe that these goals can be best accomplished by focusing on bilateral negotiations rather than multilateral negotiations – and by renegotiating and revising trade agreements when our goals are not being met. Finally, we reject the notion that the United States should, for putative geopolitical advantage, turn a blind eye to unfair trade practices that disadvantage American workers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses in global markets”⁴³⁴. The latter observation – the affirmation that economic interest was not to be subsumed to geopolitical calculation – is critical for understanding Donald Trump’s foreign policy in relation to China and, more importantly, to allies such as the European Union.

Subsequent policy choices confirmed that the president, much more so than his recent predecessors, had opted for widespread economic coercion in the form of tariffs, export controls and financial statecraft.⁴³⁵ Invoking national security provisions, on 8 March 2018 the administration announced a 10 percent tariff on all aluminum imports

431 See, The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, p. 1.

432 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

433 Cf., Office of the United States Trade Representative, “The President’s 2017 Trade Policy Agenda”, March 2017, p. 1.

434 *Ibid.*, p 1.

435 See, Daniel W. Drezner, “Economic Statecraft in the Age of Trump”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2019, pp. 7-24; and Jacob J. Lew and Richard Nephew, “The Use and Misuse of Economic Statecraft: How Washington is Abusing its Financial Might”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 6, 2018, 2008, pp. 139-149.

and a 25 percent tariff on all steel entering the United States.⁴³⁶ Crucially, no distinction was made between friend and foe as long-standing allies – including Japan, Canada, South Korea and Mexico – became subject to some form of economic coercion. As a matter of fact, these aluminum and steel tariffs were widely understood to constitute an opening salvo in a broader commercial dispute with Europe and a preview of future tariffs aimed at Germany’s automotive industry. To his critics, Trump was firmly on the path to dismantling liberal trade norms and institutions that the United States had ceaselessly promoted in the post-1945 era. In the process, so they charged, the president had “diminished the country’s standing in the world and led other governments to consider using the same tools to limit trade arbitrarily”⁴³⁷. Much more severe in his judgment, Daniel Drezner succinctly observed that “the Trump administration has unilaterally surrendered the set of ideals that guided US policymakers for decades”⁴³⁸.

However, president Trump’s recourse to a robust economic statecraft was not without precedent.⁴³⁹ Rather, the use of economic statecraft has been a staple of US foreign policy since the dawning of the republic. Believing economic coercion would oblige Britain and France to respect America’s neutral rights and cease their practice of seizing American commercial ships, Thomas Jefferson imposed the 1807 Embargo Act.⁴⁴⁰ Proving tremendously detrimental to the American economy, Congress proceeded to repeal the embargo after two years. Jefferson’s successor, James Madison, then saw Congress pass the Non-Intercourse Act, reopening trade with all nations except Britain and France. Although Congress reinitiated trade with these two powers in the preceding year, president Madison, in early 1811, cut off commerce with Britain and recalled Washington’s accredited minister to London. In turn, Britain lifted restrictions on American trade, but, on June 1, 1812, Madison obtained from Congress a declaration of war.⁴⁴¹ By the end of the century, expansive commercial interests and a growing self-confidence led Washington to proclaim Open Door policies in Latin America and Asia.

436 See, Ana Swanson, “Trump to Impose Sweeping Steel and Aluminum Tariffs”, *The New York Times*, March 1, 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/01/business/trump-tariffs.html>; and Scott Horsley, “Trump Formally Orders Tariffs On Steel, Aluminum Imports”, *NPR*, March 8, 2018, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2018/03/08/591744195/trump-expected-to-formally-order-tariffs-on-steel-aluminum-imports>.

437 See, Chad P. Brown and Douglas A. Irwin, “Trump’s Assault on the Global Trading System: And Why Decoupling from China Will Change Everything”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 5, 2019, p. 125.

438 See, Daniel W. Drezner, “This Time Is Different: Why U.S. Foreign Policy Will Never Recover”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2019, p. 16.

439 See, Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, “Economic Sanctions and U.S. Foreign Policy”, *PJ*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1985, pp. 727-735. For two helpful treatments of the foreign policy of the republic during its early years, see, Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson. *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990; and Gordon S. Wood. *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, particularly Chapter 17.

440 See, Jeffrey A. Frankel, “The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain”, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1982, pp. 291-308.

441 See, Donald R. Hickey. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict, Bicentennial Edition*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Decades later, the 1940 decreeing of a US oil embargo against Imperial Japan convinced Tokyo's militarists to launch their ill-fated December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.⁴⁴²

In the early days of the Cold War, economic statecraft by way of the massive aid extended through the Marshall Plan contributed decisively to fashioning the new European order.⁴⁴³ American policymakers understood that America's self-interest would be best served by a more prosperous and peaceful world⁴⁴⁴. Yet, before the Marshall Plan was approved, coercive economic statecraft was applied against allies reluctant to follow Washington's lead in the construction of the post-war order. For instance, Britain, financially exhausted by the war against the Axis powers, saw Harry Truman terminate the Lend-Lease program. London resorted to a \$3.75 billion loan from the Americans to avoid economic collapse, but, in exchange, was forced to accept the Bretton Woods system, effectively ending the trade privileges until then obtained by the British from their imperial possessions. Moreover, Washington demanded full convertibility of sterling by the end of 1947, thus opening Britain's colonial markets to US interests and consolidating the dollar as the world's reserve currency.⁴⁴⁵

On the other side of the Eurasian landmass, Washington resorted to an economic embargo to isolate China's post-1949 communist regime.⁴⁴⁶ During the 1956 Suez crisis, aiming to dissuade Great Britain from continuing its military campaign in Egypt, president Dwight Eisenhower brought tremendous pressure to bear on the pound, ultimately convincing London of its unsustainable imperial folly.⁴⁴⁷ Later, technology and cereal sales to the Soviet Union were heavily conditioned and, following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a host of sanctions were adopted in retaliation for Moscow's aggression.⁴⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the Cold War, America led the call for sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, Kim Jong-il's North Korea and Muammar Qaddafi's Libya.⁴⁴⁹ More recently, the 2016 Global Magnitsky Act

442 See, Jeffrey Record, "Japan's Decision for War in 1941: Some Enduring Lessons", Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, February 2009, consulted at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=38470>.

443 The literature on the Marshall Plan is extensive. For a full treatment of the initiative, see, Benn Steil. *The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

444 See, Robert B. Zoellick. *America in the World*, pp. 272-280.

445 See, Philip Stephens. *Britain Alone: The Path from Suez to Brexit*. London: Faber, 2021, pp. 51-55

446 See, Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1949-1962*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

447 See, for example, Richard M. Filipink, "'Force Is the Last Method': Eisenhower, Dulles and American Intervention in the Suez Crisis", *Critique*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007, pp. 173-188; and Diane B. Kunz. *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

448 See, Paige Bryan, "The Soviet Grain Embargo", The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, January 12, 1981, available at: http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf_media/1981/pdf/bg130.pdf; and P. Mustard and S. C. Schmidt, "Short-Term Impact of the 1980-81 Partial U.S. Grain Embargo on Grain Trade", *North Central Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1983, pp. 111-121. On technology export controls, Benjamin H. Flowe, Jr., "An Overview of Export Controls on Transfer of Technology to the U.S.S.R. in Light of Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan", *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1980, pp. 555-573, available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/151515603.pdf>.

449 See, David L. Asher, Victor D. Comras and Patrick M. Cronin, "Pressure: Coercive Economic Statecraft and U.S. National Security", Center for a New American Security, January 2011, available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/126602/CNAS_Pressure_AsherComrasCronin_1.pdf.

empowered Washington's policymakers to sanction suspected human rights violators by freezing their assets and prohibiting them for entering the United States.⁴⁵⁰

These and other instances of economic statecraft demonstrated the extent to which a bipartisan consensus regarding the effectiveness of sanctions had solidified by the time Donald Trump was inaugurated.⁴⁵¹ Rather than a substantive policy innovation, Trump's use of economic statecraft was facilitated by the proliferation of post-Cold War legislation versing export controls, money laundering and sanctions. No wonder then that portions of Trump's 'America First' economic statecraft mirrored Democrat proposals for addressing China's violations of trade rules, intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers. Furthermore, since virtually all financial transactions denominated in US dollars required clearing through American financial institutions, the administration was able to successfully block most dollar exchanges destined for Iran, Russia and other blacklisted states and individuals.⁴⁵² The administration also defined specific sanctions designed to target non-state actors such as Iran's Revolutionary Guards, as well as members of Putin's government, International Criminal Court investigators, Huawei executives and other individuals running afoul of Washington. Although the efficacy of sanctions continued to be widely debated, such tools, in a globalized economy where the US dollar retained its "exorbitant privilege" as the world's foremost reserve currency, were increasingly attraction for policymakers.⁴⁵³

Quite correctly, Trump observed that, historically, protectionism and high tariffs were decisive tools allowing the United States to emerge as the world's leading economy.⁴⁵⁴ Yet, in contrast to that era of vertiginous economic and financial ascent, economic statecraft

450 See, Michael A. Weber and Edward J. Collins-Chase, "The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act", *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, October 28, 2020, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10576>; and Tom Firestone and Kerry Contini, "The Global Magnitsky Act", *Criminal Law Forum*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2018, pp. 617-628, accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327947733_The_Global_Magnitsky_Act.

451 On the use of sanctions in the post Cold-War years prior to the Trump presidency, see, Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin, (eds.). *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*. Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2003; Lawrence Freedman, (ed.). *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; Peter Viggo Jakobsen. *Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War: A Challenge for Theory and Practice*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998; and Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman. *The Dynamic of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

452 The expression "exorbitant privilege" was coined by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. See, Brooke Sample, "America's currency is losing its exceptionalism", *Bloomberg*, June 13, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2020-06-13/u-s-dollar-s-exorbitant-privilege-is-about-to-end-kbd18zcy>

453 On the emergence of the dollar as the world's reserve currency, see, Barry Eichengreen. *Exorbitant Privilege. The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. On international "currency statecraft", see, Benjamin J. Cohen. *Currency Statecraft: Monetary Rivalry and Geopolitical Ambition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

454 See, Nancy Williams, "The Resilience of Protectionism in US Trade Policy", *Boston University Law Review*, Vol. 99, No. 2, 2019, pp. 683-719, available at: <https://www.bu.edu/bulawreview/files/2019/03/WILLIAMS.pdf>.

and protectionism were not the tools of choice during the Cold War decades. After 1945, tariffs and protectionism were understood to have been the root causes accounting for the outbreak of World War II. Seeking to neutralize these perceived causes of war, free trade and multilateralism became the default policy preferences of Western states. But unlike his predecessors who had relied on GATT and WTO rules to open foreign markets, Trump preferred to negotiate bilateral accords so as to – theoretically at least – maximize American leverage. Accordingly, and characterizing his decision as nothing less than “a great thing for the American worker”, he unceremoniously withdrew from TPP negotiations on his third day in the Oval Office and demanded the renegotiation of both the NAFTA and the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement.⁴⁵⁵

To assure that parliaments in Ottawa and Mexico City ratified a new treaty, Trump abandoned the steel and aluminum tariffs placed on both countries⁴⁵⁶. The revised treaty – the USMCA – saw Canada reduce import restrictions on dairy products and Mexico modify rules of origin governing the all-important automobile components sector.⁴⁵⁷ Washington managed to secure a 16-year sunset clause, but was unsuccessful in removing the contentious Chapter 19 dispute resolution clause.⁴⁵⁸ Indicative of the new White House *zeitgeist*, the USMCA prohibited the signatories from celebrating bilateral trade deals with authoritarian states, a clause designed to thwart Chinese pretensions in the North American market. Even though approximately 95 percent of the USMCA was virtually identical to NAFTA, the former was, arguably, less trade-promoting than the treaty it replaced.⁴⁵⁹ Still, and to the extent that Canada and Mexico were forced to negotiate bilaterally and concede more favorable terms to the American side, the revised treaty provided the president with a political “win”. Even Democrat presidential

455 See, David Smith, “Trump withdraws from Trans-Pacific Partnership amid flurry of order”, *The Guardian*, January 23, 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/23/donald-trump-first-orders-trans-pacific-partnership-tpp> and Bob Woodward, *Fear*, pp. 264-265.

456 See, Sean Higgins, “Business to Trump: End Steel and Aluminum Tariffs in Wake of US-Canada-Mexico Trade Deal”, *The Washington Examiner*, 4 October 2018, available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/economy/business-to-trump-end-steel-and-aluminum-tariffs-in-wake-of-us-canada-mexico-trade-deal>.

457 For the text of the treaty, see, Office of the United States Trade Representative, “Agreement between the United States of America, the United Mexican States, and Canada 7/1/20 Text”, available at: <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/united-states-mexico-canada-agreement/agreement-between>.

458 Eliminating Chapter 19, a dispute settlement mechanism seen as unfavorable to the US because it hindered Washington’s ability to pursue anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases against Canada and Mexico, was a priority for the American trade negotiators. See, Homer E. Moyer, Jr., “Chapter 19 of the NAFTA: Binational Panels as the Trade Courts of Last Resort”, *The International Lawyer*, Vol. 27, No. 93, 1993, pp. 707-726, consulted at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2982&context=til>.

459 For an evaluation of the USMCA trade deal, see, Meredith Lilly, Hugo Perezcano Díaz and Christine McDaniel, “The Future of North America’s Economic Relationship: From NAFTA to the New Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement and Beyond”, *CIGI Special Report*, Centre for International Governance Innovation, Waterloo, Ontario, February 11, 2019, consulted at: https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/documents/North%20American%20Forum%20Special%20Report_1.pdf

candidate Joe Biden was compelled to admit that Trump's revised deal was "better than NAFTA"⁴⁶⁰.

Economic statecraft was also on display south of the border in the Spring of 2018 as caravans from Central America traversed Mexico to cross into the United States. Attorney General Jeff Sessions responded to the situation by announcing a "zero tolerance" policy and controversy soon swirled as the administration was accused of separating families.⁴⁶¹ The caravans continued throughout 2018 and, on November 26, Trump took to Twitter to suggest that "Mexico should move the flag waving Migrants, many of whom are stone cold criminals, back to their countries. Do it by plane, do it by bus, do it anyway you want, but they are NOT coming into the U.S.A. We will close the border permanently if need be"⁴⁶². Linking trade to immigration, in 2019 the president threatened to seal the border unless Mexico stemmed the tide of asylum caravans heading north. Later, in May, he made known his intention to raise tariffs on Mexican goods unless the country's government undertook robust action to resolve the problem, a prelude to a subsequent bilateral deal providing for joint enforcement actions finally allowing Mexico to close down the flow of migrants. As for the countries originating the asylum caravans – El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras –, the White House made it crystalline clear that the substantial foreign aid conceded by the American government to those nations would be terminated unless the outflow of asylum seekers came to an end.⁴⁶³

The intertwined nature of the North American economy made NAFTA susceptible to revision and Mexico vulnerable to US leverage. In contrast, dealings with the European Commission – the entity responsible negotiating trade matters on behalf of all European Union member-states – were fraught with a great deal of enmity. On March 8, Trump signed an executive order allowing for a 25 percent tariff on steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum to come into effect on May 1. However, on March 22, temporary exemptions were granted to the EU. On June 6, after negotiations to resolve the dispute failed, US tariffs on the EU's steel and aluminum products came into force under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.⁴⁶⁴ This effort to use steel and aluminum

460 See, Yaron Steinbuch, "Joe Biden says Trump's USMCA is 'better than NAFTA'", *New York Post*, September 11, 2020, available at: <https://nypost.com/2020/09/11/joe-biden-admits-trumps-usmca-is-better-than-nafta/>

461 See, Department of Justice, "Attorney General Announces Zero-Tolerance Policy for Criminal Illegal Entry", April 6, 2018, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-announces-zero-tolerance-policy-criminal-illegal-entry>

462 See, Bloomberg, "President Trump Threatens to Close Border with Mexico 'Permanently If Need Be'", *Time*, November 26, 2018, consulted at: <https://time.com/5463168/trump-border-mexico/>

463 In the end, aid was, in fact, canceled. See, "Donald Trump cuts \$700m in Central American aid as migrant crisis deepens", *ABC News*, March 31, 2019, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-31/trump-cuts-aid-to-central-american-countries-as-migrant-crisis/10957000>

464 See, United States Department of Commerce, "The Effect of Imports of Steel on the National Security: An Investigation Conducted under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, as amended", US Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security Office of Technology Evaluation, January 11, 2018, accessed at: https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/the_effect_of_imports_of_steel_on_the_national_security_-_with_redactions_-_20180111.pdf

tariffs to force European concessions was met with a retaliatory increase of tariffs on a wide range of US products in the amount of about €2.8 billion (US\$3.1 billion) of U.S. exports, including US-produced metals and agricultural products.⁴⁶⁵ Exasperated with the tit-for-tat escalation, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker cautioned Trump that “If you want to be stupid, I can be stupid as well”⁴⁶⁶. Albeit rather crudely, Juncker’s words nonetheless revealed the depth of bitterness between allies that, during the Obama years, engaged in broad negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Aggressive bilateralism may not have lowered the US trade deficit, but it did provide symbolic payoffs for president Trump. For example, Europe agreed to re-enter trade negotiations after initially stating that no talks would be entered into before the US side abandoned its steel and aluminum tariff increases. However, given the importance of agriculture in French and German domestic politics, the EU did manage to resist pressures to negotiate this heavily subsidized and protectionist common policy.

Europeans were not alone in pushing back against the administration’s economic statecraft. America’s other commercial partners responded by lowering trade barriers between themselves, thus pressuring for a change of course in White House policy. For instance, the European Union proceeded to ratify generous free trade deals with Canada, Japan, Vietnam and others. After making a host of concessions to the United States that failed to salvage the negotiations, Japan joined ten other nations to ratify a modified version of TPP – the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – coming into force on 30 December 2018.⁴⁶⁷ Not to be outdone, Beijing increased tariffs on US goods and services while simultaneously lowering them for the EU and other nations. Moreover, Chinese authorities continued their diplomatic push

465 Europe sought duties on €6.4 billion worth of American exports, including on steel, motorcycles and a host of agricultural products. The EU also sought to open a WTO case against the measures. Jean-Claude Juncker characterized the American move as “protectionism, pure and simple”. See, William Mauldin, “US Tariffs Prompt Anger, Retaliation from Trade Allies”, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-slaps-steel-aluminum-tariffs-on-canada-mexico-european-union-1527774283>.

466 See, Valentina Pop and Vivian Salama, “Juncker’s Trade Pitch to Trump: ‘I Can Be Stupid, as Well’”, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 26, 2018, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/eus-white-house-trade-talks-went-from-uncertainty-to-lowered-tensions-1532624882>.

467 Following the White House’s announcement, the remaining nations negotiated new provisions less objectionable to the American side. In early April 2018, the White House Deputy Press Secretary Lindsay Walters admitted that “(T)he President has consistently said he would be open to a substantially better deal, including in his speech in Davos earlier this year. To that end, he has asked Ambassador Lighthizer and Director Kudlow to take another look at whether or not a better deal could be negotiated”. See, Alana Abramson, “White House Explains Trump’s Reversal on TPP”, *Fortune*, April 12, 2018, available at: <https://fortune.com/2018/04/12/white-house-explains-trumps-reversal-on-tpp/>. For a discussion of the geopolitical significance of the trade deal, see, Michael J. Green and Matthew P. Goodman, “After TPP: The Geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2015, pp. 19-34; and Jane Perlez, “U.S. Allies See Trans-Pacific Partnership as a Check on China”, *The New York Times*, October 6, 2015, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/07/world/asia/trans-pacific-partnership-china-australia.html>.

for a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an objective that came to fruition in late 2020.⁴⁶⁸

On the whole, Trump's efforts to conflate economic and security baskets produced mixed results, as exemplified by the KORUS FTA renegotiation. Extraordinarily dependent on Washington's security umbrella, South Korea was – at least in theory – at a negotiating disadvantage since the asymmetry of the bilateral relationship granted the American side tremendous, albeit not unlimited, leverage. Moreover, the pressure was applied at precisely the same moment that North Korea intensified its onslaught against peninsular peace and stability. As a matter of fact, Trump began pushing for the renegotiation of KORUS FTA while simultaneously calling upon Seoul to increase its contribution to the maintenance of US military bases in the country.⁴⁶⁹ Leery of all alliances, and aiming to offset China's significant investments in blue water navy capabilities and anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) assets, Trump, in early 2016, had called upon South Korea (and Japan) to bear a greater part of the cost of stationing US troops in Asia.⁴⁷⁰ Suggesting that Japan and the Republic of Korea should consider the development of nuclear weapons, he later sought to shift part of the cost of maintaining its “nuclear umbrella” to the allies⁴⁷¹. A surprising degree of uncertainty in the regional balance of power was thus

468 See, for instance, Min Ye, “China and Competing Cooperation in Asia-Pacific: TPP, RCEP, and the New Silk Road”, *Asian Security*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2015, pp. 206-224; and Shintaro Hamanaka, “TPP versus RCEP: Control of Membership and Agenda Setting”, *Journal of East Asian Economic Integration*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2014, pp. 163-186.

469 See, Victor Cha and Andy Lim, “Database: Donald Trump's Skepticism of U.S. Troops in South Korea Since 1990s”, *CSIS Beyond Parallel*, February 25, 2019, available at: <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/database-donald-trumps-skepticism-u-s-troops-korea-since-1990/>.

470 See, Bob Woodward. *Rage*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020, pp. 83-85. In 1966, the United States and South Korea signed the Status of Forces Agreement, whose Article V states that the United States will bear all costs for the maintenance of US troops, except those specifically assumed by South Korea. To determine this contribution, Special Measures Agreements (SMAs) have, since 1991, been periodically renegotiated. The last of these, dating from February 2019, and with a one-year duration, Seoul agreed to increase its contribution to \$927 million, \$70.3 million increase from the previous deal. Donald Trump initially asked South Korea to pay \$5 billion. Japan earmarks roughly \$1.8 billion to host U.S. forces, mostly stationed on Okinawa Accounting for more than 80% of the cost of stationing troops in the country. Japan, in recent years, increased its share of that cost, now assuming responsibility for the payment of utilities, housing repairs and an array of assorted expenses.

471 See, Hiroyuki Akita, “Trump demands Japan and South Korea pay for nuclear umbrella”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, February 4, 2020, accessed at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Trump-demands-Japan-and-South-Korea-pay-for-nuclear-umbrella>; and Ashley Parker, “Donald Trump Says NATO is ‘Obsolete’, UN is ‘Political Game’”, *The New York Times*, April 2, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/04/02/donald-trump-tells-crowd-hed-be-fine-if-nato-broke-up/>. A practical problem is that the nuclear deterrent encompasses a vast range of weapons systems, including intercontinental ballistic missiles, bombers, nuclear-armed submarines, aircraft carriers, command and control systems, as well as early warning systems. Many of these weapons and systems are, of course, partially or totally secret. That is to say, unless the US decides to open these systems to allies, there is no way of knowing their exact cost, even if it were possible to separate the specific cost of extending the nuclear umbrella to allies.

introduced by the American president.⁴⁷² Given the favorable negotiating context for the US side, South Korea agreed to voluntarily reduce steel exports and raise quotas for American truck imports.⁴⁷³ There was only one problem: Seoul does not export trucks to America and the US does not presently export more trucks to Korea than it did under the original treaty.⁴⁷⁴ As for the burden-sharing agreement, Korea augmented its financial contribution by less than USD\$100 million. By no stretch of the imagination could these modest outcomes be classified as ‘big wins’ for the Trump administration.

Donald Trump’s preference for bilateralism also stemmed from his deeply-held conviction that WTO rules governing international trade were in need of massive overhaul.⁴⁷⁵ This was not an entirely surprising development since the general erosion of trade multilateralism pre-dated the Trump administration. The impasses surrounding the Doha Development Round had already pointed to the extreme difficulty in reaching a broad understanding on trade facilitation. Even so, the president’s readiness to withdraw from the WTO unless American qualms over the organization’s Dispute Settlement

472 See, for example, Demetri Sevastopulo, “Donald Trump open to Japan and South Korea having nuclear weapons”, *Financial Times*, March 27, 2016, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/c927017c-f398-11e5-9afe-dd2472ea263d>; and “Full Rush Transcript: Donald Trump, CNN Milwaukee Republican Presidential Town Hall”, *CNN*, March 29th, 2016, consulted at: <https://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2016/03/29/full-rush-transcript-donald-trump-cnn-milwaukee-republican-presidential-town-hall/>. Attempting to restore greater predictability to US regional policy, Secretary of Defense James Mattis prudently reaffirmed the United States’ “firm commitment” to its regional allies. See, Michael R. Gordon and Choe Sang-Hun, “Jim Mattis, in South Korea, tries to reassure an ally”, *The New York Times*, February 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/world/asia/james-mattis-us-korea-thaad.html>.

473 See, Alexia Fernández Campbell, “Trump’s New Trade Deal with South Korea, Explained”, *Vox*, September 25, 2018, available at: <https://www.vox.com/2018/9/24/17883506/trump-korea-trade-deal-korus>; Simon Lester, Inu Manak and Kyoung-hwa Kim, “Trump’s First Trade Deal: The Slightly Revised Korea-US. Free Trade Agreement”, *Free Trade Bulletin No. 73*, Cato Institute, June 13, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.cato.org/free-trade-bulletin/trumps-first-trade-deal-slightly-revised-korea-us-free-trade-agreement>; and Brock R. Williams (coord.), “U.S.–South Korea (KORUS) FTA”, *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, December 28, 2018, available at: https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2018-12-28_IF10733_5414a2917e96d62b72baed8ea55b54b44fbdeba.pdf.

474 See, “The trade deal between America and South Korea has barely changed”, *The Economist*, September 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2018/09/27/the-trade-deal-between-america-and-south-korea-has-barely-changed>; and Hyunjoo Jin and Joyce Lee, “U.S., South Korea revise trade deal with quotas on Korean steel”, *Reuters*, March 26, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-southkorea-idUSKBN1H22GP>.

475 See, Damian Paletta and Ana Swanson, “Trump suggests ignoring World Trade Organization in major policy shift”, *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2017, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/03/01/trump-may-ignore-wto-in-major-shift-of-u-s-trade-policy/>; Robert Howse, “Making the WTO (Not So) Great Again: The Case Against Responding to the Trump Trade Agenda Through Reform of WTO Rules on Subsidies and State Enterprises”, *Journal of International Economic Law*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2020, pp. 371-389, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7454681/>; and Simon Lester and Huan Zhu, “Closing Pandora’s Box: The Growing Abuse of the National Security Rationale for Restricting Trade”, *Policy Analysis*, Cato Institute, No. 874, June 25, 2019, available at: <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/closing-pandoras-box-growing-abuse-national-security-rationale-restricting-trade>.

Mechanism were surmounted was still quite remarkable.⁴⁷⁶ Less surprising was the intensification of American hostility towards the WTO in late 2019 when Washington refused to appoint judges to the organization's Appellate Body, thereby paralyzing the Dispute Settlement Mechanism.⁴⁷⁷ The move was not entirely unexpected for, in mid 2019, on the eve of yet another round of "trade war" talks in Shanghai, Donald Trump had described the WTO as "broken"⁴⁷⁸. Acknowledging the president's criticism, WTO Director-General Ricardo Azevedo conceded that the organization "has to be updated. It has to be changed. It has to be reformed"⁴⁷⁹.

During a January 2020 White House press conference, Trump once again raised the WTO issue, noting that the organization "has been very unfair to the United States for many, many years. And without it, China wouldn't be China, and China wouldn't be where they are right now"⁴⁸⁰. The president was pointing out that, largely as a consequence of WTO membership, China had quadrupled its GDP and increased its exports by a factor of five.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, as millions of manufacturing jobs migrated to China through offshoring, the WTO had failed to counter Chinese protectionist industrial policy. The organization, Trump maintained, had similarly been ineffective in regulating subsidies to state owned enterprises (SOEs), in preventing intellectual property theft and was incapable of ending the practice of forced technology transfer as a price of entry for foreign investors. Beijing, for its part, claimed to be in compliance with WTO norms and practices, suggesting that disputes would be resolved once the country passed from a developing to a "market-focused" economy.⁴⁸²

476 See, James Politi, "Donald Trump threatens to pull out of the WTO", *Financial Times*, August 30, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.ft.com/content/32e17984-aca2-11e8-89a1-e5de165fa619>.

477 See, Ana Swanson, "Trump Cripples W.T.O. as Trade War Rages", *The New York Times*, December 8, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/08/business/trump-trade-war-wto.html?searchResultPosition=1>. One year earlier, the White House had announced its intention to pursue this course of action. See, Tom Miles, "U.S. blocks WTO judge reappointment as dispute settlement crisis looms", *Reuters*, August 27, 2018, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-wto-idUSKCN1LC190>.

478 See, Jacob M. Schlesinger and Alex Leary, "Trump Denounces Both China and WTO", *The Wall Street Journal*, July 26, 2019, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-presses-wto-to-change-china-s-developing-country-status-11564166423>.

479 See, Silvia Amaro, "A reform-or-die moment: Why world powers want to change the WTO", *CNBC*, February 7, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/07/world-powers-us-eu-china-are-grappling-to-update-the-wto.html>.

480 See, "WTO has been very unfair to US for many years: Trump", *Business Standard*, January 23, 2000, available at: https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/wto-has-been-very-unfair-to-us-for-many-years-trump-120012300078_1.html.

481 For a discussion of the benefits derived by China from WTO membership, see, Stewart Paterson. *China, Trade and Power: Why the West's Economic Engagement Has Failed*. London: London Publishing Partnership, 2018.

482 See, Todd L. Allee and Jamie E. Scalera, "The Divergent Effects of Joining International Organizations: Trade Gains and the Rigors of WTO Accession", *International Organization*, Vol. 66 No. 2, 2012, pp. 243-276; and Christina L. Davis and Meredith Wilf, "Joining the Club: Accession to the GATT/WTO", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 79, No. 3, 2017, pp. 964-978.

Donald Trump's criticism of the WTO rested on the conviction that China's rise was unlikely to be pacific. Accordingly, rather than simply pursuing "fairer" trade relations, containing China's rise required a strategy encompassing the security, economic, technological and political dimensions of the Sino-American relationship. A critical element of the strategy was the disruption of Chinese supply chains, a view articulated in late 2018 in Mike Pence's "Iron Curtain speech" at Washington's Hudson Institute. In effect, the Vice-President proposed a resetting of relations with Beijing so as to impede the country's growing economic and geo-political influence.⁴⁸³ Twenty years after Bill Clinton's endorsement of the WTO, how remote and displaced the former president's words seemed when he affirmed that "There is no substitute for the confidence and credibility the WTO lends to the process of expanding trade based on rules. There's no substitute for the temporary relief WTO offers national economy, especially against unfair trade and abrupt surges in imports. And there is no substitute for WTO's authority in resolving disputes which commands the respect of all member nations"⁴⁸⁴.

3.5. Meeting the China Threat

During the Trump Administration's two final years, economic statecraft played a pivotal role in the president's broader geopolitical outlook. While the media insistently made reference to a "trade war" unleashed by the president against China in early 2018, the designation was a misnomer obfuscating what, in effect, was merely one dimension of a full-spectrum strategic rivalry between the two countries. Not that that Donald Trump was unwilling to engage in a trade war, as he made absolutely clear in a 2 March 2018 tweet: "trade wars are good, and easy to win. Example, when we are down US\$100 billion with a certain country and they get cute, don't trade anymore – we win big. It's easy!"⁴⁸⁵. In an unprecedented move, Trump cited national security concerns to justify

483 Mike Pence stated that "China now spends as much on its military as the rest of Asia combined and has prioritized capabilities that erode U.S. military advantages on land, sea, air, and space. China wants to drive the United States out of the Western Pacific and prevent us from coming to the aid of our allies. We hoped that economic liberalization would lead China to greater partnership with us and the world. But it opted for economic aggression, which in turn encourages its growing army. (...) Beijing is conducting a comprehensive and coordinated campaign to undermine support for the President, his agenda, and our nation's most cherished ideals...To put it bluntly, President Trump's leadership is working and China wants a different American president". See, "Vice President Mike Pence's Remarks on the Administration's Policy Towards China", October 4 Event, Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, October 4, 2018, available at: <https://www.hudson.org/events/1610-vice-president-mike-pence-s-remarks-on-the-administration-s-policy-towards-china102018>.

484 See, The White House, "Remarks by the President at the World Economic Forum", Davos, Switzerland, January 29, 2000, available at: https://1997-2001.state.gov/travels/2000/000129clinton_wef.html.

