ACADEMIC ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE MOULDING OF US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CUBA[1]

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Abstract

Most analysts have concluded that President Donald Trump does not have an elaborated ideology,[3] but rather that his character largely determines his decisions given his belief that he alone can fix what is wrong with the US government. This leads him towards being influenced by those advisors who reinforce his instincts. At the core is his belief that to restore US supremacy worldwide, American diplomacy needs to be forceful and aggressive. He is not an advocate of soft or smart power as used by the Obama administration.[4] In addition, he tends to prefer advisors whom he regards as tough and assertive. As a result, this article examines President Trump's personality and instincts and the degree to which his current, as well as previous, advisors' ideologies have influenced him in order to evaluate trends in US foreign policy generally and more specifically with respect to Cuba.

Keywords: Donald Trump, foreign policy, ideology, US supremacy, propaganda

On 23 January 2018, the conservative Heritage Foundation announced that President Trump and his administration had followed 64 per cent of its 333 recommendations in its 'Mandate for Leadership' (Heritage Foundation 2018). These included leaving the Paris Climate Accord, moving to repeal net neutrality, reducing the size of selected national parks and opening some public lands for coal leasing, ordering an end to funding organisations that provide abortion services including the United Nations (UN) Population Fund, supporting work requirements for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), reducing the size and activities of government agencies, withdrawing from

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UNESCO and substantially increasing the US military budget. While such recommendations were supported by other organisations (e.g., Breitbart Media), implementation of the Heritage Foundation recommendations was facilitated by the presence of some 70 former Heritage employees incorporated into the Trump administration (Heritage Foundation 2018). Furthermore, a founder of the Heritage Foundation Ed Feulner concluded that 'In some respects, Trump the non-politician has an incredible advantage, even over Ronald Reagan . . . . Because Ronald Reagan knew there were certain things government couldn't do' (Peters 2018: A17).

The emergence of non-politicians such as Trump in electoral office reflects, according to some analysts, the increasing inclination of voters towards a candidate as a 'mere vessel for policy preferences' (Weiner 2017: A19). Hence, politicians are evaluated largely on the policies they support rather than on their knowledge of the issues or actual experience in governing. Nevertheless, as the political scientist Greg Weiner argues a candidate's character is relevant because 'American notions of political representation assign statesmanship an essential role in the constitutional regime. Federalist 10 says the representative's role is to "refine and enlarge", not simply reflect, the public's views.' Weiner (2017: A17) also asserts that this requires prudence and a profound capacity for judgement that is

> a product of moral cultivation, broad education and political experience and as such, it is inseparable from the statesman's character . . . . One of the ironies of the new defense of the candidate as a mere vessel for policy preferences is that it attaches to strong personalities who seem to attract support precisely for their charisma . . . . That is why the statesman must be bound by constitutional rules and customs.

In the light of this, it is useful to explore President Trump's character, as well as the ideological influences that have reinforced his personal beliefs and inclinations.

The increasing focus by the media and hence voters on the personal characteristics of candidates rather than on their understanding of issues and how government functions was confirmed by an analysis of news coverage during the 2016 campaign and elections by the Harvard University Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Opinion. It found that only 10 per cent of media coverage was focused on issues, whereas controversies constituted 17 per cent. Coverage of major issues generally emphasised conflicts as in 84 per cent of reports on immigration, 87 per cent on Muslims, 71 per cent on health care and 70 per cent on the economy. The Shorenstein Report concluded that 'If everything and everyone is portrayed negatively, there's a leveling effect that opens

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the door to charlatans. The press historically has helped citizens recognize the difference between the earnest politician and the pretender. Today's news coverage blurs the distinction' (Patterson 2016: 18, 2, 8). Additionally it was concluded that the media has contributed to a substantial growth in hostile partisanship in Congress and among the public in general over the past 20 years as polls have indicated (Ciano 2016).

