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**“TWEET AND RETREAT”?
PRESIDENT TRUMP’S PAKISTAN AID FREEZE**

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Abstract

President Trump is being criticized for aggressive tweets using his personal twitter account on U.S. foreign policy issues of a great strategic significance. There's continuing debate over whether or not President Trump's tweets have any significant meaning in context of U.S. foreign policy. This research paper begins by examining a traditional U.S. grand strategy – preponderance, reassurance, integration and nuclear inhibition – safeguarded by the “Blob” in guiding the United States foreign policy. It challenges some U.S. foreign policy experts and scholars' argument, due to an unalterable and irreversible nature of U.S. foreign policy's fundamentals, there's a consistency and continuity in a traditional U.S. grand strategy under President Trump's rhetoric “America First”. President Trump's tweets, statements and actions highlight a major shift in the United States foreign policy. This paper also critically explores and examines a “Tweet and Retreat” foreign policy approach - Are President Trump's tweets all rant and no strategy? To debunk the traditional U.S. foreign policy claims, this paper uses a case study of President Trump's Pakistan aid freeze tweet. The case study shows that there's a visible cohesion and synchronization in President Trump's statements and actions in collaboration with other institutions including U.S. Congress. Overall, this major research paper demystifies President Trump's heated rhetoric, actions and their strategic implications on U.S. foreign policy.

President Trump's "America First": A Paradigm Shift

Foreign policy formulation and its successful execution is an integral part of a President of the United States' job.¹ It has a direct impact on measuring the overall success or failure of a president's performance² - often defining presidential legacies.³ The profound significance and vitality of a foreign policy can be best realized in the words of President Kennedy, "Domestic policy... can only defeat us, foreign policy can kill us."⁴ According to a hegemonic presidency model, "presidents dominate the foreign policy agenda, with Congress and the media exercising little influence."⁵ Hence, President Trump's tweets and statements should be evaluated in light of a hegemonic presidency model that states: "When the president attends to an issue in foreign policy, the media and Congress follow the president's lead."⁶ It further states that presidents tend to influence foreign policy issues through continuous public attention to a specific issue, presidential drama and legislative initiatives.⁷ This provides a framework to analyze President Trump tweets in shaping and implementing U.S. foreign policy. It can further help to demystify and understand President Trump's "America First" National Security Strategy (NSS)⁸ – a grand strategy – in guiding U.S. foreign policy as a reflection of the President of the United States' (POTUS) vision of the

¹ Jeffrey S. Peake, "Presidential Agenda Setting in Foreign Policy" (Texas A&M University, 1999), 7.

² George C. Edwards III, William Mitchell, and Reed Welch, "Explaining Presidential Approval: The Significance of Issue Salience," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (February 1995): 108, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111760>.

³ Peake, "Presidential Agenda Setting in Foreign Policy," 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ The White House, "President Donald J. Trump's Foreign Policy Puts America First," The White House, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-foreign-policy-puts-america-first/>.

world.⁹ An in-depth analysis of U.S. foreign policy can provide a best measure to gauge President Trump's tweets' influence in shaping it.

An eminent international security and strategy scholar, Patrick Porter, argues that “an interaction of power and habit makes U.S. grand strategy stable.”¹⁰ According to his argument, the United States' economic and military power primacy is perpetuated by the security interests of Washington's influential foreign policy establishment known as the “Blob” - making U.S. grand strategy hard to change.¹¹ Porter's power and habit theoretical framework suggests that U.S. grand strategy is embedded in prior established beliefs of the United States place in the international order which leaves no room for policy decision-makers to deliberate beyond the boundaries of already set parameters of the U.S. traditional power rationales.¹² The traditional grand strategy has four components – preponderance, reassurance, integration and nuclear inhibition – immune to any significant changes despite shifts between presidencies.¹³ This has resulted in Washington's created “security bureaucracy” also called as “foreign policy elite” or “primacists” or “the blob” that drives and shapes U.S. foreign policy.¹⁴ However, according to Porter, this elite foreign policy establishment only move towards a shift in the grand strategy when there's an extreme discomfort to maintain the status quo from rapidly changing external conditions and “determined agents of change willing to incur domestic costs to drive it.”¹⁵ For instance, President Richard Nixon resolved towards making a hard shift in the United States traditional grand strategy to ease off multiple simultaneous domestic and external pressures, which caused a rift with the Washington's elite security establishment. Likewise, President Trump

⁹ Don Snider, “The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision,” (The Strategic Studies Institute, March 1995), 1.

¹⁰ Patrick Porter, “Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment,” *International Security* 42, no. 04 (May 1, 2018): 11, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00311.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

is also facing/creating chaotic circumstances that require a systematic review of the existing grand strategy. Porter admits that President Trump is a non-traditionalist and an anti- Blob president.¹⁶ In his argument, Porter accepts that current accounts of U.S. grand strategy are inadequate to support its continuity.¹⁷ Henceforth, I argue that President Trump's "America First" doctrine demonstrates a shift in a traditional U.S. grand strategy. In this research paper, I propose that it's necessary to understand President Trump's foreign policy as a lynchpin to U.S. grand strategy. To further understand Trump's strategy, there's a need to pay attention to his policy and structural initiatives, instead of simply "focusing in the usual way on signature legislation or grand political bargains."¹⁸ Moreover, we cannot determine the role of the president in foreign policy agenda setting without exploring both presidential influence on the U.S. foreign policy agenda and the makeup of the president's own agenda.¹⁹

The critics of President Trump argue that Trump tweets are his own personal snap decisions, idiosyncratic behavior and coercive language.²⁰ This argument is over simplified and generally fails to acknowledge the significance of a presidential influence in U.S. foreign policy agenda setting. For instance, President Trump has been consistently calling Pakistan out for its non-cooperative and dubious behavior. In his very first tweet of 2018, President Trump used his twitter account, [@realdonaldtrump](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump), to criticize the United States ally and an important coalition partner state, Pakistan, on war against terrorism, for exploiting billions of dollars of U.S. aid through lies and deceit by its inaction against terrorist organizations. He ended the tweet showing a resolve to bring this conduct to an end. Even before, as early in 2011, an Indian tv channel, *NDTV*, reported that "Trump had called for an urgent pull-back

¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸ Michael Williams, "Trump's Genius," Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS), accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2017/07/09/trumps-genius/>.

¹⁹ Peake, "Presidential Agenda Setting in Foreign Policy," 6.

²⁰ Daniel Kurtzer, "The United States and the Middle East in the Age of Trump: Tweet and Retreat" (Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, October 9, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aC0IA8FOS5k>.

on aid to Pakistan unless it demolishes its nuclear arsenal.”²¹ Likewise in July 2012, way before Trump’s decision to run for the U.S. presidency, he criticized Pakistan in his tweet for its inaction against Bin Laden: “When will Pakistan apologize to us for providing safe sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden for 6 years?! Some "ally.””²² Hence, President Trump has been consistent on bringing attention to Pakistan’s issue while calling Islamabad out for its non-cooperative and dubious behavior. This will be further explored in a case study of President Trump’s Pakistan aid freeze.