485 See, "Trump defiant as tariffs spark global anger, stock market plunges", *The Business Times*, March 2, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/trump-defiant-as-tariffs-spark-global-anger-stock-market-plunges>.

tariffs measures on steel and aluminum imports. Invoking Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974, the White House set off the “trade war” targeting China’s “discriminatory” policies designed to “burden or restrict United States commerce”⁴⁸⁶. Justifying tariffs in this fashion was fraught with controversy because the president took the unilateral decision to enact Section 301 rather than procure a trade dispute resolution through the WTO. By doing so, he rejected not only the WTO’s arbitration mechanism, but the fundamental principles of rules-based multilateral resolution of trade disputes. In this sense, the decision was a clear departure from past practice since American administrations had abided by WTO rules so as to preserve the legitimacy of the international trade system.⁴⁸⁷

The first measures destined to remedy unfair Chinese practices were announced in early 2018, when the United States imposed Section 201 tariffs on Chinese solar panels and washing machines.⁴⁸⁸ After the US International Trade Commission found that these industries were being harmed, it recommended the president the imposition of “global safeguard” restrictions. Trump followed the recommendation on January 22 and China responded with preliminary tariffs on American sorghum. Then, on March 1, the administration revealed forthcoming tariffs on steel and aluminum under national security grounds, although only 6 percent of imports originated in China.⁴⁸⁹ In subsequent months, tariffs of 25 percent were imposed on US\$50 billion worth of Chinese goods and, by September, a 10 percent tariff was added on to another US\$200 billion of imports arriving from the People’s Republic.⁴⁹⁰ In May 2019, with bilateral trade negotiations interrupted, the administration raised tariffs to 25 percent on a second tranche of Chinese goods. A few months later, in August 2019, the president finally – albeit only for only a few months – fulfilled his campaign promise by ordering that China

486 At a June 28, 2016 campaign rally in Pennsylvania, Trump had clearly stated his intention to counter unfair trade practices from China and apply tariffs under sections 201 and 301 of the 1974 Trade Act.

487 See, Rachel Brewster, “The Trump Administration and the Future of the WTO”, *Yale Journal of International Law Online*, Duke Law School Public Law and Legal Theory Series No. 2019-10, Vol. 44, December 4, 2018, pp. 1-10, available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3328929.

488 See, Executive Office of the President of the United States, “Section 201 Cases: Imported Large Residential Washing Machines and Imported Solar Cells and Modules”, *Fact Sheet*, available at: <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/files/Press/FS/201%20Cases%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>. In January 2021, president Trump extended the “safeguard” tariffs on large residential washers for another two years. See, David Lawder, “Trump extends “safeguard” tariffs on large washer imports for two years”, *Reuters*, January 14, 2021, accessed at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-washers-idUSKBN29J2SD>.

489 See, Chad P. Brown, “Trump’s Steel and Aluminum Tariffs: How WTO Retaliation Typically Works”, Peterson Institute for International Economics, March 5, 2018, available at: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/trade-and-investment-policy-watch/trumps-steel-and-aluminum-tariffs-how-wto-retaliation>.

490 See, Jacob Pramuk, “Trump will slap 10% tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods — and they will go to 25% at year-end” *CNBC*, September 17, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/17/trump-puts-new-tariffs-on-china-as-trade-war-escalates.html>

be labeled a currency manipulator.⁴⁹¹ The following month, the White House decreed an additional 10 percent tariff on approximately US\$150 billion of goods. The Chinese responded with increases targeting agricultural goods so as to inflict economic pain on Trump's electoral base as the president prepared to go to the voters for a second mandate. Presuming that Trump's reelection obliged him to secure a trade deal, China hardened its position and an additional round of tit-for-tat tariffs followed.⁴⁹² By the summer of 2019, China had applied tariffs on over US\$110 billion of US exports.⁴⁹³

On the political front, President Trump's claim that China, rather than the American consumer, was supporting the cost of tariffs was widely contested. The president was adamant in claiming that the cost of sanctions would be borne by China rather than by American companies and consumers.⁴⁹⁴ He was partially correct since, in the long-term, tariffs would invariably alter investment decisions, disrupt supply chains and slow down Chinese innovation.⁴⁹⁵ None of this negated the obvious fact that, in the short-term, economic pain was unavoidable. As the debate raged, National Economic Council

491 See, "Treasury Designates China as a Currency Manipulator", U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Releases, August 5, 2019, available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm751>. The Treasury Department, in its January 2020 Report to Congress, lifted the designation. The reasoning was as follows: "Over the summer, China took concrete steps to devalue the RMB. Subsequently, Treasury determined under Section 3004 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 that China was a currency manipulator, given that the purpose of China's devaluation was to gain unfair competitive advantage in international trade. Intensive trade and currency negotiations between the United States and China over the last few months resulted in a Phase One agreement that requires structural reforms and other changes to China's economic and trade regime in several key areas, including currency and foreign exchange issues. In this agreement, China has made enforceable commitments to refrain from competitive devaluation and not target its exchange rate for competitive purposes. China has also agreed to publish relevant information related to exchange rates and external balances. Meanwhile, after depreciating as far as 7.18 RMB per U.S. dollar in early September, the RMB subsequently appreciated in October and is currently trading at about 6.93 RMB per dollar. In this context, Treasury has determined that China should no longer be designated as a currency manipulator at this time". See, The Department of the Treasury, "Report to Congress. Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States", January 2020, pp. 1-2, available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/20200113-Jan-2020-FX-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

492 Chinese authorities underestimated the shift in American public opinion since Trump entered the White House. By the Summer of 2018, the Pew Research Center was reporting a significant reduction of positive opinions on China as positive opinions decreased from 44% in 2017 to 38% by 2018. See, Richard Wike and Kat Devlin, "As Trade Tensions Rise, Fewer Americans see China Favorably", Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends, August 28, 2018, available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/08/28/as-trade-tensions-rise-fewer-americans-see-china-favorably/>.

493 See, "China tariffs: what are they and how are they used?", *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 2020, available at: <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3113157/china-tariffs-what-are-they-and-how-are-they-used>

494 See, Geoffrey Gertz, "Did Trump's tariffs benefit American workers and national security?", Policy 2020, *Brookings*, September 10, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/did-trumps-tariffs-benefit-american-workers-and-national-security/>.

495 See, John K. Ferraro, "Long-Run Effects on Chinese GDP from US-China Tariff Hikes", *FEDS Notes*, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, July 15, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/long-run-effects-on-chinese-gdp-from-us-china-tariff-hikes-20190715.htm>.

director Larry Kudlow blatantly contradicted the president by acknowledging that “both sides will suffer”⁴⁹⁶. Immediate suffering came in the form of a decline in Whirlpool’s sales and stock value. Moreover, since higher prices suppressed demand for steel, various companies, including US Steel, closed a number of domestic plants.⁴⁹⁷ China also hinted that a freeze on the export of crucial rare earths was in the works, as was a significant reduction of Chinese students on US campuses, a coveted revenue stream for many leading universities.⁴⁹⁸

China’s unwillingness to make substantial concessions in exchange for the alleviation of tariffs was not unforeseen. Bent on hedging against future American demands, Beijing had little incentive to make concessions that would embolden the United States in subsequent negotiations. Seen from the prism of full-spectrum strategic rivalry, China’s February 2019 pledge to purchase an additional 5 million metric tons of soybeans and a host of other goods from American producers could not possibly defuse tensions because, for Washington, international trade had become synonymous with national security.⁴⁹⁹ This change was signaled by a shift in Trump’s rhetoric away from the emphasis placed on trade imbalances during the previous two years. Much of the administration’s attention to trade imbalances had been driven by the president’s long-held conviction that the colossal trade deficit with Beijing needed equalizing. However, even if tariff-based trade war revealed itself capable of balancing the trade relationship, the problem raised by China’s long-term rise remained unaddressed. For that reason, the White House altered its focus from trade deficits to preventing China’s acquisition of US technology, delaying Chinese innovation and countering the Made In China 2025 strategy designed to achieve technological leadership.

The rhetoric and practice of trade war became one element of a wider menu of American policy tools meant to disrupt global supply chains.⁵⁰⁰ By eroding China’s centrality in supply chains, Washington sought to weaken Chinese global competitiveness and, in this fashion, foment the return of manufacturing to the United States and enhance national security. To all intents and purposes, the strategy broke with four decades of US policy seeking to coopt China as a stakeholder in the international liberal order.⁵⁰¹ For the president, the prospect of prolonged strategic competition with China

496 See, Patrick Temple-West, “Kudlow: ‘Both sides will suffer’ in U.S.-China trade war”, *Politico*, December 5, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/12/china-trade-war-kudlow-1317632>.

497 See, Rajesh Kumar Singh, “Trump steel tariffs bring job losses to swing state Michigan”, *Reuters*, October 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-steel-insight-idUSKBN26U161>.

498 See, Panos Mourdoukoutas, “China Threatens To Cut Rare Earths Supplies To The U.S. — Bad Idea”, *Forbes*, May 16, 2019, available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2019/05/16/china-threatens-to-cut-rare-earth-supplies-to-the-us-bad-idea/?sh=2bae4e2a7486>.

499 See, Ryan McCrimmon, “China pledges big soybean buy”, *Politico*, February 1, 2019, available at: <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/morning-agriculture/2019/02/01/china-pledges-big-soybean-buy-498235>.

500 See, Chad P. Brown and Douglas A. Irwin, “Trump’s Assault on the Global Trading System: And Why Decoupling from China Will Change Everything”, *op. cit.*

501 Cf., Dan Blumenthal and Nicholas Eberstadt, “China Unquarantined”, *National Review*, June 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2020/06/22/our-disastrous-engagement-of-china/#slide-1>.

demanded an upgrading of America's economic statecraft, a concern illustrated by White House efforts to circumscribe Huawei's role in the construction of 5G wireless networks in allied countries⁵⁰². Given that Chinese law obliges companies to share data with the country's intelligence services, American officials argued that Beijing would surely compel Huawei to access confidential data from foreign 5G networks.⁵⁰³ Since US national security would invariably be compromised if allied governments carried their plans to fruition, friendly governments choosing not to curb Huawei's participation in their national 5G networks would see a severe restriction of – or an end to – intelligence-sharing. Bowing to the pressure, Australia effectively banned Huawei and European allies, after initial hesitations, largely acquiesced to US demands. Fearing data breaches, in May 2018, the American government banned the sale of Huawei devices at US military installations and proscribed their use by government contractors.⁵⁰⁴ One year later, the company was added to the Commerce Department's "entity list", a move that prohibited the sale of components to Huawei in the absence of prior clearance from the federal government.⁵⁰⁵ Hailed as a step toward decoupling from the China, such a disruption of critical supply chains reinforced Beijing's conviction that its considerable vulnerability could be overcome only through technological self-reliance.⁵⁰⁶

502 See, John Bolton. *The Room Where it Happened: A White House Memoir*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020, pp. 305-309.

503 See, Arshi Tirkey, "The 5G Dilemma: Mapping Responses Across the World", *ORF/Observer Research Foundation*, New Delhi, May 2020, pp. 16-23, consulted at: https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ORF_Monograph_5G_Dilemma.pdf. Also, "Huawei Personnel Worked With China Military on Research Projects", *Bloomberg*, June 27, 2019, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-06-27/huawei-personnel-worked-with-china-military-on-research-projects>; and Julian E. Barnes, "White House Official Says Huawei Has Secret Back Door to Extract Data", *The New York Times*, February 11, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/11/us/politics/white-house-huawei-back-door.html>. For a contrasting view, see, Elsa B. Kania and Lindsey R. Sheppard, "Why Huawei Isn't So Scary", *Foreign Policy*, October 12, 2019, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/12/huawei-china-5g-race-technology/>.

504 See, Shannon Liao, "The Pentagon bans Huawei and ZTE phones from retail stores on military bases", *The Verge*, May 2, 2018, available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2018/5/2/17310870/pentagon-ban-huawei-zte-phones-retail-stores-military-bases>. Many of these restrictions were extended in 2020. See, David Shepardson and Mike Stone, "U.S. federal contract ban takes effect for companies using products from Huawei, others", *Reuters*, August 13, 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-others-idINKCN25928Y>.

505 See, "Addition of Certain Entities to the Entity List and Revision of Entities on the Entity List", *Federal Register*, August 21, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-08-21/pdf/2019-17921.pdf>.

506 See, Meng Jing and Zen Soo, "Tech cold war: how Trump's assault on Huawei is forcing the world to contemplate a digital iron curtain", *South China Morning Post*, May 26, 2019, available at: <https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3011700/tech-cold-war-how-trumps-assault-huawei-forcing-world-contemplate>. Also, Haiyong Sun, "U.S.-China Tech War: Impacts and Prospects", *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2019, pp. 197-212, available at: <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/reader/10.1142/S237774001950012X>.

Beijing, in effect, had been moving closer to self-reliance since announcing its Made In China 2025 strategy.⁵⁰⁷ Loosely inspired by Germany's 2013 "Industry 4.0", as well as Japan's broad approach to innovation and development, Made In China 2025 was unveiled in May 2015 by prime-minister Li Keqiang as a decade-long comprehensive strategy designed to enhance the country's technological and industrial capacities.⁵⁰⁸ The proposal sought to achieve Chinese dominance in ten strategic sectors, including aviation, robotics, driverless cars, advanced medical products, biopharma and a host of other high-tech areas believed to be the foundation of the new global economy.⁵⁰⁹ The strategy envisioned massive investment in state of the art research as well as capital investments – primarily by the state-funded National Integrated Investment Fund – in innovative Chinese companies capable of competing in the domestic and global markets.⁵¹⁰ Expectably, the view from Washington was considerably less benign. In an October 2018 speech, Vice-President Mike Pence remarked that "through the 'Made In China 2025' plan, the Communist Party has set its sights on controlling 90 percent of the world's most advanced industries, including robotics, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence. To win the commanding heights of the 21st century economy, Beijing has

507 See, Jost Wübbeke, Mirjam Meissner, Max J. Zenglein Jaqueline Ives and Björn Conrad, "Made In China 2025: The making of a high-tech superpower and consequences for industrial countries", Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), No. 2, December 2016, accessed at: https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/MPOC_No.2_MadeinChina2025.pdf. Also, Ma Humin, Li Yan, Xiang Wu, Han Huang, Han Wu, Jie Xiong and Jinlong Zhang, "Strategic Plan of Made In China 2025 and Its Implementations". In Richard Brunet-Thornton and Felipe Martínez (eds). *Analyzing the Impacts of Industry 4.0 in Modern Business Environments*. Hershey: IGI Global, 2018, pp. 1-23, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326392969_Strategic_plan_of_Made_in_China_2025_and_its_implementation; Scott Kennedy, "Made In China 2025", *Critical Questions*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1 June 2015, consulted at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/made-china-2025>; and Mirjam Meissner and Jost Wübbeke, "China's High-Tech Strategy Raises the Heat on Industrial Countries", *The Diplomat*, 16 December 2016, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/chinas-high-tech-strategy-raises-the-heat-on-industrial-countries/>.

508 See, "Made In China 2025" plan unveiled to boost manufacturing", *GB Times*, May 20, 2015, accessed at: <https://gbtimes.com/made-china-2025-plan-unveiled-boost-manufacturing>.

509 Announced in July 2010, the High-Tech Strategy 2020 for Germany emphasizes the research and innovation. Innovation is oriented to five priority areas: climate/energy, health/nutrition, mobility, security and communications. Berlin's aim is to increase digitalization and the interconnection of products over a ten to fifteen-year span, thus obtaining advantages in digital manufacturing. Information technology and the internet of things are of critical import because, by connecting German companies to global production chains, these companies would become more competitive. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research subsequently updated the 2020 strategy. See, The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Made in China 2025 plan issued", May 19, 2015, accessed at: "http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2015/05/19/content_281475110703534.htm". Ten sectors as priorities to develop and upgrade China's industry: advanced information technology, automated machine tools and robotics, aerospace and aeronautical equipment, maritime equipment and high-tech shipping, modern rail transport equipment, new-energy vehicles and equipment, power equipment, agricultural equipment, new materials, advanced medical products and biopharma. The importance of the latter has become apparent to all during the Covid crisis.

510 See, Nicholas R. Lardy. *The State Strikes Back: The End of Economic Reform in China?*. Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2019, p. 2.

directed its bureaucrats and businesses to obtain American intellectual property – the foundation of our economic leadership – by any means necessary”⁵¹¹.

China’s broad strategy of growing competitive, world-class companies essentially replicates the approach pursued over the last few decades by Huawei and similar champions.⁵¹² Attaining the “moderately prosperous society” outlined in Xi Jinping’s “Chinese Dream” presupposes a moving up on the value chain. As the country transitions to a developed nation, fostering the sectors identified by Made In China 2025 simultaneously reduces dependence on manufactured imports and foreign export markets, thus extending greater control over the entirety of value chains. Since competition from developed countries increased as a result of efficiency gains driven by technological innovation, China’s vast pool of cheap labor became less competitive for sustaining export-led growth. Incapable of reducing substantially labor costs or devaluing significantly the *renminbi*, competitive advantages were therefore to be secured through innovation and the establishment of Chinese-defined standards in new sectors. A highly propitious environment for growing national companies was assured by direct and indirect state subsidies, targeted financing, forced technology transfers, export incentives and immunity for intellectual property theft.⁵¹³ China’s protected, massive internal market provided companies with an opportunity to grow until they were sufficiently consolidated to “go out” and compete for foreign market shares with the full backing of the Chinese state.

During the early part of his mandate, Trump failed to appreciate that the Chinese challenge was not restricted to trade; rather, it was a full-spectrum assault on American primacy. As attitudes hardened on both sides of the Pacific, Trump’s increasingly assertive China policy garnered bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. After Richard Nixon surprised the world with his 1972 “opening” to “Red China”, sporadic tense moments marked an otherwise stable bilateral relationship. The period following the June 1989 Tiananmen Square slaughter proved to be the most consequential because it convinced the communist elite that the United States and the West in general sought

511 See, The White House, “Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration’s Policy Toward China”, The Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, October 4, 2018, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-administrations-policy-toward-china/>.

512 For more information on China’s main technological companies, see, Rebecca A. Fannin, *Tech Giants of China*. Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2019. On Huawei’s international strategy, see, Brian Low, “Huawei Technologies Corporation: from local dominance to global challenge?”, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 2, 2007, pp. 138-144; and Sunny Li Sun, “Internationalization Strategy of MNEs from Emerging Economies: The Case of Huawei”, *Multinational Business Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2009, pp. 133-159, 2009, available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1528265.

513 See, Nicholas R. Lardy, *The State Strikes Back*, op. cit., pp. 99-117. These practices are exhaustively documented in the March 2018 United States Trade Representative’s report, resulting from its Section 301 investigation into China’s unfair trade practices. See, Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, “Findings of the Investigation into China’s Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation Under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974”, March 22, 2018, available at: <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/Section%20301%20FINAL.PDF>.

to provoke the collapse of the regime.⁵¹⁴ In subsequent decades, the view that liberal states constituted an existential threat to the People's Republic was not been modified; rather, it has been confirmed. Yet, the foreign policy consensus on China remained largely unchanged until Trump entered the White House and proceeded to build a new consensus around the view that Beijing posed an existential threat to US primacy. Indeed, Trump was the first senior political figure to alert to the immediacy of the monumental challenges posed by the Chinese regime.⁵¹⁵ Considering that China's rise was greatly assisted by the communist regime's "predatory economic statecraft", the president contended that the United States was bound to either retaliate in the same manner or face an ongoing erosion of its economic and trade positions. Although no overall consensus regarding the most suitable strategy for addressing China's rise was formulated during Trump's mandate, few continue to believe in the emergence of a benign People's Republic.

The Trump administration's economic statecraft was not limited to China; it encompassed "maximum pressure" campaigns directed against lesser threats: North Korea, Iran and Venezuela. During the transition of power to the new administration, Barack Obama conveyed to the incoming team that he considered North Korea to be the principal threat confronting the United States.⁵¹⁶ In the first months of the GOP

514 Chinese Communist Party elders suggested that the vast majority of the protestors were "misguided but not hostile to the regime", they also claimed that ideas of "bourgeois liberalization" and foreign powers "scheming" to overthrow party and regime had incited the students. The reference, obviously, was to the United States. See, Deng Xiaoping, "June 9 Speech to Martial Law Units", available at: <http://www.tsquare.tv/chronology/Deng.html>. In addition, Li Peng, "Full Text of Top-Secret Fourth Plenary Session Document: Li Peng's Life-Taking Report Lays Blame on Zhao Ziyang", *Chinese Law & Government*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2005, pp. 69-84. For an insightful discussion, see, Andrew J. Nathan, "The New Tiananmen Papers", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 4, 2019, pp. 80-91; and Ian Johnson, "China's 'Black Week-end'", *The New York Review of Books*, June 27, 2019, pp. 34-37, available at: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/06/27/tiananmen-chinas-black-week-end>.

515 After characterizing China as a "currency manipulator" throughout the electoral campaign, Trump, after taking office, returned to using the same designation. Cf., Steve Holland and David Lawder, "Exclusive: Trump calls Chinese 'grand champions' of currency manipulation", *Reuters*, 24 February 2017, consulted at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china-currency-exclusive-idUSKBN1622PJ>. Two months later, in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, he changed his mind. Cf., Gerard Baker, Carol E. Lee and Michael C. Bender, "Trump Says Dollar 'Getting Too Strong,' Won't Label China a Currency Manipulator", *The Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-says-dollar-getting-too-strong-wont-label-china-currency-manipulator-1492024312>. Recurrently labeling China the "big champion" of currency manipulation throughout the 2016 campaign, Trump affirmed that, on his first day in the Oval Office, the country would formally be designated a currency manipulator. He repeatedly decried Beijing's regular and deliberate discriminatory practices undercutting US companies and insistently warned that Western companies faced forced technology transfers, intellectual property theft and unacceptable barriers to entry into the Chinese market. Concomitantly, he recalled that Chinese companies operating in the United States benefitted from unhampered access of a kind denied to American companies in the Chinese market.

516 See, Gerald F. Seib, Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee, "Barack Obama Warns Donald Trump on North Korea Threat", *The Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 2016, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-faces-north-korean-challenge-1479855286>.

administration, tremendous pressure was placed on Pyongyang through the approval of additional stringent sanctions by the UN Security Council. At the same time, Asia-Pacific allies were urged to suppress sanctions-breaking activities carried out from North Korean embassies and consulates. Most significantly, China was pressed to enforce sanctions against the Kim regime.⁵¹⁷ None of these initiatives dissuaded Kim Jong-un from proceeding with nuclear and ballistic missiles tests. As rhetoric escalated on both sides, on 3 January 2018 the president tweeted that “North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un just stated that the ‘Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times’. Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!”⁵¹⁸. Then the White House abruptly shifted strategy, moving to engage Kim in the search for a negotiated solution: in exchange for denuclearization, the United States would provide aid for development and assure the regime’s normalization.⁵¹⁹ When talks broke down at the Hanoi summit, North Korea, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, resumed its ballistic missile tests. The Trump-Kim summits, in short, appeared merely to confer respectability upon the dictator and lessen the regime’s international isolation.⁵²⁰

President Trump’s dealings with Iran proved even more vexing. During the campaign season, Trump adopted an uncompromising hardline position in relation to the Islamic Republic and made clear his repudiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiated by the US and the EU-3.⁵²¹ Following through on the president’s campaign pledge, the White House withdrew from the nuclear deal on 8 May 2018, announced financial sanctions and later designated the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization.⁵²² As part of its approach, the administration

517 See, Leif-Eric Easley, “From Strategic Patience to Strategic Uncertainty: Trump, North Korea, and South Korea’s New President”, *World Affairs*, Vol. 180, No. 2, 2017, pp. 7-31; and Inhan Kim, “Trump power: Maximum pressure and China’s sanctions enforcement against North Korea”, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2020, pp. 96-124.

518 See, “Trump to Kim: My nuclear button is ‘bigger and more powerful’”, *BBC News*, January 3, 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42549687>.

519 See, Michael Wolff. *Siege: Trump Under Fire*. London: Little, Brown, 2019, p. 140; and Julie Bykowicz and Farnaz Fassihi, “Trump Says He and Kim Jong Un ‘Fell in Love’”, *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-says-he-and-kim-jong-un-fell-in-love-1538336604>.

520 See, Leif-Eric Easley, “Trump and Kim Jong Un: Climbing the Diplomatic Ladder”, *North Korean Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2020, pp. 103-110; Jung H. Pak, “What Kim Wants: The Hopes and Fears of North Korea’s Dictator”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99 Issue 3, 2020, pp. 96-106; Daniel Wertz, “The U.S., North Korea, and Nuclear Diplomacy”, NCNK/The National Committee on North Korea, *Issue Brief*, October 2018, pp. 1-24, available at: https://www.ncnk.org/sites/default/files/issue-briefs/US_DPRK_Relations.pdf; and Mel Gurtov. *America in Retreat: Foreign Policy Under Donald Trump*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, pp. 75-81.

521 See, Eli Stokols, “Trump declares himself a friend of Israel: ‘Believe me’”, *Politico*, March 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/03/donald-trump-israel-aipac-221064>.

522 See, *Mark Landler*, “Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned”, *The New York Times*, May 8, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

pressured SWIFT, the network facilitating cross-border payments, to target Iranian banks subject to US sanctions. The European Union advised SWIFT to refuse, but, in the Fall of 2018, Washington's request was met with approval.⁵²³ Concomitantly, exemptions allowing for third country importation of Iranian oil were terminated. Maximum pressure undoubtedly weakened Iran as oil exports fell by more than 50 percent, GDP contracted significantly and the currency depreciated by an astounding 60 percent.⁵²⁴ Even though Washington's endgame was never explicitly outlined, it was plain that the demands made of Tehran amounted to a call for regime change.⁵²⁵ Unsurprisingly, the *mullahs* refused to make palpable concessions and, predictably, by the second half of 2019, the uranium enrichment program was restarted at the underground Fordow facility.⁵²⁶ By doing so, Tehran blatantly violated the terms of the JCPOA, thus forcing European governments still attempting to salvage the nuclear deal to impose a fresh round of sanctions.⁵²⁷

In Venezuela, the United States joined the Lima Group's efforts to isolate Nicolás Maduro's Bolivarian regime⁵²⁸. Extending recognition to Juan Guaidó as the country's legitimate president, Washington also sought to deny the regime access to its foreign

523 See, "SWIFT system to disconnect some Iranian banks this weekend", *Reuters*, November 9, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-iran-sanctions-swift/swift-system-to-disconnect-some-iranian-banks-this-weekend-idUSFWN1XK0YW>; and Radoslaw Fiedler, "Iran and the European Union after the Nuclear Deal", *CES Working Papers*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2018, consulted at: https://media.proquest.com/media/hms/PFT/1/rV3u7?_s=ulWyp8wNZmOjrGAFcKLY0XkA908%3D.

524 See, Javier Blas, "In Big Win for Trump, U.S. Sanctions Cripple Iranian Oil Exports", *Bloomberg*, September 28, 2018, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-18/in-big-win-for-trump-u-s-sanctions-cripple-iranian-oil-exports>; and Saeed Ghasseminejad and Richard Goldberg, "The Impact of Sanctions Two years After U.S. Withdrawal From the Nuclear Deal", *FDD/ Foundation for Defense of Democracies, FDD Policy Brief*, May 6, 2020, available at: <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/05/06/sanctions-impact-two-years-after-jcpoa-withdrawal/>.

525 See, Steven Simon, "Iran and President Trump: What Is the Endgame?", *Survival*, Vol. 60, No. 4, 2018, pp. 7-20, available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2018.1494975?src=recsys>; Mohammed Nuruzzaman, "President Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign and Iran's Endgame", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 44, No. 6, 2020, pp. 570-582; and Mel Gurtov, *America in Retreat: Foreign Policy under Donald Trump*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, pp. 81-85.

526 See, Patrick Wintour, "Iran resumes uranium enrichment in new step away from nuclear deal", *The Guardian*, November 5, 2019, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/05/iran-announces-injection-of-uranium-gas-into-1044-centrifuges>; Laurence Norman, "In Major Nuclear Step, Iran to Resume Enrichment at Underground Site", *The Wall Street Journal*, November 5, 2019, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-plans-to-breach-nuclear-deal-again-11572955701>; and Marc Santora, "Iran Increases Uranium Enrichment at Key Nuclear Facility", *The New York Times*, January 4, 2021, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/04/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-uranium-enrichment.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

527 See, Julian Borger, "Friends without Benefits: How Europe Was Wrongfooted by Trump over Iran", *The Guardian*, 14 May 2018, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/14/the-myth-of-trumps-european-allies-shows-of-friendship-dont-signal-influence>; and Ellie Geranmayeh, "Trump's Iran Sanctions: An Explainer on Their Impact for Europe", European Council on Foreign Relations, September 12, 2018, available at: https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_trumps_iran_sanctions_an_explainer_on_their_impact_for_europe.

528 See, John Bolton, *The Room Where it Happened*, pp. 247-285.

assets and international accounts.⁵²⁹ Already facing hyperinflation and the rationing of essential goods, Venezuela's dysfunctional economy was further pressured when secondary sanctions were imposed on foreign companies doing business with Caracas. Not unexpectedly, Maduro rejected concessions and then resorted to increased repression of internal opposition groupings. As was the case in Iran, the Trump administration pursued regime change and hinted that the use of force to attain such an outcome had not been definitively ruled out.⁵³⁰ When the Maduro regime proved more resilient than expected, Venezuela rapidly vanished from the White House's radar. Reportedly "losing both patience and interest in the situation", president Trump moved on to more pressing matters.⁵³¹

Critics of "maximum pressure" maintain that the president's strategy ultimately squandered the United States' economic leverage and strategic advantages.⁵³² Administration attacks on Huawei and other Chinese technology companies persuaded Beijing to accelerate its quest for self-sufficiency. Subject to "maximum pressure", Iran, North Korea and Venezuela discovered they could readily escalate tensions and increase costs for the United States. For instance, Kim Jong-un could launch more ballistic missiles and Maduro could weaponize the flow of refugees to American allies in the neighborhood. Iran, for its part, possesses a number of asymmetrical instruments to destabilize the Persian Gulf region and oil supplies. Although president Trump was successful in securing multilateral cooperation for his "maximum pressure" campaigns against North Korea and Venezuela, Iran posed an altogether different matter and morphed into yet another source of transatlantic discord.

529 See, Clare Ribando Seelke, "Venezuela: Overview of U.S. sanctions", *CRS/Congressional Research Service*, January 22, 2021, available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10715.pdf>.

530 See, Brian Ellsworth, "Trump says U.S. military intervention in Venezuela 'an option,' Russia objects", *Reuters*, February 3, 2019, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-idUSKCN1PS0DK>.

531 See, Karen DeYoung and Josh Dawsey, "With Maduro entrenched in Venezuela, Trump loses patience and interest in issue, officials say", *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2019, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/with-maduro-entrenched-in-venezuela-trump-loses-patience-and-interest-in-issue-officials-say/2019/06/19/a7ba2c56-92b1-11e9-b58a-a6a9afaa0e3e_story.html.

532 See, for example, Richard C. Bush, Robert Einhorn, Ryan Hass, Michael E. O'Hanlon, Jung H. Pak, and Jonathan D. Pollack, "Around the halls: Can President trump claim credit for progress on North Korea?", *Brookings*, October 19, 2018, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/10/19/around-the-halls-can-president-trump-claim-credit-for-progress-on-north-korea/>; and Loosineh Markarian, "Trump's Maximum Pressure Campaign Thwarted the Chance to Contain Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps", *Responsible Statecraft*, December 11, 2019, available at: <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2019/12/11/trumps-maximum-pressure-campaign-thwarted-the-chance-to-contain-irans-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps/>.

Part 4: A Greying Partnership

*Like many isolated people, they were wrapped up in themselves
and not too interested in the world outside*

V. S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*.

Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and Winston Churchill have all been credited with observing that America and Britain are two nations divided by a common language. Irrespective of authorship, the fundamental insight revealed by the quip – that commonalities tend to instill a deceptive sense of familiarity – is readily applicable to contemporary Euro-American relations.⁵³³ To this day, the impression that Americans and Europeans are fundamentally alike persists on both sides of the Atlantic. Europeans generally apprehend America – or, rather, a caricature of America – through the filter of a globalized pop culture disseminated by a pervasive English language, itself the continental *lingua franca*. Countless Americans, in turn, romanticize the “old country”, and fervently set out on the obligatory backpack “experience” through the main boulevards of major European capitals. Both sides thus perpetuate the illusion of comprehension and false familiarity such exchanges invariably engender. Unfortunately, this very same illusion of familiarity sustains the myth of harmonious transatlantic bonds and obfuscates more than it reveals about the two sides.

The cultural underpinnings of Donald Trump’s appeal, the specificities of his base of support and the formidable political force of *trumpism* were never fully comprehended in Europe.⁵³⁴ Convinced that Hillary Clinton would surely emerge as the victor of the 2016 general election, continental publics and elites were astounded to discover that the same country that twice sent Barack Obama to the White House could elect the antithesis of the outgoing president. Reminiscent of the acute antipathy once shown toward Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, Trump’s massive unpopularity in Europe was not entirely surprising. Mainstream European political culture has historically been mirrored by centrist parties whose core values and programs tend to find greater resonance in and identification with the Democrat party. In contrast, Republican rhetoric, values and policy preferences usually collide with European sensibilities. Yet, even by this measure, Trump’s world-view was uncommonly alien to continental elites and publics.

533 For background, see, *inter alia*, Jarrod Wiener (ed.). *The Transatlantic Relationship*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996; Steven McGuire and Michael Smith. *The European Union and the United States: Competition and Convergence in the Global Arena*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Bruce W. Jentleson. *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014; and Glenn Peter Hastedt. *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present and Future*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017.

534 See, for example, Marie-Cécile Naves. *Trump: L’onde de choc populiste*. Limoges: FYP éditions, 2016; and Marie-Cécile Naves. *Trump, la revanche de l’homme blanc*. Éditions Textuel, 2017. For a largely favorable continental European evaluation of Trump, cf., Vicente Vallés. *Trump y la caída del imperio Clinton*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2017.

