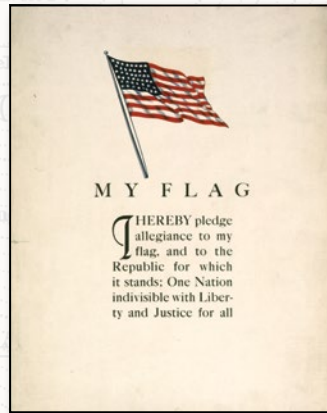


STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



Trump's New Nationalism

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Williamson Murray • Mark Moyer • Kori Schake



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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.



America Alone

Williamson Murray

Both in his campaign speeches and in his initial actions after taking office, Donald Trump has made it clear that he aims in his foreign policy to follow the path of dismantling America's alliance system of turning away an economy that has emphasized globalization to one that is protected by tariffs, and of pursuing what he called one of "America first."¹ For many Americans, at least to those with some knowledge of the last seventy-five years, Trump's direction appears to be a massive break with the past. It is not. In fact, for most of its history, the United States has followed a grand strategy that has largely involved a separation from much of the rest of the world. In the eighteenth century, there was, as George Washington pointed out, little reason for the nascent republic to engage in foreign entanglements, when a great ocean separated the United States from the European powers. Expansion to the Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century made little difference because the distances across that ocean were even greater, while there was no apparent threat in East Asia to America's interests.

All that changed in the twentieth century with the emergence of a globalized world economy even before the disastrous arrival of the First World War. That conflict eventually pulled the United States into the slaughter on the Western Front. Interestingly, President Woodrow Wilson refused to declare the United States an ally of the Entente Powers, but instead announced that America was an associated power. Only in the war's last months did American forces engage in major fighting. Nevertheless, the United States emerged as the great victor. It was now the world's dominant economic and financial power. Yet, almost immediately upon the war's conclusion, the United States withdrew into semi-isolation, refusing to join the League of Nations. The Treaty of Versailles that settled some of the outstanding differences among the powers, nevertheless, hardly lived up to the promises that the American president, Wilson, had made in bringing the United States into the conflict in April 1917. Nevertheless, in terms of the context, especially considering the egregious crimes and destruction that the German Army had committed, the Treaty of Versailles was about the most reasonable peace that one could have been expected.²

Too many historians have argued that the refusal of the United States to participate in the League of Nations after the war made World War II inevitable. That is nonsense. The election of Warren G. Harding with his slogan of a "return to normalcy" made it clear that the American people were not interested in foreign entanglements; Harding won 60

percent of the popular vote and 404 electoral votes to his opponent's 127. The one major diplomatic success of his administration, and a multilateral one at that, was the Washington Naval Conference, which allocated warship tonnages to the major powers to prevent a naval race. For the most part, the 1920s represented a relatively peaceful decade, while the US economy grew at a fast pace in the aftermath of a recession immediately after the war. The international calm allowed American presidents to dabble in issues like naval disarmament and whether the United States should join the world court, but there appeared no great threats to American security.

But the thirties were a much nastier and unforgiving decade. What had begun with the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 soon spiraled into the worst depression in world history. The passage of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in June 1930 turned what should have been a recession into a disastrous collapse of the American as well as the global economy. The act raised tariffs on over 20,000 goods; the rest of the world rapidly followed suit, and the result was that US exports and imports collapsed by over 50 percent. Besides the economic suffering the Depression and tariffs caused, they unleashed enormous political turmoil throughout the world with the appearance of governments and political leaders across the globe pledged to overthrow the international order.³

Confronting an economic collapse of epic proportions, since their company was the most dependent on exports of any major nation, the Japanese military struck at Manchuria in September 1931 to begin what they hoped would prove the creation of an autarkic economic system. The League of Nations condemned the Japanese actions, but refused to take any serious action. The Japanese immediately walked out of the League.⁴ The United States announced that it would refuse to recognize any puppet government the Japanese established in Manchuria, but it too took no action. Meanwhile, the Depression only continued to worsen; not surprisingly Americans continued to look ever more inward.