‘Tweet and Retreat’ Approach

In terms of explaining his tweets in U.S. foreign policy perspective, Daniel Kurtzer, a former U.S. career diplomat and professor of Middle East policy studies at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, labeled President Trump’s foreign policy as “Tweet and Retreat” approach.²³ According to Kurtzer:

“He huffs and puffs on Twitter — shaming allies, threatening adversaries, promising cosmic responses to perceived slights, and engaging in bellicose, rhetorical excess — and then does nothing. He reverts to his risk-averse posture, but in his wake he leaves scars and sows confusion among friend and foe alike.”²⁴

²¹ NDTV, “Pakistan No Friend of US: Donald Trump,” *NDTV*, May 10, 2011, <https://www.ndtv.com/video/news/news/pakistan-no-friend-of-us-donald-trump-199168>.

²² Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 05 July 2012, 1:22 p.m. <https://bit.ly/2BxbTXT>

²³ Daniel Kurtzer, “The ‘Tweet and Retreat’ Foreign Policy of Donald Trump,” *Daily News*, accessed December 20, 2018, <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-tweet-and-retreat-foreign-policy-20180725-story.html>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

So, in his view, President Trump's tweets cannot be mistaken for U.S. foreign policy, since tweets are all rants, no strategy.²⁵ As there's nothing emerging out his tweets, they don't mean anything.²⁶ For instance, President Trump tweeted on 30th November 2017 demeaning the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by calling him "Little rocket man"²⁷ and responded to the North Korean leader's statement in his tweet "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!"²⁸ In response to Trump's twitter outburst, Ben Cardin, Md., ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made it clear in a statement that "no one should think that a conflict with North Korea will be a quick little glorious war, or be tempted by false hopes that North Korea's nuclear program can be destroyed with a single antiseptic surgical strike."²⁹ However, President Trump backtracked on his aggressive posturing: "they will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen."³⁰ Later he met the North Korean leader in a historic summit held in Singapore. However, as the North Korean regime failed to fulfill its summit promises, nothing much has changed on the ground regarding U.S. foreign policy on North Korea.³¹

Similarly, Kurtzer presents Iran, another U.S. adversary state that President Trump has aggressively been targeting in his tweets. Iran has a significant role in the Middle East power politics. Iran's nuclear program and "forward defense"³² policy – a policy embedded in exploiting weak states through proxies in countering Israeli and U.S. hegemony in the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Kurtzer, "The United States and the Middle East in the Age of Trump: Tweet and Retreat."

²⁷ Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 30 November 2017, 4:25 a.m. <https://bit.ly/2BG3Mrj>

²⁸ Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 02 January 2018, 4:49 p.m. <https://bit.ly/2rUCMj7>

²⁹ The Washington Post, "Trump Is Playing a Dangerous Game with North Korea," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 2017.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kurtzer, "The 'Tweet and Retreat' Foreign Policy of Donald Trump."

³² The International Crisis Group, "Iran's Priorities in a Turbulent Middle East," (International Crisis Group, April 13, 2018), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/184-irans-priorities-turbulent-middle-east>.

region³³ – has been a cause of serious concern for U.S. administrations since Ayatollah Khomeini’s Islamic Revolution in 1979. In July 2015, Obama administration’s exhaustive diplomatic efforts along with the P5+1 group of world powers – the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany – resulted in curtailing Iran’s pursuit for a nuclear deterrence. In other words, Iran’s quest to nuclear deterrence was “at least temporarily dispelled by the 2015 nuclear accord.”³⁴ After assuming office of the president of the United States, Donald Trump kept lashing out against the Iranian regime in his tweets. On 12 January 2018, President Trump reluctantly waived a range of sanctions against Iran but warned that he would withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal by mid-May unless he “secure[d] our European allies’ agreement to fix [its] terrible flaws.”³⁵ On 8 May 2018, President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from Iran Nuclear Deal³⁶ – the announcement was live broadcasted on his twitter account – and imposition of the “highest level of economic sanction”³⁷ on the Iranian regime. Later in July 2018, he again responded to the Iranian threat in the all-caps tweet, that they “WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE.”³⁸ Kurtzer calls it like many other Trump’s tweets “all rant, no strategy.”³⁹ He argues that the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) was a great agreement from the P5 +1 countries perspective.⁴⁰ Now due to Trump’s decision to pull the United States out of the agreement, Iran is exploiting the situation to its own advantage.⁴¹ Kurtzer claimed that President Trump had tweeted threats to Iran without consulting his

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ American Journal of International Law, “President Trump Withdraws the United States from the Iran Deal and Announces the Reimposition of Sanctions,” *American Journal of International Law* 112, no. 3 (July 2018): 514–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2018.67>.

³⁶ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 08 May 2018, 11:52 a.m. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/993926510003277825>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 22 July 2018, 8:24 p.m. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1021234525626609666?lang=en>

³⁹ Kurtzer, “The ‘Tweet and Retreat’ Foreign Policy of Donald Trump.”

⁴⁰ Kurtzer, “The United States and the Middle East in the Age of Trump: Tweet and Retreat.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

military advisors, on the U.S. preparedness to take a military action against Iran.⁴² Therefore, Kurtzer concludes, Trump’s tweet and retreat approach is of a “proverbial playground bully”⁴³ – “just like the bully who runs from the real fight, Trump retreats, leaving it to his people to spin nothing into strategy.”⁴⁴

Logically, Trump’s “Tweet and Retreat” approach argument leads to questions like what is the balance of costs and benefits of President Trump’s “tweet and retreat” foreign policy to America and the world? Aren’t President Trump’s tweets an open threat to the United States traditional grand strategy of primacy? Can “tweet and retreat” approach be applied on all President Trump’s tweets and subsequently to U.S. foreign policy? And, are President Trump tweets on U.S. foreign policy issues all rants, no strategy?

A Case Study: President Trump’s Pakistan Aid Freeze Tweet



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!

4:12 AM - 1 Jan 2018

© Twitter/ Donald J. Trump

Let's examine how the U.S.-Pakistan relationship has unfolded since the Cold- War up until 9/11 and the subsequent developments in the region, involving Pakistan’s all powerful military establishment, which is a frequent target of President Trump’s scathing rhetoric.

⁴² Kurtzer, “The ‘Tweet and Retreat’ Foreign Policy of Donald Trump.”

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

On 1st January 2018, President Trump used his twitter account, [@realdonaldtrump](https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump), to criticize the United States ally and coalition partner state on war against terrorism, Pakistan, for exploiting billions of dollars of U.S. aid through lies and deceit by its inaction against the terrorists. He ends the tweet with a resolve to bring this conduct to an end. This was President Trump's very first tweet of 2018. Though President Trump's tweet wasn't surprising as "a president who does not like America's best allies was never going to smile on Pakistan."⁴⁵ However, publicly fulminating a U.S. major non-NATO ally (MNNA) with words "nothing but lies & deceit"⁴⁶ by a U.S. president was unprecedented. The United States policy options toward Pakistan are "complex and imperfect"⁴⁷ which is an irreparable impasse between the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.⁴⁸ With a history of U.S. foreign policy breakdowns as "frenemies"⁴⁹ which he saw is not moving in America's way;⁵⁰ indeed, this has been the main reason behind President Trump's aggressive rhetoric on Pakistan.