Negative campaigning and media coverage appears to have stimulated President Trump's competitive spirit forged, in part, by his experiences as a real estate developer in New York and elsewhere. This has been repeatedly reflected in the president's insistence that the turnout at his inauguration was much larger than that of President Obama, his exaggeration of his accomplishments as well as his furious attacks not only on political competitors but also on the media and critics. His ongoing conflicts with Members of Congress, as well as some of his own staff, reflect an underlying need to dominate. As one commentator remarked 'He desperately needs to be the king-of-every-hill he sees in the mirror: He was the ladies man, business man, smartest man, toughest man. There was nothing beyond him, and he didn't have to follow the rules, he only had to follow his instincts' (Blow 2018: A22). Speculation abounds that the latter is at the root of why President Trump is so fixated on how he is presented in the media and why there are so many of his friends and appointees from that realm. It may also help explain his deep need for expressions of gratitude and his obvious frustration when he does not receive what he regards as sufficient thanks. As Diane Butler Bass, the author of *Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*, has noted, Donald Trump

> has always depicted himself as a benefactor: 'I alone can fix it.' During the primaries he boasted that he received no outside gifts or contributions, thus debts of gratitude would never control him. He criticized conventional forms of payback, promising to distribute social largess to the 'right' people, rid the system of undeserving beneficiaries and restore upward mobility in a social pyramid. No more corporations, no more politicians. He would be the ultimate benefactor. He would make America great again from the top.

Furthermore, Butler Bass (2018: A23) concluded,

> This helps explain why the Russian inquiry makes Mr. Trump angry. The suggestion that he benefited from anyone much less a foreign government undermines his self-image as unassailable benefactor. He never receives. He gives as he wills, and to whom he chooses. 'Receivers', like the poor, immigrants, women and persons of color, are considered weaker beings, consigned to the lower ranks of his social

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> pyramid, and who, failing to reciprocate his paternalistic generosity, are chided for a lack of thanks.

He has called Americans, as well as the rest of the world, ingrates for failing to recognise sufficiently what he has done for them. Historically, authoritarians have used gratitude to 'control critics and consolidate power' (Butler Bass 2018: A23).

Linked to President Trump's irritation over the lack of the gratitude he feels he deserves, is a sense of being unfairly persecuted, particularly by the Mueller investigation, as well as the FBI and Department of Justice. He has repeatedly claimed that the Mueller investigation is biased and illegitimate and part of an attack not just on him but on the US. It also reinforces his disdain not only for individuals, including some Republican leaders identified with the maintenance of the rule of law, but also with judicial procedures and the separation of powers. This would appear to have contributed to his eliminating those appointees who have objected to his transgressing on the powers of the legislative and judicial branches of government. It also appears to be a factor in his seeking out appointees with commitments to the expansion of presidential powers. Both Stephen Bannon and Stephen Miller, who worked on Trump's 2016 campaign, were champions of the expansion of presidential powers including through the use of executive orders. Bannon was highly influential in translating Trump's instincts into his campaign appeals and subsequently into actual policy. While Steve Bannon went from being a senior policy advisor to being fired in August 2017 and subsequently isolated as a result of his criticisms of Trump published in Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (2018), Miller has survived. And in the spring of 2018, a new Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and a new National Security Advisor, John Bolton, were chosen for what Trump perceives as their more supportive positions than the former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the former National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster. Both Tillerson and McMaster were regarded as non-ideologues.

While Bannon left the White House in mid-August of 2017, he reportedly continued to be in close contact with President Trump until early 2018 when Bannon's derogatory comments about the president, as well as his daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner, outraged Trump. The president's reaction additionally reflected his anger at what he regarded as Bannon's taking credit for the president's accomplishments, as well as a lack of gratitude. Trump's ire, as well as that of a good number of his supporters, contributed to Bannon's exile from Breitbart News.

Although Bannon was not Trump's only adviser during the 2016 campaign and the first months of 2017, he appears to be the one with the most elaborated ideology which appealed to Trump, in part, because of their shared visions of what the

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US role in the world ought to be. Prior to joining Trump as his presidential campaign chief in 2016, Bannon had reportedly been looking for a candidate to promote the populist nationalist agenda he had championed while at Breitbart Media. Trump had already introduced some of the same themes in his campaign emphasising nationalism, nativism, anti-globalisation, anti-immigration and absolutistic sovereignty. According to the journalist Joshua Green who covered Trump's campaign, Bannon provided a 'fully formed, internally coherent worldview that accommodated Trump's own feelings about trade and foreign threats . . .'. This is what Trump eventually dubbed 'America First' (Green 2017: 46).