As transatlantic relations reached their lowest point since the outbreak of the 2003 Iraqi War, qualms over the direction of US foreign policy under Donald Trump became a fixed, durable feature of continental political discourse.⁵³⁵ The president's barely disguisable disregard for the European integration project, his unapologetic encouragement of Brexit, abandonment of the Paris Treaty and declared aim to refashion the rules of international trade amounted to a repudiation of the generic European political consensus. Moreover, his imprudent remarks questioning the strategic value of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) undercut the mutual security guarantee enshrined by Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty.⁵³⁶ Viewing transatlantic relations through a transactional prism, Trump, during the presidential campaign, hinted that unless the Euro-American relationship was radically reconfigured the United States would simply leave Europe to its own devices.⁵³⁷ For his predecessors, convinced that European democracies were privileged allies and that US prosperity rested on Euro-American trade and investment, abandoning Europe to its own devices was simply not an option. After all, European security and prosperity were understood as core American interests.

Trump's criticism of the EU was different in kind from that of other presidents, but the structural problems afflicting the alliance could not be simply attributed to the behavior of a mercurial president. America's transatlantic ambiguity was expressed in a December 2018 speech when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo asserted that "the European Union and its predecessors have delivered a great deal of prosperity to the entire continent" and "we benefit enormously from your success"⁵³⁸. Having said this,

535 See, Trine Flockhart, "Trans-Atlantic Relations After the War in Iraq: Returning to – or Departing from – 'Normal Politics'?", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2004, pp. 395-417; Heinz Gärtner and Ian M. Cuthbertson (eds.), *European Security and Transatlantic Relations after 9/11 and the Iraq War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; Philip H. Gordon, "Bridging the Atlantic Divide" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1, January/February 2003, pp. 70-83; Andrew Moravcsik, "Striking A New Transatlantic Bargain", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July/August 2003, pp. 74-89. Also, João Marques de Almeida e Vasco Rato. *A Encruzilhada: Portugal, A Europa e os Estados Unidos*. Lisbon: Bertrand Editora, 2004.

536 Article 5 of the NATO Treaty states that: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security. The full text of the treaty is available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20120822_nato_treaty_en_light_2009.pdf.

537 See, *The New York Times*, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html>

538 See, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, "Remarks by Secretary Pompeo at the German Marshall Fund", German Marshall Fund, Brussels, December 4, 2018, available at: <https://ua.usembassy.gov/remarks-by-secretary-pompeo-at-the-german-marshall-fund/>.

he also wondered aloud if the EU was “ensuring that the interests of countries and their citizens are placed before those of bureaucrats here in Brussels?”⁵³⁹. Such utterances convinced many Europeans that, deliberately or not, Trump’s rebuke of the bedrock assumptions underlying the decades-old transatlantic relationship undermined Euro-American unity. Unsurprisingly then, as late as February 2020, during the annual Munich Security Conference, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo still found himself attempting to alleviate concerns relative to US global leadership. Asserting that “I am happy to report that the death of the transatlantic alliance is grossly over-exaggerated. The West is winning. We are collectively winning. We’re doing it together”, he also observed that respect “for sovereignty of nations is a secret of and central to our success” and further suggested that assaults on “sovereignty are, indeed, assaults on the very freedom that anchors the Western ideal”⁵⁴⁰. Raised on the intrinsic benefits of cooperation and “pooled sovereignty”, European leaders interpreted this emphasis on sovereignty as synonymous with a diminished commitment to consultation and international cooperation through multilateral institutions.⁵⁴¹ In reality, as on other many occasions, both sides were speaking directly past each other.

For all intents and purposes, voluntarism and good intentions were no longer disguised the fact that, from Washington’s prism, Europe ceased to be the world’s central geopolitical stage. Given the shift in strategic preoccupations accruing from Barack Obama’s 2011 pivot to Asia, it also no longer seemed reasonable to expect that America’s foreign policy focus would be drawn away from the Pacific back to the Atlantic.⁵⁴² Still, the case for a revamped transatlantic bond continued to be a robust one. After all, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union were the historical mainstays of the transatlantic relationship and, no less critically, the twin pillars of the post-1945 international order. Acknowledging this reality, since the late 1940s American presidents consistently backed NATO, European reconstruction and the continent’s integration project. In turn, Europeans were steadfast in backing Washington’s global leadership and policy preferences. Today, as a result of this complex web of mutual ties,

539 Ibid.

540 See, US Embassy in Luxembourg, “Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper Speak at Munich Security Conference 2020”, February 2020, available at: <https://lu.usembassy.gov/secretary-pompeo-and-secretary-esper-speak-at-munich-security-conference-2020/>.

541 See, Joachim Krause, “Multilateralism: Behind European Views”, *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2004, pp. 43-59.

542 On the pivot to Asia, see, Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century”, *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>. As well, Kurt M. Campbell. *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia*. New York: Twelve, 2016. Barack Obama’s first Undersecretary of State for Asia during the president’s first term, Campbell was the principal architect of the “pivot”. For a critical examination of the policy, cf., for example, Bruce Klingner, “The Missing Asia Pivot in Obama’s Defense Strategy”, *The Heritage Foundation WebMemo*, January 6, 2012, consulted at: http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/wm3443.pdf; and Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, “Here, We See the Future”: The Obama Administration’s Pivot to Asia”, In Edward Ashbee and John Dumbrell (eds.). *The Obama Presidency and the Politics of Change*. Cham: Springer, 2017, pp. 307-327.

the US and the EU continue to share common security concerns and, crucially, are also each other's major trade and investment partners.⁵⁴³

In the immediate aftermath of the November 2020 elections, no noticeable effort was made by European leaders to contain their glee over Joe Biden's victory. In the midst of ballot recounts, assorted court challenges and denunciations of voting irregularities, allied governments extended their congratulations to the Democrat president-elect. One month later, with president Trump still in office, the European Commission took the unusual step of reaching out to Biden by way of an official proposal designed to 'reset' the transatlantic relationship. Resting on the conviction that a Biden administration would prove considerably more responsive to fomenting transatlantic cooperation, the text proclaimed that Europe was America's "indispensable partner"⁵⁴⁴. Commenting the document, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen expressed her belief that it was "time to reconnect with a new agenda for transatlantic and global cooperation for the world of today"⁵⁴⁵. Striking a similarly buoyant note, Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, appealed to both sides of the Atlantic to "look forward, not back. Let's rejuvenate our relationship"⁵⁴⁶. Oddly, a month before Biden's inauguration, the European Union (EU) announced the completion of a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment under negotiation with China during the previous seven years. Although finding common ground with the United States regarding China was one of the proposals included in the Commission's "reset" document, Antony Blinken's appeal to delay finalizing the deal until Biden entered the White House was simply ignored.⁵⁴⁷ The haste was even more bewildering when one considers that the agreement requires ratification by national parliaments, a rather drawn-out process.

543 In 2019, total US trade with the EU in merchandise and services was \$1.3 trillion. In 2018, US direct investment in the EU totaled \$3.3 trillion, while the EU invested \$2.6 trillion in the US. Thus, the EU accounts for over half of foreign direct investment in the United States, although Brexit will alter these trade and investment levels since the UK, in 2018, accounted for approximately 15% of EU GDP. Still, post-Brexit EU remains the United States' largest trade and investment partner.

544 The introduction to the document stated that: "With a change of administration in the US, a more assertive Europe and the need to design a post-corona world, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design a new transatlantic agenda for global cooperation – based on our common values, interests and global influence. This should be the linchpin of a new global alliance of like-minded partners. This comes at a time when there is a commonality of outlook and priorities on domestic and international agendas between the incoming US administration and the European Union". See, European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: A new EU-US agenda for global change", December 2, 2020, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/joint-communication-cu-us-agenda_en.pdf.

545 Ibid.

546 Ibid.

547 See, Theresa Fallon, "The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment is a win for China, and a blow for transatlantic relations" *The Diplomat*, January 4, 2021, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/the-strategic-implications-of-the-china-eu-investment-deal/>.

4.1. Europe as Nemesis

Although president Trump's 'America First' agenda was an obvious source of Euro-American tensions, fault for the deterioration of relations never resided wholly on one side of the Atlantic. European elites greeted Donald Trump's 2016 triumph at the ballot box with equal amounts of perplexity, forbearance and resignation. Virtually from the day Trump settled into the Oval Office, continental acrimony toward the new president was driven by a purported "*trumpian* desire that the EU's ability to define its own future should be diminished"⁵⁴⁸. As if the ultimate fate of the Western world rested exclusively with the choices made by the incoming administration, skittish observers insisted that Trump's political ascendancy heralded "the end of Europe"⁵⁴⁹. Even more ominously, other pundits maintained that the president would likely trigger nothing less than the end of Western liberalism.⁵⁵⁰ Such apocalyptic prophesies were, to say the very least, wildly embellished and, in a less polarized context, would most certainly have been categorically dismissed. These outlandishly dire predictions never actually materialized, but they did permeate European political discourse as the continent's Cassandras felt compelled, year after year, to recite their grim warnings.

Mutual transatlantic rancor actually predated the November 2016 vote. As the US presidential campaign unfolded, prominent European politicians contributed to the surrealism of the race by airing vehement, public criticism of the GOP candidate. For instance, when Trump embraced a "Muslim travel ban", British conservative Prime Minister David Cameron made it known that he "completely disagrees" with a proposal he decried as "divisive, unhelpful and quite simply wrong"⁵⁵¹. Seemingly vindicated by Cameron's resignation following the Brexit referendum, Trump later taunted the routed former Prime Minister by asking his GOP supporters to "imagine how much better our future can be if we declare independence from the elites who led us from one financial and foreign policy disaster to another"⁵⁵². As if the allusion to the outcome of the referendum was somehow less than clear, he went on to boast that "(O)ur friends in Britain recently voted to take back control of their economy, politics and borders.

548 See, for instance, Natalie Nougayrède, "A chaotic Brexit is part of Trump's grand plan for Europe", *The Guardian*, March 14, 2019, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/14/chaotic-brexit-trump-plan-europe-president>.

549 See, James Kirchick. *The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018, pp. xii-xiii; and David Frum, "Trump's Plan to End Europe", *The Atlantic*, May 2017, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/05/the-plan-to-end-europe/521445/>.

550 See, Edward Luce. *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017, pp. 11-12.

551 See, Matt Chorley, "Donald Trump is 'divisive, stupid and wrong' but we shouldn't ban him from Britain, says David Cameron", *Daily Mail*, December 16, 2015, consulted at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3362449/Donald-Trump-divisive-stupid-wrong-shouldn-t-ban-Britain-says-David-Cameron.html>.

552 See, "Donald Trump's jobs plan speech", *Politico*, June 28, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/full-transcript-trump-job-plan-speech-224891>.

I was on the right side of that issue, as you know, with the people. I was there. I said it was going to happen, I felt it”⁵⁵³. Neither did Trump pass up on the opportunity to recollect that “Hillary, as always, stood with the elites and both she and President Obama predicted that one, and many others, totally wrong”⁵⁵⁴. At a time when most European governments feared that Brexit could elicit additional defections from the integration project, Donald Trump’s raucous incursion into the British debate was viewed as an assault on the very concept of European unity when it was most vulnerable.

David Cameron’s words proved quite serene and even-handed when compared to the statements made by socialist French president François Hollande. Commenting the “Khan affair”, he deplored the “hurtful, humiliating comments”, adding that the “excesses make you want to retch, even in the United States, especially when – as was Donald Trump’s case – he speaks ill of a soldier, of the memory of a soldier”⁵⁵⁵. Making these highly irregular considerations about the domestic politics of an allied nation, Hollande went on to predict that “(I)f the Americans choose Trump, that will have consequences, because an American election is a world election... It could lead to a very strong turn to the right in the world... the American campaign shows issues that will be reflected in the French campaign”⁵⁵⁶. Clearly, Hollande believed a Trump victory would necessarily generate a contagion effect propelling Marine Le Pen to the final round of the French presidential election. About to face French voters as national-populist parties surged in the polls throughout the continent, Hollande proceeded to transformed *trumpism* into a domestic political issue. Ironically, the French president proved oddly omniscient regarding his own immediate political future. Polling in the single digits, he would ultimately refrain from seeking a second term in the Élysée and Le Pen would, in fact, go on to dispute the second round of presidential voting with Emmanuel Macron.

Polemics engulfing the GOP candidate were not circumscribed to the United Kingdom and France. On more than one occasion, Trump asserted that, from his perspective, Germany was America’s thorniest European ally. As early as 1987, in his “open letter to the American people” published in several major newspapers, he had argued that “(I)t’s time for us to end our vast deficits by making Japan, and others who can afford it, pay. Our world protection is worth hundreds of billions of dollars to these countries, and their stake in their protection is far greater than ours”⁵⁵⁷. Although not explicitly cited, Germany was one of those free-riding allies that Trump purposely set out to denounce. He would be more forthcoming during an October 2015 CBS *Face the Nation* interview when he characterized Angela Merkel’s decision to open the doors to over a

553 Ibid.

554 Ibid.

555 Cf., “François Hollande says Donald Trump makes you want to retch”, *The Guardian*, August 3, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/03/francois-hollande-says-donald-trump-makes-you-want-to-retch>.

556 Ibid.

557 See, Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms. *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017, p. 33.

million refugees as “insane”, ominously forewarning of “riots in Germany”⁵⁵⁸. Adding insult to injury, he then confessed his personal disillusionment with the chancellor, indicating that “I always thought Merkel was, like, this great leader”⁵⁵⁹. Two months later, when *Time* magazine announced its selection of Merkel as its 2015 “Person of the Year”, Trump, in a self-indulgent December 9 tweet, complained that “I told you @TIME Magazine would never pick me as person of the year despite being the big favorite. They picked the person who is ruining Germany”⁵⁶⁰. Months later, pointing to the New Year’s Eve assault on hundreds of women in Cologne, he again lashed out against Merkel by claiming that the “German people are going to end up overthrowing this woman. I don’t know what the hell she is thinking”⁵⁶¹. Noticeably absent from these remarks was the decorum expected of politicians of allied nations.

By this point in time, Trump’s unrelenting badgering of Merkel had united Germany’s political elite around the chancellor. Sigmar Gabriel, vice-chancellor and leader of the Social Democratic Party, Merkel’s junior partner in the governing “black-red” coalition, compared Trump to populist party leaders Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders, admonishing all three for promising their supporters “a way back into a fairytale world”⁵⁶². As if the comparison was not sufficiently undiplomatic, Gabriel added that “these right-wing populists are not only a threat to peace and social cohesion, but also to economic development”⁵⁶³. In other words, German stability and prosperity would invariably be imperiled by a Trump victory at the polls. Gabriel’s apprehension was not entirely misplaced given Trump’s economic nationalism and his aversion to prosperous, free-riding allies and “unfair” trade relations. Indeed, the GOP candidate raised the prospect of American recourse to tariffs against the German automobile industry on more than one occasion. Berlin may have been uncomfortable with Trump’s ambiguities about the liberal order and its repercussions in Europe, but it was no less concerned with its pragmatic economic interests.

558 For the complete transcript of the interview, see, “Face the Nation Transcripts, October 11, 2015: Trump, Carson”, *CBS News*, October 11, 2015, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-october-11-2015-trump-carson/>.

559 Ibid.

560 After *Time* made the “Person of the Year” nomination public, Trump, in a November 24, 2017 tweet, claimed that “*Time* Magazine called to say that I was PROBABLY going to be named “Man (Person) of the Year,” like last year, but I would have to agree to an interview and a major photo shoot. I said probably is no good and took a pass. Thanks anyway!”. For both tweets, see, Allie Malloy and Jeff Zeleny, “Trump tweets he “took a pass” at being named *TIME*’s person of the year”, *CNN*, November 25, 2017, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/24/politics/president-donald-trump-time-magazine/index.html>.

561 See, Meghan Keneally, ‘What Trump and Merkel Have Said About Each Other’, *ABC News*, July 6, 2017, available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-merkel/story?id=46198767>.

562 Cf., Michael Nienaber, “German minister calls Trump a threat, Merkel lauds Clinton”, *Reuters*, March 6, 2016, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-trump-germany-idUSMTZSAPEC36LTD4ZC>.

563 Ibid.

Indirectly, and much less aggressively, Merkel replied to Trump by lauding Hillary Clinton. Tactfully refraining from openly endorsing the Democrat, the chancellor nonetheless did so tacitly by extolling the former Secretary of State's "strategic thinking" and by emphasizing that the candidate was "a strong supporter of the transatlantic partnership"⁵⁶⁴. Asked for a statement on Trump's unflattering appreciation of her refugee policy, Merkel retorted: "I don't see any reason why I should reply to him"⁵⁶⁵. No doubt remained that she considered Donald Trump a nuisance of no particular importance and did not expect him to win the race for the White House. Not one to be easily deterred, Trump, in June 2016, commenting the outcome of the Brexit referendum, mused about Germans emigrating: "These are people that were very proud Germans that were beyond belief, they thought the greatest that there ever was and now they're talking about leaving Germany"⁵⁶⁶. Recurrently, on the campaign trail Trump used Merkel to attack Hillary Clinton. During a August 2016 Make America Great Again rally in Charlotte, he claimed that Clinton planned to "bring in roughly 620,000 refugees from all refugee-sending nations in her first term alone, on top of all other immigration" and charged her with "running to be America's Angela Merkel, and we've seen how much crime and how many problems that's caused the German people"⁵⁶⁷. Weeks later, in September 2016, he conceded that "Merkel is a really great world leader", but then immediately cast doubts on Merkel's judgment and leadership by recalling that "I was always a Merkel person, I thought really fantastic. But I think she made a very tragic mistake a year and a half ago"⁵⁶⁸.

The German leader responded after the November 2016 election by way of a remarkable official statement. Congratulating Trump on his victory, Merkel extended the hand of cooperation on the basis of common values. The caveat, of course, was that those values – "democracy, freedom, the respect for the law and the dignity of human beings, independent of their origin, skin color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political position" – were explicitly outlined in the congratulatory statement⁵⁶⁹. For a German chancellor to stipulate the terms of bilateral cooperation in such a frank, public manner amounted to a very stark rebuke of Donald Trump. A few days after

564 Ibid.

565 Ibid.

566 See, Chris Cillizza, "Donald Trump's Brexit press conference was beyond bizarre", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 25, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre-20160625-gprojw.html>.

567 See, Sopan Deb, "Trump says he admires Germany's Merkel despite bashing her often", *CBS News*, September 29, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-says-he-admires-germanys-merkel-despite-bashing-her-often/>; and "Fact check: Is Merkel's immigration policy like Clinton's?", *DW*, August 16, 2016, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-is-merkels-immigration-policy-like-clintons/a-19478550>.

568 See, "I was always a Merkel person,' says US presidential candidate Donald Trump", *DW*, September 30, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.dw.com/en/i-was-always-a-merkel-person-says-us-presidential-candidate-donald-trump/a-35929474>.

569 See, "Merkel congratulates Trump as politicians express shock", *DW*, November 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-congratulates-trump-as-politicians-express-shock/a-36318866>.

Trump was sworn-in and formally announced his promised “Muslim travel ban”, Merkel compounded tensions by stressing that the “necessary and decisive battle against terrorism does not in any way justify putting groups of certain people under general suspicion, in this case people of Muslim belief or of a certain origin”⁵⁷⁰. Once again, the inference was that Trump was eroding common, sacrosanct Western values, rights and freedoms. For all intents and purposes, the chancellor was signaling her concern over the state of American democracy under a Trump administration that, in her view, was determined to erode fundamental rights and freedoms. An experienced political hand, Merkel was quite obviously cognizant that she would invariably be perceived as lecturing an American president on the significance of bedrock Western values. She surely was also aware that diplomatic courtesies – and elementary good manners – impede allies from insinuating that fundamental democratic values are imperiled by legitimately elected politicians.

Angela Merkel’s manifest lack of enthusiasm for Trump’s international agenda catapulted her – either by accident or design – into the center of a raging debate over the “leadership of the free world” following the NATO, EU and G7 summits of May 2017.⁵⁷¹ Venting her exasperation with Donald Trump after these gatherings, Merkel affirmed that “(T)he times in which we could completely depend on others are, to a certain extent, over. I’ve experienced that in the last few days... We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands”⁵⁷². It was a bombastic statement to make at the precise moment the American president was perceived as distancing himself from liberal norms. However, Merkel’s clashes with Trump did not obfuscate the fact that Germany – seen from the White House as the main culprit of the problems plaguing the transatlantic relationship – was simply not powerful enough to assume the role of “leader

570 See, “Merkel says U.S. travel ban not justified by terror fight”, *Reuters*, January 30, 2017, available at: <https://fr.reuters.com/article/usa-trump-immigration-germany-merkel-idINKBN15E11O>.

571 It appears as if the first reference to “chancellor of the free world” was made by *Time* when it designated Angela Merkel as the magazine’s 2015 Person of the Year. See, Karl Vick, with Simon Shuster, “Angela Merkel – Chancellor of the free World”, *Time*, December 21, 2015, accessed at: <https://time.com/time-person-of-the-%20year-2015-angela-merkel/>. For an argument making the case for the chancellor, see, for example, Suzanne Moore, “Angela Merkel shows how the leader of the free world should act”, *The Guardian*, May 29, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/29/angela-merkel-leader-free-world-donald-trump>. For a different perspective, see, Clemens Wergin, “Angela Merkel Is Not the ‘Leader of the Free World’”, *The New York Times*, March 4, 2018, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/04/opinion/angela-merkel-leader-free-world.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

572 See, Michael Birnbaum and Rick Noack, “Following Trump’s trip, Merkel says Europe can’t rely on ‘others.’ She means the U.S.”, *The Washington Post*, May 28, 2017, consulted at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/following-trumps-trip-merkel-says-europe-cant-rely-on-us-anymore/2017/05/28/4c6b92cc-43c1-11e7-8de1-ccc59a9bf4b1_story.html; and Giulia Paravicini, “Angela Merkel: Europe must take ‘our fate’ into own hands” *Politico*, May 28, 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-europe-cdu-must-take-its-fate-into-its-own-hands-elections-2017>

of the free world”⁵⁷³. As the 2015 refugee crisis revealed, Berlin could not even generate pan-European acceptance of German leadership on that specific issue. As a matter of fact, Merkel and other German officials actually went to some length to deny the country’s interest in assuming such a leadership role. For instance, Jürgen Hardt, foreign policy spokesperson of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, categorically asserted that “Germany is not the leader of the free world”⁵⁷⁴. Although the chancellor herself took deliberate care to avoid claims to the mantle of “leadership of the free world”, her criticisms of the president – and her ominous silences – effectively transformed her into the foremost exponent of the liberal order in opposition to the new, sovereigntist course outlined by the White House.

Seen from the European left, Trump’s election amounted to the latest in an unending series of American failings. True, Barack Obama had brought a brief respite, but under Trump’s leadership the United States would obviously revert to its all too familiar malevolent ways at home and abroad. Expressing this sentiment, President François Hollande, laconically congratulating Trump on his electoral triumph “as is natural between two heads of state”, echoed Merkel by positing that “certain positions taken by Donald Trump during the American campaign must be confronted with the values and interests we share with the United States”⁵⁷⁵. His ministers were even less constrained in their considerations. Leading the charge, Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault asserted that “(W)e don’t want a world where egoism triumphs”⁵⁷⁶. Not to be outdone by her zealous colleague, Ecology Minister Ségolène Royal contended that Donald Trump’s stance on climate change was “absolutely catastrophic”⁵⁷⁷. The trenches were being dug in preparation for yet more transatlantic political skirmishes.

Further afield, Ireland’s Social Democratic and Labour Party leader Colum Eastwood described Trump as a “bigot” promoting “sectarian, racial and xenophobic hatred”⁵⁷⁸. Less imaginatively, the militant Irish Labour Party senator Aodhán O’Riordáin denounced

573 See, Constanze Stelzenmüller, “Is Angela Merkel the leader of the free world now? Not quite”, *Brookings Institution*, November 17, 2016, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/11/17/is-angela-merkel-the-leader-of-the-free-world-now-not-quite/>; and “The Merkel doctrine: Germany is not the new leader of the free world”, *The Economist*, July 18, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/07/08/germany-is-not-the-new-leader-of-the-free-world>.

574 See, Erik Kirschbaum, “With America in crisis, a reluctance in Germany to be ‘leader of the free world’”, *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3087531/america-crisis-reluctance-germany-be-leader-free-world>.

575 See, Guardian Staff, “World leaders react to Donald Trump’s US election victory”, *The Guardian*, November 9, 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/world-leaders-react-to-donald-trumps-us-election-victory>.

576 See, Derek Healey, “Donald Trump wins US election: Reaction from around the world”, *The Press and Journal*, November 9, 2016, available at: <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/world/1079618/donald-trump-wins-us-election-reaction-around-world/>.

577 See, Alister Doyle, “Trump’s climate plan ‘catastrophic’. France’s Royal”, *Reuters*, November 11, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-climatechange-plan-idUSKBN13625G>.

578 See, Gareth McKeown, “SDLP will boycott Trump White House says Eastwood”, *The Irish News*, November 10, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.irishnews.com/news/2016/11/10/news/sdpl-will-boycott-trump-white-house-says-eastwood-778112/>.

the new president, somewhat redundantly, as a “monster” and a “fascist”⁵⁷⁹. On the other side of the Irish Sea, Labour’s Jeremy Corbyn, while in no uncertain terms reproaching Trump for his “divisive rhetoric”, suggested that his triumph was a reaction to failed economic policies and unresponsive elites.⁵⁸⁰ Hinting that deeper structural problems accounted for the GOP victory, Corbyn sought to contextualize Trump’s message. Lacking nuance and employing archaic rhetoric, Pablo Iglesias, leader of Spain’s *Podemos* party, called the president-elect a “fascist”, while Portugal’s radical Left Bloc described Trump as a “global threat” and his election as “a victory of hate politics – hate of equal rights, of immigration and of the primacy of human rights”⁵⁸¹. Remarkably, no explanation was forthcoming from the radical left as to why the American working class backed a “fascist” at the ballot box.

Reactions to Donald Trump’s electoral achievement were noticeably warmer on the opposite side of the European politico-ideological spectrum. Acknowledging that ‘America First’ paralleled Brexiters’ intent to “take back control” of Britain’s sovereignty and national destiny, Nigel Farage, in a November 9 tweet, gleefully noted that it “(L)ooks like 2016 is going to be the year of two big political revolutions”⁵⁸². A perennial candidate for the French presidency, *Front National/Rassemblement National* leader Marine Le Pen extended her congratulations to the “free” American people.⁵⁸³ Frauke Petry, Germany’s populist *Alternative für Deutschland* chief, similarly affirmed that the result was “a triumph of the American people, a victory of ordinary people over the political establishment. It’s a victory over the politically correct globalist elites who show little interest in the well-

579 See, Cian Murray, “Senator launches stinging attack at government’s reaction to ‘monster’ and ‘fascist’ Trump”, *Independent*, November 11, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/watch-senator-launches-stinging-attack-at-governments-reaction-to-monster-and-fascist-trump-35207286.html>.

580 Jeremy Corbyn’s statement reads as follows: “Trump’s election is an unmistakable rejection of a political establishment and an economic system that simply isn’t working for most people. It is one that has delivered escalating inequality and stagnating or falling living standards for the majority, both in the US and Britain. This is a rejection of a failed economic consensus and a governing elite that has been seen not to have listened. And the public anger that has propelled Donald Trump to office has been reflected in political upheavals across the world. But some of Trump’s answers to the big questions facing America, and the divisive rhetoric around them, are clearly wrong”. See, Julia Rampen, “Jeremy Corbyn’s reaction to Donald Trump’s election is getting a reaction of its own”, *New Statesman*, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2016/11/jeremy-corbyns-reaction-donald-trumps-election-getting-reaction-its-own>.

581 See, “Pablo Iglesias: ‘Podemos llamar fascista a Donald Trump’”, *Público*, November 29, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.publico.es/politica/pablo-iglesias-llamar-fascista-donald.html>. On the position of the Portuguese Left Bloc, see, Comunicado da Comissão Política do Bloco de Esquerda, “Eleição de Trump é um perigo global”, *Esquerda.net*, November 9, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/eleicao-de-trump-e-um-perigo-global/45368>.

582 Matthew Weaver, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Helena Smith, Kate Connolly and Philip Oltermann, “Rightwing populists first to congratulate Trump on historic upset”, *The Guardian*, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/far-right-first-to-congratulate-donald-trump-on-historic-upset>.

583 See, “Far-right leader Le Pen says Trump win ‘good news for France’”, *France24*, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20161109-france-far-right-chief-marine-le-pen-congratulates-trump>.

being of the people”⁵⁸⁴. In the same vein, Holland’s Party for Freedom Geert Wilders claimed that “America regained its national sovereignty, its identity. It reclaimed its own democracy, that’s why I called it a revolution. And I think that the people of America, as in Europe, feel insulted by all the politicians that ignore the real problems”⁵⁸⁵. Equally satisfied with the outcome, Austrian Freedom Party leader Heinz-Christian Strache asserted that “the political left and the out-of-touch and corrupt establishment is being punished by voters and driven from the seats of power”⁵⁸⁶. Each in their unique manner, Europe’s national-populist leaders acknowledged that, in effect, a Trump presidency empowered their parties by bringing them into the national mainstream. All seemed to believe that ideas previously deemed marginal to national conversations had been legitimized by the outcome of the American vote.

European ruling populists also rejoiced at Trump’s election. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, leader of *Fidesz*, at the time integrated in the European People’s Party, posted on his Facebook page that “Democracy is still alive”⁵⁸⁷. Shortly after, on November 10, he explained that the outcome of the vote amounted to a belated “return to reality” since “Western civilization has successfully liberated itself from the captivity of an ideology”⁵⁸⁸. Seen from Budapest, Trump’s victory configured an ideological and cultural shift away from the American left wing, political correctness and identity politics espoused by Barack Obama but so intensely abhorred by continental populists. Alluding to his own myriad political conflicts with Brussels over the state of Hungarian democracy, Orbán suggested that ‘America First’ was tantamount to receiving “permission from the highest worldly place that we can put ourselves in the first place, too”⁵⁸⁹. In short, the “common European interest” mantra promoted by Brussels was finally giving way to traditional, sovereignist self-interest.

Since Barack Obama had openly criticized regime corruption and the disregard for the rule of law in Hungary, Orbán’s enthusiasm for Donald Trump was as predictable as it was understandable. After all, the new president’s emphasis on checking unregulated immigration, promotion of traditional values and his apparent admiration of strongman

584 Jeremy Ashkenas and Gregor Aisch, “European Populism in the Age of Trump”, *The New York Times*, December 5, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/05/world/europe/populism-in-age-of-trump.html>

585 Ibid.

586 See, “Austria’s far-right Freedom Party congratulates Trump”, *Reuters*, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-election-austria-fpo-idINKBN1341DB>.

587 For these and other reactions, see, Matthew Weaver, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Helena Smith, Kate Connolly and Philip Oltermann, “Rightwing populists first to congratulate Trump on historic upset”, *The Guardian*, November 9, 2016.

588 See, Benjamin Novak, “Orbán: We are living times of great transformation!”, *Budapest Beacon*, November 10, 2016, consulted at: <https://budapestbeacon.com/orban-living-times-great-transformation/>.

589 See, Tom Batchelor, “Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban praises Donald Trump’s ‘America First’ nationalism”, *The Independent*, January 23, 2017, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/donald-trump-nationalist-hungary-pm-viktor-orban-praise-america-first-a7542361.htm>.

politics mirrored Orbán's own "illiberal democratic" views⁵⁹⁰. Small wonder then that Viktor Orbán was rewarded with a meeting with the president in May 2019, the first time since 2005 that a Hungarian Prime Minister had been received at the White House.⁵⁹¹ Similarly, for Poland's governing Law and Justice, Trump incarnated a "real America" rebelling in the name of traditionalist Christian values against open immigration, cosmopolitanism and identity politics.⁵⁹² Trump's apparent affinity for Vladimir Putin initially tempered the Polish government's enthusiasm for the new American president, but Warsaw's doubts were allayed after the president's official July 2017 visit to the country, when he came out in defense of a "threatened Western civilization"⁵⁹³. With this visit, Trump solidified his standing as a valuable Law and Justice ally in Poland's clash with its "Europeanist" critics and its struggle against EU liberalism and globalism. Populist backing for Trump demonstrated the extent to which the American president had become a formidable political actor in domestic European politics.⁵⁹⁴

4.2. A Quarrelsome Family

American presidents usually serve as detonators for European inter-party conflict, but Donald Trump became a wedge issue in the internal political quarrels of virtually every European country even before entering the White House. Even so, heads of

590 Orbán inspired Zakaria's concept of "illiberal democracy". On Orbán, see, Paul Lendvai. *Orbán: Europe's New Strongman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; and Peter Wilkin. *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy: The Road to Serfdom*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016.

591 See, Drew Hinshaw and Anita Komuves, "In a Reversal, U.S. to Host Hungarian Prime Minister", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-a-reversal-u-s-to-host-hungarian-prime-minister-11557687059>.

592 See, Jeremy Shapiro and Dina Pardijs, "The Transatlantic Meaning of Donald Trump: A US-EU Power Audit", European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2017, p. 34, available at: https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_transatlantic_meaning_of_donald_trump_a_us_eu_power_audit7229/. Also, James Traub, "The Party that wants to make Poland Great Again", *The New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/magazine/the-party-that-wants-to-make-poland-great-again.html?searchResultPosition=1>; Joanna Fomina and Jacek Kucharczyk, "The Specter Haunting Europe: Populism and Protest in Poland", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 4, October 2016, pp. 58-68 and Robert Csehi and Edit Zgut, "We Won't Let Brussels Dictate Us': Eurosceptic Populism in Hungary and Poland", *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1, February 2021, pp. 53-68.