A Background: The U.S. and Pakistan Relations

The U.S.-Pakistan relations have ranged from being closest allies to a security threat for each other.⁵¹ After its independence from the British Raj in 1947, Pakistan turned towards the United States for economic and military assistance. Pakistan – a newly independent state with a fragile economy and under equipped military – was deeply dependent on the great

⁴⁵ The Economist, "Lexington: Trump and Pakistan," *The Economist*; London, December 8, 2018.

⁴⁶ Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 01 January 2018, 4:12 a.m. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/947802588174577664>

⁴⁷ Touqir Hussain, "U.S.-Pakistan Engagement: The War on Terrorism and Beyond," United States Institute of Peace, 2, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2005/07/us-pakistan-engagement-war-terrorism-and-beyond>.

⁴⁸ C. Christine Fair, "The US–Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror," *Contemporary South Asia* 20, no. 2 (June 2012): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2012.670204>.

⁴⁹ Peter R. Mansoor, "The United States And Pakistan: Frenemies On The Brink," Hoover Institution, April 26, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/united-states-and-pakistan-frenemies-brink>.

⁵⁰ The Economist, "Lexington: Trump and Pakistan."

⁵¹ Hussain, "U.S.-Pakistan Engagement," 2.

powers and their institutions. Due to Pakistan's geo-strategic position, U.S. leaders have viewed the Pakistani military as an important defense against the Communist expansionism in South Asia.⁵² Nevertheless, the United States and Pakistan relations are based on a "transactional relationship";⁵³ there are no common "cultural or ideological affinities"⁵⁴ between the U.S. and Pakistan. Right from the beginning, instead of establishing a long-term strategic partnership between the two countries, Washington centered its relations with Islamabad on a short-term self-interest basis.⁵⁵ This is one of the main causes of a trust deficit in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. However, Pakistan's strategic and geographic location in South Asia and the regional geopolitical conditions brought it closer to the United States by the two events: "the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the attacks of September 11, 2001."⁵⁶ All in all, in the post 9/11 decade, U.S. provided some \$21 billion in defense and economic assistance to Pakistan.⁵⁷ By the time President Obama left the White House, U.S. had given "\$33 billion in military and economic aid in an attempt to convince the Pakistani government to cooperate with the United States."⁵⁸

The Trust Deficit

In years since 9/11, the Bush and Obama administrations both used "carrots" in the form of vast military and economic aid to win Pakistan's genuine support to end the Taliban and the Haqqani network insurgency in Afghanistan.⁵⁹ However, the renewed U.S.-Pakistan

⁵² Mansoor, "The United States And Pakistan."

⁵³ Adrien Schu, "Les turpitudes d'un mariage sans amour : une analyse historique et prospective de la relation pakistano-américaine," *Politique américaine* N° 22, no. 2 (2013): 74, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-americaine-2013-2-page-73.htm>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Fair, "The US-Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror," 243.

⁵⁸ Mansoor, "The United States And Pakistan."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

strategic alliance immediately after 9/11 was only able to alter Pakistan's behavior to a certain extent, but not its interests.⁶⁰ Moreover, despite the fact that the United States has been providing exceptional social, economic and defence development assistance to Pakistan, both its public and military have strong anti-American sentiments.⁶¹ Even Pakistan's designation as a major non-NATO strategic ally of the U.S.⁶² in the region has failed to eliminate a trust deficit in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Though Pakistan provided substantial assistance, including ports, air bases, and ground lines of control,⁶³ to the U.S. war in Afghanistan, Pakistan never abandoned its support in providing safe havens not only to the Afghan insurgents but also to Al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan's tribal areas.⁶⁴ Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (I.S.I.) continued to exercise its influence over the Afghan Taliban. In this double game, the powerful Pakistani military, which controls the I.S.I., characterizes the Taliban into the "good" Taliban and the "bad" Taliban,⁶⁵ while striking against the bad Taliban factions in Pakistan but tolerating or helping others.

As early as President Obama's first presidential term, as the United States moved towards lessening its dependence upon Pakistan, the U.S. government started to opt for "more aggressive set of policies aimed at containing the threats posed by Pakistan."⁶⁶ Even during his presidential candidacy in July of 2008, Obama expressed his administration's priorities on terrorist hideouts inside Pakistan, "We must make it clear that if Pakistan cannot or will not act, we will take out high-level terrorist targets like bin Laden, if we have

⁶⁰ Schu, "Les turpitudes d'un mariage sans amour," 85.

⁶¹ Fair, "The US-Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror," 243.

⁶² Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Why Pakistan Supports Terrorist Groups, and Why the US Finds It so Hard to Induce Change," The Brookings Institution, January 5, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/05/why-pakistan-supports-terrorist-groups-and-why-the-us-finds-it-so-hard-to-induce-change/>.

⁶³ Fair, "The US-Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror," 247.

⁶⁴ Schu, "Les turpitudes d'un mariage sans amour," 87.

⁶⁵ Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban: How to Win in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): 37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20699620>.

⁶⁶ Fair, "The US-Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror," 245.

them in our sights.”⁶⁷ This policy was seen as being practically executed in a daring “Operation Neptune Spear”⁶⁸ to kill/capture the infamous Al Qaeda’s leader, Osama bin Laden, inside Pakistan. On May 1, 2011, President Obama confirmed in a televised address that Osama bin Laden – the most wanted terrorist – was killed in a U.S. Navy SEAL team’s raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan.⁶⁹ It was reported that Osama bin Laden had been living with 3 of his wives at the raided compound within the jurisdiction of Abbottabad Cantonment, an area controlled by the Pakistani military, approximately 30 miles from Islamabad.⁷⁰ During this unilateral military operation, the SEALs team remained on ground for approximately 45 minutes and returned with Bin Laden’s body and other intelligence-value material to the U.S. airbase in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.⁷¹ Later, in a press briefing on the SEAL’s operation, John Brennan, Assistant to President Obama for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, while answering the question on Pakistani authorities involvement in hiding bin Laden, was skeptical of Pakistan’s role: “I think it’s inconceivable that bin Laden did not have a support system in the country that allowed him to remain there for an extended period of time.”⁷² Once again, Pakistan was angry and embarrassed at being left in the dark about the Bin Laden’s raid by the U.S. government.⁷³ Pakistan continued to rely upon “militancy as a foreign policy tool,”⁷⁴ while using its nuclear weapons and regional geopolitics to extract economic and military concessions from the U.S. and international community. However, a

⁶⁷ The White House, “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan, 5/2/2011,” whitehouse.gov, May 2, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/02/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-and-assistant-president-homela>.

⁶⁸ Global Security.Org, “Operation Neptune Spear - Raid on Osama Bin Laden’s Hideout Compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan,” accessed January 13, 2019, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/neptune-spear.htm>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The White House, “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan, 5/2/2011.”