The 'America First' approach involves aggressive defence of US sovereignty, interests and national security. It emphasises strong economic nationalism and anti-globalisation, as well as reducing immigration, together with deconstruction of the administrative state. As part of the latter effort, the sowing of chaos in traditional politics is a prime strategy. Some have speculated that this facilitates a similar effort to encourage chaos in the West by Russia.[5]

It is significant that Bannon recommends introducing chaos to defeat political elites and bureaucrats to transform political systems. This is related in part to a strategy to reinvigorate the nation state in its pursuit of national interests. It also reflects some concepts of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European geopolitics concerning the nature of the nation state and the need to defend it in the face of threats including from Islam and Communism, a theme that Bannon often emphasises. It was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for the nation state to be considered a natural organism with a need to grow for a nation to achieve its destiny. The nation state was conceived as having rights that transcended those of the individual. Governmental power was to be concentrated in the executive which contributed to the emergence of authoritarian personalistic regimes in the early twentieth century (Crahan 1982). These nation states were considered best equipped to bring order out of the chaos of the Industrial Revolution with its changing economic structures and mass migrations. The concept of the nation state as a living organism with rights that transcended those of the individual with a strong executive branch was refined in the first half of the twentieth century by a number of European political commentators often cited by Bannon including René Guénon and Charles Murras, French intellectuals; Juluis Evola, an Italian philosopher who was pro-fascist; Jean Raspail, author of the apocalyptic novel *The Camp of the Saints*, which projected the destruction of Western civilisation by the expansion of the third world populations into the West; and the right-wing Cité Catholique which sounded an alarm about the destruction of the nation state by Marxism and non-Christian societies. The evolution of the concepts of the nation state and sovereignty in the twentieth century, particularly in the light of issues raised by the First World War and Second World War,

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such as the utility of international cooperation and institutions to defend democracy and human rights, promote sustainable development and respond to major crises, was slighted. Bannon and some of his political allies tended to view the priority as being the West defending civilisation which had been submerged in an existential crisis in which it was on the defensive. More specifically, after interviewing Bannon for 10 hours, the journalist Keith Koffler (2017: 2–3) concluded that Bannon firmly believes that

> Western civilization today is under siege . . . from within and without. Many in the West have forgotten their culture or actively chosen to despise it; and . . . [Bannon] believes the West faces implacable enemies, both Islamists and the Communist Chinese, who believe they can become the next great hegemonic power. The result of Bannon's thinking about how best to protect and defend America, its culture, and its western tradition, at a time when its elites are manifestly corrupt, is a new conservative populism grounded in an old American economic system, known . . . as 'the American system'.

Bannon used such ideas to shape a pro-Trump populist rebellion in part through breitbart.com that helped carry Trump into the White House and has influenced, at least to a degree, the administration's policies. At the root of the Trump campaign was an appeal to the disaffected to unite to overthrow a corrupt establishment and 'drain the swamp in Washington'. Related to this was the notion that America was being undercut by 'Others', particularly immigrants, including those from Muslim countries. In addition, there was fear of those who supported globalisation and multiculturalism as un-American.

Both Bannon and Trump share a somewhat Manichaean view of the world, that is, a belief in America as a source of good against the forces of secularism and evil. Out of this came suspicion of immigrants, the stereotyping of the 'Other', for example, Mexicans, thus justifying the wall, Washington elites and globalisers, among others. Specifically, it led to a 'clash of civilisations' rhetoric that helped promote the ban on travellers and immigrants from Muslim countries. It also stimulated, among the general population, a level of fear that could be manipulated to maintain support for the Trump administration. It inculcated a mentality of us versus them, particularly, alleged jihadist Islamic fundamentalism versus modernised societies characterised by a capitalism that generated jobs and wealth for a country. In Bannon's discourse, there is virtually no mention of constitutionalism and democracy (Purdy 2016).

While Bannon and Trump do have some differences, given the absence on the president's part of a coherent vision of how to achieve his goals, Bannon was able while in the White House to influence the president's decisions both

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internationally and domestically. Bannon reinforced Trump's suspicion of trade agreements, the Iran nuclear accord, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the UN. He also stimulated Trump's inclination to believe he was only responsible to his supporters and not to the whole of US citizenry, much less to the international community. While in the White House, Bannon did disagree somewhat with Trump on the positive role of business elites in government, with Bannon holding a critical view perhaps derived from his time working on Wall Street. Trump appointed Wall Street and corporate representatives throughout his administration, although he sometimes became disenchanted with them. Obviously, Bannon did not win every battle while in the White House, most notably over immigration and increasing US troops in Afghanistan.