593 President Trump asserted that "(D)his continent no longer confronts the specter of communism. But today we're in the West, and we have to say there are dire threats to our security and to our way of life. You see what's happening out there. They are threats. We will confront them. We will win. But they are threats... Just as Poland could not be broken, I declare today for the world to hear that the West will never, ever be broken. Our values will prevail. Our people will thrive. And our civilization will triumph". See, The White House, "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland", Warsaw, Poland, July 6, 2017, available at: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland/>.

594 See, Charlotte Cavailé, Noam Gidron and Peter A. Hall, "Trumpism as a Transatlantic Phenomenon", *Prospect*, March 8, 2016, available at: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hall/files/cavailleetal2016_trump.pdf.

government still faced the unenviable chore of defining proper bilateral relations with the incoming GOP administration. Having in the past characterized Trump's words as "racist and divisive", Ireland's Prime-Minister Enda Kenny prudently walked back his criticism with a message of "sincere congratulations" on the electoral outcome before being the first EU leader to receive a telephone call from the president-elect.⁵⁹⁵ Bowing to hard-headed pragmatism, most defaulted to the same wait-and-see attitude toward the new administration. In this spirit, Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders observed that during his campaign "Mr. Trump has expressed opinions that are at odds with how we envision society and the world order, for instance in respect of NATO, relations with Russia and Europe, and specific population groups", but wisely added that henceforth "we will judge him by his actions"⁵⁹⁶. Portugal's socialist government noted that "(W)e trust that the foreign policy priorities of the new Administration will conform to the values that have guided the actions of the United States around the world, to the commitment to the United Nations' multilateral system, to the Atlantic Alliance and to the development of relations with the European Union. Portugal shall loyally cooperate with the United States, in bilateral and multilateral settings, respecting international law and democratic values and strengthening the bonds deeply connecting the two countries"⁵⁹⁷. To the east, Linas Linkevičius, Lithuania's Foreign Minister, concerned with Trump's praise for Vladimir Putin, expressed her fear that Russia "may test NATO" prior to inauguration day.⁵⁹⁸ For these governments, quite understandably, strife was to be avoided because bilateral ties with Washington were simply too valuable to risk.

Leaders favored by Donald Trump for their ideological proximity were promptly – and sometimes imprudently – rewarded with invitations to visit the White House. Viktor Orbán would not be the sole beneficiary of such an honor. Days after the November 2016 election, in a letter congratulating Trump on his victory, Czech president Miloš Zeman observed that "(M)y political opponents have called me the 'Czech Donald Trump' as they have noticed that you and I share views on topics like the fight against terrorism and the so-called Islamic State or global migration. I am proud of such a label and I have never understood it as an insult"⁵⁹⁹. Undoubtedly flattered by these words, the president-elect invited the pro-Russia Zeman to the White House. The meeting was never realized

595 See, Fiach Kelly, "Government feels it had no choice but to welcome Trump win", *The Irish Times*, November 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/government-feels-it-had-no-choice-but-to-welcome-trump-win-1.2863445>.

596 See, "Koenders: judge Trump by his actions", Government of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/news/2016/11/09/koenders-judge-trump-by-his-actions>.

597 See, Sónia Sapage and Maria João Lopes, "Marcelo e Costa felicitam Donald Trump", *Público*, November 9, 2016, available at: <https://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/marcelo-felicita-donald-trump-1750510>.

598 See, Kevin Connolly, "Trump election: Baltic warning over Russian move on Nato", *BBC*, November 18, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38014997>.

599 See, "The President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman sent congratulations to Donald Trump on November 9, 2016", Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C., November 10, 2016, available at: https://www.mzv.cz/washington/en/czech_u_s_relations/news/czech_republic_s_president_zeman.html.

because the administration fell out with Zeman over the deployment of a US missile defense system in the country. Relations improved after Prague helped to block an EU joint statement critical of Trump's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem and warnings from Czech security services against the use of Huawei software.⁶⁰⁰ In the end, Zeman would be sidelined and the reliable, pro-Trump Czech Prime-Minister Andrei Babiš was granted a White House meeting with the president in March 2019.⁶⁰¹

Unsurprisingly, leaders bowed to political reality and actively sought to embrace the new administration as rapidly as possible. Perhaps the best example of this course of action was Theresa May's reaching out to the new president immediately following Trump's taking of the oath of office.⁶⁰² Invoking Britain's "special relationship" with America and reiterating her hope for a "strong and close" partnership in matters such as "trade, security and defense", May wasted no time in flying to Washington for a 26 January 2017 White House meeting to discuss a post-Brexit bilateral trade deal.⁶⁰³ However, while the Prime Minister was on her way back to London, Trump signed an executive order banning travel to the US by citizens from seven predominantly Muslim countries that also encompassed dual citizens of the United Kingdom. Considering the measure "divisive and wrong", May admitted to the House of Commons that she had

600 President Zeman appears to have been invited because Donald Trump was unaware of his pro-Russian and pro-Chinese policies. Zeman was, however, applauded for his stance on Islamic terrorism and his strong support for Israel. See, Jiri Valenta and Leni Friedman Valenta, "Trump Should Aid Czech President Zeman in Fighting the 'Munich Attitude'", *BESA Perspectives*, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Dec. 20, 2017, pp. 1-5, available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep16850?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. On the tensions in the bilateral relationship, see, Lukasz Ogrodnik, "Intensification of Czech-U.S. Relations", *PISM Bulletin*, PISM/The Polish Institute of International Affairs, No. 94 (1340), July 11, 2019, consulted at: https://pism.pl/publications/Intensification_of_CzechUS_Relations.

601 See, "Trump, Czech Prime Minister Babiš Have Much in Common", *VOA/Voice of America*, March 7, 2019, accessed at: <https://www.voanews.com/usa/trump-czech-prime-minister-babis-have-much-common>; and Robert Tait, "Rich, scandal-hit and anti-immigrant: Czech leader Babiš to meet Trump", *The Guardian*, March 6, 2019, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/05/rich-scandal-hit-and-populist-czech-leader-babis-to-meet-trump>.

602 On the travails of the US-UK relationship during first half of the Trump presidency, see, Thomas Wright, "How Trump Undermined Theresa May", *The Atlantic*, May 31, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/trump-undermines-uk-and-bullies-theresa-may/590758/>. Also, the controversial UK Ambassador to the US until 2019, Kim Darroch, has written an interesting book on the tensions in the bilateral relationship during the first two years of of the Trump presidency. See, Kim Darroch. *Collateral Damage: Britain, America, and Europe in the Age of Trump*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2020.

603 Boris Johnson, May's foreign secretary, refused to attend a "special session" of EU foreign ministers, slated for one day previous to the regular gathering, to discuss Trump's election. He declared that: "We do not see the need for an additional meeting on Sunday because the US election timetable is long established. An act of democracy has taken place, there is a transition period and we will work with the current and future administrations to ensure the best outcomes for Britain". See, "Boris Johnson snubs emergency EU meeting on Trump victory" *PressTV*, November 12, 2016, available at: <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/11/12/493312/UKUS-relations-Boris-Johnson-Donald-Trump-EU-Brexit>.

not been informed of the “Muslim ban” while at the White House.⁶⁰⁴ Theresa May’s relations with the president would deteriorate further. Six months later, when Trump controversially contended that there were some “very fine people” among the August 2017 Charlottesville rioters, the British Prime Minister retorted that “I see no equivalence between those who propound fascist views and those who oppose them. I think it is important for all those in positions of responsibility to condemn far-right views wherever we hear them”⁶⁰⁵.

Largely as a consequence of the president’s negative opinion of the EU and support for Brexit, the administration expressed interest in a bilateral free trade agreement after British voters opted for leaving the EU by a margin of 52% to 48% on June 23, 2016. Although Brexit was initially scheduled for March 2019, a deadlocked parliament failed to reach agreement on the specifics of the withdrawal as Conservatives split over May’s management of negotiations with Brussels. During his July 2018 visit to London, the president intimated that a trade relationship could be imperiled in case Theresa May chose to pursue a “soft” Brexit not sanctioned by a referendum meant to “sever ties with the EU”⁶⁰⁶. Trump encouraged May to “sue the EU” rather than continue talks with Brussels, advice acknowledged by the president when he said that “I did give her my views on what she should do and how she should negotiate, and she didn’t follow those views”, further observing that “I would actually say she probably went the opposite way”⁶⁰⁷. Wading deeper into domestic British politics, he lavished praise on Boris Johnson,

604 See, Kim Darroch. *Collateral Damage*, op. cit, pp. 147-148. Also, cf., “May: I won’t chase headlines over Trump ban”, *BBC News*, February 1, 2017, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-38828383>. Shortly after, On March 17 2017, the US administration accused British intelligence of eavesdropping on candidate Trump at the request of president Obama. May’s office denied the charge, claiming that “We’ve made clear to the administration that these claims are ridiculous and should be ignored. We’ve received assurances these allegations won’t be repeated”. Trump would later repeat them. See, Peter Baker and Steven Erlanger, “Trump Offers No Apology for Claim on British Spying”, *The New York Times*, March 17, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/world/europe/trump-britain-obama-wiretap-gchq.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

605 For this and other European reactions to Trump’s remarks on Charlottesville, see, Liam Stack, “Charlottesville Violence and Trump’s Reaction Draw Criticism Abroad”, *The New York Times*, 17 August 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/17/world/charlottesville-trump-world-reaction.html>.

606 In London, president Trump stated that “If they do a deal like that, it will most likely, because we’ll be dealing with the European Union, instead of dealing with the U.K., so it will probably kill the deal, if they do a deal like that, their trade deal with the U.S. will probably not be made” because “we have enough difficulty with the European Union”. See, Kathryn Watson, “Trump says UK Prime Minister Theresa May ‘went the opposite way’ from his Brexit advice”, *CBS News*, July 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-sun-interview-today-theresa-may-soft-brexit-boris-johnson-2018-07-12/>. Also, Philip Rucker and Carol Leonnig. *A Very Stable Genius Donald J. Trump’s Testing of America*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020, 316-317 and Michael Wolff, *Siege*, p. 165.

607 See, Andrew Learmonth, “Donald Trump humiliates Theresa May at Chequers conference”, *The National*, July 14, 2018, available at: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/16354160.donald-trump-humiliates-theresa-may-chequers-conference/>.

May's Foreign Secretary who, a few days earlier, had resigned from cabinet due to deep differences with the Prime Minister over Brexit. Affirming that "I'm not pitting one against the other, I'm just saying, I think he'd be a great prime minister", the president fueled growing speculation that the resignation foreshadowed a plot to remove May from office⁶⁰⁸. Three months later, in October 2018, the administration formally notified Congress of its intent to proceed with trade negotiations in the aftermath of Britain's full withdrawal from the European Union.⁶⁰⁹

The impasse in the House of Commons led Theresa May to announce, on 24 May 2019, her resignation from the Conservative party leadership. With the Tories in the process of selecting their new leader, Donald Trump, days before initiating a state visit to the United Kingdom, again forcibly inserted himself into domestic British politics by declaring that "I think Boris would do a very good job. I think he would be excellent. I like him. I have always liked him. I don't know that he is going to be chosen, but I think he is a very good guy, a very talented person. He has been very positive about me and our country"⁶¹⁰. Boris Johnson did win the Tory leadership and, armed with an "oven-ready" Brexit deal, his Conservatives obtained a landslide majority in the December 2019 general elections. Talks with Brussels were re-launched in early March 2020 and a final agreement was passed by the House of Commons in late December of that year. For Washington, London's abandonment of the European Union meant that a post-Brexit "Global Britain" – a nuclear power, a major military contributor to NATO, a member of the G7 and holder of a permanent United Nations Security Council seat – would likely be a staunch American ally in confronting global security challenges. On the other hand, Brexit was a setback for the United States since London had usually mirrored American views on foreign policy, trade, and defense policies within EU institutions. Washington was deprived of its best EU advocate for policies approximating European positions to broad US goals and interests.

Of course, relations with Europe inevitably centered on the quality of America's bilateral ties with France and Germany, particularly pressing in the emerging post-Brexit context. Donald Trump's electoral success had cast a wide shadow over the French Spring 2017 presidential race; after all, Trump had depicted Marine Le Pen as "the strongest on what's been going on in France"⁶¹¹. Interviewed on the same day president Trump was

608 Ibid.

609 In April 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that there would be "no chance whatsoever" for a trade deal if Brexit there were to be any "weakening" of the 1998 Good Friday Accord. See, Ned Simons, "Nancy Pelosi Warns 'No Chance Whatsoever' Of US-UK Trade Deal If Brexit Harms Good Friday Agreement", *Huffington Post*, April 15, 2019, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nancy-pelosi-warns-no-chance-whatsoever-of-us-uk-trade-deal-if-brexit-harms-good-friday-agreement_uk_5cb4a5d5e4b098b9a2d7b5f7.

610 See, Tom Newton Dunn, "I Back Boris. Donald Trump wades into Tory leadership race saying Boris Johnson would do a 'very good job'", *The Sun*, June 1, 2019, available at: <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/9196164/donald-trump-boris-johnson-prime-minister-uk-visit/>.

611 See, Aidan Quigley, "Trump expresses support for Le Pen", *Politico*, April 21, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-expresses-support-for-french-candidate-le-pen/>

inaugurated, she declared that “the EU is dead, but does not know it yet”⁶¹². During the final debate before the run-off vote, Le Pen claimed, rather appropriately, that she was the candidate “best placed” to deal with Trump.⁶¹³ The inference was that France should pursue its own path of national independence unburdened by the exigencies placed upon it by the European Union. Her rival, Emmanuel Macron, retorted that French EU membership did not shackle France’s independence; in point of fact, and irrespective of how paradoxical it might appear on the surface, the “pooling” of European sovereignty empowered Paris on the international stage.⁶¹⁴ It was another way of saying that Europe should refrain from relying primarily on the US and NATO for upholding its values and interests. Making France great demanded a deepening of European integration rather than, as Le Pen claimed, a loosening of ties to Europe and the pursuit of a Trump-like sovereignist approach to international relations. Echoing familiar Gaullist arguments, Macron reaffirmed his preference for greater European defense integration, the *sine qua non* condition for Europe to “hold its destiny in its own hands”⁶¹⁵.

Emmanuel Macron countered Trump’s undisguisable preference for Le Pen by appealing to “close cooperation” with the US on security issues, but added that, as French president, he would “try to convince Trump to work together on climate change”⁶¹⁶. Macron was engaged in a delicate balancing act because, just a few weeks earlier, he had warned that Trump “would be making a grave mistake by going back on his predecessor’s climate change commitments”, explaining that, on this particular matter, he was prepared to “forge a very strategic alliance with our Chinese partner”⁶¹⁷. In no uncertain terms, Macron thus dismissed Trump’s characterization of global warming as a “hoax” and his intention to “cancel” the Paris Treaty. As these polemics swirled, it was all too plain to see that Trump had become a wedge issue in France’s domestic political battles.

Entering the Élysée in May 2017, president Macron deliberately set out to forge a close personal relationship with Donald Trump. There were in fact good reasons for so

612 See, “EU is dead but doesn’t know this yet, French rightist Le Pen says”, *Daily Sabah*, January 22, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/01/22/eu-is-dead-but-doesnt-know-this-yet-french-rightist-le-pen-says>.

613 See, Simon Carraud, Ingrid Melander and Johnny Cotton, “France’s Le Pen says best placed to face ‘new world’ of Trump, Putin”, *Reuters*, May 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-le-pen-trump-idUSKBN17Y2DL>.

614 See, “French election highlights a deep divide on the European Union”, *The Conversation*, May 5, 2017, available at: <https://theconversation.com/french-election-highlights-a-deep-divide-on-the-european-union-77193>; and “Why the French election is a pivotal test for Europe”, *The Conversation*, April 21, 2017, accessed at: <https://theconversation.com/why-the-french-election-is-a-pivotal-test-for-europe-76296>.

615 See, Manuel Lafont Rapnouil and Jeremy Shapiro, “Macron’s Foreign Policy: Claiming the tradition”, European Council on Foreign Relations, *ECFR Commentary*, May 5, 2017, accessed at: https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_macrons_foreign_policy_claiming_the_tradition_7285/

616 See, Philippe Le Corre, “A bloody final debate between Macron and Le Pen as France heads toward election runoff”, *Brookings*, May 4, 2017, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/05/04/a-bloody-final-debate-between-macron-and-le-pen-as-france-heads-toward-election-runoff/#cancel>.

617 See, “French presidential candidate Macron criticizes Trump’s policies”, *Reuters*, March 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-trump-macron-idUSKBN1691J5>.

doing. Irrespective of their policy differences, both men were political outsiders who had successfully challenged and defeated their respective national political establishments. Both also presented themselves as straight-talkers unafraid to point out their countries' problems and propose bold, heterodox policy solutions to invert what both understood to be national decline. As the United Kingdom exited the European Union, and Trump's rocky relationship with Angela Merkel showed no sign of easing, Macron, quite logically, sought to cast himself as Trump's principal European interlocutor. Indeed, during his April 2018 state visit to Washington, Macron's reaching out to Trump appeared destined for success as he boasted of a "very special relationship" between the two heads of state.⁶¹⁸

Yet, Trump's 'America First' agenda generated insurmountable obstacles to the increasingly tortuous personal relationship between the two men. Macron failed to avert tariffs on European steel and aluminum and was unsuccessful at convincing president Trump not to abandon the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris Treaty.⁶¹⁹ More importantly, disagreements regarding NATO burden-sharing and Article 5 security guarantees had moved Macron to advocate for a greater European "strategic autonomy" relative to the United States⁶²⁰. By the end of 2018, when Trump visited France to participate in the commemorations marking the centenary of the end of World War I, Macron, in a not too veiled reference to his guest, chastised "nations" losing their moral compasses by placing their own interests first.⁶²¹ Rather than seeking to contain the budding quarrel, Trump, true to form, responded by mocking France's military defeats, tweeting, on November 13, that "Emmanuel Macron suggests building its own army to protect Europe against the US, China and Russia. But it was Germany in World Wars One & Two – How did that work out for France? They were starting to learn German in Paris before the U.S. came along. Pay for NATO or not!"⁶²².

The clash between the two presidents came to a climax in December 2018, when Trump took to Twitter to announce that "(We) have defeated ISIS in Syria, my only

618 See, James McAuley, "The Broken Romance? The Trump-Macron relationship is on the rocks", *The Washington Post*, November 10, 2018, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/10/broken-bromance-trump-macron-relationship-is-rocks/>; and Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer and Martin Quencez, "The U.S.-France Special Relationship: Testing the Macron Method", GMF/The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Policy Brief*, No. 006, April 18, 2018, available at: <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/us-france-special-relationship-after-year-trump>.

619 See, Sara Stefanini and Kalina Oroschakoff, "France, Germany and Italy: Paris Deal 'Cannot Be Renegotiated'", *Politico*, 1 June 2017. <http://www.politico.eu/article/france-germany-and-italy-paris-deal-cannot-be-renegotiated/>; and John Vogler and Charlotte Bretherton, "The European Union as a Protagonist to the United States on Climate Change", *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1, February 2006, pp. 1-22.

620 See, Benjamin Haddad. *Le paradis perdu: L'Amérique de Trump et la fin des illusions européennes*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2019, pp. 258-265.

621 See, Philip Rucker and Carol Leonnig. *A Very Stable Genius Donald J. Trump's Testing of America*, pp. 319-321; and Helene Fouquet, "The Moment Macron Gave Up on Trump", *Bloomberg*, February 13, 2019, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-02-13/the-moment-emmanuel-macron-gave-up-on-donald-trump>.

622 The November 13, 2018 tweet may be found at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-14/@realdonaldtrump-emmanuel-macron-suggests-building-its-own-arm/10495092?nw=0>.

reason for being there during the Trump presidency”⁶²³. Prior to the announcement, Macron had warned that the abandonment of the Syrian theatre would empower Bashar al-Assad, strengthen the regional influence of his Iranian allies and undermine the war on terrorism.⁶²⁴ More critically, Vladimir Putin, given a free hand in Syria, would be better able to control the flow of refugees to the EU, a major cause of surging populism in France and other European nations. Indeed, Macron pointed out that the president had made a number of assurances on Syria and NATO during his November 2018 visit to Paris that were quite incompatible with the removal of the US troops from Syria. None of these considerations sufficed to dissuade Trump. In addition to triggering Defense Secretary James Mattis’ resignation, the abrupt policy shift consolidated Macron’s conviction that Trump would willingly forsake his commitments if the occasion presented itself.⁶²⁵ Visiting Chad, Macron retorted that he “very deeply regretted” the decision because an “ally must be reliable, and coordinate with other allies”⁶²⁶.

From that moment forward, Emmanuel Macron’s suspicions concerning Trump’s reliability shaped France’s security strategy⁶²⁷. Cooperation between the two countries was pursued against *jihadi* threats in the Middle East and Africa. France likewise continued to back anti-piracy initiatives in the Indian Ocean and US naval containment of China in the South China Sea. European security cooperation was a different matter. Neither were suspicions allayed when, one month after Trump had assured Macron of his commitment to NATO during the November Paris armistice commemorations, Michael Pompeo signaled that international organizations should not take US support for granted and “must be reformed or eliminated”⁶²⁸. Made in Brussels, where both the EU and NATO are headquartered, the declaration was pregnant with symbolism. From the European

623 See, Julian Borger and Martin Chulov, “Trump shocks allies and advisers with plan to pull US troops out of Syria”, *The Guardian*, December 20, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/19/us-troops-syria-withdrawal-trump>.

624 See, Helene Fouquet, “The Moment Macron Gave Up on Trump”, *Bloomberg*, February 13, 2019, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-02-13/the-moment-emmanuel-macron-gave-up-on-donald-trump>

625 Ibid. As well, see, Jeffery Goldber, “The Man Who Couldn’t Take it Anymore”, *The Atlantic*, October 2019, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/10/james-mattis-trump/596665/>; Leo Shane III and Aaron Mehta, “Mattis out: Defense secretary says his views no longer aligned with Trump”, *Defense News*, December 20, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2018/12/20/mattis-out-defense-secretary-says-his-views-no-longer-aligned-with-trump/>. For James Mattis’ letter of resignation, see, “James Mattis’ resignation letter in full”, *BBC News*, December 21, 2018, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46644841>.

626 Reacting to Mattis’ resignation, Emmanuel Macron described the former Secretary of Defense as a “reliable ally”, a compliment not extendable to Donald Trump. Cf., “Macron says ‘an ally must be reliable’ after Syria pullout”, *The International News*, December 23, 2018, consulted at: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/409894-macron-says-an-ally-must-be-reliable-after-us-syria-pullout-announcement>.

627 See, Benjamin Haddad. *Le paradis perdu*, pp. 166-169.

628 See, Stewart M. Patrick, “Tilting at Straw Men: Secretary Pompeo’s Ridiculous Brussels Speech”, Council on Foreign Relations, December 4, 2018, available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/tilting-straw-men-secretary-pompeos-ridiculous-brussels-speech>.

perspective, it was a menacing statement. Less than two years into the Trump presidency, accumulated misgivings led Macron to conclude that America's security guarantee to Europe had simply ceased to be reliable.

As relations with Paris very publicly veered off course, Washington's frayed ties with Berlin were even less promising. After Trump accused Angela Merkel of "ruining Germany" by welcoming refugees, a clash between the two leaders became unavoidable. Reflecting the acrimony between Trump and Merkel, the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) Sigmar Gabriel described the president-elect as "the pioneer of a new authoritarian and chauvinist international movement" and advised that Germany and "Europe must change if we want to counter the authoritarian international movement"⁶²⁹. In a similar vein, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, having previously labeled Trump a "hate preacher", refused to congratulate the new president on his electoral victory. Relations nosedived when, days before entering the White House, Trump, in a joint January 2017 interview with the German daily *Bild* and the British *The Times*, stated that "I said a long time ago that NATO had problems. Number one – it was obsolete, because it was designed many, many years ago"⁶³⁰. Insisting that "NATO remained very important to me", the president pointed out that "(T)here's five countries that are paying what they're supposed to. Five. It's not much" since Washington's contribution accounted for 70 percent of NATO spending.⁶³¹ Recalling the defense expenditure targets agreed to by the alliance at its 2014 Wales summit, he added that "(W)e're supposed to protect countries, but a lot of these countries aren't paying what they're supposed to be paying, which I think is very unfair to the United States"⁶³².

NATO was not the sole issue fueling German-American tensions. In the same *Bild/The Times* interview, Trump characterized Merkel's stance on refugees as a "catastrophic mistake" bound to lead more countries to follow Britain out of the European Union, an entity labelled by the president-elect as "a vehicle for Germany"⁶³³. Doubling down on the criticism levied at the chancellor, he added that "countries want their own identity" and if "refugees keep pouring into different parts of Europe ... I think it's going to be

629 See, "Germany's Gabriel calls Trump 'pioneer of a new authoritarian movement'", *Reuters*, November 9, 2016, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-germany-gabriel-idUSKBN1341IN>.

630 See, "Full transcript of interview with Donald Trump", *The Times*, January 16, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/full-transcript-of-interview-with-donald-trump-5d39sr09d>.

631 Ibid. A few months later, at the July 2018 NATO summit, the 70% figure had risen substantially as the president claimed that "Now, what has happened is, presidents over many years, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, they came in, they said, 'Okay, hey, do the best you can', and they left. Nobody did anything about it. And it got to a point where the United States was paying for 90 percent of NATO. And that's not fair. So it's changed". See, "Remarks by President Trump at Press Conference, NATO Summit Brussels", Brussels, Belgium, July 12, 2018, available at: <https://nato.usmission.gov/july-12-2018-remarks-by-president-trump-at-press-conference-after-2018-nato-summit-in-brussels/>.

632 See, "Full transcript of interview with Donald Trump", *The Times*, January 16, 2017, op. cit.

633 Ibid.

very hard to keep it together because people are angry about it”⁶³⁴. For all intents and purposes, Trump was making it known that responsibility for Brexit and the possible disintegration of the EU was to be placed squarely on Merkel’s shoulders.⁶³⁵ Moreover, Trump claimed the 2015 decision to open Europe’s door to refugees was “the last drop that made the barrel overflow” in convincing British referendum voters to back Brexit; that is to say, “If they hadn’t been forced to take in all of the refugees, so many, with all the problems that it... entails, I think that you wouldn’t have a Brexit. This was the final straw that broke the camel’s back”⁶³⁶. Describing Brexit as “a great thing”, the president admitted being prepared to extend a trade deal to the United Kingdom because Theresa May had pledged to make a “hard exit”⁶³⁷. The offer was coming at a time when many European governments favored extracting a high price from London during the Brexit negotiations so as to discourage other member-states from leaving the European Union.

While admitting a free trade deal with Britain, Trump complained of EU trade imbalances and threatened a border tax of 35 percent on BMW automobiles slated to be assembled at the new Mexican San Luis Potosi plant.⁶³⁸ Driving the point home, he indicated that it would be “much better” for the German company to build its new factory in the United States. Facing elections a few months later, Merkel quite naturally challenged a protectionist approach to trade directly threatening German interests. Her response to Trump’s *Bild* interview came during a joint press conference with New Zealand prime minister Bill English, when she proclaimed that “Europeans have our fate in our own hands”⁶³⁹. Days earlier, she had gone beyond expressing disagreement with a particular White House policy to affirm that from “the point of view of some of our traditional partners – and I am thinking here as well about the transatlantic relations – there is no eternal guarantee for a close cooperation with us Europeans”⁶⁴⁰. Not letting a crisis go to waste, the chancellor claimed that “(W)e should see this decision as an

634 Ibid.

635 One year later, unwilling to disown previous statements that had angered Merkel, Trump again suggested that Europe was “losing” its “culture” and concluded that “allowing the immigration to take place in Europe is a shame. I think it changed the fabric of Europe”. See, Kathryn Watson, “Trump says UK Prime Minister Theresa May ‘went the opposite way’ from his Brexit advice”, *CBS News*, July 13, 2018, available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-sun-interview-today-theresa-may-soft-brexite-boris-johnson-2018-07-12/>.

636 See, “Full transcript of interview with Donald Trump”, *The Times*, January 16, 2017, op. cit.

637 Asked to comment on Theresa May’s declaration that she intended to pursue a “hard Brexit”, Merkel refused to comment since London’s plans had not been officially presented. The chancellor would wait until the United Kingdom submitted its application to exit the European Union. See, “Merkel on Trump: The EU can take care of itself”, *DW*, January 16, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-on-trump-the-eu-can-take-care-of-itself/a-37148057>.

638 See, Philip Oltermann and Alec Luhn, “Germany hits back at Trump criticism of refugee policy and BMW tariff threat”, *The Guardian*, January 16, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/16/germany-hits-back-at-trump-criticism-of-refugee-policy-and-bmw-tariff-threat>.

639 See, “Merkel on Trump: The EU can take care of itself”, *DW*, January 16, 2017, op. cit.

640 See, “Merkel: No ‘eternal guarantee’ for United States cooperation with EU”, *DW*, January 12, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-no-eternal-guarantee-for-united-states-cooperation-with-eu/a-37115220>.

incentive to work together (for the goal), to hold Europe together now more than ever, to improve it further and to bring the citizens closer together again”⁶⁴¹. For his part, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier reacted to the president-elect’s assertion that NATO was “obsolete, because it was designed many, many years ago” by suggesting that Trump’s words “have caused some surprise and consternation here, and surely not just here...his statements contradict things his designated Defense Secretary Mattis just said before Congress”⁶⁴². In effect, tensions had blossomed into a full crisis in transatlantic relations spilling over to the political, trade and security realms.

Despite the unseemly rhetoric, the parts made important strides toward finding common ground on critical security and defense issues. Less than two weeks after the *Bild/The Times* interview, James Mattis, days into the job as Defense Secretary, telephoned his British and European counterparts to reassure them of Washington’s “unshakeable commitment” to NATO.⁶⁴³ He also placed a call to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to guarantee that “the United States always starts with Europe”⁶⁴⁴. High-ranking talks between German and American officials were held in early February when Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel arrived in Washington for meetings with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Vice President Mike Pence.⁶⁴⁵ In the weeks preceding the visit, Gabriel had been extremely critical of the president. For instance, in January 2017, after Donald Trump remarked that there was an excess of German cars on American roads and not enough American cars on German roads, Gabriel dismissively retorted that the US “will have to build better cars”⁶⁴⁶. Commenting Trump’s ‘America First’ inauguration speech, the minister remarked that the rhetoric reminded him of undemocratic “reactionaries” of the 1920s.⁶⁴⁷ In Washington, Gabriel acknowledged being “unsettled” by various statements made by the president but admitted that “Vice President Pence and his colleague Tillerson made it clear in the talks that they have a strong interest in a united Europe, that they stand by a trans-Atlantic partnership in NATO”⁶⁴⁸. Even more

641 Ibid.

642 See, “Pentagon: US affirms ‘unshakeable commitment’ to NATO”, *DW*, January 24, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pentagon-us-affirms-unshakeable-commitment-to-nato/a-37246362>.

643 See, “NATO has our ‘unshakeable commitment’, Pentagon chief vows”, *The Guardian*, January 24, 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/24/pentagon-chief-vows-unshakeable-commitment-to-nato>.

644 See, “Mattis speaks with NATO chief, highlighting importance of alliance”, *Reuters*, January 23, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-defense-nato-idUSKBN1572W9>.

645 See, “Spotlight on first meeting between Gabriel and Tillerson”, *DW*, February 2, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.dw.com/en/spotlight-on-first-meeting-between-gabriel-and-tillerson/a-37377983>.

646 See, David Charter, “Germans hit back at Trump as BMW shares slump”, *The Times*, January 16, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/germans-hit-back-at-trump-as-bmw-shares-slump-zwz9k0nc9>.

647 See, “Germany’s Gabriel ‘reassured’ after US meetings”, *DW*, February 6, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-gabriel-reassured-after-us-meetings/a-37423951>.

648 See, “Germany’s Gabriel reassured on U.S. policy after Washington trip”, *Reuters*, February 5, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-germany-idUSKBN15K05J>.

revealingly, the minister emphasized that the assurances obtained from Mattis and Pence had “relativized much of what we heard before” from Donald Trump.⁶⁴⁹

Days later, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen arrived in Washington for discussions with Secretary of Defence James Mattis. Visiting the Pentagon on February 10, von der Leyen declared that the German-American relationship had “come a long way, but needs to progress further”⁶⁵⁰. Mattis expressed his “high regard for Germany as an ally”, while von der Leyen highlighted the Defence Secretary’s “clear and deep commitment to NATO” and welcomed his suggestion to deepen the strategic dialogue between the two countries because the United States benefited greatly from a strong European pillar in NATO.⁶⁵¹ Buoyed by the administration’s conciliatory posture, von der Leyen acknowledged that Trump’s call for greater European defense spending was “a fair demand”⁶⁵². With the first Trump-Merkel meeting scheduled for late March 2017, the White House made known that it was “heartened by the German government’s determination to reach NATO’s benchmark of committing 2 percent of GDP to defense by 2024”⁶⁵³. Apparently, the president was moving Germany toward greater NATO burden-sharing and disagreements were well on their way to being resolved.