⁷³ Gerald F. Seib, “U.S. News --- CAPITAL JOURNAL: U.S., Pakistan, Through Thick and Thin,” *Wall Street Journal, Eastern Edition; New York, N.Y.*, May 31, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/869095287/abstract/2E7D627DA9634E8APQ/1>.

⁷⁴ Fair, “The US–Pakistan Relations after a Decade of the War on Terror,” 251.

diplomat, who had long been involved in the U.S.-Pakistan diplomacy relates the relationship to a “Catholic marriage: There may be problems, but divorce isn't an option.”⁷⁵

U.S. Government’s Response to President Trump’s Aid Freeze Tweet

From a U.S. perspective, seeing the Bush and Obama administrations’ “carrots” foreign policy failure in getting the desired outcomes, President Trump decided to drop the “carrots” and opted for “sticks”⁷⁶; a coercive strategy towards Pakistan. This coercive approach was an outcome of years of failure to get desired outcomes for which U.S. paid billions of dollars to Pakistan. Perhaps, he assumed Pakistan as the worst U.S. ally to persevere.⁷⁷ On August 21, 2017, President Trump criticized Pakistan’s role in a speech on his administration’s new Afghan and South Asia strategy.⁷⁸ Calling out Pakistan on its “bad behavior”⁷⁹ President Trump said: “The next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach and how to deal with Pakistan. We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, he stressed on Pakistan to change its behavior too, “We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars ... It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace.”⁸¹ Likewise, on December 18, 2017, President Trump presented his administration’s first National Security Strategy (NSS) Report 2017.⁸² As a reflection of President Trump’s vision of the world and his

⁷⁵ Seib, “U.S. News --- CAPITAL JOURNAL.”

⁷⁶ Mansoor, “The United States And Pakistan.”

⁷⁷ The Economist, “Lexington: Trump and Pakistan.”

⁷⁸ Mansoor, “The United States And Pakistan.”

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The White House, “Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia,” The White House, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The White House, “National Security Strategy 2017” (The White House, December 18, 2017), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017.pdf>.

administration's foreign policy,⁸³ the NSS follows the same coercive rhetoric on Pakistan: "We will insist that Pakistan take decisive action against militant and terrorist groups operating from its soil."⁸⁴ Later, advancing President Trump's new South Asia strategy, while addressing American troops in Afghanistan, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence reinforced the stance: "President Trump has put Pakistan on notice."⁸⁵ Overall, the NSS continues to reinforce President Trump's rhetoric "America First" and what the United States government's policy priorities and expectations are, regarding Pakistan. Thus, indicating steps that are necessary to be taken by the Pakistani government to maintain the United States' security and economic assistance in the future.

A day after President Trump's Pakistan aid freeze tweet, on January 2, 2018, Heather Nauert, U.S. Department of State's spokesperson, in a department's press briefing endorsed President Trump's Pakistan's aid freeze tweet. She stated that President Trump's statement was not only his own opinions or concerns, but these concerns were shared by many other U.S government officials: "The President had expressed that concern months ago. He expressed this at the beginning of the administration, as have many officials in the United States Government."⁸⁶ Furthermore, on the question of the Pakistani Government's rebuttal of the total U.S. aid amount quoted in President Trump's tweet, i.e., 33 billion dollars,⁸⁷ Ms. Nauert agreed with President Trump's quoted figure, "I would go with what he said."⁸⁸ Similarly, on the same day January 2, 2018, Sarah H. Sanders, the White House press secretary, justified President Trump's aid freeze tweet on Pakistan. On Pakistan's issue, while

⁸³ Richard Fontaine, "Trump Should Mind the Gaps in His National Security Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, December 21, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/trump-mind-gaps-national-security-strategy/>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Mujib Mashal, "Visiting Afghanistan, Pence Says U.S. Will 'See This Through,'" *The New York Times*, October 15, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/22/world/asia/mike-pence-afghanistan.html>.

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of State, "Department Press Briefing by Spokesperson Heather Nauert" (U.S. Department of State, January 2, 2018), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2018/01/276817.htm>.

⁸⁷ Khawaja M. Asif, (@KhawajaMASif), Twitter post, 02 January 2018, 6:35 a.m.

<https://twitter.com/KhawajaMASif/status/948201021356085248>

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Department Press Briefing - January 2, 2018."

addressing the White House’s first press briefing of 2018, Ms. Sanders reaffirmed President Trump’s commitment to his new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia: “Pakistan is not fulfilling its obligations. The President is simply following through on a commitment that he made, because this is a President that does what he says he’s going to do.”⁸⁹ Moreover, she made it clear that the U.S. government’s actions would follow President Trump’s tweet soon, “In terms of specific actions, I think you’ll see some more details come out on that in the next 24 to 48 hours.”⁹⁰ And they did.

Three days after President Trump’s aid freeze tweet, on January 4, 2018, senior U.S. State Department officials on security assistance to Pakistan announced suspension of a security assistance to Pakistan which included \$255 million dollars for FY16 Foreign Military Financing (FMF) that had already been announced in September 2017.⁹¹ In a press briefing, the senior State Department’s officials told that the aid suspension also included Coalition Support Funds (CSF) for Pakistan, whereas U.S. civilian assistance programs in Pakistan were exempted from the suspension.⁹² This across-the-board freeze – as much as \$1.3 billion in annual aid to Pakistan – was the most tangible sign of the U.S. government’s prompt actions triggered by the President Trump’s tweet. Initially, the aid freeze was temporary, not permanent; a pressure tactic – as a part of cohesive and coercive strategy – to make “Pakistan take the decisive action against terrorist and militant groups that [the United States] seek.”⁹³ However, on 31st July 2018, U.S. State Department announced relocation of much of the aid allocated for Pakistan to elsewhere.⁹⁴ Likewise, a month later, the U.S.

⁸⁹ The White House, “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders,” The White House, accessed January 18, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/press-briefing-press-secretary-sarah-sanders-010218/>.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Background Briefing with Senior State Department Officials on Security Assistance to Pakistan,” U.S. Department of State, accessed January 19, 2019, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/01/276858.htm>.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ U.S. Department of State, “Background Briefing with Senior State Department Officials on Security Assistance to Pakistan.”

⁹⁴ Eric Schmitt, “Rise of Critic in Pakistan Could Strain U.S. Efforts,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 2018, Late Edition-Final edition, sec. Foreign Desk; SECTA.

military also made a final decision to cancel \$300 million aid in the Coalition Support Funds (CSF) to Pakistan.⁹⁵ According to a Pentagon official, “U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, in particular, had an opportunity to authorize \$300 million in CSF funds, if he saw concrete Pakistani actions to go after insurgents. Mattis chose not to.”⁹⁶ In another instance, on 22nd March 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security, Commerce imposed sanctions on seven private Pakistani companies for being involved in “proliferation of unsafeguarded nuclear activities” placing them on its “Entity List.”⁹⁷ These joint sanctions made harder for the Pakistani companies to operate in the United States and do business with U.S. companies.