Despite losing access to the president, Bannon has continued to defend Trump's agenda, as well as attempting, not particularly successfully, to have hard right candidates elected to Congress, undercut the Mueller investigation, and encourage the growth of right-wing groups in the US and Europe. In addition, some of Bannon's policy goals continue to be pursued by Stephen Miller, still a senior White House adviser, and Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General until November 2018, particularly on immigration issues. However, pragmatists in the administration including, the Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Chief of Staff, General John Kelly, as well as the Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, together with elements in the US Congress, have moderated some of Trump's and Bannon's more extreme inclinations, although not all.

Bannon's influence has lingered on as was seen in Trump's September 2017 speech to the UN General Assembly in which he emphasised national sovereignty, a Bannon priority. Trump asserted US sovereignty as a justification for America's departure from the Paris Climate Accord, rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, criticism of NATO and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as of the UN itself. Trump asserted that the UN had lost sight of its original purpose to serve as a platform for independent nation states to pursue their sovereign interests. The president appeared to have continued to believe in Bannon's vision of the UN as suborning America's sovereignty and interests.

While Bannon left the White House in August 2017 and lost his personal influence with the president in early 2018 with the publication of his critical comments in Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, Stephen Miller remained as a senior adviser for policy, as well as a principal speech writer for the president.[6] Miller was well known in conservative circles when he joined the Trump campaign in 2016 having worked on Capitol Hill for conservative Members of Congress including Michelle Bachmann, John Shadegg and Jeff Sessions who became Trump's Attorney General. As the latter's communications director during the Senate debates over immigration reform in

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2013–14, Miller was instrumental in defeating proposals for immigration reform adducing some of the same arguments as Bannon and Breitbart that globalisation and immigration were threats to Western civilisation and particularly to the sovereignty and culture of the US. Miller has championed the building of a border wall between the US and Mexico, restrictions on Muslim travel and emigration to the US, and renegotiating trade agreements including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). During the 2016 campaign, Miller warmed up the audiences at Trump rallies emphasising 'America First' and repeatedly claiming erroneously that 14 per cent of non-citizens in the US were registered to vote and that voter fraud was a major problem (Boehlert 2017). During his tenure in the White House, Miller has been employed as a frequent guest on TV defending the administration and Donald Trump.

In his public appearances and on TV, Miller has frequently accused critics of the Trump administration of 'cosmopolitan bias', a term popularised by Breitbart News, Bannon and the alt-right, among others. The phrase is used to characterise 'people or movements that are unmoored to the traditions and beliefs of a nation' and has long been a favourite of '"nationalist political figures" as a means of delegitimizing and attacking opposition forces'. The term was used by Josef Stalin 'to "purge" the Soviet Union of "dissident voices", and often carried strong anti-Semitic connotations' (Greenfield 2017). Vladimir Putin uses similar terms in his attacks on what he regards as unpatriotic groups whose championing of free speech and the global circulation of ideas he considers threats to his nation. The term 'cosmopolitanism' and the ideas behind it also have their adherents among the European alt-right and help explain ongoing invitations and interest in speeches and writings by Bannon and Miller, as witnessed by Bannon's address to the rightist French National Front Party on 10 March 2018. Bannon exhorted the party faithful that 'History is on our side' and furthermore that 'Let them call you racist. Let them call you xenophobes. Let them call you nativists. Wear it as a badge of honor.' He also asserted, 'You're part of a worldwide movement bigger than France, bigger than Italy' (Associated Press 2018) as he excoriated economic and political globalisation, immigration and porous borders as contrary to the interests of national sovereignty.