After months of very public rhetorical sparring, Donald Trump and Angela Merkel finally met on March 17, 2017 to discuss NATO, allied defense spending, terrorism, Syrian refugees, escalating violence in eastern Ukraine and Vladimir Putin.⁶⁵⁴ Prior to their encounter, the president and the chancellor attempted to paper over their differences during a 28 January 2017 telephone conversation. After the call, an official statement announced that the leaders “affirmed the importance of close German-American cooperation to our countries’ security and prosperity and expressed their desire to deepen already close German-American relations in the coming years”⁶⁵⁵. Agreement was reportedly reached on the “fundamental importance” of NATO and both leaders recognized that that the alliance “must be capable of confronting 21st century threats and that our common defense requires appropriate investment in military capabilities to ensure all allies are contributing their fair share to our collective security”⁶⁵⁶. While during the campaign Trump claimed that Merkel was “ruining” Germany by allowing thousands of asylum seekers into the country – and with the US Muslim travel ban already in

649 Ibid.

650 See, “US request for NATO spending boost ‘a fair demand,’ German defense minister says”, *DW*, February 10, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/us-request-for-nato-spending-boost-a-fair-demand-german-defense-minister-says/a-37505631>.

651 Ibid.

652 Ibid.

653 Ibid.

654 See, Steve Holland and Roberta Rampton, “Trump to ask Merkel for advice on Putin, Ukraine: U.S. officials”, *Reuters*, March 10, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-merkel-idUSKBN16H22T>.

655 “Chancellor Merkel and President Trump discuss conflicts, importance of NATO”, *DW*, January 29, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.dw.com/en/chancellor-merkel-and-president-trump-discuss-conflicts-importance-of-nato/a-37317898>.

656 Ibid.

effect –, the joint statement was noticeably silent on the questions of immigration and refugees. Having escalated political tensions for months on end, both leaders appeared to be willing to retreat from their brinksmanship.

Below the surface of diplomatic niceties, Trump and Merkel failed to surpass their differences. At the joint press conference following their White House encounter, both described the exchange as “very good”⁶⁵⁷. Differences were acknowledged by Merkel, but she chose instead to emphasize the constructive nature of the meeting and admitted that both sought “to find a compromise that is good for both sides”⁶⁵⁸. Trump was intransigent on burden-sharing, but otherwise conciliatory, claiming that “I reiterated to Chancellor Merkel my strong support for NATO as well as the need for our NATO allies to pay their fair share for the cost of defense”⁶⁵⁹. The problem was that he immediately added that “(M)any nations owe vast sums of money from past years, and it is very unfair to the United States. These nations must pay what they owe”⁶⁶⁰. Asking for retroactive payments from allies was, to say the least, as unexpected as it was unprecedented. Trump’s remarks surely embarrassed Merkel, who simply restated Germany’s commitment to the Wales spending targets. On immigration, Merkel implicitly recognized their deep disagreement by laconically recognizing that the issue was “obviously something we had an exchange of views about”⁶⁶¹. On the critical question of trade, Merkel expressed her anticipation of a resumption of discussions on a trade agreement. Claiming not to believe in isolationism, Trump insisted that trade policy should be “fairer” and was certain the United States would do “fantastically well” from trade with Germany.

Cognizant of the chancellor’s political importance, Trump was nonetheless wary of Merkel, a staunch Obama ally sharing the former president’s broad outlook on international relations. Trump’s suspicions only intensified after Obama, in his last foreign trip, joined the chancellor for a much publicized dinner at Berlin’s Hotel Adlon, an obvious sign of their political proximity and shared unease relative to the incoming GOP president.⁶⁶² Trump’s willingness to upset the *status quo* raised acute problems for the chancellor. Merkel was mindful that shared values were a key component of Euro-American relations, but she also realized America’s considerable influence in Europe was also derived from European discomfort with the specter of German continental dominance. Historically, by assuring that no European country upset the balance of power, the United States guaranteed the necessary precondition for the continuation of the integration project. American disengagement, irrespective of its degree, posed serious political challenges for Germany’s broader relations with European Union member-states.

657 See, “In first Trump-Merkel meeting, awkward body language and a quip”, *Reuters*, March 17, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-trump-germany-idUKKBN16O0FY>.

658 Ibid.

659 Ibid.

660 Ibid.

661 Ibid.

662 See, “Merkel welcomes Obama under cloud of Trump”, *DW*, November 17, 2016, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-welcomes-obama-under-cloud-of-trump/a-36421531>.

Shortly before Donald Trump came to power, concerns over German hegemony had been publicly expressed by Greece during the Euro sovereign debt crisis and, more recently, by Poland.⁶⁶³ Unease was further accentuated by Merkel's unilateral 2015 decision to open borders to refugees, interpreted by various nations as a sign of Berlin's temptation to conflate German national interests with the broad European interest. Smaller EU states, particularly those of Central Europe, were extremely weary of seeing the EU transformed into an instrument for German – or even Franco-German – continental hegemony. Given that European Union leadership rests on the broad consent of the member-states, a breakdown of delicate power equilibriums threatened – at a minimum – to paralyze European Union decision-making and install ongoing institutional crises. Lord Ismay's observation that NATO was created to “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down” remained apt and it was legitimate to wonder for how long the integration project would survive in the absence of an American stabilizing influence on the continent⁶⁶⁴. The problem was that Trump himself was becoming a destabilizing influence, thereby setting in motion a chain of events propelling Germany and France to assume a leadership role in the European Union that was viewed with trepidation by a number of other member-states.

By the end of 2019, as Donald Trump entered the final year of his mandate, the traumatic Euro-American relationship had apparently stabilized as both sides resigned themselves to living with the frictions.⁶⁶⁵ The calm proved deceptive as relations again soured amid the coronavirus crisis. To many, it appeared as if Trump sought to scapegoat the EU for his failings in managing the outbreak. Germany publicly charged

663 See, “Poland's Jaroslaw Kaczynski renews call for German WWII reparations”, *DW*, June 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/polands-jaroslaw-kaczynski-renews-call-for-german-wwii-reparations/a-44452776>; and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, “The Ambivalence of Anti-Austerity Indignation in Greece: Resistance, Hegemony and Complicity”, *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2014, pp. 488-506; and Simon Bulmer, “Germany and the Eurozone Crisis: Between Hegemony and Domestic Politics”, *West European Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 6, 2014, pp. 1244-1263.

664 See, Hal Brands. *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2018, pp. 42-44.

665 German resentment was not solely the consequence of policy disagreements; it was also fueled by perceived American diplomatic slights. For instance, a full year and a half into Trump's term – in July 2018 – the administration had yet to indicate a new ambassador to the EU. Washington finally appointed Gordon Sondland, a longtime Republican Party fundraiser and hotel developer from Seattle. But he lasted little more than a year and a half on the job before being fired in February 2020 in retribution for testifying before Congress at the first impeachment hearings. Ronald Gidwitz, a Trump fundraiser, then accumulated the ambassadorship to Belgium with that of acting representative to the EU. Concurrently, when Ric Grenell, the ambassador to Germany and a Trump loyalist – never a stranger to controversy, Grenell hoped to “empower other conservatives throughout Europe” and harshly criticizing Berlin over defense spending, the NordStream 2 pipeline and the Iran nuclear deal – was recalled to Washington to serve as acting Director of National Intelligence, Berlin saw career foreign service officer Robin Quinville nominated as *chargé d'affaires*. Also of note is the fact that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in fact, has not visited Washington since taking office on December 1, 2019.

the administration with attempting to convince CureVac, a Tübingen-based company, to move its research wing to the United States and develop a vaccine “for the U.S. only”⁶⁶⁶. Proving that things can always get worse, US efforts to outbid Germany and France for facemasks and medical supplies on the international market seemed to indicate the extent of transatlantic strife.⁶⁶⁷ The administration’s 11 May 2020 temporary travel ban on foreign nationals arriving in the United States from the Schengen Area proved tremendously disruptive in Europe⁶⁶⁸. Formally, the ban was a response to the World Health Organization’s concern over transmission rates in the Schengen area, particularly in Italy and Spain. But as the situation deteriorated, the ban was extended to the United Kingdom and Ireland, neither a party to Schengen. Reacting to the decision, Ursula von der Leyen admonished Washington for acting “without consultation” with its partners, noting that the pandemic “is a global crisis, not limited to any continent, and it requires cooperation rather than unilateral action”⁶⁶⁹. Brussels retaliated by decreeing a ban on travel from a host of destinations, including the United States.

The pandemic was the source of other transatlantic irritants such as the president’s widely criticized decision to suspend funding to the WHO, accused of mismanaging the response to the coronavirus outbreak and of being manipulated by China.⁶⁷⁰ Revealing the extent of the conflict, Europeans and Americans clashed at the May 2020 World Health Assembly, the WHO’s annual ministerial meeting. Immediately prior to the gathering, president Trump wrote a letter critical of WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and made it clear that unless the WHO undertook “major substantive improvements within the next 30 days” the temporary funding freeze would become permanent and the US would reexamine its membership.⁶⁷¹ Considering that Washington contributed approximately 15% to the overall WHO budget, the threat was not an idle one. More critically, the World Health Assembly passed a draft resolution calling for an “independent and impartial” inquiry into the WHO’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak. Largely drafted by the European Union – but backed by China –, the resolution was less incisive than the US-backed international inquiry directed at China previously solicited by Australia. Attempting to circumvent a clash between Washington and Beijing,

666 See, “Germany tries to stop US from luring away firm seeking coronavirus vaccine”, *Reuters*, March 5, 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-usa-idUSL8N2B8075>.

667 See, Lynsey Jeffery, “German, French Officials Accuse U.S. Of Diverting Supplies”, *NPR*, April 4, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/04/827321294/german-french-officials-accuse-u-s-of-diverting-supplies>.

668 See, Bob Woodward, *Rage*, pp. 276-278.

669 See, Marin Banks, “EU leaders criticise Trump’s Coronavirus travel ban”, *The Parliament Magazine*, March 13, 2020, available at: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/eu-leaders-criticise-trumps-coronavirus-travel-ban>.

670 See, “EU ‘deeply regrets’ Trump’s cut to WHO funding, says unjustified”, *Reuters*, April 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-trump-eu/eu-deeply-regrets-trumps-cut-to-who-funding-says-unjustified-idUKKCN21X1E0>.

671 See, Patrick Wintour and Julian Borger, “Member states back WHO after renewed Donald Trump attack”, *The Guardian*, May 19, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/member-states-back-who-after-renewed-donald-trump-attack>.

the EU came out in support of a WHO leadership under siege for its pro-Beijing bias. Understanding the passage of the resolution as a victory of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell stated that the “resolution underlines the importance of responding to this crisis through solidarity and multilateral cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations”, adding, in a direct rebuke of the American position, that the EU wanted to “commend the WHO for its leading role in guiding the response to this crisis”⁶⁷².

In the midst of the pandemic, violent street protests swept the United States in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death. Unable to resist involving himself in the domestic politics of an ally, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called for restraint and respect for the rule of law. Manifestly exceeding himself, the minister went as far as to describe the protests as “legitimate”, expecting they would remain “peaceful and produce change” and, as if referring to a dictatorial regime, urged “protection” for journalists.⁶⁷³ Maas then took to Twitter and, in a non-too-subtle admonition of Trump’s handling of the protests, counseled the Democrats to “never escalate — not even through words. Threatening violence only triggers further violence”⁶⁷⁴. In this context of renewed acrimony, in late May 2020 Angela Merkel refused Trump’s invitation to attend the proposed Washington G7 summit.⁶⁷⁵ Although the chancellor cited health safety concerns for not attending, it was widely suspected that she was reticent to legitimize Trump’s international standing five months before the November 2020 general election. Merkel’s attitude, in effect, betrayed her preference for Joe Biden and her incapacity to work with the sitting president. Quite predictably, Trump lashed out by describing the G7 as “outdated” and voicing his desire to have Russia return to the forum after being expelled for annexing Crimea. Underscoring the deep transatlantic rift and president Trump’s increasing isolation, Canada, United Kingdom and the European Union spurned the suggestion and the summit was not held.⁶⁷⁶

As the rules-based liberal order continued to fragment, a robust transatlantic relationship remained – at least in theory – a strategic imperative for both sides. To the extent that NATO remained the principal vehicle for conserving stability and US influence in Europe for the foreseeable future, security was the most robust pillar of the transatlantic relationship. Paradoxically, NATO has proven to be both the pivotal transatlantic institution as well as a periodic cause of Euro-American tension. Although not entirely new, divisions over burden-sharing, enhanced European defense capabilities and EU autonomy became undisguisable fractures during the Trump years. At the precise

672 Ibid.

673 See, David M. Herszenhorn, “Trump’s Europe strategy: Nothing”, *Politico*, June 4, 2020, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-eu-strategy-nothing-g7-summit-angela-merkel/>.

674 The Heiko Maas tweet may be found at: <https://twitter.com/HeikoMaas/status/1268070834272382976>.

675 See, Matthew Karnitschnig, David M. Herszenhorn, Jacopo Barigazzi and Andrew Gray, “Merkel rebuffs Trump invitation to G7 summit”, *Politico*, May 29, 2020, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-rebuffs-donald-trump-invitation-to-g7-summit/>.

676 See, Jacopo Barigazzi, “EU’s top diplomat says no to Russia rejoining the G7”, *Politico*, June 2, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eus-top-diplomat-josep-borrell-says-no-to-russia-rejoining-g7/>.

moment when formidable challenges posed by a revisionist Russia and a newly-assertive China counseled Atlantic democracies to coalesce around core strategic priorities, policymakers on both sides of the ocean became enmeshed in unceasing acrimony detrimental to all.

Part 5: A House Divided Against Itself

...crushed between the fears of going forward and the dread of going back,

Jim Crace, *The Pesthouse*.

President Trump's 'America First' world-view conveyed his intention to recuperate America's national sovereignty as a vehicle for promoting the national interest and bilateral relationships. Pursued by both Trump and Brexiters, the "taking back" of sovereignty collided frontally with conventional European understandings of pooled sovereignty and multilateralism, the very essence of the European Union (EU) integration project. Clashing with the self-understanding and core values upheld by the EU's political elites, the administration's transactional view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), transatlantic trade and key bilateral relationships with allies could not but instill tremendous ambiguity over Washington's ultimate commitment to European security.

Already manifest during the Republican primary season, continental unease with Donald Trump's rhetoric and policy aims was embodied by his gruff comportment and patronizing attitude toward allies. The problem was encapsulated in a widely reported incident transpiring during the contentious May 2017 NATO summit⁶⁷⁷. To assure a place for himself in the front row of the meeting's official photograph, Trump unceremoniously shoved aside Duško Marković, Montenegro's Prime Minister. Captured by the cameras, the gesture was, at a very minimum, ignominious. Equally startling, but no less revealing, was Marković's response to the slight. When journalists solicited a comment, he seized the opportunity to "thank President Trump personally for his support" for Montenegrin NATO ascension, meekly noting that "it is natural for the president of the United States to be in the first row"⁶⁷⁸. To a large extent, the incident symbolized the nature of the transatlantic relationship: Trump browbeating his allies and these, in turn, desperately seeking to acknowledge America's leadership.

Marković's submissiveness was likely provoked by the suspicion that Trump was largely indifferent to the transatlantic partnership and, in particular, to the destinies of a peripheral Balkan state. Great effort was subsequently taken by the administration to dispel such perceptions of American disengagement. Yet, success proved illusive. As late as February 2020, with the president's reelection campaign already underway, at the Munich Security Conference Mike Pompeo struggled to allay entrenched European concerns by announcing that "the death of the transatlantic alliance is grossly over-

677 See, John Bolton, *The Room Where it Happened*, pp. 133-147; and Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne*, pp. 97-102.

678 See, Samantha Schmidt, "Breaking down Trump's shove", *The Washington Post*, May 26, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/05/26/breaking-down-trumps-shove-the-internet-debates-and-montenegros-leader-shrugs/>. For a discussion of the incident, cf., Alisher Faizullaev. *Symbolic Insult in Diplomacy: A Subtle Game of Diplomatic Slap*. Boston: Brill Nijhoff, 2018, pp. 8-12.

exaggerated”⁶⁷⁹. As far as it went, the appreciation was correct. But that a senior official felt compelled to reassure Europeans skeptical of the United States’ commitment to NATO, Article 5 and trade negotiations was itself an indication of the storm clouds hovering over Euro-American relations. A full three years after Donald Trump had first entered the White House, allies continued to be alarmed by a pattern of policy inconsistency and absence of consultations on matters such as the killing of Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander Qasem Soleimani.⁶⁸⁰ Neither were suspicions undone when, shortly after Pompeo spoke at Munich, the White House imposed a European travel ban meant to combat the proliferation of the coronavirus pandemic without the allies’ prior knowledge. Small wonder that the absence of trust marring the transatlantic relationship never entirely dissipated throughout Trump’s four-year mandate.

Despite deep policy differences separating the two sides of the Atlantic, it was equally plain that Trump’s unpopularity in the continent was a sort of political smokescreen veiling an elementary truth: Euro-American tensions arose from structural divergences rather than just from White House capriciousness. Although expressing a genuine disdain for the president and his agenda, Europe remained heavily dependent on the United States for security and, no less important, an array of global collective goods including unimpeded sea lanes guaranteeing Europe’s trade flows and energy requirements. America’s role as ultimate guarantor of European stability and security meant that EU nations, with the possible exception of France and Germany, had little choice but to embrace a stable relationship whose terms were largely dictated by Washington. Irrespective of Trump’s boorishness and reiterated European appeals to shared values and interests, most NATO and EU leaders, particularly those from smaller states, were obliged to accommodate Trump’s foreign policy choices.⁶⁸¹ As demonstrated by the incident involving the Montenegrin Prime-Minister, America remained indispensable for Europe while the inverse was not entirely obvious.

While American foreign policymakers certainly continued to acknowledge Europe’s political and economic importance, Washington’s Cold War focus on Europe has receded into a distant past. The Trump Administration was not the first to express skepticism of multilateral institutions nor the first to be perceived as manifesting a bias for unilateral action when European allies failed to support Washington’s policy choices. In effect, these same criticisms had been levied at the George W. Bush administration at the beginning of the century. Still, from the moment that the United States took the initiative

679 See, U.S. Department of State, “The West Is Winning”, Speech by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Munich, Germany, February 15, 2020, accessed at: <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-west-is-winning/index.html>.

680 See, Karen Zraick, “What to Know About the Death of Iranian General Suleimani”, *The New York Times*, January 3, 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/world/middleeast/suleimani-dead.html>.

681 See, Charles A. Kupchan, “For the West, There Is No Road Back to a Time Before Trump, Europeans Are Relieved by Biden’s Victory But Will Be Very Disappointed If They Don’t Heed the Lessons of the Past Four Years,” *Foreign Policy*, November 16, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/16/biden-west-europe-agenda/>.

to form NATO, in 1949, the organization was the principle vehicle for safeguarding transatlantic security and preserving the underlying political ties between the two sides of the Atlantic. Similarly, once Harry Truman vowed support for the European Coal and Steel Community, the United States was steadfast in its backing for Europe's integration project.⁶⁸² From the early 1950s, successive administrations encouraged integration as the main vehicle for Franco-German reconciliation, continental market-driven economic recovery and the consolidation of democracy in a region emerging from the ravages of a devastating war. That support was not altruistic since the US succeeded in realizing its principal objectives for Cold War Europe: containment of the Soviet Union, peace, prosperity and the sustainability of the region's democratic regimes.⁶⁸³ In short, NATO and European integration were mutually reinforcing pillars stabilizing Europe's security architecture under American leadership. American aims thus dovetailed with Jean Monnet's vision of European integration as a vehicle for achieving a lasting continental peace.⁶⁸⁴

Following the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, NATO morphed from a twelve-member Cold War regional collective defense alliance into a thirty-member organization acting out-of-area. Without a doubt, the Atlantic Alliance also served to project American power in Europe through the stationing of forces – and nuclear weapons – in various allied nations. Such a presence enabled rapid land, air and sea access to the Middle East, Africa and other regions of American strategic interest. As a result, and irrespective of US qualms relative to burden-sharing and the inadequacy of allied military capabilities, NATO remained a vital instrument for the defense of America's broader global interests. After the Cold War, Washington strongly backed NATO and EU enlargements to Central Europe so as to extend stability, markets and democracy to the post-communist states and prevent the emergence of a strategic vacuum.

Since NATO was largely an outgrowth of Cold War geopolitical realities, the transatlantic bond was bound to loosen in the post-Cold War era. Accentuated by George W. Bush's launching of the war on terror, America's turn from Europe intensified with the unfolding of the 2003 Iraqi intervention. At that critical juncture, president Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld reacted to French and German opposition to the looming war by famously distinguishing between "old" and "new" Europe. Implying an absence of European unity concerning strategic issues in general and the

682 In his *Europe Recast*, Desmond Dinan claims that "the Americans really wanted was what eventually happened in Europe not in 1952 but in 1992: a single market involving the free movement of goods survives, and capital". See, Desmond Dinan. *Europe Recast: A History of the European Union*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 26.

683 See, Armin Rappaport, "The United States and European Integration: The First Phase", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1981, pp. 121-150.

684 In his 1968 Author's Preface to his *The Uniting of Europe*, Ernst Haas observes that "the decision to follow the gospel of Jean Monnet rather than that of the federalists which was "political" in a pure sense rested on a political commitment to realize peace and welfare by way of European unification. See, Ernst B. Haas. *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, p. xx. Also, Jean Monnet. *Mémoires*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1976.

Iraq war in particular, the distinction signified that “new Europe” stood loyally with the United States while “old Europe” – essentially France and Germany – did not.⁶⁸⁵ Granted, Barack Obama’s 2008 victory raised considerable expectations of a sea-change in transatlantic relations.⁶⁸⁶ Speaking to a vast crowd gathered at Berlin’s *Strasse des 17 Juni* before his election, Obama distanced himself from Bush’s policies by declaring that international problems could not be resolved by any single nation, “no matter how large or how powerful”⁶⁸⁷. Following on this appeal for a renewed multilateralism, he added that robust transatlantic relations required “allies who will listen to each other, who will learn from each other who will, above all, trust each other”⁶⁸⁸. Reality would prove quite different in subsequent years as he pivoted to Asia and downgraded US commitments to Europe, but Obama had nonetheless extended an olive branch to Europeans alienated by the Bush administration.

5.1. Undermining the Atlantic Alliance

Naked American self-interest should have counseled Donald Trump to demonstrate restraint when, inadvertently or not, he deepened tensions between the two sides of the Atlantic. Yet, the opposite course of action was taken when, in March 2016, he asserted that “I think NATO may be obsolete. NATO was set up a long time ago – many, many years ago when things were different. Things are different now...And I think NATO – you have to really examine NATO. And it doesn’t really help us, it’s helping other countries. And I don’t think those other countries appreciate what we’re doing”⁶⁸⁹. From one perspective, the statement should not have aroused uncertainty over the future of the Atlantic Alliance.⁶⁹⁰ After all, on previous occasions Trump had stated that NATO was outdated because it had failed to modernize its original Cold War mission.⁶⁹¹ Worse was to come. In a campaign event in Racine, Wisconsin, the GOP candidate cavalierly suggested that countries “have to pay up for past deficiencies or they have to get out. And

685 See, Jiri Sedivy and Marcin Zabrowski, “Old Europe, New Europe and Transatlantic Relations”, *European Security*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2004, pp. 187-213.

686 An example of this viewpoint is Alvaro de Vasconcelos and Marcin Zaborowski (eds.). *The Obama Moment, European and American Perspectives*. Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2009.

687 For the full transcript, see, “Obama Delivers Much Anticipated Berlin Speech”, *NPR*, July 24, 2008, available at: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92875642>.

688 Ibid.

689 See, “Complete Donald Trump Interview: NATO, Nukes, Muslim World, and Clinton”, *Bloomberg*, March 23, 2016, accessed at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/videos/2016-03-23/complete-trump-interview-nato-nukes-muslims-and-hillary>.

690 See, Joshua Shiffrin, “Time to Consolidate NATO?”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2017, pp. 109-123; and Sven Biscop, “Has Trump reshuffled the cards for Europe?”, *Egmont Security Policy Brief No. 79*, November 2016, available at: <http://aei.pitt.edu/86890/1/SPB79.pdf>.

691 See, Janusz Bugajski and Ilona Teleki, “Washington’s New European Allies: Durable or Conditional Partners?”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.2, 2005, pp. 95-107.

if it breaks up NATO, it breaks up NATO”⁶⁹². Admission of a NATO breakup took the discussion considerably beyond the issue of defense budgets; it reflected an ordering of priorities that subsumed allied solidarity to bookkeeping⁶⁹³.

During the GOP primaries, Trump tweeted – on March 24 – that “NATO is obsolete and must be changed to additionally focus on terrorism as well as some of the things it is currently focused on!”⁶⁹⁴. That same day, in a second tweet, he claimed that “We pay a disproportionate share of the cost of NATO. Why? It is time to renegotiate, and the time is now!”⁶⁹⁵. Likewise, during his July 21 acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, he asserted that “I have said that NATO was obsolete. Because it did not properly cover terrorism. And also, that many of the member countries were not paying their fair share. As usual, the United States has been picking up the cost”⁶⁹⁶. However, in a July 22 interview with *The New York Times*, Trump went a step further and likened burden-sharing to continued membership in the alliance when he declared that “I would prefer that we be able to continue (protecting them), but if we are not going to be reasonably reimbursed for the tremendous cost of protecting these massive nations with tremendous wealth... We’re talking about countries that are doing very well. Then yes, I would be absolutely prepared to tell those countries, ‘Congratulations, you will be defending yourself’”⁶⁹⁷. Notwithstanding these affirmations, subsequent claims made by

692 See, Ashley Parker, “Donald Trump Says NATO is ‘Obsolete’, UN is ‘Political Game’”, *The New York Times*, April 2, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/04/02/donald-trump-tells-crowd-hed-be-fine-if-nato-broke-up/>.

693 See, Mel Gurtov. *America in Retreat*, pp. 38-41; and Guy Snodgrass. *Holding the Line*, pp. 166-171.

694 See, Eliza Collins, “Trump: ‘It is amazing how often I am right’”, *Politico*, March 24, 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/03/trump-im-right-221198>.

695 Ibid.

696 See, “Donald Trump’s complete Convention speech, annotated”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-convention-speech-transcript-20160721-snap-htmlstory.html>.

697 See, “Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey’s Coup Attempt and the World”, *The New York Times*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?searchResultPosition=1>. Indirectly responding to Trump, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared that “I will not interfere in the U.S. election campaign, but what I can do is say what matters for NATO. Solidarity among allies is a key value for NATO”. A number of Republicans were particularly harsh in their replies to Trump. Senator Lindsey Graham affirmed that “(S)tatements like these make the world more dangerous and the U.S. less safe”, adding that Vladimir Putin would be “a very happy man”. Furthermore, Graham observed that the GOP “nominee for president is essentially telling the Russians and other bad actors that the U.S. is not fully committed to supporting the NATO alliance”. Another Trump critic, Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse stated that “(O)ur friends should draw strength and our adversaries should take pause from this simple fact: Americans keep our word”. See, Paul Sonne, “NATO Takes Issue With Donald Trump’s Comment on Defending Allies”, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 21, 2016, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-fires-back-after-donald-trump-questions-value-of-defending-allies-1469120175>. See, also, Helene Cooper, “Defense Secretary Mattis Tells NATO Allies to Spend More, or Else”, *The New York Times*, February 15, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/world/europe/jim-mattis-nato-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

Hillary Clinton and vice-presidential candidate Tim Kaine that Trump called for “getting rid of NATO” were untrue.⁶⁹⁸ Still, he was clearly proposing that NATO member-states contributing too little might not be defended by the United States.

In one sense, Trump’s discourse was not new since successive presidents had called for the modernization of NATO’s mission and for increased allied burden-sharing. The difference resided in the strident tone permeating Trump’s transactional rhetoric and his linkage of burden-sharing to the fulfillment of US security guarantees arising from NATO’s Article 5 collective defense provision.⁶⁹⁹ Combined with a perceived American unilateral approach to problems of mutual concern such as Syria, Donald Trump’s belligerent rhetoric invariably raised deep reservations about American leadership. As these doubts became entrenched, alliance credibility and cohesion invariably eroded. Once Trump was elected, Vice-President Pence and the Secretaries of Defense and State sought to minimize the damage by restating Washington’s commitment to Europe.⁷⁰⁰ In mid February 2017, meeting in Brussels with European Council president Donald Tusk, Mike Pence expressed his “strong commitment” to NATO and the EU as the former Polish Prime Minister observed that “(T)oo much has happened over the past months in your country, and in the EU. Too many new – and sometimes surprising – opinions have been voiced over this time about our relations and our common security for us to pretend that everything is as it used to be”⁷⁰¹. Tusk’s candid observation revealed the extent to which the transatlantic relationship was deteriorating at an alarming pace as well as the administration’s inability to bring closure to the matter.

Washington acknowledged Europe’s centrality for US security, but considered the allies ill-prepared to confront emerging strategic challenges. Trump’s concerns relative to allied contributions to NATO defense spending were extremely pertinent, as virtually all allied countries subsequently came to recognize. Indeed, during NATO’s 2014 Wales summit member-states had reached an understanding on burden-sharing whereby national

698 See, Sean Gorman, “Donald Trump says “that NATO is obsolete and that we need to get rid of NATO...”, *Polifact*, October 10, 2016, available at: <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2016/oct/10/tim-kaine/contrary-kaine-claim-trump-hasnt-called-us-break-n/>.

699 Donald Trump, a few months later, stated that NATO was not “obsolete”. On the evolution of the president’s position, cf., Peter Baker, “Trump’s Previous View of NATO Is Now Obsolete”, *The New York Times*, April 13, 2017, at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/world/europe/nato-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

700 Cf., Rebecca Kheel, “Mattis: NATO ‘fundamental bedrock’ for US”, *The Hill*, February 15, 2017, consulted at: <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/319620-defense-chief-nato-fundamental-bedrock-for-us>; and David M. Herszenhorn and Giulia Paravicini, “Rex Tillerson wins applause, literally, in NATO debut”, *Politico*, March 31, 2017, accessed at: <http://www.politico.eu/article/rex-tillerson-wins-applause-literally-in-nato-debut-donald-trump-foreign-policy-putin-russia>.

701 See, “Pence vows EU and NATO support as as protestors reject cooperation”, *DW*, February 20, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pence-vows-eu-and-nato-support-as-protestors-reject-cooperation/a-37643325>.

defense budgets were to be raised to at least 2% of gross GDP by 2024.⁷⁰² Contributions made directly to NATO were not encompassed by these targets, but a minimum of 20% of expenditure had to be allotted to procurement and to research and development. The consensus was a considerable achievement since – at the time – only three member-states met the 2% guideline.⁷⁰³ Five years later, nine allies were meeting the target.⁷⁰⁴ Still, significant disparities in military capabilities persisted since the allies relied heavily on the United States for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Moreover, persistent disagreements remained over how to properly tally contributions. Attempting to find an acceptable middle ground, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg suggested that contributions should be evaluated in terms of “cash, capabilities, and contributions”⁷⁰⁵. From the European perspective, resources directed to ongoing NATO missions – in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and the Middle East- and the effectiveness of military capabilities should be contemplated as spending outlays because allies falling below the 2% target but channeling resources to modern capabilities made a greater overall contribution to NATO preparedness than allies surpassing the 2% target by channeling funds to personnel costs.

Although the burden-sharing issue plagued Euro-American relations throughout the previous decades, Trump instilled the issue with a new immediacy because it came to be interpreted through the prism of a seemingly dwindling commitment to the transatlantic partnership. All of these doubts filled the air as the newly-inaugurated president prepared to head for Belgium and Italy for the May 2017 EU, NATO and the G7 summits, his first as America’s chief executive officer. Prior to Trump’s trip, Vice-President Mike Pence and Defense Secretary James Mattis made their way to Europe to dispel lingering doubts about administration policy. Speaking at the 2017 Munich Security Conference, Pence proclaimed that the “United States of America strongly supports NATO and will be unwavering in our commitment to this transatlantic alliance”, promising the European

702 See, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Wales Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales”, September 5, 2014, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?mode=pressrelease. For a discussion, see John R. Deni, “NATO’s New Trajectories after the Wales Summit”, *Parameters*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2014, pp. 57-65; and James Bergeron, “Back to the Future in Wales”, *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 159, No. 3, 2014, pp. 4-8.

703 See, Denitsa Raynova and Ian Kearns, “The Wales Pledge Revisited: A Preliminary Analysis of 2015 Budget Decisions in NATO Member States”, European Leadership Network, *Policy Brief*, February 2015, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep06720.pdf>.

704 The nine were Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019)”, November 29, 2019, consulted at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_171356.htm.

705 See, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers”, June 29, 2017, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_145385.htm.

allies that the US was “your greatest ally”⁷⁰⁶. He also transmitted a “personal message” from president Trump: “We will stand with Europe”⁷⁰⁷. At the same time, Pence called for greater European defense spending and insisted that expenditure disequilibrium “must end”⁷⁰⁸. When all was said and done, Pence failed to dispel the ambiguity because the administration’s political support for NATO appeared to be contingent upon an acceptable burden-sharing formula.