U.S. Congress’ response to President Trump’s Aid Freeze Tweet

Congress as an institution, “with its control of the purse and the power of the veto,”⁹⁸ has been exercising and occasionally exerting its authority over the chief executive's foreign policy actions; hence it has central role in shaping U.S. foreign policy, especially foreign aid⁹⁹ to force compliance on Pakistan.

U.S. LEGISLATION ON PAKISTAN (1990 - 2004)

August 1990:
Pressler
Amendment
Sanctions

The 1985 Pressler Amendment authorized banning most military and economic assistance to Pakistan if an annual presidential determination that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device was not given. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush was the first to withhold such a determination.

⁹⁵ Reuters, “Exclusive: Pentagon Cancels Aid to Pakistan over Record on Militants,” *Reuters*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-military-exclusive-idUSKCN1LH3TA>.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Reuters, “Pakistan Defends Nuclear Safety Record after U.S. Sanctions Companies,” *Reuters*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-usa-sanctions-idUSKBN1H30PY>.

⁹⁸ E. Rose and A. Hussain, “United States-Pakistan Relations,” 108.

⁹⁹ Peake, “Presidential Agenda Setting in Foreign Policy,” 185.

May 1998: Pakistani Nuclear Test Sanctions	After Pakistan's May 1998 nuclear tests, President Bill Clinton imposed additional sanctions on Pakistan, invoking the 1994 Glenn Amendment, which authorizes sanctions on non-nuclear weapon states that detonate nuclear explosions, and the Symington Amendment, which prohibits military and economic assistance to any country that delivers and/or receives nuclear assistance.
October 1999: "Democracy Sanctions"	After Musharraf's October 12, 1999, coup, Congress invoked Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act, prohibiting all U.S. economic and military aid toward Pakistan.
Sep./Oct. 2001: Sanctions lifted after 9/11	The Glenn, Symington, and Pressler sanctions were waived by President George W. Bush under the authority given him by an earlier piece of legislation known as Brownback II. Congress voted to allow President Bush to waive the "democracy sanctions" imposed on Pakistan through September 30, 2003. These democracy sanctions have since been waived annually.
December 2004: Ackerman Amendment	This amendment to the Intelligence Authorization Act requires the CIA, over a five-year period, to make annual reports to Congress about Pakistan's nuclear activities, democratic development, and counterterror efforts.

Source: "U.S.-Pakistan Engagement: The War on Terrorism and Beyond" by Touqir Hussain, Special Report No. 145, July 2005.

From the table above, it can be deduced that in the period from 1990 – 2004, U.S Congress had been extending its influence through “sanctions regime.”¹⁰⁰

Generally, the economic and military sanctions were being used as a strategic tool to produce a deterrence effect to make Pakistan comply with the U.S. regional interests.¹⁰¹ However, most of these sanctions were imposed in the post-Cold War period to deter Pakistan's “nuclear proliferation activities and its growing clandestine support to terror outfits and Islamic fundamentalism.”¹⁰² In the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration with the congressional vote lifted all sanctions to suit immediate American interests, making a strategic U-turn to win Pakistan’s assistance in the war in Afghanistan.¹⁰³ In September 2017, a few days after President Trump unveiled his new Afghanistan and South Asia

¹⁰⁰ Shubhangi Pandey, “US Sanctions on Pakistan and Their Failure as Strategic Deterrent,” *ORF* (blog), 2, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/42912-u-s-sanctions-on-pakistan-and-their-failure-as-strategic-deterrent/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8.

strategy, U.S. Senate Committee on Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related programs passed an appropriation bill for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018.¹⁰⁴ The bill imposed military and economic sanctions against Pakistan, unless the Secretary of State certifies to the congressional committees that Pakistan is cooperating with the US in counterterrorism efforts in the region.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, Congress was taken on board regarding the Pakistani aid freeze by the Trump administration.¹⁰⁶ On January 5, 2018, Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, while applauding the Trump administration for suspending security assistance to Pakistan said, “The Trump administration’s calibrated approach is designed to encourage Pakistan to take the necessary steps against the Haqqani network. I applaud the President and his National Security team...”¹⁰⁷ Later on January 24, 2018, Senator Rand Paul (R) introduced a bill to prohibit Department of State or the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds from being made available as assistance to the government of Pakistan.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, following the Trump administration’s suspension of aid to Pakistan, the U.S. House of Representatives also joined the Senate to end US economic aid.¹⁰⁹ On February 7, 2018, Republican Congressmen Mark Sanford from South Carolina and Thomas Massie from Kentucky, introduced a bill to prohibit the US State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) from sending American

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Congress, “S. Rept. 115-152 - DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2018,” accessed January 28, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/senate-report/152>.

¹⁰⁵ Pandey, “US Sanctions on Pakistan and Their Failure as Strategic Deterrent,” 6.

¹⁰⁶ Arshad Mohammed and Jonathan Landay, “U.S. Suspends at Least \$900 Million in Security Aid to Pakistan,” *Reuters*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-aid-idUSKBN1ET2DX>.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Senate, “Corker Applauds Trump Administration Decision to Suspend Security Assistance to Pakistan” (U.S. Senate, January 5, 2018), <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/corker-applauds-trump-administration-decision-to-suspend-security-assistance-to-pakistan>.

¹⁰⁸ Sen. Rand Paul, “Text - S.2333 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): A Bill to Prohibit Assistance to the Government of Pakistan, and to Require the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development to Transfer Amounts to the Highway Trust Fund Equivalent to Historic Levels of Assistance to Pakistan.,” Pub. L. No. S. 2333 (2018), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2333/text>.

¹⁰⁹ Anwar Iqbal, “Bill to End US Aid to Pakistan Moved in House of Representatives Too,” *DAWN.COM*, February 7, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1387821>.

taxpayer money to Pakistan.¹¹⁰ Even a year since President Trump’s aid freeze tweet, members of U.S. Congress have been keeping up pressure over Pakistan to take a decisive action against the Taliban and Haqqani Network in fulfilment to its commitment to the regional peace and stability. On January 3, 2019, Congressman Andy Biggs introduced a bill – [H.R.73](#) – to terminate the designation of Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally, and for other purposes.¹¹¹ The bill introduced in the 116th Congress Session call upon the president to provide certification to Congress over Pakistan’s actions against the Taliban and Haqqani Network, including arresting and prosecuting its leaders.¹¹²

According to Sameer Lalwani, co-director of the South Asia program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington, “It is a calibrated, incremental ratcheting up of pressure on Pakistan.”¹¹³ Perhaps, President Trump’s aid freeze tweet was part of a broader strategy – a cohesive & coercive strategy – to change U.S. grand habits in accordance to Pakistan’s behavior by collectively increasing pressure on Pakistan’s security apparatus. Overall, there has been a clear consistency and cohesion between President Trump, U.S. administration and other U.S. institutions on Trump’s vision, policy, demands and language vis-à-vis Pakistan. Hence, the case study of President Trump’s Pakistan aid freeze tweet disapproves a narrative of the ‘tweet and retreat’ foreign policy approach.