Bannon in a March 2016 Sirius XM radio interview with Stephen Miller stated that when 61 million or 20 per cent of people in the US are immigrants you have an enormous threat to the physical, cultural, political and moral security of a country. Miller agreed and communicated that position to the president as well as Attorney General Jeff Sessions. It would appear that Miller's views have influenced Trump's attitude not only towards immigration but also in terms of the evaluation of the worth of countries. In short, Trump's comments on nations in Africa and Central America, for example, in contrast to those

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about Nordic countries, appear to reflect those of Miller. Furthermore, they appear to inform the Trump administration's push for merit-based immigration such as that promoted by RAISE legislation. Miller was also heavily involved in the 2017–18 effort to arrange a compromise on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA or Dreamers) program. The battle seems to have cemented a closer connection with Trump Chief of Staff General John Kelly. It also appears to have increased Trump's appreciation of Miller's combative style and loyalty to the president (Parker and Dawsey 2018). Some commentators argue that Miller has taken to 'mirroring' Trump in terms of his rhetoric and style. The journalist Heather Digby Parton ascribes this to Trump's adoption of interpersonal strategies in the 1970s satirised by Michael Korda in his book *Power! How to Get It, How to Use It* (Korda 1975). These strategies included 'encroach on other people's space, keep them waiting on the phone, and force them to mirror you . . . . Eventually you can crush your enemies if you can force them to adopt your expressions, intonations, rhythms, gestures' (Digby Parton 2018: 6). Beginning during the 2016 campaign, some journalists began noting Miller's increasing adoption of Trump's intonation and verbal style. According to Digby Parton (2018: 6),

> Miller is 'mirroring' Trump which to the president is the best sign of respectful submission. The people in the Trump orbit who figure that out will be the ones with the most influence. The only person Trump will ever trust is someone who reminds him of himself.

The transition from policy advisors steeped in ideology who joined Trump during the 2016 campaign to more experienced Washington old-hands well known for their hawkish views was highlighted by the appointments of Mike Pompeo, a former Tea Party congressman, as Secretary of State and John Bolton, who was a well-known hawk as an Undersecretary of State in the H. W. Bush administration. Both had extensive government experience and were regarded as talented in political in-fighting. Pompeo replaced Rex Tillerson, the former CEO of Exxon Mobil, who reportedly never established rapport with the president and was widely criticised for his lack of comprehension of the role of the State Department. Bolton, who previously had served in both Bush administrations, including as US ambassador to the United Nations, had attracted Trump's attention as a commentator on Fox News.

Pompeo reportedly gained Trump's interest via his succinct intelligence briefings as Director of the CIA and strong opinions on such issues as the Iran accord and his sense that US allies should shoulder more of the burden for international security. Hours after he was sworn in as Secretary of State, Pompeo left for

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NATO headquarters, as well as Saudi Arabia, Israel and Jordan reportedly to inform US allies that the president was going to pull the US out of the Iran accord. He also stated at the time that he had reservations about the North Korean proposal of an incremental disarmament process in return for Western concessions. Pompeo's position on Russia is more critical than that of President Trump, and he has called for NATO to take a strong stance with respect to Russian incursions into Georgia, the Ukraine and the Middle East. On his first day as Secretary of State, Pompeo made a point of praising the professionals at the State Department and promised to help them get their 'swagger' back. Reportedly he also placed a number of calls to former US diplomats encouraging them to return to the Department. Pompeo has also made efforts to reduce preoccupations about his earlier remarks that were interpreted as anti-Muslim, as well as some of his positions on immigration.

With respect to Latin America, Pompeo in a presentation at the conservative American Enterprise Institute in early 2018 stated that there were serious political risks to the US emanating from Latin America including instability in Venezuela and violence and corruption stimulated by transnational organised crime, as well as the presence of Hezbollah in the area (Noriega 2018). Pompeo's early comments about the role of diplomacy and diplomats suggest that he will depend more on the expertise of Foreign Service officers and other experts in devising policies, including for Latin America. During the April 2018 Senate hearings on his confirmation as Secretary of State, Pompeo said he would restaff the US embassy in Havana and build a team there. He also suggested he supported reducing restrictions on agricultural sales to the island (Harris and Sullivan 2018: A8).

While Pompeo appears to have pragmatically modified somewhat the Tea Party views he held as a congressman from Kansas from 2011 to 2017, John Bolton does not appear to have done so to the same degree. Bolton has in the past called for military action against Iran and North Korea. Indeed, in early 2018, he proposed a 'pre-emptive attack' on North Korea arguing that 'Given the gaps in U.S. intelligence about North Korea . . . we should not wait until the last minute to stage what he called a pre-emptive attack' (Sagan and Weiner 2018: A19). There was immediate criticism of what was regarded as Bolton's misinterpretation of international law. According to scholars at Stanford University, Bolton did not understand the distinction between a pre-emptive and preventive attack. The former is only legal under international law if an attack is imminent and the need for self-defence is palpable. The latter is not legal under international law simply because of the possibility of an attack. Bolton's logic is considered dangerous in the international community (Sagan and Weiner 2018: A19).