Days before, speaking before NATO defense ministers, Mattis had similarly characterized the Atlantic Alliance as crucial to his country’s security and reaffirmed that Washington would “meet its responsibilities”⁷⁰⁹. Essentially confirming the position outlined by Trump during the presidential campaign, he warned that the American taxpayer could no longer “carry a disproportionate share of the defense of Western values”⁷¹⁰. Positing that “Americans cannot care more for your children’s future security than you do”, he went on to alert that the US could conceivably “moderate its commitment to the alliance” unless allies raised their spending.⁷¹¹ Reacting to the speech, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said that the “US is right” and announced a German defense expenditure increase.⁷¹² Dutch Defense Minister Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert – whose contribution barely exceeded 1% of GDP – also conveyed support for the American position, although she introduced the caveat that “Trans-Atlantic cooperation is about much more than just a simple calculation of who’s paying what”⁷¹³. Danish Defense Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen seemed to express overall alliance pragmatism when he recognized that “(I)here is no way around it. We have to increase our defense budget. It’s clear from what has now has been put on the table by the Americans and the weight they carry”⁷¹⁴. As expected, the keenest support came from the British, whose Minister, Michael Fallon, said that the Mattis speech reflected the “administration’s very

706 See, Anton Troianovski and Julian E. Barnes, “Pence Backs NATO; Russian Official Touts a New World Order”, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mike-pence-says-u-s-backs-nato-but-asks-europe-to-boost-military-spending-1487411158>.

707 See, Bruce Jones, “Team Trump meets Europe: A dispatch from the Munich Security Conference”, *Brookings*, February 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/02/19/team-trump-meets-europe/>. For the full text of Vice-President Pence’s speech, see, “Remarks by Vice President Pence at the Munich Security Conference”, February 18, US Embassy and Consulate in the Netherlands, February 18, 2017, consulted at: <https://nl.usembassy.gov/remarks-vice-president-pence-munich-security-conference-february-18/>.

708 See, “Pence vows EU and NATO support as protestors reject cooperation”, *DW*, February 20, 2017, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pence-vows-eu-and-nato-support-as-protestors-reject-cooperation/a-37643325>.

709 See, Julian E. Barnes and Gordon Lubold, “U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis Warns NATO Allies on Military Spending”, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 15, 2017, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-defense-secretary-jim-mattis-to-deliver-nato-message-of-support-1487155910>.

710 Ibid.

711 Ibid.

712 Ibid.

713 Ibid.

714 Ibid.

clear commitment to the NATO alliance⁷¹⁵. As subsequent events would demonstrate, that was not the case.

A few weeks later, Donald Trump reversed himself on NATO during a joint press conference with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. Declaring that he would continue to work closely with the allies, the president revealed that the “Secretary-General and I had a productive discussion on what more NATO can do in the fight against terrorism”⁷¹⁶. True to form, Trump intimated that the reversal was not his but a result of NATO’s newfound willingness to reinforce the anti-terrorist struggle.⁷¹⁷ As a consequence of the change, Trump quipped: “I said it was obsolete. It is no longer obsolete”⁷¹⁸. The fact that the president proclaimed an end to NATO’s “obsolescence” in no way meant that the problem had been surmounted.

In his first trip to Brussels, Trump set the tone for the visit by reprimanding NATO allies for not spending enough on defense and by remarking that Germany was “very bad”⁷¹⁹. Seeking to downplay the comment and find common ground with the Americans, Jean-Claude Juncker claimed that it was “not true that the president took an aggressive approach when it came to the German trade surplus. This is a real translation [issue]. If someone is saying the Germans are bad that doesn’t mean this can be translated literally. He was not aggressive at all”⁷²⁰. Likewise, Donald Tusk claimed that the parts were of one mind on combating terrorism and “on the same line” regarding Ukraine⁷²¹. A former Polish Prime Minister, Tusk proceeded to add that his “main message to President Trump was what gives our cooperation and friendship its deepest meaning are fundamental Western values, like freedom, human rights, respect for human

715 Ibid.

716 See, Joe Gould, “Trump says NATO ‘no longer obsolete’ in series of foreign policy reversals”, *Defense News*, April 12, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2017/04/12/trump-says-nato-no-longer-obsolete-in-series-of-foreign-policy-reversals/>.

717 Ibid. President Trump stated that “I complained about that a long time ago and they made a change and now they do fight terrorism”.

718 Ibid.

719 See, David M. Herszenhorn, “Trump makes forceful NATO debut”, *Politico*, May 25, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-nato-demands-allies-make-up-for-many-years-lost-on-military-spending/>; and Peter Müller, “The Germans Are Bad, Very Bad”, *Der Spiegel*, May 26, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/trump-in-brussels-the-germans-are-bad-very-bad-a-1149330.html>. US National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn clarified the president’s comments, saying that Trump was referring to German trade and not condemning the country as a whole. The confirmation came after European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker indirectly did so. Complained in private about Germany being “very bad” and about the “terrible” trade deficit between the U.S. and Germany for selling so many cars to the United States and said the meeting was not “aggressive” and Trump’s remarks had been lost in translation. See, Tom McTague, “Juncker: Trump wasn’t aggressive in saying Germany was ‘very bad’”, *Politico*, May 26, 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/juncker-trump-wasnt-aggressive-in-saying-germany-was-very-bad/>.

720 Ibid.

721 See, “Remarks by President Donald Tusk after meeting with President Donald Trump”, European Council, May 25, 2017, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/05/25/tusk-trump-remarks/>.

dignity... The greatest task today is the consolidation of the whole free world around those values, not just interests. Values and principles first – this is what Europe and American should be saying”⁷²². However, his most cutting remarks were reserved for Trump’s posture toward Russia: “I am not sure that we can say 100 percent today that we have a common position, common opinion about Russia”, adding, ironically, that “I am maybe less optimistic when it comes to president Putin’s plans and intentions. I’m less sentimental”⁷²³. Said differently, Tusk was voicing concern that at some point Trump could be tempted to abandon the sanctions regime placed on Russia after it annexed Crimea in exchange for a grand bargain with Vladimir Putin. After all, prior to Trump’s European trip, the White House had acknowledged that sanctions and the Minsk process were under review by the president.

At the May 25 NATO summit, Jens Stoltenberg revealed that the main points on the agenda were fighting terrorism and a “fairer burden-sharing in our alliance”⁷²⁴. He promptly announced plans for the creation of a new “terrorism intelligence cell here at NATO headquarters” and recalled that the alliance’s “largest military operation ever was launched in Afghanistan in a direct response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States”⁷²⁵. By all accounts, the president was unmoved by these professions of past solidarity. European leaders expecting Trump to moderate his views on NATO were surely disabused as he chastised the allies for not spending enough on defense. Recalling that “(O)ver the last eight years, the United States spent more on defense than all other NATO countries combined”, he went on to claim that member-states owed “massive amounts” in back payments, a charge aimed squarely at Germany.⁷²⁶ Equally troubling was the omission from the president’s speech of an explicit endorsement of the collective defense principle consubstantiated in Article 5 of the Atlantic Alliance Treaty. Instead, he limited himself to saying that the United States “will never forsake

722 Ibid.

723 Ibid. For the full text of the speech, cf., The White House, “Remarks by President Trump at NATO Unveiling of the Article 5 and Berlin Wall Memorials – Brussels, Belgium”, US Embassy and Consulates in Russia, May 25, 2017, available at: <https://ru.usembassy.gov/remarks-president-trump-nato/>.

724 See, NATO, “Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meeting of NATO Heads of State and/or Government”, May 25, 2017, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_144083.htm.

725 Ibid. In response to 9/11, NATO took the unprecedented decision to invoke Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty. European and Canadian troops subsequently joined American forces in Afghanistan in what was to become NATO’s longest mission. Ten years later, in 2011, approximately 40,000 of the 130,000 troops deployed in the country were non-American. In 2015, NATO’s combat mission morphed into the Resolute Support Mission to advise, assist and train Afghan security forces. Until late 2018, US troop increases were matched by the alliance. NATO leaders welcomed the 29 February 2020 agreements between the United States, the Taliban and the Afghani government calling for the withdrawal of international forces within 14 months, contingent on an array of political and security preconditions.

726 See, David M. Herszenhorn, “Trump makes forceful NATO debut”, *Politico*, May 25, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-nato-demands-allies-make-up-for-many-years-lost-on-military-spending/>.

the friends who stood by our side”⁷²⁷. Such a bland assertion served only to reinforce the view that NATO was seen by the new administration in financial terms rather than as a community of shared values; that the burden-sharing issue subsumed all else. Berlin and Paris were far from satisfied with Trump’s understanding of the transatlantic relationship, but other leaders were visibility supportive of the president. Confirming European divisions, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán dismissed his colleagues’ misgivings with the simple assurance that “everything will be fine”⁷²⁸.

5.2. Our Fate in Merkel’s Hands

In the aftermath of these contentious May 2017 summits, Angela Merkel conceded that “Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands” because the “era in which we could fully rely on others is over to some extent. That’s what I experienced over the past several days”⁷²⁹. Although the remark was qualified by the “to some extent” caveat, her words were an unambiguous sign that relations with the United States were on an accelerated downward spiral.⁷³⁰ President Trump’s view was not coincidental with Merkel’s as he took to Twitter to claim that: “Just returned from Europe. Trip was a great success for America. Hard work but big results!”⁷³¹. However, the chancellor’s position was tainted by the demands of German domestic politics. Campaigning for re-election, Merkel came under tremendous pressure from Martin Schulz, her SPD rival, to harden her position relative to the United States. Interviewed by *Der Spiegel*, Schulz had claimed that Trump’s “attacks on Europe are also attacks on Germany”, adding that “(W)hat the U.S. government is starting right now is a cultural struggle. We should confidently

727 Cf., The White House, “Remarks by President Trump at NATO Unveiling of the Article 5 and Berlin Wall Memorials – Brussels, Belgium”, US Embassy and Consulates in Russia, May 25, 2017, op cit.

728 See, Matthew Karnitschnig, “Trump confirms Europe’s worst fears”, *Politico*, May 26, 2017, op. cit.

729 See, Michael Birnbaum and Rick Noack, “Following Trump’s trip, Merkel says Europe can’t rely on ‘others.’ She means the U.S.”, *The Washington Post*, May 28, 2017, consulted at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/following-trumps-trip-merkel-says-europe-cant-rely-on-us-anymore/2017/05/28/4c6b92cc-43c1-11e7-8de1-ccc59a9bf4b1_story.html; and Giulia Paravicini, “Angela Merkel: Europe must take ‘our fate’ into own hands”, *Politico*, May 28, 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-europe-cdu-must-take-its-fate-into-its-own-hands-elections-2017>.

730 Things had gone from bad to worse when leaders of the G7 met at Taormina, Italy failed to reach a consensus on the 2015 Paris climate accords. President Trump stated that he would “later” decide on America’s participation in the treaty. The remaining six members of the G7 — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the U.K. — reaffirmed their “strong commitment” to the agreement, which Barack Obama signed in 2015. One day after the G7 summit, the German chancellor said she intended to maintain good “neighborly relations” with Britain and the US, but “also with Russia”. See, David M. Herszenhorn “Trump, G7 agree they can’t agree on Paris (for now, at least)”, *Politico*, May 27, 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/leaders-issue-g7-declaration-with-us-a-holdout-on-climate-change/>.

731 For the May 28, 2017 tweet, see, *The Tweets of President Donald J. Trump*, p. 35.

take up this struggle and say: We have a different model for society⁷³². Describing the president as “dangerous to democracy” and charging him with “playing with the security of the Western world”, Schulz called for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from German soil.⁷³³ Differences that in another context could have been overcome took on a new relevance as the language of cultural clash was introduced and disagreements over security issues morphed into differences over societal models. As German public opinion became increasingly hostile to president Trump and his policies, Merkel was forced to adjust her rhetoric and positions.

A few months later, in December 2017, Donald Trump’s *National Security Strategy* conceded that in a world of emerging great power rivalry “the United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable, and can help defend our shared interests and ideals”⁷³⁴. The administration’s global strategy suggested that European fears of disengagement were grossly exaggerated, particularly since Trump encouraged NATO deterrence of Russia, alliance enlargement to both Montenegro and North Macedonia and, not least importantly, appealed to enhanced transatlantic cooperation to confront an array of challenges posed by Russian, Chinese and Iranian assertiveness⁷³⁵. Yet, despite the administration’s profession of the importance of the Atlantic Alliance, burden-sharing again returned to poison the transatlantic debate.

The July 2018 Brussels NATO summit coincided with the budding transatlantic trade war. President Trump reproached those nations failing to comply with defense spending goals, although, prior to the gathering, he had declared that “yesterday, I let them know that I was extremely unhappy with what was happening, and they have substantially upped their commitment, yeah. And now we’re very happy and have a very, very powerful, very, very strong NATO, much stronger than it was two days ago”⁷³⁶. At the same time, he proceeded to link burden-sharing to Nord Stream2, claiming that “there’s a lot of anger at the fact that Germany is paying Russia billions of dollars. There’s a lot of anger. I also think it’s a very bad thing for Germany”⁷³⁷. European free-riding, Donald Trump seemed to be suggesting, was not restricted to security; it was also in evidence in the realms of economics and trade. Even worse, Berlin’s options

732 See, Klaus Brinkbäumer, Markus Feldenkirchen and Horand Knaup, “The Trump Approach Will Never Be Our Approach”, *Spiegel International*, February 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/interview-with-german-chancellor-candidate-martin-schulz-a-1133475.html>.

733 Ibid. Also, Anton Troianovski, “Candidate for German Chancellor Finds a Rallying Cry: Trump”, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 2017, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/candidate-for-german-chancellor-finds-a-rallying-cry-trump-1486492506>.

734 See, The White House, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”, December 2017, op. cit. p. 48.

735 See, Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*, pp. 159-160.

736 See, “Remarks by President Trump at Press Conference, NATO Summit Brussels”, Brussels, Belgium, July 12, 2018, available at: <https://nato.usmission.gov/july-12-2018-remarks-by-president-trump-at-press-conference-after-2018-nato-summit-in-brussels/>.

737 See, “I think the European Union is a foe,” Trump says ahead of Putin meeting in Helsinki”, *CBS News*, *Face the Nation*, July 15, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-interview-cbs-news-european-union-is-a-foe-ahead-of-putin-meeting-in-helsinki-jeff-glor/>.

were compromising European security by increasing German dependence on Russia⁷³⁸. Replying to the president, Angela Merkel recalled that she had “experienced myself how a part of Germany was controlled by the Soviet Union” and, indirectly suggesting that Berlin would not be dictated to by Washington, retorted that she made “independent decisions”⁷³⁹. Witnessing the escalation of tensions, Secretary General Stoltenberg underplayed the disagreement stressing that “(W)e do have disagreements. But most importantly we have decisions that are pushing this Alliance forward and making us stronger” and, on various occasions, credited the president with spurring increases in European defense spending⁷⁴⁰.

Despite Stoltenberg’s best efforts, the transatlantic relationship continued to sour. In line with previous administrations, Trump revisited the main obstacle to transatlantic cooperation in a 24 December 2018 tweet, affirming that “(W)hat I don’t like, however, is when many of these same countries take advantage of their friendship with the United States, both in Military Protection and Trade”⁷⁴¹. From his perspective, the problem was that the US was “substantially subsidizing the Militaries of many VERY rich countries all over the world, while at the same time these countries take total advantage of the U.S., and our TAXPAYERS, on Trade. General Mattis did not see this as a problem. I DO, and it is being fixed!”⁷⁴². The president’s discontentment was not directed at the Atlantic Alliance *per se*, but at the asymmetric costs falling upon the American treasury. It was this free-riding problem that truly undermined the transatlantic relationship because it indicated the allied states’ lack of solidarity with the United States.

Quite obviously, most Europeans saw things from a different angle. America’s perceived tepid support for NATO and qualms relative to Article V were again exhibited when the president, speaking at the Pentagon Missile Defense Review ceremony a month after the Mattis resignation – and days after *The New York Times* alleged Trump considered the possibility of withdrawing from NATO in mid 2018 – proclaimed that “(W)e will be with NATO 100 percent, but as I told the countries, you have to step up”⁷⁴³. Trump’s

738 See, William Drozdiak. *The Last President of Europe: Emmanuel Macron’s Race to Revive France and Save the World*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2020, p. 147.

739 See, Ewen MacAskill, “Angela Merkel hits back at Donald Trump at Nato summit”, *The Guardian*, July 11, 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/11/nato-summit-donald-trump-says-germany-is-captive-of-russians>.

740 See, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Heads of State and Government (NATO Summit Brussels)”, July 11, 2018, consulted at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_156733.htm?selectedLocale=en.

741 See, Michael Burke, “Trump says unlike Mattis he sees countries taking ‘total advantage’ of US as a problem”, *The Hill*, December 24, 2018, available at: <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/422728-trump-knocks-mattis-for-not-addressing-countries-that-take-total>.

742 See, Garrett Ross, “Trump swipes at senators, Mattis over military alliances”, *Politico*, December 24, 2018, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/24/trump-mattis-military-alliances-1074816>.

743 See, Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper, “Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. from NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia”, *The New York Times*, January 14, 2019, accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

long-held concern over America's "humiliation" at the hands of free-riding allies again came to the surface when he observed that "(W)e cannot be the fools for others. We don't want to be called that. And I will tell you, for many years behind your backs, that's what they were saying"⁷⁴⁴. Shortly after, in February 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi led a bipartisan congressional delegation to Europe to reaffirm "our commitment to the transatlantic alliance, our commitment to NATO and respect for the European Union"⁷⁴⁵. It was not the first time Congress had sought to blunt Trump's rhetoric and policy choices. For instance, in the latter part of 2018, Congress had sought to overturn the State Department's downgrading of the EU diplomatic mission to the United States by granting it a status equivalent to that of a national mission. Amounting to a rebuke to the president, both House and Senate passed bipartisan bills reaffirming support for NATO and limiting the executive branch's power to unilaterally withdraw from the organization since, in the words of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, such a move would be "Putin's dream"⁷⁴⁶. Senator Schumer's reference to the Russian president echoed continental skepticism over Trump's ongoing indulgence of Vladimir Putin, interpreted by many in Europe as a prelude to a strategic *rapprochement* between the two powers.

Extremely constrained by domestic accusations of collusion with Vladimir Putin, Trump's cautious policy relative to Russia did not differ substantially from that of his predecessors. Months into his presidency, after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson visited Putin in Moscow, Trump, standing next to NATO's Secretary-General Stoltenberg at a press conference, stated that it "would be wonderful, as we were discussing just a little while ago, if NATO and our country could get along with Russia"⁷⁴⁷. The president

744 See, Joe Gould, "Trump says US backs NATO '100%' after report he discussed withdrawal", *Defense News*, January 17, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/01/17/trump-says-us-backs-nato-100-after-report-he-discussed-withdrawal/>; and Rebecca Morin, "Trump: We will be with NATO '100 percent'", *Politico*, January 17, 2019, available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/01/17/trump-nato-alliance-pentagon-1108846>.

745 See, "Pelosi says US needs NATO 'more than ever'", *DW*, February 19, 2019, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/pelosi-says-us-needs-nato-more-than-ever/a-47576802>.

746 Although the newspaper story was based on unidentified sources and was denied by the White House, Senator Schumer claimed the president "wanted" to withdraw from NATO. On the floor of the Senate, he said: "Last weekend, we learned that President Trump has expressed a desire to withdraw from NATO this summer. This past summer is when he expressed the desire. That's Putin's dream. All the advice of our military and our diplomatic leaders were against it. Somehow the president wants to do it. And who benefits the most? Putin. Who loses the most? The West". See, "Schumer Floor Remarks On The Hundreds Of Thousands Of Americans Harmed By The Trump Shutdown, Senate Republicans' Responsibility To Help Re-Open The Government, And The Motion To Disapprove The Trump Administration's Proposal To Relax Sanctions On Three Russian Companies", Senate Democrats, January 16, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.democrats.senate.gov/news/press-releases/schumer-floor-remarks-on-the-hundreds-of-thousands-of-americans-harmed-by-the-trump-shutdown-senate-republicans-responsibility-to-help-re-open-the-government-and-the-motion-to-disapprove-the-trump-administrations-proposal-to-relax-sanctions-on-three-russian-companies>.

747 See, Joe Gould, "Trump says NATO 'no longer obsolete' in series of foreign policy reversals", *Defense News*, April 12, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2017/04/12/trump-says-nato-no-longer-obsolete-in-series-of-foreign-policy-reversals/>.

acknowledged that “we are not getting along with Russia at all. We may be at an all-time low in terms of relationship with Russia. This has built for a long period of time, but we are going to see what happens. Putin is the leader of Russia. Russia is a strong country. We are a very, very strong country. We will see how that all works out”⁷⁴⁸. The ambiguity of the statement only served to heighten concerns that a substantial policy shift could come at any time from an unpredictable White House. In response, Stoltenberg affirmed that NATO was increasing its readiness and characterized the ongoing deployment of four battle groups to Eastern Europe as a “sufficient” reply to Russia’s maneuvers in the region. Summarizing the situation, he claimed that “European allies have reduced defense spending since the end of the Cold War because tensions went down, but if you are decreasing defense spending when tensions are going down, you have to increase when tensions are going up, and now they are going up”⁷⁴⁹.

Donald Trump’s remarks not infrequently clashed with administration policy. Formally, Trump’s European policy was driven by a steadfast commitment to continental security. Both the December 2017 *National Security Strategy* and the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* highlighted Washington’s commitment to Article 5. Although Europeans were uneasy with the president’s reluctance to criticize Putin and apparent enthusiasm for improved Russo-American relations, America’s military presence in Europe was reinforced. For instance, the White House bolstered by 41 percent its 2018 financial commitment to the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) launched by Barack Obama in the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine⁷⁵⁰. The president also augmented the number of US combat troops assigned to the three Baltic countries as a “tripwire”, an essential confidence-building measure.⁷⁵¹ Although the US had fewer troops deployed abroad than at any time since the height of the Cold War, an Army Brigade Combat Team was complemented by additional exercises and training activities in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, at NATO’s December 2019 summit, allied cooperation was extended to encompass space, cyber and hybrid threats and, in February 2020, NATO defense ministers reached agreement on expanding NATO’s training mission in Iraq.

American firmness toward Moscow was also in evidence in February 2019 with the US decision to suspend its participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)

748 Ibid.

749 Ibid.

750 The European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) was launched in 2014 and until 2017 was known as the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). See, Eerik Marme and Gabriel White, “European Deterrence Initiative: Bolstering the Defence of the Baltic States”, RKK/ICDS, International Centre for Defence and Security, Estonia, December 2017, available at: https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ICDS_Policy_Paper_European_Deterrence_Initiative_Eerik_Marme-Gabriel_White_December_2017.pdf.

751 See, Dianne Pfundstein Chamberlain, “NATO’s Baltic Tripwire Forces Won’t Stop Russia”, *The National Interest*, July 21, 2016, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/natos-baltic-tripwire-forces-wont-stop-russia-17074>. In response, Putin placed area defense systems and modern short-range nuclear missiles in Kaliningrad, signaling a willingness to resort to nuclear weapons in the European theater in case of confrontation. See, Lidia Kelly, “Russia’s Baltic outpost digs in for standoff with NATO”, *Reuters*, July 5, 2016, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-russia-kaliningrad-idUSKCN0ZL0J7>

Treaty due to Russian violations.⁷⁵² Six months later, when the United States withdrew from the agreement, European leaders validated Washington's claim that Russia was in violation of the treaty and NATO announced that it "fully supported" Trump's decision⁷⁵³. Concerns that the withdrawal could unleash a new arms race persisted, especially after Vladimir Putin made it clear that he too would suspend INF participation. Freed from the treaty's constraints, Moscow indicated its intention to develop new nuclear-capable missiles. At the February 2020 Munich Security Conference, Mike Pompeo thus took care to justify his government's decision by claiming that "credibility" had been restored to the arms control regime.⁷⁵⁴

It was not just the Europeans that believed that the Trump Administration could abandon sanctions on Russia. In mid 2017 Congress enshrined into law a host of sanctions foreseen by Obama-era executive orders. By attributing to Congress the power to review alterations to the sanctions regime, the legislators preempted Trump from unilaterally weakening the sanctions.⁷⁵⁵ Understanding the domestic political nature of the congressional decision, Trump objected, but, aware that a presidential veto would be overridden, signed the legislation. Germany and its European allies opposed the measures aimed at restricting Russian energy exports through Nord Stream2, arguing that the pipeline enhanced EU energy security because it provided a direct route to secure energy supplies.⁷⁵⁶ In contrast, Poland and the Baltic States echoed the administration's view that Nord Stream2 augmented Russia's leverage and Ukraine's vulnerability. Questions were also arising in Europe relative to the effectiveness of sanctions as a long-term solution. President Macron went as far as to describe sanctions as "inefficient" and proposed

752 See, Alex Ward, "The US just withdrew from an important nuclear arms treaty with Russia. Don't panic — yet", *Vox*, August 2, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/8/2/20750158/inf-treaty-trump-russia-withdraw>

753 See, "US announces withdrawal from INF missile treaty", *DW*, available at: February 1, 2019, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/us-announces-withdrawal-from-inf-missile-treaty/a-47323488>; and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty", August 2, 2019, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_168164.htm?fbclid=IwAR0Lf3URLD1rmfoOSAU9gpsScyfx-6IPbw7cCeanOryWBkv_tcnfJYacgs.

754 See, U.S. Department of State, "The West Is Winning," Speech by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Munich, Germany, February 15, 2020, accessed at: <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-west-is-winning/index.html>.

755 See, Michael Crowley, "Trump signs Russia sanctions bill he opposed", *Politico*, July 29, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-signs-russia-sanctions-bill-he-opposed/>.

756 In December 2019, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA) as part of the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act. PEESA aimed to halt the construction of Nord Stream2 by imposing sanctions on foreign individuals and entities involved in the pipeline's construction. Some European opponents of Nord Stream2 joined supporters of the pipeline in criticizing the PEESA sanctions. EU officials rejected as a "matter of principle" sanctions against EU companies conducting business in conformity European law. Some opponents of Nord Stream2, such as the Polish government, supported PEESA.

a “strategic dialogue” with Moscow⁷⁵⁷. Not unexpectedly, Poland and the Baltic States argued for complementing sanctions with a robust NATO military presence in Central and Eastern Europe.

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has consistently sought to develop a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) permitting greater EU flexibility in responding to security crises.⁷⁵⁸ Like its predecessors, the Trump administration cautioned that EU defense should not clash with European commitments to NATO, but otherwise supported the CSDP. Seen from Washington, EU efforts would ideally focus on strengthening NATO’s European pillar rather than duplicating or substituting alliance capabilities. Yet the European political landscape had been profoundly transformed by *trumpism*. Brexit and growing uncertainty about America’s future role in European security legitimized calls for deeper EU defense integration. Accordingly, in 2017, 25 EU member-states created the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) with the aim of assuring a more efficient use of defense funds.⁷⁵⁹ In this fashion, NATO’s European members would simultaneously enhance their military capabilities and assume a greater security burden. The White House refrained from criticizing the initiative, but America’s ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchison, alerted against a “protectionist vehicle for the EU” since PESCO and the recently created EDF could be used to curb American defense companies operating in the European market.⁷⁶⁰

By this point, various NATO member-states were expressing deep discomfort over Europe’s historic military dependence on the United States. In a November 2019 interview granted to the *Economist*, French president Emmanuel Macron, voicing reservations over the October 2019 drawdown of US forces from Syria, remarked that “(Y)ou have partners together in the same part of the world, and you have no coordination whatsoever

757 See, Judah Grunstein, “For Macron, Being Right on European Strategic Autonomy Isn’t Enough”, *World Politics Review*, September 30, 2020, accessed at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29095/for-macron-being-right-on-european-strategic-autonomy-isn-t-enough>. William Drozdiak. *The Last President of Europe*, p. 157-176.

758 See, *inter alia*, Anand Menon, ‘From crisis to catharsis: ESDP after Iraq’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No.4, 2004, pp. 631-648; Mette E. Sangiovanni, “Why a Common Security and Defence Policy is Bad for Europe”, *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 2003, pp. 193-206; Ronald Asmus, “Rethinking the EU: Why Washington needs to support European integration”, *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2005, pp. 93-102; Seth G Jones. *The Rise of European Security Cooperation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Fabien Terpan. *La politique étrangère, de sécurité et de défense de l’Union européenne*. Paris: La Documentation française, 2010; and André Dumoulin and Nicolas Gros-Verheyde. *La politique européenne de sécurité et de défense commune*. Brussels: Les éditions du Villard, 2017.

759 See, for instance, Sven Biscop, “European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance”, *Survival*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 2018, pp. 161-180; and Simon Sweeney and Neil Winn, “EU Security and Defence Cooperation in Times of Dissent: Analysing PESCO, the European Defence Fund and the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) in the Shadow of Brexit”, *Defence Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2020, pp. 224-249.

760 See, Aaron Mehta, “US warns against ‘protectionism’ with new EU defense agreement”, *Defense News*, February 14, 2018, available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/munich-security-forum/2018/02/14/us-warns-against-protectionism-with-new-eu-defense-agreement/>; and US NATO Mission, “Ambassador Hutchinson at the Brussels Forum”, Brussels, March 9, 2018, consulted at: <https://nato.usmission.gov/mar-9-2018-ambassador-hutchison-brussels-forum/>.

of strategic decision-making between the United States and its NATO allies⁷⁶¹. Most critically, Macron concluded that “we are currently experiencing the brain death of NATO”⁷⁶². The statements were made as European governments argued over whether enhanced European military capabilities required further EU defense integration. While France took the lead in advocating European “strategic autonomy”, others suggested that such efforts would invariably weaken NATO and decouple US and European security.⁷⁶³ Wary of American disengagement, Emmanuel Macron, Josep Borrell and a number of European leaders therefore advocated a path of EU “strategic autonomy”⁷⁶⁴. Defaulting to traditional French policy preferences, Macron took up the call for “European military and technological sovereignty” so as to guarantee that the EU would continue to be a global geopolitical player. That France should be pushing technological sovereignty was not entirely surprising; after all, France, closely followed by Germany, is the EU’s biggest arms exporter.

At its core, “strategic autonomy” was meant to provide Europeans with capabilities to conduct military operations without the support of the United States.⁷⁶⁵ Against this background, in June 2019, the EU approved a *New Strategic Agenda for the EU, 2019-*

761 Cf. “Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead”, *The Economist*, November 7, 2019, available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>.

762 Ibid.

763 President Macron, speaking on this matter, claimed that: “In the area of defence, our aim needs to be ensuring Europe’s autonomous operating capabilities, in complement to NATO. The basis for this autonomy has been laid, with historic progress in recent months. In June, we laid the foundations of Defence Europe: Permanent Structured Cooperation, enabling us to make enhanced commitments, to progress together and to better coordinate ourselves; and also a European Defence Fund to fund our capacities and research. We are in the process of giving this essential framework content, through discussions between the various member states who wish to move forward in this area. But we need to go further. What Europe, Defence Europe, lacks most today is a common strategic culture. Our inability to work together convincingly undermines our credibility as Europeans. We do not have the same cultures, be they parliamentary, historical or political, or the same sensitivities. And that cannot be changed in one day. But I propose trying, straight away, to build that common culture, by proposing a European intervention initiative aimed at developing a shared strategic culture”. See, “Sorbonne speech of Emmanuel Macron”, September 26, 2017, available at: <http://international.blogs.ouest-france.fr/archive/2017/09/29/macron-sorbonne-verbatim-europe-18583.html>.

764 Ibid. Also, European Commission, “Jean-Claude Juncker’s ‘State of the Union’ speech on 12 September 2018”, consulted at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/state-union-2018-hour-european-sovereignty-2018-sep-12_en; and “55e anniversaire de la signature du Traité sur la coopération franco-allemande (22 janvier 2018)”, Ministère de L’Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 22 January 2018 Treaty, available at: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/declarationemam_cle0355d5.pdf.

765 See, Daniel Fiott, “Strategic autonomy: towards ‘European sovereignty’ in defence?”, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), *Brief Issue 12*, November 2018, pp. 1-8, consulted at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep21120.pdf>; and Thomas Verellen, “European Sovereignty Now? A Reflection on What it Means to Speak of ‘European Sovereignty’”, *European Papers*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2020, pp. 307-318, accessed at: https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS3081314&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US&fromSite-map=1.

2024 because, so it was claimed, “(I)n a world of increasing uncertainty, complexity and change, the EU needs to pursue a strategic course of action and increase its capacity to act autonomously to safeguard its interests, uphold its values and way of life, and help shape the global future”⁷⁶⁶. The intention was reaffirmed when Ursula von der Leyen, assuming the presidency of the European Commission in December 2019, stressed her determination to lead a “geopolitical Commission”⁷⁶⁷. Yet, despite the aspirational rhetoric, EU states remained divided on major foreign and defense policy issues, only infrequently speaking with one voice on immigration, Libya, Syria, Russia and China. The Commission’s ambition to establish the European Union as a relevant geopolitical actor was predicated on a premise that simply did not exist: European states shared a common understanding of the world and approached external threats and challenges in the same fashion. It presupposed, in short, that a “European interest” had subsumed “national interests”.

Despite all of these developments, European governments were not of one mind on this critical issue of strategic autonomy. Central and East European nations were profoundly skeptical of such plans, fearing that their security would be compromised by a reduction of American commitments. Angela Merkel also tread a cautious path seeking to back French calls for a robust EU with the preservation of NATO as the central pillar of European security⁷⁶⁸. Even more direct, German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer affirmed that “(I)n a world marked by increased power competition, the West will only be able to stand firm and succeed in defending its interests as long as it remains united. Europe remains dependent on U.S. military protection, both nuclear and conventional, but the U.S. will not be able to carry the banner of Western values alone”⁷⁶⁹. The minister wisely concluded that “Illusions of European strategic autonomy must come to an end: Europeans will not be able to replace America’s crucial role as a security provider”⁷⁷⁰.

766 See, European Council, “A new strategic agenda for the EU, 2019-2024”, June 2019, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/eu-strategic-agenda-2019-2024/>.