Argument: Demystifying President Trump’s Tweets and Foreign Policy

According to well-known U.S. foreign policy scholars and experts also called the Washington “insiders”, as per conventional diplomacy wisdom, President Donald J. Trump is

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Andy Biggs, “H.R.73 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): To Terminate the Designation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally, and for Other Purposes.,” webpage, January 3, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/73>.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Reuters, “Exclusive: Pentagon Cancels Aid to Pakistan over Record on Militants.”

running an incoherent U.S. foreign policy.¹¹⁴ As a Chief Diplomat, President Trump is being accused of treating friends and foes equally; trusting both Russia's Putin and Germany's Merkel,¹¹⁵ playing a zero-sum game both in domestic and international politics, while calling the U.S.-led international system as outdated, too costly and too restrictive for his case-by-case deal-making.¹¹⁶ His signature foreign policy rhetoric "America First" has already injected uncertainty into America's alliances, as international partners question whether Washington can be trusted to uphold its global and regional security commitments as a world hegemon.¹¹⁷ He values neither world trading system nor allies.¹¹⁸ In addition, he publicly embarrassed NATO, criticized all-weather U.S. closest ally Britain and its Prime Minister Theresa May,¹¹⁹ admired authoritarian regimes and dumped the U.S. coalition partners by deciding unilaterally to pull out U.S. troops from Syria. Furthermore, he fired his top diplomat and first secretary of state, Rex Tillerson who was a proponent of asserting U.S. primacy,¹²⁰ by a tweet and nine months later he again attacked Tillerson in a tweet branded him "dumb as a rock" and "lazy as hell".¹²¹ So far, President Trump's words, actions, policies, strategies, and tweets have done more damage rather good to his and U.S. friends than foes. For instance, he has withdrawn from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), replaced the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with a new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), backtracked on the Paris-climate agreement and labelled the European Union (EU) as a "foe".¹²² Leon Panetta,

¹¹⁴ Leon Panetta, "Leon Panetta: How to Save America From President Trump's Foreign Policy Hell | Opinion," *Newsweek*, August 10, 2018.

¹¹⁵ G. John Ikenberry, "The Plot Against American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 3 (June 2017): 1–7, https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/gji3/files/may-june_2017_foreign_affairs.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Robert B. Zoellick, "The Peril of Trump's Populist Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, November 28, 2017, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-peril-of-trumps-populist-foreign-policy-1511912230>.

¹¹⁷ Micah Zenko and Rebecca Lissner, "There Is No Trump Doctrine, and There Will Never Be One," *Foreign Policy*, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/21/there-is-no-trump-doctrine-and-there-will-never-be-one-grand-strategy/>.

¹¹⁸ The Economist, "Demolition Man; Trump's Foreign Policy," *The Economist*, June 9, 2018.

¹¹⁹ Panetta, "Leon Panetta: How to Save America From President Trump's Foreign Policy Hell."

¹²⁰ Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed," 44.

¹²¹ Carol Morello, "Tillerson Calls Trump Undisciplined. Trump Calls Tillerson 'Dumb as a Rock,'" *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2018, <https://wapo.st/2W0a4KK>.

¹²² Panetta.

a former C.I.A. director and secretary of defense under President Obama, equates President Trump's tenure as a "hell" for the American nation, which any other modern U.S. president would be embarrassed about and fail to survive politically.¹²³

President Trump's actions demonstrate not just simple a degree change in American foreign policy, but a complete change of type.¹²⁴ Unlike Mr. Trump, previous presidents brought together like-minded democracies to help repair and extend the liberal world order.¹²⁵ For instance, President Barack Obama engaged Europe, Russia and China, which bound Iran into the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.¹²⁶ Moreover, Mr. Obama united America's Asian allies around new trading rules through Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that would one day curtail Chinese ambitions.¹²⁷ In addition, the United States is one of the paramount creators of the modern postwar liberal international order (LIO).¹²⁸ U.S. as a hegemon of the international order gains advantages of the U.S. dollar as a global reserve currency domination over the global security regimes and controls global foreign direct investment (FDI).¹²⁹ Likewise, a rules-based international order "safeguards American interests and create a mechanism to help solve problems from trade to climate change."¹³⁰ This rules-based international order assures to counter competing great powers' coercion, contributing towards a safer, fairer and peaceful world.

President Trump is leading a revisionist strategy to US-led liberal world order.¹³¹ The Trump administration's post-pivot approach of "America First" clearly shows his intentions to reevaluate the United States accomplishments in global governance, multilateralism, trade, and

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ The Economist, "Demolition Man; Trump's Foreign Policy."

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Doug Stokes, "Trump, American Hegemony and the Future of the Liberal International Order," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 133, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix238>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ The Economist, "Demolition Man; Trump's Foreign Policy."

¹³¹ Ikenberry, "The Plot Against American Foreign Policy."

alliance systems. He no more wants Americans to export or give lessons on liberal values to the rest of the world. Instead, Trump envisioned a world of strong, independent sovereign states, hewing to common rules and working to address a multitude of security problems.¹³² The uncertainty and unpredictability since the U.S. presidential election 2016 has been keeping the world guessing at what he really means and where his foreign policy is heading. It seems that around the world and foreign capitals, especially those of Western liberal powers, have already started to realign their foreign policies accordingly. He wants all the countries to fully understand, respect and abide by the principles of reciprocity, meaning, they should be paying back what they receive from the United States. He reiterated his international trade policy vision during his final day speech at the APEC CEO Summit 2017, making it clear that “the current trade imbalance is not acceptable,”¹³³ and that, “from this day forward, we will compete on a fair and equal basis.”¹³⁴ Similarly, President Trump “refuses to follow any rules, traditions or processes of foreign policy.”¹³⁵ It seems that Mr. Trump’s foreign policy is entrenched in the United States’ unmatched military, diplomatic, scientific, cultural and economic power rhetoric that can bully the world.¹³⁶ In the words of Henry Kissinger, an ultimate international relations realist and a veteran statesman, “order cannot simply be ordained; to be enduring, it must be accepted as just.”¹³⁷ Hence, according to a conventional foreign affairs wisdom, all these President Trump’s debacles make a perfect recipe of a complete foreign policy overhaul. Perhaps he’s unfit for the office of the president of the United States, as opined by some.¹³⁸ However, the central question regarding his tweets remains unanswered, i.e., whether or not President Trump tweets have any successful influence on the U.S. foreign policy?

¹³² Patrick M. Cronin, “Trump’s Post-Pivot Strategy,” *The Diplomat*, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/trumps-post-pivot-strategy/>.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Zoellick, “The Peril of Trump’s Populist Foreign Policy.”

¹³⁶ The Economist, “Demolition Man; Trump’s Foreign Policy.”

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Williams, “Trump’s Genius.”