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Bolton has an expansive view of presidential power, arguing that the role of the National Security Advisor is to make sure that 'the bureaucracy did not impede the decisions of the president' (Landler and Haberman 2018: A19). This fits in with Trump's own views of the extent of presidential power and the president's view of the bureaucracy as part of what is wrong with Washington. As a commentator on Fox News, Bolton attracted President Trump's attention particularly for his aggressive espousing of the importance of coercion over negotiations in international relations. After serving in George W. Bush's administration, Bolton founded The John Bolton Super PAC which was an early client of Cambridge Analytica and helped it develop its strategies for 'behavioral microtargetting with psychographic messaging' (Rosenberg 2018: A14). The Bolton objective was to make the US public more receptive to military solutions to international problems and more supportive of an aggressive foreign policy. The psychographic work was used to promote candidates in the 2014 elections. Using data culled from Facebook together with voter data, Cambridge Analytica provided strategies to influence voters in the 2016 election (Rosenberg 2018: A14).

Throughout his career, Bolton has prided himself on targeting for criticism the State Department, the UN, the International Criminal Court, the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, North Korea, Iran, China, Russia, the Palestinian Authority and the European Union. Other targets include those he has categorised as 'the Crusaders of Compromise' in the national security realm, the 'High Minded', that is diplomats, and 'the True Believers' or 'arms control priesthood' (Baker 2018: A1). Bolton styles himself an 'Americanist' that is a champion of US interests including the nation's sovereignty in the face of the inroads of global governance, thereby resonating with Trump's 'America First' position. Nevertheless, he has recently claimed that he thinks diplomacy is preferable to military solutions (Baker 2018: A13). He has warned that North Korea's conversations with South Korea and the possibility of US–North Korean accords are a con. Bolton has also repeatedly insisted that China is not to be trusted as it has 'jived us for 25 years' (Baker 2018: A13). During his tenure in the George W. Bush administration, he was aligned with Dick Cheney and critical of Bush's foreign policy. Some speculate that given his and Trump's temperaments, they might clash. During the 2005 hearings on Mr Bolton's nomination to be US ambassador to the UN, documents were released that alleged that the nominee was considered to be 'a volatile, aggressive infighter, who seemed willing to cherry pick intelligence, steamroll analysts he did not agree with and end-run his State Department bosses in pursuit of an agenda considered bellicose even among Bush administration hawks' (Rogers and Williamson 2018: A13). Such evaluations contributed to Bolton's failure to secure Senate confirmation as

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ambassador to the UN, and hence he assumed the post as a recess appointee. Whether Bolton will assume more pragmatic stances as National Security Advisor under Trump is unclear.

US foreign policy under the Trump administration has been moulded by the character of the president, as well as by his advisors, those with the most elaborated ideologies and visions of the role of the US in the world having considerable influence. As a result, there has been a tendency to be assertive in defence of what the president perceives to be necessary to defend US interests against not only competition from other countries but also such threats as waves of immigrants who would undercut America's cultural, political and social identity. Furthermore, there is an inclination towards what is commonly characterised as hard power, that is, the use of coercion together with enticements to secure US objectives. US foreign policy has also become more interventionist and unilateral, in part, because of Trump's instincts and his advisors' ideologies.

In his January 2018, State of the Union address to Congress, President Trump was described in *The New York Times* as having an 'ominous view of America's international role . . . emphasizing adversaries over allies, threats over opportunities, and a world to be pacified rather than elevated' (Landler 2018: A15). Mr Trump assured his audience that the US would defeat rivals such as China and claimed success in liberating 'almost 100 percent of the territory once held by the killers in Iraq and Syria' (Landler 2018: A15). The president also committed himself to strengthening US military power including its nuclear weaponry. With respect to Latin America, the president expressed a commitment to continue sanctions on Venezuela and Cuba. This was in line with his policy to

> punish countries that split with the United States over what he called America's sovereign right to make this recognition .... That is why, tonight, I am asking Congress to pass legislation to help insure American foreign assistance dollars always serve American interests, and only go to America's friends. (Landler 2018: A15)