767 See, Mujtaba Rahman, “Europe’s Next Crisis: The Geopolitical Commission,” *Politico Europe*, February 3, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-next-crisis-the-geopolitical-commission/>; Matthew Karnitschnig, “Europe’s Geopolitical Year Ended Before it Began,” *Politico Europe*, February 13, 2020, accessed at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-geopolitical-year-ended-before-it-began-strategy-china-us-russia/>; and Lili Bayer, “Meet von der Leyen’s Geopolitical Commission”, *Politico*, December 4, 2019, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/meet-ursula-von-der-leyen-geopolitical-commission/>

768 See, Tobias Bunde, “Defending European integration by (symbolically) integrating European defence? Germany and its ambivalent role in European security and defence policy”, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2021, pp. 243-259.

769 See, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, “Europe still needs America”, *Politico*, November 2, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/>.

770 Ibid.

5.3. Transatlantic Trade Conundrum

Contrasting with his White House predecessors, Donald Trump signaled that European unity was not strategically crucial for the United States, a conviction exemplified by the president's professed enthusiasm for Brexit and startling advice to Macron to also withdraw from the European Union in exchange for an advantageous bilateral trade deal.⁷⁷¹ Moreover, on the eve of the Helsinki summit with Vladimir Putin and the contentious July 2018 NATO summit, when CBS News reporter Jeff Glor asked the president to identify America's "biggest foe globally right now", the response was, to say the very least, as unexpected as it was disconcerting. In the midst of an increasingly bitter trade dispute with the European Union, the president retorted that "I think we have a lot of foes. I think the European Union is a foe, what they do to us in trade. Now you wouldn't think of the European Union but they're a foe"⁷⁷². Pressed for clarification, the president was quick to note that even through the EU was a "foe" in trade "that doesn't mean they are bad ... it means that they are competitive" and further claimed that, "in a trade sense, they've really taken advantage of us and many of those countries are in NATO and they weren't paying their bills and, you know, as an example a big problem with Germany"⁷⁷³.

The president's singling out of Germany was motivated by Nord Stream2, an ambitious pipeline project linking Germany and Russia partially financed and constructed by European companies. Nord Stream2 was particularly objectionable to the White House because Berlin was "going to be paying Russia billions and billions of dollars a year for energy and I say that's not good, that's not fair. You're supposed to be fighting for someone and then that someone gives billions of dollars to the one you're, you know, guarding against"⁷⁷⁴. These reservations led him to question whether or not the Germans were "waving a white flag"⁷⁷⁵. True, America's traditional adversaries did not go unmentioned by the president since he recognized that Russia was a "foe in certain respects" and China was "a foe economically, certainly they are a foe"⁷⁷⁶. Still, Trump's views on trade exacerbated an already tense transatlantic relationship.

The administration could not but acknowledge Europe's centrality for US prosperity and geopolitical might. After all, the transatlantic economy accounted for virtually half of total global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), over half of the world's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and millions of American jobs. Apparently, Trump was departing from

771 See, Kim Willsher, "Quit the EU for better trade deal, Trump reportedly told Macron", *The Guardian*, June 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/29/quit-eu-bilateral-trade-deal-trump-told-macron-us-france-terms>.

772 See, "I think the European Union is a foe," Trump says ahead of Putin meeting in Helsinki", *CBS News*, *Face the Nation*, July 15, 2018, op. cit.

773 Ibid.

774 Ibid.

775 Ibid.

776 Ibid.

the conventional view positing that an interlocking transatlantic economy sustaining growth, employment and exceptional living standards on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite the obvious advantages accrued from decades of trade and investment between the two sides, the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) came to a brusque end on 15 April 2019, when the European Council declared the ongoing talks were “obsolete and no longer relevant”, thus determining that it would be “appropriate to pursue with the United States a more limited agreement covering the elimination of tariffs on industrial products only, and excluding agricultural products”⁷⁷⁷. Given that a successful accord would have permitted the allies to outline new global rules and standards for the digital economy, the failure of the TTIP represented more than a lack of agreement on trade liberalization. It meant that both sides were strategically weakened by an outcome rooted in transatlantic political and trade tensions marring much of Donald Trump’s presidency.

As Donald Trump settled into the White House, not a small number of his critics expected him to discard the heterodox campaign rhetoric and policy proposals. Once the politically inexperienced president completed his learning curve, “normality” would surely be restituted. Such hopes did not come to pass as Trump, true to himself and his campaign promises, lost no time in advancing with his nationalist political agenda. In his first days in office, he signed executive orders confirming the promised “Muslim travel ban” and abandoned the TPP negotiations. Neither was his rhetoric on China toned down. In fact, within days of being elected, Trump accepted a congratulatory telephone call from Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan’s president, symbolically treating her as a head of state rather than as the head of a “Chinese province”⁷⁷⁸. It was the first time since the 1979 severing of relations between the US and the Republic of China that an American president – in this case, a president-elect – spoke directly with his Taiwanese counterpart. It was a signal whose symbolism Beijing could ill afford to ignore because, during the

777 See, Council of the European Union, “Legislative Acts and Other Instruments”, Brussels, April 9, 2019, p. 2, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/39180/st06052-en19.pdf>. The Obama Administration notified Congress on its intention to enter into TTIP negotiations on March 20, 2013. The Office of the US Trade Representative and the European Commission began negotiations in July 2013. Negotiations were to be concluded in two years. See, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “On the Benefits of Liberalising Product Markets and Reducing Barriers to International Trade and Investment: The Case of the United States and European Union”, OECD Economics Department Working Papers, *Working Paper No. 432*, May 26, 2005, available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/770775252885.pdf?expires=1618304928&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=D95BC3F499A2F2C09A8DA890EB47509C>; Alasdair R. Young, “Not your parents’ trade politics: the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Negotiations”, *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2016, pp. 345-378; Ferdi De Ville and Gabriel Siles-Brügge, “Why TTIP is a game-changer and its critics have a point”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 24, No. 10, 2017, pp. 1491-1505; and Eric Hayes, “TTIP: transatlantic free trade at last?”, *Global Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2015, pp. 113-120.

778 See, Mark Landler and David E. Sanger, “Trump Speaks With Taiwan’s Leader, an Affront to China”, *The New York Times*, December 2, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/02/us/politics/trump-speaks-with-taiwans-leader-a-possible-affront-to-china.html>.

campaign season, in an interview granted to *Fox News*, Trump stated that he failed to understand the necessity of maintaining a “one China” policy unless it was possible to negotiate other issues, including commercial ones, with the Beijing government.⁷⁷⁹ By questioning the “one China policy” Trump made a significant break with the foreign policy consensus.

Promoting America’s withdrawal from the Paris Treaty and the Iran nuclear deal, he carried out both. Since those agreements had been presented as examples Europe’s “soft power” in international affairs, the White House shattered the assumption that continental diplomacy could provide leadership in select global issues. Relations with America’s European allies were actually fraying even before Trump was elected in November 2016. Wary of US disengagement from European affairs, and underscoring the growing uncertainty over the future of the transatlantic relationship, EU elites began to echo French demands for greater “strategic autonomy” so as to lessen dependence on Washington. As the debate over transatlantic relations raged, the danger stemming from American unreliability meant that Europeans would at some point seek to balance their strategic and economic interests between the United States, Russia, and China. Such a turn would obviously be warmly greeted by Russia and China, countries extremely adroit at exploiting cleavages between the allies and filling strategic voids when these emerged. Yet, in the final analysis, Europe’s dependence on US security guarantees and the magnitude of transatlantic trade meant that Europe, if obliged to choose between the US and its rivals, could not but opt for the United States. This fundamental reality was openly acknowledged by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell when he declared that “the U.S. is and will remain a key partner and ally”⁷⁸⁰. But if Europe was unable to decouple from the United States, neither was the latter able to decouple from the former. Mutual dependence, albeit with very asymmetrical costs, delimited the scope for conflict between the parts.

American aid and trade proved indispensable for Europe’s post-1945 recovery. During the Cold War, Euro-American cooperation fomented trade liberalization and ensured the stability of international financial markets. Europe’s integration project was consolidated, transatlantic political and economic ties were strengthened and periodic divergences were surmounted. A robust transatlantic economy had emerged that, so it was thought before Trump’s swearing in as president, proved beneficial to all sides. Largely viewing the EU through a zero-sum prism, the new president made known his

779 See, Mark Lander, “Trump Suggests Using Bedrock China Policy as Bargaining Chip”, *The New York Times*, December 11, 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/11/us/politics/trump-taiwan-one-china.html?searchResultPosition=1>. Soon after, following a telephone conversation with president Xi Jinping, President Trump announced that, after all, he would abide by the “one China” policy. See, Mark Landler e Michael Forsythe, “Trump Tells Xi Jinping U.S. Will Honor ‘One China’ Policy”, *The New York Times*, February 9, 2017, consulted at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/world/asia/donald-trump-china-xi-jinping-letter.html>.

780 See, Jacopo Barigazzi, “Borrell urges EU to be foreign policy ‘player, not the playground’”, *Politico*, December 9, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/on-foreign-policy-josep-borrell-urges-eu-to-be-a-player-not-the-playground-balkans/>.

displeasure with existing trade arrangements and expressed a preference for bilateral trade deals better serving US interests. Concerned by the Trump Administration's trade policies, Europeans feared both the White House's indifference to EU cohesion and the consequences of steel, aluminum and auto tariffs. For its part, Washington understood that the EU's failure to understand the extent of the threat posed by Iran and was dismayed that EU governments did not ban the use of Huawei telecommunications equipment.

As the EU celebrated free trade accords with Canada, Japan and other nations, trade negotiations with the United States were at a virtual impasse. The Trump administration insistently accused the EU, and Germany in particular, of "unfair" trade practices producing a sizable US trade deficit with the EU.⁷⁸¹ Trump's policies met considerable resistance from European leaders. For instance, Emmanuel Macron announced that "I think Mr. Trump is wrong to advocate protectionism for his own economy. The United States is one of the most open economies in the world"⁷⁸². Reacting to Trump's threat to impose a border tax on German automobiles, Macron hinted that Europe, in accordance with WTO rules, could retaliate by raising tariffs on US exports and warned that "I don't want to go down that path, but we would respond if the wrong choices were made"⁷⁸³. The lines were drawn as Europeans saw in Trump's position an assault on the rules-based trading system and a return to protectionism. Not unexpectedly, negotiations proved insufficient to resolve the impasse over tariffs and, more critically, trust in US trade policy waned as the European Union confronted the messy repercussions stemming from the Brexit referendum vote. A window of opportunity to hammer out a trade liberalization agreement improving the competitiveness of US and EU businesses, allowing both to shape global "rules" on new trade issues and address China's trade practices, had closed.

In June 2018, the White House moved from threats to action as the president announced Section 232 tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum imports. The worst was avoided since the EU managed to obtain a temporary exemption

781 The Department of the Treasury's 2020 Report to Congress stated that: "Germany's current account surplus declined modestly in the first half of 2019, but remains the largest in the world in nominal dollar terms at \$283 billion over the four quarters through June 2019. Meanwhile, Germany's bilateral goods trade surplus with the United States has been broadly stable and sits at \$67 billion over the four quarters through June 2019. The persistence of the massive current account surplus and the large bilateral trade imbalance with the United States has resulted from lackluster demand growth in Germany and an undervalued real effective exchange rate. The considerable moderation in Germany's growth in 2018 and the contraction in Germany's GDP in the second quarter of 2019 underscores the urgent need for Germany to cut elevated labor and value-added taxes, restore stronger purchasing power to German households, and undertake reforms to unleash robust domestic investment and consumption. This would help underpin domestically driven growth and reduce large external imbalances". See, The Department of the Treasury, "Report to Congress. Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States", January 2020, p. 6, available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/20200113-Jan-2020-FX-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

782 See, "French presidential candidate Macron criticizes Trump's policies", *Reuters*, March 2, 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/cnews-us-france-trump-macron-idCAKBN1691J5>.

783 Ibid.

from the American side. Brussels, however, failed to secure a permanent tariff exemption in exchange for alternative quota arrangements. Tariffs therefore went into effect and, in response, the EU retaliated against Harley-Davidson motorcycles and other iconic American products, raising tariffs anywhere between 10 percent to 25 percent on \$2.8 billion worth of US exports.⁷⁸⁴ Given the role of the allies in preserving transatlantic security, Europeans considered the imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on “national security grounds” plainly unjustified⁷⁸⁵. A clash of visions was underway because Trump had securitized trade; that is, he made trade a matter of national security. In contradistinction, for Europeans, trade was a vehicle for achieving peace and prosperity as demonstrated by their integration experience.

But the main preoccupation was the eventual use of tariffs to target the European automotive sector. Protecting the US auto industry was particularly incensing for Europeans because the sector, unlike American steel, was not undergoing a crisis. As the tit-for-tat escalated, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström and Jean-Claude Juncker flew to Washington to meet president Trump and reach an agreement precluding further damage to the transatlantic relationship. Following their 25 July 2018 White House meeting, the parts issued a Joint Statement whose aim was to “to launch a new phase in the relationship between the United States and the European Union – a phase of close friendship, of strong trade relations in which both of us will win, of working better together for global security and prosperity, and of fighting jointly against terrorism”⁷⁸⁶. The parts communicated their intention to resolve the steel and aluminum tariff and retaliatory tariffs issues, pledged to work toward “zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers” and “zero subsidies on non-auto industrial goods”⁷⁸⁷. A commitment was also made to “reduce barriers and increase trade in services, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medical products, as well as soybeans”⁷⁸⁸. Moreover, both sides agreed to “strengthen our strategic cooperation with respect to energy”, essentially by having the European Union import more liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States.⁷⁸⁹ No less importantly, a pledge was made “to launch a close dialogue on standards in order to ease trade, reduce bureaucratic obstacles, and slash costs”⁷⁹⁰. Finally, but not least important, action was promised “to protect American and European companies better from unfair global trade

784 See, European Commission, “EU adopts rebalancing measures in reaction to US Steel and aluminum tariffs”, Brussels, June 20, 2018, available at: <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1868>; and Bob Tita, “Harley-Davidson to Shift Production Overseas to Offset EU Tariffs”, *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/harley-davidson-to-shift-production-overseas-to-offset-eu-tariffs-1529927301>.

785 See, Jamie Dettmer, “Europe Responds Swiftly to US Tariffs, Threatens Retaliation”, *VOA/Voice of America*, May 31, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.voanews.com/europe/europe-responds-swiftly-us-tariffs-threatens-retaliation>.

786 See, European Commission, “Joint EU-US Statement Following President Juncker’s Visit to the White House”, June 25, 2018, consulted at: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1898>.

787 Ibid.

788 Ibid.

789 Ibid.

790 Ibid.

practices” and to build a coalition “to reform the WTO and to address unfair trading practices, including intellectual property theft, forced technology transfer, industrial subsidies, distortions created by state owned enterprises, and overcapacity”⁷⁹¹. Trump’s willingness to work within the framework of a multilateral organization signaled China that the United States and Europe were determined to counter Beijing’s aggressive trade tactics. To operationalize these commitments, an Executive Working Group of advisors was set up to advance the Joint Statement agenda.

Accompanying Junker to the White House was EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström whose 9 July 2028 speech, delivered days before departing for Washington, constituted a seminal statement on European trade policy.⁷⁹² Malmström began from the premise that “liberal Europe was only possible with the help of the United States,” a view “once widely known”, but increasingly endangered because “the generation who built the world as we know it today are dying out”⁷⁹³. This appeal to a fading Euro-European collective memory resting on shared hardship was reinforced by the acknowledgement that the relationship was rooted in “two values – one idealistic, and the other realistic”⁷⁹⁴. Underscoring “common universal values” such as freedom and democracy, the Commissioner then proceeded to widen the notion of shared values so as to encompass an “open trade and a rules-based world order”⁷⁹⁵. Malmström highlighted the principle that “power speaks”; that is, values and an appreciation of the realities of power had always orientated the transatlantic relationship.⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, American power provided the cement for the consolidation of shared political values as “Western Europe stood as a bulwark against Communism” during the Cold War and, after 1991, “anchored democracy as the obvious choice for those emerging from behind the Iron Curtain”⁷⁹⁷.

Delivered on the 70th anniversary of the launching of the Marshall Plan, the speech looked to the future by suggesting that “the US and the EU are powerful enough to sustain the liberal world order, along with our partners”⁷⁹⁸. In contrast, a Euro-American divorce would undeniably weaken both sides. Pointing out the stakes, Malmström, indirectly referencing Trump, noted that “this stability between us has been called into question. There has been tough rhetoric linking trade and security – a link that will only serve to make us *both* poorer and weaker”⁷⁹⁹. She was also critical of virtually all trade decisions taken by the administration, including the blocking of appointments to the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism, steel and aluminum tariffs on national security grounds, unilateral trade measures against China and, not least important, “using increasingly aggressive

791 Ibid.

792 Ibid.

793 Ibid.

794 *ibid.*

795 Ibid.

796 Ibid.

797 Ibid.

798 Ibid.

799 Ibid.

rhetoric at allies⁸⁰⁰. The net result of these policies was a disruption of alliances rather than their consolidation. The inference was that Donald Trump was effectively undercutting decades of US foreign policy. Confronted with this new situation, the EU “had no choice but to respond” by opening a WTO case challenging Trump’s actions in conformity with international rules.⁸⁰¹ At the same time, the list of American goods susceptible to balancing tariffs in accordance with WTO rules would mostly come into force three years later. By then, so it was hoped, the conflict would be over and the measures would prove unnecessary. Lastly, to prevent distortions to the EU market generated by steel and aluminum redirected from the US, the Commissioner promised to apply “safeguards to prevent any excess steel from disrupting our markets”⁸⁰².

Still, Malmström was “seriously concerned about the new US investigation on cars, also under Section 232, pointing to national security”⁸⁰³. This process was understood as an escalation generating potentially disastrous consequences since the volume of automotive trade was incomparably higher than steel and aluminum; indeed, according to the Trade Commissioner, “EU car and car part exports to the US are worth more than 50 billion euros, every year”⁸⁰⁴. American action targeting this sector was particularly unacceptable because – contrary to steel and aluminum – US auto “exports have been rising consistently over the last decade, and so has foreign investment in US car manufacturing – including from EU companies”⁸⁰⁵. From Europe’s prism, no possible justification was to be found for applying tariffs on national security or, for that matter, any other grounds.

Irrespective of conjunctural problems, Cecilia Malmström was convinced of the continued usefulness of the transatlantic relationship and the partnership’s capacity to shape the global order. She agreed that “the international trading system” faced serious problems, but insisted that American measures on steel and aluminum would not solve overcapacity in China, nor would the use of the “so-called Section 301 – the measures the US has taken against China on forced technology transfers. Trying to force the hand of China with illegal actions will not work, and the US might end up breaking the multilateral system. Our view is that another approach is needed”⁸⁰⁶. That other approach resided in the “modernization” of the WTO by “reviving” the Dispute Settlement Mechanism, “updating” the rules and resolving “the crisis in the Appellate body”⁸⁰⁷. Since these were the exact same issues hindering US cooperation with the WTO, she counseled Washington to “stop blocking the appointment of judges” and join the EU in reforming the Appellate body.⁸⁰⁸

800 Ibid.

801 Ibid.

802 Ibid.

803 Ibid.

804 Ibid.

805 Ibid.

806 Ibid.

807 Ibid.

808 Ibid.

Following from the commitments stipulated by the Joint Statement, on 16 October 2018, under Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), the Trump administration notified Congress of new trade negotiations with the EU meant to establish a “fairer, more balanced” relationship, a move coming after Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership stalled after 15 rounds.⁸⁰⁹ To avoid pitfalls of wide-ranging talks, the EU proposed limited negotiations to address tariffs and nontariff barriers for goods, services, agriculture, government procurement, intellectual property rights, investment as well as a host of questions arising from the specificity of digital trade. For its part, the European Commission was bent on eliminating tariffs on industrial products – excluding agriculture – and revising regulatory nontariff barriers making it easier for companies to meet EU and US technical requirements.

Even though the two sides agreed in the Joint Statement not to escalate tariffs while negotiations were active and to examine the Section 232 steel and aluminum tariffs, President Trump continued to threaten the EU with the imposition of additional tariffs. Agriculture was particularly worrisome because many in Congress, responding to domestic constituencies, opposed the exclusion of agricultural goods from the negotiations. Indeed, the Americans viewed the talks as an opportunity to address barriers to European agricultural markets. Then, on May 17, 2019, President Trump announced that the US Trade Representative’s Section 232 investigation had concluded that imports of motor vehicles and parts was prejudicial to US national security.⁸¹⁰ This was a critical step because, in her speech, Malmström had made it clear that such a move could lead to a transatlantic trade war. All of these tensions came to the surface at the 2019 Munich Security Conference, when Angela Merkel asserted that “If we’re serious about the transatlantic partnership, it’s not very easy for me as German chancellor to read... that the American Department of Commerce apparently considers German and European cars to be a threat to the national security of the United States of America”⁸¹¹.

Although Trump had repeatedly threatened to impose tariffs on auto imports, he nonetheless ordered the US Trade Representative to negotiate agreements with the EU and Japan. Following the World Economic Forum, in January 2020, President Trump said that he expected to negotiate a trade agreement with the EU before the November US elections. Similarly, European Commission president von der Leyen said the EU was “expecting in a few weeks” to have an agreement with the United States covering trade,

809 See, Office of the United States Trade Representative, “Trump Administration Announces Intent to Negotiate Trade Agreements with Japan, the European Union and the United Kingdom”, October 16, 2018, available at: <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2018/october/trump-administration-announces>

810 See, Hans von der Burchard and Adam Behsudi, “The great transatlantic trade charade”, *Politico*, February 4, 2019, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-great-transatlantic-trade-charade-european-union-us-donald-trump-tariffs-cars/>.

811 See, The Federal Government, “Speech by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel on 16 February 2019 at the 55th Munich Security Conference”, February 16, 2019, available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/speech-by-federal-chancellor-dr-angela-merkel-on-16-february-2019-at-the-55th-munich-security-conference-1582318>.

technology, and energy.⁸¹² Europeans had attempted to advance the talks by pledging a “mini-package” of regulatory issues to expand opportunities for US agricultural exports. However, some U.S. priorities, including addressing EU prohibitions on the use of beef growth hormones and pathogen treatments on poultry, remained politically sensitive for the Europeans. In this context, the outbreak of the pandemic became the overarching priority on both sides of the Atlantic, invariably relegating trade to the backburner. In early 2020, following discussions with Ursula von der Leyen at Davos, the president threatened “very high tariffs on their cars and other things that come into our country”, adding that Europe was “going to make a deal, because they have to. They have to. They have no choice”⁸¹³. In response, the EU made it known that it would abort negotiations if the United States applied new Section 232 tariffs on other trade restrictions.

Although the United States had a deficit in merchandise and services trade with the EU, Europe maintained that the trade relationship was actually fair because of the American surplus in services, the investment relationship, and the higher profits earned by US companies operating in the EU. Trade was not only fair, it actually benefitted both sides. The argument proved unconvincing, particularly after France announced a forthcoming 3% digital services tax (DST) expected to generate more than €750 million globally and over €25 million in France alone.⁸¹⁴ Quite predictably, a USTR Section 301 investigation found DST discriminatory against mammoth US digital companies such as Amazon, Google and Facebook. Washington concluded that international tax policy principles would be violated by the DST and warned other European countries contemplating a similar tax that they would be subject to additional US tariffs. Reacting in December 2019, the US Trade Representative composed a list of French products – including wines and cheeses – eligible for additional tariffs of up to 100 percent.⁸¹⁵ The following month, Paris suspended the DST proposal as the sides initiated multilateral talks within the framework of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

812 See, Josh Wingrove, Jenny Leonard and William Horobin, “Trump Cranks Up Pressure on Europe, Renewing Tariff Threat”, *Bloomberg*, January 22, 2020, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-22/trump-cranks-up-pressure-on-europe-renewing-car-tariff-threat>.

813 See, “President Donald Trump sits down with CNBC’s Joe Kernen at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland”, *CNBC*, January 22, 2019, available at: <https://www.cnb.com/2020/01/22/cnbc-transcript-president-donald-trump-sits-down-with-cnbc-joe-kernen-at-the-world-economic-forum-in-davos-switzerland.html>.

814 See, United States Trade Representative, “Section 301 Investigation: Report on France’s Digital Services Tax”, December 2, 2019, p. 22, accessed at, https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/Report_On_France%27s_Digital_Services_Tax.pdf. Also, Hamza Ali, “France Takes a Step Closer to Making 3 Percent Digital Tax Law,” *Bloomberg*, Apr. 10, 2019, available at: <https://news.bloombergtax.com/pharma-and-life-sciences/france-takes-a-step-closer-to-making-3-percent-digital-tax-law?context=article-related>; and Isabel Gottlieb, “France Defends Digital Tax Effort, Promises to Work With U.S.,” *Bloomberg*, April 8, 2019, consulted at: <https://news.bloombergtax.com/pharma-and-life-sciences/france-defends-digital-tax-effort-promises-to-work-with-u-s?context=article-related>.

815 See, United States Trade Representative, “Conclusion of USTR’s Investigation Under Section 301 into France’s Digital Services Tax”, December 2, 2019, available at: <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2019/december/conclusion-ustr-s-investigation>.

5.4. The Narcissism of Difference

In addition to bilateral trade issues, Americans were increasingly concerned over the direction of Europe's relations with China. The 2017 *National Security Strategy* observed that "China is gaining a strategic foothold in Europe by expanding its unfair trade practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies, and infrastructure"⁸¹⁶. White House concerns were motivated by substantial investments made by Beijing in European ports, technology as well as by rife intellectual property theft and illicit data collection.⁸¹⁷ All of this raised the specter of Beijing's economic influence translating into leverage over the more vulnerable allied countries still recovering from the Eurocrisis. Conceivably, albeit in extreme cases, governments could even align their foreign policies with Beijing. More realistically, since European Union foreign policy required consensus and, in some cases, unanimity, countries susceptible to Chinese economic penetration could bring pressure on national capitals to block common stances critical of Beijing on trade and human rights issues.⁸¹⁸

Washington was particularly distressed over the eventuality of Huawei being awarded contracts for Europe's fifth generation (5G) wireless networks⁸¹⁹. Since the United States feared that its national security could be compromised by such participation, the White House made it crystalline clear that such a choice was cause for interrupting intelligence sharing. A considerable success occurred in January 2020, when the United Kingdom decided for to block Huawei from supplying "sensitive" parts of the "core" network and announced that all company equipment was to be removed from 5G networks by 2027.⁸²⁰ Concurrent with this decision, in January 2020, EU member states, the European Commission, and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity – ENISA – released a 5G security "toolbox" outlining the general guidelines for

816 See, The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, p. 47.

817 For an analysis of some of these issues, see, Jonathan Holslag, *The Silk Road Trap: How China's Trade Ambitions Challenge Europe*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.

818 See, Max Roger Taylor, "Inside the EU–China Human Rights Dialogue: assessing the practical delivery of the EU's normative power in a hostile environment", *Journal of European Integration*, 2020, pp. 1-16, consulted at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07036337.2020.1854245>.

819 See, Carisa Nietzsche and Martijn Rasser, "Washington's Anti-Huawei Tactics Need a Reboot in Europe", *Foreign Policy*, April 30, 2020, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/30/huawei-5g-europe-united-states-china/>; and see, Ellen Nakashima, "U.S. pushes hard for a ban on Huawei in Europe, but the firm's 5G prices are nearly irresistible", *The Washington Post*, May 29, 2019, accessed at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/for-huawei-the-5g-play-is-in-europe-and-the-us-is-pushing-hard-for-a-ban-there/2019/05/28/582a8ff6-78d4-11e9-b7ae-390de4259661_story.html.

820 For the official statement, see, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, "Huawei to be removed from UK 5G networks by 2027", Press Release, July 14, 2020, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/huawei-to-be-removed-from-uk-5g-networks-by-2027?utm_source=d4c962f4-e125-4300-a80f-101eeca801d9&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate; and Laurens Cerulus and Emilio Casalicchio, "Boris Johnson follows Washington's lead on Huawei", *Politico*, July 14, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-to-cut-huawei-from-5g-rollout/>.

5G modernization.⁸²¹ States pledged to enhance security requirements for mobile operators and high-risk suppliers were to be avoided or severely restricted. Dependency on a single supplier was discouraged and, no less relevant, supply chains were to be diversified precisely to avoid such dependencies. Although not constituting an outright ban on Huawei, the toolbox effectively signaled a determination to limit the company's penetration the European Union networks.

Huawei and other leading Chinese telecommunications companies were not the sole concern for American policymakers wary of Beijing's penetration in Europe. Equally distressing was Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a project for expanding Chinese geopolitical influence through investment and infrastructure across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.⁸²² By the beginning of 2020, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, and various Central and Eastern European states had agreed to either participate in BRI or host projects falling under its umbrella. As the US pressured for a more assertive approach to China, a step in that hardening of positions was taken in March 2019, when the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy released a joint position paper characterizing China as an "economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models

821 See, European Commission, "Cybersecurity of 5G networks – EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures", January 23, 2020, available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/cybersecurity-5g-networks-eu-toolbox-risk-mitigating-measures>.

822 The Silk Road Economic Belt concept was presented in September 2013, in a speech delivered by Xi Jinping at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan, In October 2013, Xi proposed a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to promote maritime cooperation during his speech to the Indonesian parliament. Xi also proposed establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to finance infrastructure construction, promote regional interconnectivity and economic integration. For the full text of the speeches outlining the proposal made in Kazakhstan, see, Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries", September 7, 2013, available at: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjthshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtm. For the proposal made in Indonesia, see, "Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament", Jakarta, Indonesia, October 2, 2013, available at: https://reconasia-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/filer_public/88/fe/88fe8107-15d7-4b4c-8a59-0feb13c213e1/speech_by_chinese_president_xi_jinping_to_indonesian_parliament.pdf. A third speech, delivered at the official 2017 opening of the Belt and Road Forum is also relevant. See, President of the People's Republic of China, "Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 14 May 2017, available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm. For a discussion on BRI, see, *inter alia*, Peter Frankopan. *The New Silk Roads: The Present and Future of the World*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018; Bruno Maçães. *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order*. London: Hurst & Company, 2018; Tom Miller. *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road*. London: Zed Books, 2019; Jonathan Holslag. *The Silk Road Trap: How China's Trade Ambitions Challenge Europe*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019; and Daniel Drache, A. T. Kingsmith and Duan Qi. *One Road, Many Dreams: China's Bold Plan to Remake the Global Economy*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

of governance”⁸²³. The following month, the EU announced a new, more demanding framework for screening foreign investment; in effect a means of curtailing Chinese investment in Europe. Albeit at a glacial pace, and even though states sought to avoid having to choose between the US and China, transatlantic positions on China gradually began to converge during the Trump presidency.

Iran was an altogether different matter since allied policy toward Iran was inseparable from efforts to defeat the Islamic State. European forces were deployed to the region in 2014 to assist and train Kurdish combatants. In late 2018 Trump announced the withdrawal of all 2,000 US troops fighting the Islamic State in Syria, but, in early 2019, decided instead to remove 1,000 troops. To offset the reductions, Washington sought European contributions to prevent the resurgence of the Islamic State and protect the Kurds. Then, in October 2019, European allies were dismayed by the president’s unilateral withdrawal of forces from northern Syria prior to Turkey’s assault on the Syrian Democratic Forces. Taken following a telephone conversation with Erdogan, Trump’s decision was interpreted as a green light for Ankara to launch its operation.⁸²⁴ And while president Trump claimed that the United States had not endorsed the operation, the Europeans saw the American withdrawal as a betrayal of their Kurdish partners and, as important, an opening for the resurgence of the Islamic State in the region.

European anxiety about the reliability and credibility of the United States as a foreign policy partner was heightened by president Trump’s desire to withdraw US forces from Syria without prior coordination with the allies. Although Europeans were contributing to NATO’s training and advisory mission in Iraq and the anti-Islamic State efforts in Iraq and Syria, America’s European allies also did not receive advanced warning of the January 2, 2020, strike killing General Qasem Soleimani.⁸²⁵ Nonetheless, four days later, Merkel, Macron and Boris Johnson emitted a joint statement condemning Iran’s “negative role” in the region as well as the attacks on coalition forces in Iraq by Iranian-backed militias.⁸²⁶ Critically, the statement called upon Iran to “reverse all measures inconsistent with the JCPOA”, expressed concern about security and stability in Iraq and emphasized

823 See, European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, EU-China – A strategic outlook”, March 12, 2019, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

824 See, Matthew Lee and Susannah George, “Trump call with Turkish leader led to US pullout from Syria”, *Associated Press*, December 21, 2018, consulted at: <https://apnews.com/article/ec2ed217357048ff998225a31534df12>

825 See, Loveday Morris and Michael Birnbaum, “U.S. killing of Iran’s top commander unnerves allies, dims hopes Iran nuclear deal can be saved”, *The Washington Post*, January 3, 2020, accessed at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-killing-of-irans-top-commander-rattles-european-allies/2020/01/03/0012822e-2e19-11ea-bffe-020c88b3f120_story.html; and Jim Sciutto. *The Madman Theory: Trump Takes on the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020, pp. 232-240.