In the modern digital age, all government officials use social media, especially Twitter, for official communications and dissemination of information purposes.¹³⁹ Although President Trump is mostly known for his extensive communications via social media, particularly Twitter, it was President Obama, who was the first U.S. sitting president “who had created a Twitter account for the exclusive purpose of official government communication with the public.”¹⁴⁰ President Trump won 2016 presidential election by using modern-day tools, especially Twitter, to address and tap into strong emotions.¹⁴¹ The White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, in an official press briefing clarified the status of President Trump’s tweets. He made it clear that “the President is the President of the United States, so they’re considered official statements by the President of the United States.”¹⁴² He further explained President Trump’s communication choices, “The President is the most effective messenger on his agenda.”¹⁴³ Moreover, President Trump’s tweets are not only considered official presidential statements, but also the National Archives and Records Administration has been preserving his tweets “as ‘presidential records’ under the Presidential Records Act.”¹⁴⁴ Even foreign leaders like Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly consider President Trump’s tweets as the White House’s official statements.¹⁴⁵ Hence, there shouldn’t be any doubt in anybody’s mind on refuting President Trump’s tweets from his twitter account [@realDonaldTrump](#) as the United States government’s official communication.¹⁴⁶ Ironically, the only person who does not consider all of this a foreign policy and political disaster is Trump himself.¹⁴⁷ On the

¹³⁹ Samantha Briggs, “The Freedom of Tweets: The Intersection of Government Use of Social Media and Public Forum Doctrine,” *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems* 52 (2018): 2, <http://jlsplaw.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2018/11/Vol53-Briggs.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Morello, “Tillerson Calls Trump Undisciplined. Trump Calls Tillerson ‘Dumb as a Rock.’”

¹⁴² Elizabeth Landers, “White House: Trump’s Tweets Are ‘Official Statements,’” *CNN*, accessed January 20, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/06/politics/trump-tweets-official-statements/index.html>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Briggs, “The Freedom of Tweets,” 4–5.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ The Economist, “Demolition Man; Trump’s Foreign Policy.”

contrary, he glorifies his "tremendous success" in "breaking foreign-policy taboos".¹⁴⁸ Even Trump's senior cabinet members and advisors – mostly primacists¹⁴⁹– have been showing resentment over Twitter to address critical issues and policies of national interest. For instance, Trump's first pick to run the U.S. State Department, Rex Tillerson, "took a swipe at Twitter – not the president's use of it, but the short attention spans it has allegedly caused in many Americans."¹⁵⁰ In response to a question that Trump won office using modern day tools to tap into strong emotions, Mr. Tillerson said that "I will be honest with you. It troubles me that the American people seem to want to know so little about issues that they are satisfied with 128 characters."¹⁵¹ Ironically, Tillerson learned of his own dismissal through President Trump's tweet, "Thank you to Rex Tillerson for his service!"¹⁵² Similarly, President Trump has either fired or forced to resign all of his first cabinet's senior primacist members who had the "Blob's blessing."¹⁵³

Furthermore, in context of President Trump's Pakistan aid freeze, it's practically evident that the efficacy and utility of sanctions are optimal when they are issued and enforced multilaterally and executed with the full force of the sanctioning country behind them.¹⁵⁴ In the past, U.S. governments refrained from holding Pakistan accountable for misusing the American aid.¹⁵⁵ Instead of pursuing unilateral sanctions regimes, Trump administration has initiated multilateral and comprehensive sanctions strategy to force compliance on Pakistan. For instance, in August 2018, Reuters reported that the Trump administration quietly started "cutting Pakistani officers from coveted training and educational programs that have been a hallmark of bilateral military relations for more than a

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed," 43.

¹⁵⁰ Morello, "Tillerson Calls Trump Undisciplined. Trump Calls Tillerson 'Dumb as a Rock.'"

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, 13 March 2018, 5:44 a.m. <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/973540316656623616?lang=en>

¹⁵³ Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed," 43.

¹⁵⁴ Pandey, "US Sanctions on Pakistan and Their Failure as Strategic Deterrent," 9.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

decade.”¹⁵⁶ Similarly, as an effort to keep Islamabad under pressure, U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, indicated that the U.S. would use its influence as a largest contributor to International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stop the IMF to bailout Pakistan’s economy.¹⁵⁷ Clarifying the U.S. government’s stance on the issue of Chinese loans to Pakistan as part of China's "Belt and Road" infrastructure program, Mr. Pompeo said, "There's no rationale for IMF tax dollars -- and associated with that, American dollars that are part of the IMF funding -- for those to go to bail out Chinese bondholders..."¹⁵⁸ Another example of the Trump administration’s successful multilateral sanctions strategy is a successful placement of Pakistan on a global money-laundering watchdog’s – the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – grey list. The U.S. along with its European allies – Britain, France, and Germany – lobbied to put Pakistan under pressure to close its financing loopholes to terrorist groups.¹⁵⁹ FATF also known as Groupe d'action financière (GAFI), an inter-governmental body comprising of 35 member states and two regional organizations, deters banks and global investors from lending money to a country put on its grey list.¹⁶⁰ This resulted in a high-level political commitment from Pakistan to work with the FATF and other global regulatory institutions to address its strategic counter-terrorist financing-related deficiencies through the international anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism and proliferation (AML/CFT) regimes.¹⁶¹

In order to ascertain as to what degree President Trump has successfully extended his presidential powers over the U.S. foreign policy, it requires a careful analysis of his

¹⁵⁶ Reuters, “Exclusive.”

¹⁵⁷ Dow Jones, “U.S. Seeks to Avoid a Pakistan Bailout That Would Repay China,” *Dow Jones Newswires Chinese (English)*, August 1, 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Pakistan Added To Watch List On Global Terror Financing,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, accessed February 13, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-added-to-watch-list-on-global-terror-financing/29326165.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ The Financial Action Task Force, “Improving Global AML/CFT Compliance: On-Going Process - 19 October 2018,” accessed February 13, 2019, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/countries/a-c/bahamas/documents/fatf-compliance-october-2018.html#Pakistan>.

statements/tweets, decisions and actions since he moved into the White House. Mr. Trump moved to the White House when the U.S. was apparently tired of “being the world's policeman, frustrated by jihadists and ‘rogue-states’ like Iran, and worried by the growing challenge from China.”¹⁶² Similarly, never-ending wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, loss of manufacturing jobs and a poorly performing financial sector in the country had “only deepened a sense that the system of institutions, treaties, alliances and classically liberal values put together after 1945 was no longer benefiting ordinary Americans.”¹⁶³ On the other hand, there’s an obvious executive power of the President of the United States, granted in the U.S. constitution, that is there to be fully exploited.¹⁶⁴ Every president, including Mr. Obama, used presidential powers “to get his way abroad even if that involves threats, intimidation and, occasionally, deception.”¹⁶⁵ Also, there's been a strong and steady consolidation of presidential powers since President Reagan’s time, therefore there is more power in the United States’ executive branch now than ever before.¹⁶⁶ One should be mindful of the fact that Donald Trump as a president has very powerful roles as the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces, Chief Executive of the executive branch and the Chief Legislator, who can veto a bill passed by the United States Congress that he does not agree with.¹⁶⁷ Hence, President Trump has become a source of more unchecked power concentrated in a single person. However, the White House is not just in a chaos and indiscipline, but there’s a substantial strategy aimed at dismantling liberal power, disarming opponents,¹⁶⁸ while distracting critics with his tweets, statements and actions.

¹⁶² The Economist, “Demolition Man; Trump’s Foreign Policy.”