In a review of President Trump's foreign policy after his first year in office, the Journalist Steven Erlanger concluded,

> Since the first of the year [2018], President Trump has attacked a variety of countries in Twitter posts, urging protesters to overthrow the Iranian government, threatening to blow up North Korea and calling for cuts to aid to the Palestinians. In bluster and tone he has begun 2018 where he left off. (Erlanger 2018: A1)

This position differed substantially from previous presidents, both Republican and Democratic, thereby sowing confusion about US intentions

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internationally. In addition, what Trump has said and tweeted was often subsequently contradicted or not pursued. Such factors have contributed to a steep decline in worldwide confidence in the US global leadership. In a Pew Research Center 2017 survey of attitudes in 37 countries including some of the US' closest allies in Asia, Europe and the Americas, only 22 per cent expressed confidence in Trump's leadership. In the Western Hemisphere, only 14 per cent of Brazilians, 12 per cent of Chileans, 5 per cent of Mexicans, 15 per cent of Colombians, 17 per cent of Peruvians, 13 per cent of Argentinians and 20 per cent of Venezuelans expressed confidence in his leadership (Wike *et al.* 2017: 1–3). Evidence of declining support for US leadership in Latin America under Trump helps partially explain why the president did not attend the VIII Summit of the Americas in April 2018. Instead, Vice President Mike Pence represented the US and emphasised in his meetings the need to pressure the Maduro government in Venezuela to 'return to democracy'. The vice president also spent considerable time attempting to garner support for the US, French and British bombing of chemical weapons sites in Syria. Both Bolivia and Cuba condemned the Allied attacks. Only Colombia and Canada backed the action. Instead, the majority of the Latin American countries called for multilateral action in accord with international law to respond to the use of chemical weapons. This reflected the historical position of Latin America against big power intervention. Overall, there was a sense at the Summit that the Trump administration lacked interest in working with Latin America on issues that had been previously supported including reducing corruption in the public and private sectors, sustainable development, poverty reduction, environmental protection, citizen security and inter-American cooperation. Trump's immigration policies, reduction in foreign aid, deployment of the National Guard to the Mexican border as well as attitude towards trade agreements has diminished receptivity towards support for US policies. In his closing remarks, the vice president castigated the Cuban government for the economic state of its citizens and violating their human rights. When the Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla responded, the vice president left. This action reflects the degree to which US–Cuban relations have frayed since normalisation was initiated by Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama in November 2014.[7]

The pursuit of normalisation of relations did not fit in with Trump's view, reinforced by Stephen Bannon, that Communist regimes posed a threat to US culture and values that must be defended as part of a more generalised effort to protect Western civilisation. Furthermore, President Trump has repeatedly asserted that the Obama administration's decision to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba was a 'bad deal', there being no major concessions from Cuba, nor a

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regime change. The resurgence of right-wing Cuban-Americans in presidential politics was also obviously influential most notably via Senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican. In addition, Senator Robert Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, having not been convicted of corruption reassumed lobbying his colleagues to support an aggressive stance towards Cuba. This included limitations on trade and travel to Cuba, as well as the reduction of US embassy staff in Havana and Cuban diplomats in Washington. Overall, the Trump administration's lack of commitment to substantial international cooperation has also affected the US stance towards Cuba. US allies in Europe and Latin America support lifting the US embargo on Cuba and further normalisation of relations, but their pressure has not had much impact on the White House. The increasing presence of China in Cuba has raised fear in some quarters of the Trump administration that Chinese expansion into Latin America will be facilitated by Chinese involvement in Cuba as part of an effort to consolidate a hegemonic position. The weakness of the State Department under Rex Tillerson and the White House's depreciation of its expertise decreased input from the professionals in terms of US Cuba policy.