826 See, Jason Collie, “Iran crisis: Boris Johnson, Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron appeal for all sides to show restraint after killing of General Qasem Soleimani”, *Evening Standard*, January 6, 2020, available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/iran-us-qassem-soleimani-merkel-macron-johnson-a4326956.html>.

the importance of combating the Islamic State.⁸²⁷ These same points were reiterated by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg.⁸²⁸ Since these reasons had reportedly precipitated the strike on Soleimani, the statement was understood as a declaration of support for Washington.

Still, the two sides remained far apart on the Iranian nuclear issue. Having collaborated with the Obama Administration in negotiating the 2015 JCPOA, European diplomacy viewed the deal as an important foreign policy achievement. To force Iran to the negotiating table, the EU, between 2010 and 2012, had applied a host of sanctions, including a full embargo on the purchase of Iranian oil. With this move, European and American positions converged, thus effectively compelling Tehran to enter into the talks that ultimately produced the JCPOA. After consummating his campaign promise to withdraw from the nuclear deal, Trump delineated a maximum pressure campaign against Iran. Allies were pressed to abandon the JCPOA and define a robust sanctions regime. Trump justified his decision by claiming that “this was a horrible, one-sided deal that should have never ever been made. It didn’t bring calm, it didn’t bring peace and it never will”⁸²⁹. The president acknowledged that Iran’s leaders would likely refuse to negotiate a new deal, but did not definitively exclude future discussions. In fact, he was quite certain that “they’re going to want to make a new and lasting deal”⁸³⁰. Unlike Washington, Brussels was of the opinion that issues such as Iranian support for terrorism were best addressed outside of the JCPOA framework.

President Trump’s unilateral decision to abandon the JCPOA could, so it was believed, destabilize the region. Days before, Angela Merkel had joined Emmanuel Macron and Theresa May in formally declaring that the JCPOA “remains the binding international legal framework for the resolution of the dispute about the Iranian nuclear programme” and, as a corollary, the United States was urged to “ensure that the structures of the JCPOA can remain intact, and to avoid taking action which obstructs its full implementation by all other parties to the deal”⁸³¹. As for the Islamic Republic, it too should continue to honor the agreement to ensure future sanctions relief. In conclusion, the trio expressed its willingness to reach out to Iranians and Americans “to seek a positive way forward”⁸³². Days later, and again voicing their misgivings, Merkel claimed that the US decision “undermines trust in the international order”, adding that it was wrong to unilaterally discard an accord “unanimously approved by the UN Security

827 Ibid.

828 See, Patrick Wintour and Jennifer Rankin, “Nato chief holds back from endorsing US killing of Soleimani”, *The Guardian*, January 6, 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/06/nato-chief-holds-back-from-endorsing-us-killing-of-suleimani>.

829 See, Brett Samuels, “European nations say they are staying in Iran deal”, *The Hill*, May 8, 2018, accessed at: <https://thehill.com/policy/international/386746-european-leaders-express-concern-over-trumps-decision-on-iran-deal>

830 Ibid.

831 Ibid. See, also, Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne*, pp. 127-132.

832 Ibid.

Council”⁸³³. Less lofty was the EU’s conviction that the re-imposition of US sanctions on Iran threatened considerable European business interests reeling from the sanctions.

Despite these and other differences with the White House, on January 14, 2020 the E3 charged Iran with lack of compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal, thus triggering the dispute resolution mechanism. The trio claimed to have acted “in good faith with the overarching objective of preserving the JCPOA” through “constructive diplomatic dialogue”, but clarified that US “maximum pressure” campaigns were unacceptable.⁸³⁴ For all intents and purposes, the decision sought to diminish tensions and prevent the full collapse of the JCPOA. But this hardening of positions was also a response to the administration’s threat – denounced as “extortion” and “mafia-like” tactics – to impose a 25 percent tariff on European automobiles unless the E3 activated the dispute resolution mechanism.⁸³⁵

Transatlantic friction also stemmed from Trump’s abandonment of the 2015 Paris Treaty. The issue was particularly thorny since the EU had assisted Barack Obama with negotiating the agreement and because climate change was a key issue in the domestic politics of Germany, France and a number of other European nations. After expending political capital in negotiating the accord, and unwilling to sacrifice the support of voters mobilized by green issues, European governments had little or no political margin to back away from their endorsement of the Paris Treaty. Trump’s reasons for withdrawing from the agreement, essentially that it was prejudicial to US businesses and workers, were, predictably, not well-received in Europe. Angela Merkel was particularly assertive, characterizing the decision as “very regrettable” and, taking an indirect jab at Trump, added that “(W)e know climate change isn’t a matter of faith. It’s a fact”⁸³⁶. The EU reiterated its intention to assume a leading role in climate change and, in 2019, the European Commission proposed a continental Green Deal and pledged that no future free trade agreement would be concluded with countries that were not a party to the

833 See, Avery Anapol, “Merkel rips Trump for leaving Iran deal: Move ‘undermines trust in the international order’”, *The Hill*, May 11, 2018, available at: <https://thehill.com/policy/international/387297-merkel-rips-trump-pulling-out-of-iran-deal-it-undermines-trust-in-the>.

834 See, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, E3 foreign ministers’ statement on the JCPOA”, January 14, 2020, accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-foreign-ministers-statement-on-the-jcpoa-14-january-2020>; and Claire Mills, “What now for the Iran nuclear deal?”, *House of Commons Library Briefing Paper*, Number 8792, January 15, 2020.

835 See, John Hudson and Souas Mekhennet, “Days before Europeans warned Iran of nuclear deal violations, Trump secretly threatened to impose 25% tariff on European autos if they didn’t”, *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2020, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/days-before-europeans-warned-iran-of-nuclear-deal-violations-trump-secretly-threatened-to-impose-25percent-tariff-on-european-autos-if-they-didnt/2020/01/15/0a3ea8ce-37a9-11ea-a01d-b7cc8ec1a85d_story.html.

836 See, “Merkel calls out Trump over Paris accord, renews commitment to fight climates change”, *NBC News*, June 19, 2018, available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/merkel-calls-out-trump-over-paris-accord-renews-commitment-fight-n884631>.

Treaty.⁸³⁷ The announcement effectively established a red line for ongoing, contentious US-EU trade talks. Yet, uncertainty remained over Germany's ability to meet GHG targets and, at the same time, a number of businesses and governments resisted the setting of more ambitious EU climate goals. For instance, Poland, reliant on coal, remained wary of a GHG-neutral EU by 2050 unless greater EU financial assistance was made available to offset the costs to the national economy. At any rate, the impasse between the two sides of the Atlantic was installed for the remainder of the Trump presidency.

837 See, Karl Mathiesen, "EU says no new trade deals with countries not in Paris Agreement", *Climate Home News*, February 2, 2018, available at: <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2018/02/02/eu-difficult-imagine-trade-deals-countries-not-paris-agreement/>.

Conclusion: The Politics of Misunderstanding

All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

American presidential elections usually generate a considerable amount of attention throughout the world. Rather than constituting exceptions to this general rule, the highly unconventional 2016 and 2020 presidential contests spawned unprecedented worldwide interest. Ever since the United States was catapulted by World War II to a preeminent role in international affairs, the direction of the country's external policy produced far-ranging consequences in other nations. Resting on a cohesive, enduring bipartisan consensus, American grand strategy remained quite predictable throughout the Cold War decades. The protracted existential threat posed by the Soviet Union meant that the preservation of US military alliances and broad international commitments inherent to a rules-based international order were incompatible with radical policy shifts. Nor were sporadic tensions arising between allies allowed to jeopardize the greater struggle of containing a clear and present Soviet menace. Differences regarding America's domestic agenda were a constant and presidential leadership styles varied, but the general outline of America's foreign policy orientation was delimited by the structural exigencies of the Cold War.

Global leadership of the post-1945 international order did not come to an end with the crumbling of the Soviet Union. In the post-Cold War era, it became imperative to stabilize the former communist states by extending the liberal order to countries seeking a "return to Europe". That this challenge coincided with the consolidation of Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening" facilitated the emergence of a new bipartisan foreign policy consensus in the United States. Taking form during Bill Clinton's mandate, the new consensus – broadly shared by American and European elites alike – committed the US to the enlargement of the liberal order through the promotion of free markets and liberal democracy. Russia was to be encouraged – politically as well as financially – as it transitioned to democracy and markets. China was to be transformed into a responsible stakeholder by its ascension to the World Trade Organization and full assimilation into the world economy. The interdependence generated by global trade and intertwined supply chains would, so the foreign policy consensus maintained, nudge Beijing towards further reform and, ultimately, political democratization. The result would be an increasingly pacific international system and the preservation of the American-led international liberal order.

Post-Cold War triumphalism and the robust economic growth of the 1990s were brusquely interrupted by the al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001. In subsequent years, the United States prosecuted a global war on terror, intervened militarily in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein and became utterly embroiled in the toxic politics of the greater Middle East. Drawn into the Iraqi and Afghan quagmires, the Bush administration saw its credibility undermined and America's rivals emboldened. Then the whirlwind struck

in the form of the 2008 financial crisis that, in the words of Martin Wolf, amounted to “a humiliating end to the unipolar moment”⁸³⁸. Before Trump successfully wrestled the White House from the political establishment, the bipartisan post-Cold war foreign policy consensus touted the impressive outcomes produced by the international order in the preceding decades. After all, major power war had been avoided, economic growth had reduced global poverty and US leadership had preempted the emergence of a peer competitor challenging American primacy.

As Cold War memories receded, leadership fatigue accompanied the waning of America’s power following the 2008 global crisis. Perhaps not unexpectedly, the result was a diminished American interest in advancing traditional goals of global peace and prosperity. Outside of the country, the United States was increasingly seen as unwilling or unable to provide global goods and champion universal values. As America’s capacity to inspire trust and lead by example faltered, Washington faced mounting resentment and pushback. In the United States, the 2008 crisis deepened disenchantment with international economic policies as a significant number of Americans concluded that the globalized liberal order had left in its wake working and middle class wage stagnation, debt burdens and income disparities. The crisis produced a populist reaction incarnated by the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, movements radicalizing both the Democrat and Republican parties. Populist anti-globalist, anti-establishment sentiment crept into foreign policy as concerns over the country’s decline accumulated. By 2016, Donald Trump’s message of reverting America’s decline resonated with a sizable sector of the electorate.

Dissatisfaction with the state of things and cultural angst fed anti-globalization sentiment and made the “America First” agenda appealing to sectors of the population increasingly viewing the world in transactional terms. Under these circumstances, many were predisposed to vote for a candidate advocating a reexamination of the basic tenets of the country’s foreign policy. Institutionalized alliances were to be reevaluated, as was democracy promotion, nation-building, globalization, free trade and the rules-based liberal order. Indeed, fringe Democrat and Republican presidential candidates had long expressed such views during primary campaigns. The most successful of these, Patrick Buchanan, had, in the 1990s, articulated an alternative foreign policy agenda that would be reclaimed by Donald Trump two decades later. With the widespread dissemination of social media and the concomitant erosion of the legacy media, radicalized political discourse amplified the gap between the country’s two main parties and undermined the pillars of the foreign policy consensus. Facing enormous hostility, the country’s political and cultural elites failed to understand how Donald Trump’s populism mobilized an electorate that had concluded that the “swamp” had failed the “common man”.

Donald Trump argued that in a world of rising powers, US obligations abroad were to be refashioned if national decline was to be reverted. The GOP foreign policy

838 See, Martin Wolf, “Seeds of Its Own Destruction,” *Financial Times*, March 8, 2009, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/c6c5bd36-0c11de-b87d-0000779fd2ac>.

establishment maintained its commitment to the Middle East and Afghanistan, to the Atlantic Alliance and to the European integration project. However, Trump's denunciation of allied free-riding found resonance with the voting public, making it increasingly difficult to justify the costs of extending military protection to prosperous European democracies. At the same time, for large sectors of American society, globalization became synonymous with deindustrialization, joblessness and the hollowing out of local communities. Not unexpectedly, the result was a backlash against free trade and, in particular, Chinese trade practices deemed responsible for many of these ills. Targeting China, Trump's assertive economic statecraft would not spare traditional allies, including the European Union.

Donald Trump's world-view posited that while the United States propped up the international liberal order, friends and adversaries alike preyed upon America's open markets and continued to free-ride on the country's security guarantees. Accordingly, the solution was to renegotiate – or abandon – commitments driving national decline. Donald Trump's 2016 victory was thus meant to overturn the foreign policy consensus and set the country on a new course in international affairs. During his 2016 campaign, the Republican candidate had been crystalline clear in suggesting that the foreign policy establishment had failed the country. The United States' role in the world had, therefore, to undergo profound modification so as to become more responsive to the interests and concerns of the American heartland. America's working class, Hillary Clinton's "deplorables", were set to place the "true" US national interest at the center of the country's international priorities. To revert US decline, the "America First" policy agenda would refashion the country's relationship with China and, also, with Washington's traditional allies, including Europe.

President Trump's mandate generated countless headlines minimizing his foreign policy achievements and deriding his setbacks. Academics and pundits fretted that American power was on the wane because of the words and deeds of a mercurial president. Just as Trump and his allies accused Barack Obama of accentuating national decline, so too Trump was accused of squandering the country's international influence. Yet, such a conclusion was not entirely self-evident. For instance, until the onset of the pandemic, the US economy's share of global output had not fluctuated significantly in the post-Cold War period. In contrast, the European Union and Japan saw their share fall as China expanded its share from two percent to a staggering 14 percent⁸³⁹. If anything may be concluded, it is that China's rise evinces the comparative decline of Europe and Japan, not that of the United States. As for military strength, the United States continues to greatly outspend all others. Granted, the amount spent does not necessarily guarantee enhanced capacities, but, by any metric employed, America's military remains formidable. Considerably more problematic was the country's soft power, its capacity to

839 See, Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*, pp. 11-12. For 2017 figures based on Purchasing Power Parities (PPP), see, The World Bank, "Purchasing Power Parities and the Size of World Economies: Results from the 2017 International Comparison Program", 2020, available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33623/9781464815300.pdf>.

inspire others and foster imitation. Opinion surveys conducted during the Trump years revealed a stark reduction in confidence in the United States, a trend particularly robust in allied nations.⁸⁴⁰ Still, the results were not entirely unprecedented since favorable views of the United States also fell sharply during the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush years.

Be that as it may, the international system is in profound mutation as the liberal order confronts overt challenges by Russia and China, two revisionist powers determined to upend American preeminence. Managing this new correlation of power, and developing a grand strategy capable of assuring the safeguarding of US national interests, will be the fundamental task facing president Joe Biden. Despite campaign promises to break with Donald Trump's foreign policy, the new administration cannot simply revert to the broad policy preferences of decades past. In critical areas such as trade and China, president Biden will largely continue Trump's foreign policy. Europeans expecting a "return to normality" following Biden's inauguration are in for certain disappointment. There is no returning to the broad consensus that underpinned American politics – domestic and foreign – during the second half of the previous century. In many ways, Trump was a harbinger of things to come and not an anomaly. President Trump sought to revise the pillars of the postwar order, imposed national-security tariffs on European allies, raised questions as to the continued relevance of the transatlantic project and doubts as to the robustness of America's commitment to European security. Reversing decades of American policy, Trump became a cheerleader for Brexit and encouraged Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron to negotiate bilateral trade deals with the United States. Given that the United States has been the most important pillar sustaining the current global order, Trump's retreat from globalism, and Europe's incapacity to provide consistent international leadership, produced an erosion of liberal norms, institutions and multilateral cooperation.

On the campaign trail, Joe Biden pledged to make a break with Donald Trump's foreign policy and resuscitate the international liberal order. Entering the White House, the new president signed executive orders reversing the pullouts from the World Health Organization and the Paris Treaty. The "Muslim ban" was similarly overturned and further construction on the Mexico border wall was halted. No less significant was Biden's withdrawal of support of Saudi Arabia's war against the Houthis in Yemen, an unequivocal sign of administration displeasure with the path trodden by Mohammed bin Salman.⁸⁴¹ Yet, despite these alterations, continuity with Trump administration policies has been substantial.⁸⁴² For instance, although Biden promised to rejoin the nuclear

840 See, Pew Research Center, "Global Attitudes and Trends", June 26, 2017, available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/06/26/u-s-image-suffers-as-publics-around-world-question-trumps-leadership/>; and Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*, p. 177.

841 See, Humeyra Pamuk and Daphne Psaledakis, "Blinken says taking close look at designation of Yemen's Houthi movement", *Reuters*, January 27, 2021, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-usa-idUSKBN29W2QU>.

842 See, David Lawler, "What has and hasn't changed as Biden takes over U.S. foreign policy", *Axios*, January 22, 2021, available at: <https://www.axios.com/biden-foreign-policy-yemen-iran-0c3ccf09-62c6-4197-9970-21f2e3bff479.html>.

deal if Iran complied with the terms outlined by the JCPOA, both Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines warned that the administration was “a long way from there”⁸⁴³. As a matter of fact, Iran’s resumption of uranium enrichment made it more difficult for Biden to reverse Trump’s decision to scuttle the deal. Regarding the nuclear deal as a great diplomatic achievement, EU leaders expected that a Democrat White House would rapidly revive the accord. However, Democrats demonstrably reveal scant enthusiasm for a return the Obama era *status quo ante*.

Similarly, Trump’s January 2019 recognition of Juan Guaidó as Venezuela’s interim president is unlikely to be upended. Nor are Trump-era sanctions levied against the country to be discarded in the foreseeable future; in effect, the Biden administration pledges that sanctions will “more effectively target” Maduro’s Bolivarian regime⁸⁴⁴. Likewise, Donald Trump’s 2017 decision to provide lethal military hardware to Ukraine is unlikely to be modified, even though the Obama administration had refused such aid to Kyev for fear of escalating tensions with Moscow. Nor will the Biden White House seek to revise the *status quo* in Israel after Trump effectively recognized Jerusalem as the country’s capital by transferring the US embassy from Tel Aviv. That polemical move, opposed by many fearing the outbreak of Palestinian mass violence that failed to materialize, upturned decades of US diplomacy, but is now an integral part of the new normal in a region where Trump’s approach produced considerable successes.

Biden’s China policy will also witness a large degree of continuity with the preceding administration.⁸⁴⁵ Following his first telephone conversation with Xi Jinping, Biden, emphasizing the necessity of keeping up with Chinese infrastructure investments, remarked that “if we don’t get moving, they are going to eat our lunch” and expressed “fundamental” concerns over Chinese “coercive and unfair” trade practices⁸⁴⁶. Reflecting changing Democrat views, this hardening of opinion is not entirely surprising. Evan Medeiros, China director on Obama’s National Security Council, has frankly admitted that “I wish that we had recognized quicker how different Xi Jinping was from Hu Jintao and recognized how he was going to take China politically, economically, and strategically

843 See, Arshad Mohammed and Humeyra Pamuk, “U.S. is some ways from decision on resuming Iran nuclear deal: Blinken”, *Reuters*, January 19, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-state-iran-idUSKBN29O2HD>; and “Haines says ‘we are a long ways’ from Iran returning to nuclear deal”, *Reuters*, January 19, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-biden-intelligence-iran-idUSL1N2JU1GW>.

844 See, “Biden will recognize Guaido as Venezuela’s leader, top diplomat says” *Reuters*, January 19, 2021, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-state-venezuela/biden-will-recognize-guaido-as-venezuelas-leader-top-diplomat-says-idUSKBN29O2PE>.

845 For a comparison of the Biden and Trump policy platforms in relation to China, see, “Where Trump and Biden Stand on China”, *The Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 2020, consulted at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/where-trump-and-biden-stand-on-china-11600767002>.

846 See David Brunnstrom, Alexandra Alper and Yew Lun Tian, “China will ‘eat our lunch,’ Biden warns after clashing with Xi on most fronts”, *Reuters*, February 11, 2021, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSKBN2AB06A>.

in a different direction”⁸⁴⁷. In short, the Obama administration had failed to predict – some would say to adequately respond to – Xi Jinping’s assertiveness. Revised thinking on China was further evinced by Blinken’s admission, during his Senate confirmation hearing, that Trump was fundamentally correct in pursuing “a tougher approach to China”⁸⁴⁸. Although he disagreed with a number of the president’s concrete actions, Blinken nonetheless confessed that “the basic principle was the right one”⁸⁴⁹. He also acknowledged the Trump administration’s sound judgment in labeling Beijing’s treatment of the Uighur people as genocide, a decision taken by Secretary of State Pompeo on Trump’s last day in office.⁸⁵⁰

Later, after having been sworn in as Secretary of State, Blinken, in a telephone conversation with his Chinese interlocutor, Yang Jiechi, emphasized Washington’s preoccupation with human rights in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong. He also pressed Beijing to condemn the military coup in Myanmar and reaffirmed that the US and its regional allies intended to hold China accountable for threats to Indo-Pacific stability, including in the Taiwan Strait.⁸⁵¹ At the same time, the National Security Council signaled it was making China and the broader Indo-Pacific region a priority by nominating Kurt Campbell as head of the Indo-Pacific team as “work on China expands into virtually every NSC directorate”⁸⁵². Indeed, by all accounts, National Security Council head Jake Sullivan “is personally focused on China as a priority, building capacity across departments and agencies and running processes that break down old silos between foreign and domestic policy”⁸⁵³. Encompassing all aspects of national power, this whole-of-government approach represents a step forward in developing a cohesive strategy to contain Chinese assertiveness.

The hardening of policy on China was also shaped by the Defense Department’s evaluation of a changing military balance in the Indo-Pacific. The Pentagon’s 2020 annual “China Military Power Report” observed that “China is already ahead of the United States in certain areas” such as shipbuilding, with the country having “the largest navy in the world, with an overall battle force of approximately 350 ships and submarines

847 See, “Evan Medeiros: How Should Biden Approach China?”, *BBC Hardtalk*, February 8, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszc35>.

848 See, Michele Kelemen, “Secretary Of State Nominee Blinken Promises A Reengaged America Abroad”, *NPR*, January 19, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/biden-transition-updates/2021/01/19/958289975/secretary-of-state-nominee-antony-blinken-promises-humility-and-confidence>.

849 Ibid.

850 See, United States Department of State, “Determination of the Secretary of States on Atrocities in Xinjiang” January 19, 2021, available at: <https://2017-2021.state.gov/determination-of-the-secretary-of-state-on-atrocities-in-xinjiang/index.html>.

851 See, “Blinken presses China on Xinjiang, Hong Kong in call with Beijing’s top diplomat”, *Reuters*, February 6, 2021, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-idUSKBN2A604Y>.

852 See, Bethany Allen-Ebrahimi, “Biden’s whole-of-National Security Council strategy”, *Axios*, February 2, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.axios.com/bidens-whole-of-national-security-council-strategy-431454bb-43dc-45ef-9ccc-8a3f229ba598.html>.

853 Ibid.

including over 130 major surface combatants. In comparison, the U.S. Navy's battle force is approximately 293 ships as of early 2020⁸⁵⁴. Equally worrisome were Chinese advances in land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, in integrated air defense systems and the People Liberation Army's "overall combat readiness, encouraging the PLA to embrace new operational concepts, and expanding the PRC's overseas military footprint"⁸⁵⁵. Given this rising military menace in the Indo-Pacific, president Biden's first summit – albeit a virtual one – was an unprecedented gathering of the leaders of the Quad, clearly signaling the importance of deepening American security ties with Japan, Australia and India.⁸⁵⁶ The view that China poses a long-term threat to American interests and primacy now unites Democrats and Republicans, although divergence of policy instruments has not been surpassed.

Biden has sought to contrast his consultative approach to allies with Trump's rather more contentious manner which, it is frequently suggested, hampered a more concerted approach to China and other issues. However, the search for consensus may lead to paralysis in dealing with Beijing. At any rate, the Biden administration seeks to emphasize coalition-building, although that task was never actually absent from president Trump's China policy. It was Trump, after all, that revived the Quad and emphasized its critical role in the Indo-Pacific region. Allies have become indispensable because, given the growth of the Chinese economic and military power, Washington can no longer unilaterally compel Beijing to alter its behavior. India, particularly after the June 2020 border clashes with the People's Liberation Army, has emerged as a critical regional ally.

The European Union too has converged with the United States, as witnessed by France's deployment of two naval vessels, including a nuclear attack submarine, to the South China Sea to support the Quad and the freedom of navigation operations in the area.⁸⁵⁷ Present in the Indo-Pacific for centuries, France's engagement expresses mounting EU concern over Chinese expansion in the South China Sea. Europe, however, has not developed a cohesive, common understanding of the China challenge. True, the European Commission recently labeled China a "systemic rival", but not all European capitals concur with such an estimation. The biggest obstacle continues to be Germany,

854 For the report, see, Office of the Secretary of Defence, "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2020" p. ii, available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

855 Ibid.

856 See, John Ruwitch, "'Quad' Summit: Biden Looks To Boost Coordination Against China", *NPR*, March 11, 2021, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/11/975469203/quad-summit-biden-looks-to-boost-coordination-against-china>. For the meeting statement, see, The White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad'", March 12, 2021, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>.

857 See, Rachel Zhang, "South China Sea: why France is flexing its muscles in the contested waters", *South China Morning Post*, February 28, 2021, available at: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3123342/south-china-sea-why-france-flexing-its-muscles-contested>; and Yo-Jung Chen, "South China Sea: The French Are coming", *The Diplomat*, July 14, 2016, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/south-china-sea-the-french-are-coming/>.

the country with the strongest trade relationship with China. Invariably, Biden will attempt to push Berlin and Europe's other reluctant states to adhere to a US-led coalition of democracies countering Beijing's growing influence. In the aftermath of China's assault on democracy in Hong Kong, and its ongoing repression of Xinjiang's Muslim population, Europe will find it increasingly difficult to avoid following Biden's lead.

Although clearly hyperbolic, EU policymakers that had feared for the survival of the transatlantic relationship if Donald Trump obtained a second term now see the Biden presidency as an opportunity to revamp relations. Such magical thinking underestimates the cleavages running through Euro-American relations. Biden's rehabilitation of the Paris Treaty constituted an important conciliatory gesture. But, in reality, the imperatives of American domestic politics, and his emphasis on a green agenda, made it impossible for the president to do anything except return to the accord. Europe will not be Trump's "foe" on trade, but neither will the administration return to the *status quo ante*. After losing the trade argument to the Republicans in 2016, and with Donald Trump waiting in the political wings, the Democrats, traditionally the party of labor, simply cannot resuscitate *clintonian* globalism. And since the GOP has clearly taken a *trumpian* turn, mounting unease over free trade in Congress makes a transatlantic free trade agreement extremely challenging if not impossible.

Equally thorny is Nord Stream2. Although Washington continues to contend that the project's completion will assuage European dependence relative to Russia, Angela Merkel has stated that her view on the matter "has not changed yet to the point where I say that the project should not exist"⁸⁵⁸. Antony Blinken, during his confirmation hearing, warned that he was "determined to do whatever I can to prevent that completion" of Nord Stream2 and that Biden "would have us use every persuasive tool that we have to convince our friends and partners including Germany not to move forward with it"⁸⁵⁹. Despite these declarations, Berlin's determination to complete the pipeline will mean that the US, at some point, must conform itself to the outcome. Biden will also make clear that with the US shifting its attention to China, by default Europe must lead the effort to counter Russian and Chinese attempts to enhance their continental influence. While Biden has stressed the necessity of confronting Russian aggression, China is viewed as the long-term, strategic threat. In short, France and Germany will be expected to assume the burdens that the maintenance of European stability entails.

European suggestions that Donald Trump was the sole factor generating stresses in the Euro-American relationship was always a simplistic notion. To preclude US voters from embracing *trumpism* in 2024, Biden, like Barack Obama, will surely press for more equitable NATO burden-sharing. The Wales 2 percent of gross GDP defense spending commitment will invariably be pursued by the Biden administration, even if in a less strident fashion. Germany will continue to be subject to pressure, not least because

858 See, Hans von der Burchard and America Hernandez, "US-German tensions over Russia-backed Nord Stream 2 pipeline" *Politico*, January 21, 2021, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-joe-biden-nord-stream-2/>.

859 Ibid.

the country's 2020 defense budget fell short of the €47.2 billion requested by Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen.⁸⁶⁰ The spending trajectory means that Berlin will fail to meet its 2024 defense goal of 1.5 percent of GDP, even though this level of expenditure is well below NATO's Wales target. Continuing to argue, as Germany has done in the recent past, that it was respecting the "spirit" of Wales since it was "moving towards" the target seems unacceptable to the Americans as well as to European states complying with the 2 percent goal.⁸⁶¹ Since Merkel's government has run budget surpluses, the Wales target was not met as a result of political choices rather than of financial constraints.

As the Trump presidency unfolded, Europeans increasingly came to call for greater strategic autonomy relative to the United States. The geopolitical logic driving Europe to reduce its dependence on the US has always, at least in theory, been compelling. However, greater affirmation on the world stage presupposes a unity of purpose that, so far, has not been in evidence. Inadequate responses to China's rise, Russia's assertiveness, unpredictability in the Middle East and migration flows have all sapped Europe's self-confidence and credibility. Nor, for that matter, is the EU of one mind in relation to the United States.⁸⁶² Various EU member-states looking suspiciously upon German power advocate a continued US presence on the continent and pursue advantageous bilateral arrangements with Washington.⁸⁶³ Considering all possible alternatives, many European allies are content with their continued reliance on America's security guarantees because lessening dependence on the United States would be tantamount to creating new dependencies, particularly in relation to France and Germany. European dependence on the United States is not devoid of political and strategic logic; rather, it is firmly rooted in established fears of hegemonic temptations on the part of fellow European Union member-states.

860 See, Matthew Karnitschnig, "The Trump-Merkel doctrine of mutually assured detestation", *Politico*, March 15, 2019, consulted at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-donald-trump-angela-merkel-doctrine-of-mutually-assured-detestation-nato-huawei/>. On German spending in previous years, see, John Vandiver, "Alliance unity 'more important than ever,' NATO chief says as defense spending rises", *Stars and Stripes*, March 14, 2019, available at: <https://www.stripes.com/news/alliance-unity-more-important-than-ever-nato-chief-says-as-defense-spending-rises-1.572586>.

861 See, The Federal Government, "Speech by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel on 16 February 2019 at the 55 th Munich Security Conference", February 16, 2019, op. cit.

862 Teija Tiilikainen correctly observes that "EU policies that can affect the United States often result from the ever-shifting dynamics of a two-level process between member states and EU institutions. Many more interests and factors are at stake than simply the historical interests and identities of the Union's largest member states. This does not make the EU an easy partner. But it does require a nuanced appreciation of how the process of European integration shapes the external policies of both the EU and its member states". See, Teija Tiilikainen, "Foreign Policy-Making in the European Union: How the Political System Affects the EU's Relations with the United States" In Daniel S. Hamilton and Teija Tiilikainen, (eds.). *Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States*. Washington: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2018, p. 175.

863 See, for instance, Piotr Buras and Josef Janning, "Divided at the Centre: Germany, Poland, and the Troubles of the Trump Era", European Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Brief, December 2018, accessed at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep21906.pdf?acceptTC=true&coverpage=false>.

Since leaving office, Donald Trump has all but formally announced his candidacy for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination. If that intention is consummated, no Republican can defeat the former president. Even if Trump decides not to run again, *trumpism* has taken firm root in the Republican party and the themes and policies so strongly identified with Trump appear to be here to stay for the foreseeable future.⁸⁶⁴ For Europe, it is wise to assume that the transatlantic relationship of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras has definitively been transformed in accordance with the new realities of international politics. As the United States focuses on confronting China in the Indo-Pacific, Europe will have to bear greater responsibilities for continental stability, particularly in relation to Russia. Trade relations with the European Union will also be impacted by the all-of-government approach to the Chinese challenge defined by the Biden administration. Trade and technology, in short, are becoming critical components of the Sino-American rivalry and are therefore increasingly matters of national security. Selling cars to China and opening Europe's doors to Chinese investment is not readily compatible with a strategic alliance with the United States. Tough choices, therefore, loom on the horizon. European aversion to Donald Trump should not blind us to the fact that the former president was a harbinger of change that will impose itself sooner rather than later.

864 See, Philip Bump, "Trumpism will endure in the GOP. Trump may not", *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2021, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/03/01/trumpism-will-endure-gop-trump-may-not/>.

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2012	8	Contributo para uma “Estratégia Abrangente” de Gestão de Crises
	7	Os Livros Brancos da Defesa da República Popular da China, 1998-2010: Uma desconstrução do Discurso e das Perceções de (in)Segurança
2011	6	A Arquitetura de Segurança e Defesa da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa
	5	O Futuro da Comunidade de Segurança Transatlântica
	4	Segurança Nacional e Estratégias Energéticas de Portugal e de Espanha
	3	As Relações Energéticas entre Portugal e a Nigéria: Riscos e Oportunidades
2010	2	Dinâmicas Migratórias e Riscos de Segurança em Portugal
	1	Acerca de “Terrorismo” e de “Terrorismos”

II SÉRIE

2009	4	O Poder Aéreo na Transformação da Defesa O Programa de Investigação e Tecnologia em Veículos Aéreos Autónomos Não-Tripulados da Academia da Força Aérea
	3	Conhecer o Islão
	2	Cibersegurança Segurança e Insegurança das Infra-Estruturas de Informação e Comunicação Organizacionais
2008	1	Conflito e Transformação da Defesa A OTAN no Afeganistão e os Desafios de uma Organização Internacional na Contra-subversão O Conflito na Geórgia

I SÉRIE

2007	5	Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas Modelos de Reforma Institucional
	4	A Estratégia face aos Estudos para a Paz e aos Estudos de Segurança. Um Ensaio desde a Escola Estratégica Portuguesa

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