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ The Centre for International Policy Studies, “Trump, Year One: Chaos and Confusion on the Potomac.,” Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS), November 1, 2017, <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/event/trump-year-one-chaos-and-confusion-on-the-potomac/>.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Williams, “Trump’s Genius.”

Despite President Trump's apparently hostile revisionist policy, he's not blocking the way of emerging powers; in fact, he is acknowledging their rise and presence on the global stage. For example, during his recent visit to Asia, he praised the South East Asian countries, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia, as one of the fastest growing world economies. He highlighted Thailand's ascent into the group of upper middle-income countries in less than a generation, and Malaysia as "one of the best places in the world to do business."¹⁶⁹ Trump noted how Singapore had been transformed by "honest governance" and how the Philippines was a leader in Asia in successfully closing the gender gap.¹⁷⁰ He also acknowledged China's economic reforms towards an open market that helped in lifting 800 million people out of poverty. Moreover, he recognized the triumphs of three of the wealthiest Asian democracies: South Korea, Japan, and India.¹⁷¹ It is also important to note that President Trump's has been a very vocal proponent of protectionist measures, which is a major deviation from the past US administrations' policy. He's moving away from decades of bipartisan support for multilateral trade agreements, in favor of bilateral partnerships. The United States has been seen as a champion of multilateral rules and institutions. But with a rather persistent U.S. commitment, President Trump is moving forward with striking bilateral deals around the world. The Trump administration has already withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and successfully re-negotiated with Canada and Mexico over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It's clear that Trump's administration is not interested in any country's internal matters, as long as they are willing to play along with the United States' set of rules. For instance, in his first state visit to the Middle East, he signed defense deals with Saudi Arabia worth \$350 billion over ten years and \$110 billion immediately.¹⁷² Similarly, just before embarking on his nine days visit to Asia, President Trump hosted an agreement-signing

¹⁶⁹ Cronin, "Trump's Post-Pivot Strategy."

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed," 41.

event worth \$13.8 billion, between the Boeing Co. and Singapore International Airlines. Furthermore, on his first state visit to China, President Trump secured \$250 billion bilateral trade deal agreements with Beijing, as he vowed to change the “one-sided and unfair” trade relations with China.¹⁷³ These Trump administration’s trade deals show that President Trump wants the emerging Asian countries to step forward and take their responsibilities to face the global governance challenges. Instead of banking on the United States’ economic-military might, he wants all states to play by the rules. All the countries with enough money and financial resources should shoulder the costs and responsibilities accordingly.

President Trump’s presidency is a beginning of the post-pivot era, an era defined by disruptions, confusion, disintegration and realignment of the world order. Cracks have already started to appear in the global governance’ status quo. Trump’s ascent to the most powerful position in the world shocked many veteran ‘experts’ on American politics, given his previous status as a political outsider. But it should also be noted that he was a very successful businessman for most of his life and even a reality TV star before he stepped into the political arena. It’s still too early to assess the innovations, changes, and damages in the U.S.-led world order in the wake of rising of nationalism and populism in the United States and the UK. Though Russia, China, and other emerging powers are keeping a close watch on the changing international scenarios, hoping to exploit any shift in power to their benefit; it seems President Trump fully believe that there’s no possibility to challenge or replace the U.S. hegemonic economic-military super power anytime soon. There might be a possibility that President Trump has been given task by anti-status quo establishment within the U.S. to overhaul the United States’ political and economic system. If it is true, it would be an enormous task to challenge the Washington’s status quo establishment, but once the domestic issues of economic inequality, illegal immigration, joblessness and national security have been dealt with

¹⁷³ Cronin, “Trump’s Post-Pivot Strategy.”

prudently, the United States of America will emerge more strongly and powerfully than ever before.

Conclusion

A shift in the grand strategy of the United States of America is rare, but never beyond the bounds of possibility. There's a consensus among the international affairs scholars and experts like Patrick Porter that President Trump as an outsider poses a great challenge to the traditional U.S. foreign policy and its establishment status quo. It is also becoming evident that there's a certain shift in U.S. grand strategy under President Trump's presidency, whether the shift is a radical one or not is matter of opinion. President Trump's aggressive tweets can also be interpreted as a threat to the traditional U.S. grand strategy of primacy. Similarly, no matter how much one agrees or disagrees with President Trump's ideas or so-called impulsive behavior, it must be recognized that "his ascent to the White House against huge odds was a remarkable achievement."¹⁷⁴ This cannot simply be achieved by someone who lacks a strategic acumen altogether.¹⁷⁵ The case study of President Trump's Pakistan aid freeze clearly shows that President Trump's tweet prompted a simultaneous, swift and across the institutions response including the U.S. executive branch, government departments and Congress. This further validates the view that the Trump administration has been pursuing to change Pakistan's behavior through a consistent increase in pressure on Pakistan's security apparatus by employing a cohesive and coercive strategy. Similarly, President Trump's continued use of harsher language in his statements/tweets is a signal to all the stakeholders at home and abroad, including the Congress, U.S. government departments and Pakistani

¹⁷⁴ Williams, "Trump's Genius."

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

establishment to adjust their policies and behaviors accordingly. This fits in with the hegemonic presidency model's narrative of bringing continuous public attention to a specific issue via presidential drama and legislative initiatives. Despite a lot of heated rhetoric on Pakistan, President Trump's foreign policy has been more realistic and aggressive than his predecessors.¹⁷⁶ President Donald J. Trump exerting his dominance over the security discourse along with key administration officials, former and present - from Secretary Tillerson to Secretary Mattis – have been unequivocally consistent on U.S. foreign policy regarding Pakistan since he took office. Did he vow to take a stronger stance on Pakistan on twitter alone but then took a proverbial U-turn and showered Pakistan with more concessions, economically and militarily, or even lazily continued with the policies of the previous administrations or did he even scramble his public relations resources to contain any damage done due to his tweet? The answer is a resounding No. He did follow through in the same spirit and the letter, by cutting down further aid and limiting U.S. cooperation with Pakistan's military. He kept calling out on Pakistani leadership for their lack of effort on delivering what was once an avowed common goal between the two countries. His attitude remained unfazed by an apparent change of political leadership in Pakistan. He did not suspend the aid meant for civilian assistance programs, which shows that he does have a deeper understanding of the power dynamics in the troubled state.

President Trump's tweets endorse his anti-status quo and non-traditionalist foreign policy sentiments that contradicts with the traditional United States grand strategy based on demeaning retrenchment - making it unworthy of serious consideration. It is amply evident, therefore, that the argument presented in "Tweet and Retreat Approach" by Kurtzer typifies a very narrow and partial vision of President Trump's tweets vis-à-vis U.S. foreign policy. Since there is significant consistency and synchronization in actions taken, among President

¹⁷⁶ The Economist, "Lexington: Trump and Pakistan."

Trump's rhetoric, U.S. government's foreign policy and Congress on the case of Pakistan. Hence, what the President of the United States of America says, even in his tweets, is not trivial. It has a strategic purpose and direct policy implications and it must be taken seriously.

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