What the advent of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State and John Bolton as National Security Advisor will mean for US foreign policy towards Cuba will be revealed during the course of their tenures. In the past, both have been hawkish in their positions and strongly critical of Cuba. Both are action oriented and have supported coercion and threats of military action to achieve US objectives. In the Senate hearings prior to his confirmation as Secretary of State, Pompeo attempted to assuage preoccupations that he would pursue coercive rather than diplomatic strategies. Similarly, Bolton stated shortly after he assumed his post at the National Security Council that he believed diplomacy was superior to military action, although he had at the beginning of 2018 recommended pre-emptive action against North Korea. He continues to believe there should be regime change in North Korea, Iran as well as Cuba. The question is whether Pompeo's and Bolton's hawkish views combined with President Trump's world-view will be used as leverage or to directly intervene in other countries. Apparently, President Trump has concluded that his original foreign policy team was not effective enough and has now reached out to more aggressive proactive individuals who share his vision that the US is under siege not just from competitors such as China but also as the result of allies not being sufficiently supportive. Both Pompeo and Bolton appear to have appealed to President Trump for their bluntness and commitment to an 'America First' agenda and an aggressive foreign policy to ensure US interests. A challenge facing both will be to bring some coherence into US strategies to achieve that. The alienation of US allies during the first year of Trump's presidency also needs to be addressed. Pompeo

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may be more effective in this respect than Bolton. But neither appears to support rapprochement with Cuba and the re-initiation of the process of normalisation.

While the ideological spectrum within the Trump administration is not monolithic, the concentration of decision-making in the White House and the manipulation of a discourse of 'America First' and fear of the other have resulted in negative consequences not only for Cuba but also for US foreign policy more generally. The continued presence of individuals such as Stephen Miller in the White House as a senior policy advisor may serve to limit somewhat a more pragmatic Mike Pompeo. In addition, Bolton's positions appear more ideological than those of Pompeo, and this may further reduce the Secretary of State's influence on the president. The result may be less diplomacy and more precipitous action.

Notes

1. This article is reproduced with the kind permission of the Centro de Investigaciones de Política Internacional, Havana and is a chapter in Soraya M. Castro Moreno and Margaret E. Crahan, eds. *Donald J. Trump y las relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos en la encrucijada*. Mexico, D.F.: Grupo Editor Orfila Valentini, SA de CV, 2018, pp. 81–97.
2. Dr Margaret E. Crahan is a Senior Research Scholar and Director of the Cuba Programme at the Institute for Latin American Studies at Columbia University.
3. As the British sociologist John B. Thompson (2001: 382) asserts,

> The concept of ideology is a highly contested notion, and there is no general consensus today concerning the most appropriate way to define the term. Nevertheless, many commentators would agree that the study of ideology is an indispensable part of social and political analysis. Political systems, social and political movements, and relations of power and domination are always interwoven in complex ways with ideas, beliefs, and symbolic forms of various kinds. Power is rarely exercised without some kind of symbolic attribute or support. It is this aspect of power, and of social and political life more generally, that has come to define the distinctive province of the study of ideology.

4. The Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye propagated the concept of hard, soft and smart power that was rapidly disseminated by some analysts to distinguish variations particularly in national foreign policies. Hard power was used to describe strategies that tended to use military, financial or economic coercion to co-opt other nations. Soft power was regarded as a combination of strategies that relied on non-coercive methods including influencing social and public opinion through cultural penetration, social media, and national and transnational political and non-political organisations.

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Smart power is regarded as a combination of soft and hard power strategies that rely heavily on alliances, cooperation, and influencing institutions and various elites in the target countries.

5. In February 2013, Russian General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, published an article that offered a new strategy for defeating one's enemies that has been denominated as 'chaos theory'. In essence, it describes a type of war that is

> waged on all fronts with a range of actors and tools – for example, hackers, media, businessmen, leaks and, yes, fake news, as well as conventional and asymmetric military means. Thanks to the internet and social media, the kinds of operations Soviet psy-ops teams once could only fantasize about – upending the domestic affairs of nations with information alone – are now plausible. The Gerasimov Doctrine builds a framework for these new tools, and declares that non-military tactics are not auxiliary to the use of force but the preferred way to win. That they are, in fact, the actual war. Chaos is the strategy the Kremlin pursues: Gerasimov specifies that the objective is to achieve an environment of permanent unrest and conflict within an enemy state. (McKew 2017: 2)

6. Miller reportedly drafted President Trump's inauguration speech, as well as his presentations to the UN General Assembly in September 2017 and 2018 which focused on the need for the UN to prioritise the sovereignty of the nation state.
7. For an analysis of the background to the resumption of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US and the first 2 years of the process of normalisation, see Margaret E. Crahan and Soraya M. Castro Marino, eds, *Cuba–US Relations: Normalization and Its Challenges*. New York: Columbia University Cuba Program, 2016.

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