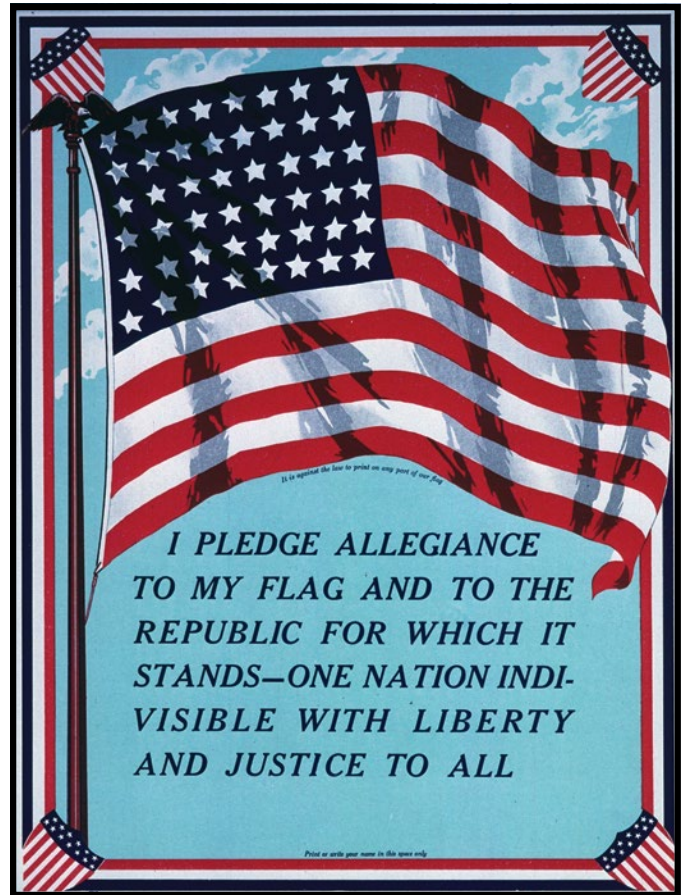
Part of that drive was the result of an international situation that continued on a path headed toward hell in a handbasket. The international arena, not only in Europe, but in Asia, appeared ever gloomier as each month passed. In October 1935, Mussolini's Italians invaded Ethiopia, a member in good standing in the League. In spite of intense popular pressure in Britain, the British and French refused to take any serious actions, beyond insignificant sanctions.

Perhaps the only excuse for the pusillanimous behavior of the Western democracies was the fact that the Germans already appeared to be a growing threat to Europe's peace. Having come to power in late January 1933, Adolf Hitler had embarked the Reich on a massive military buildup. In July 1936, a group of Spanish generals launched a coup against the elected government. The coup only partially succeeded with the result that a bitter,

ferocious civil war broke out, the Nationalist side supported by the Germans and the Italians, the Republic by Communist Russia.⁵ By 1938 the Germans were on the move in Central Europe, first chewing up Austria and then forcing the Czechs to surrender the Sudetenland, which rendered them defenseless.⁶ Meanwhile, in Asia the Japanese had begun a massive invasion of China, which they accompanied with the wholesale slaughter of civilians.

And what were the Americans doing? Burying their heads deeper and deeper in the sand. In April 1934, a senatorial committee, chaired by Gerald Nye of North Dakota, began a series of extensive hearings that came to the conclusion that the United States had become involved in the First World War because of the loans its major banks had made to the Entente Powers, and the massive export of munitions to the allies by the so-called "merchants of death." Congress's enthusiastic response to the Nye Committee and the nonsense that it served up to the media and public in its report was to pass a series of neutrality acts between 1935 and 1937. These made no distinction between the aggressor nation and those being attacked, forbade any loans or the shipment of arms to those engaged in hostilities, and forbade US citizens from traveling to war zones. Not until November 1939 was President Franklin Roosevelt able to extract the concession of "cash-and-carry" from Congress over the howls of the isolationists. That mitigating of the neutrality laws allowed the British and French to purchase armaments in the United States, but they were responsible for transporting the weapons and war material on their own ships from the United States across the Atlantic.⁷

Nevertheless, as the world situation worsened, the Roosevelt administration had begun a rearmament effort that lagged in some areas because Congress and the American public were unwilling to support greater expenditures. The increase in the navy authorized by the 1934 naval bill aimed largely at mitigating the effects of the Depression by ensuring greater employment for shipyard workers. But the Second Vinson Act of 1938



Hoover Institution Archives Poster Collection, US 04590

was a major step toward naval rearmament; it specifically authorized the construction of 105,000 tons of battleships, including the first three of the *Iowa*-class, and a major increase in cruisers and destroyers. Shortly after the fall of France Congress authorized a third massive increase in the navy, with an over 70 percent increase and no less than eighteen aircraft carriers authorized. The fact that the bill passed the House of Representatives by 316 to nothing underlined the willingness of even the isolationists to support military forces that would protect America's oceanic frontiers.

The same could not be said about Congressional willingness to support great increases in the army's ground forces, particularly since such manpower would have to come from a draft. In summer 1940, the US Army was a pitiful military force that ranked in numbers and equipment barely with that of South American dictatorships. But having waited until the catastrophe of the French defeat had more than underlined the extent of the threat, the Roosevelt administration had no choice but to bite the bullet and introduce legislation that authorized a draft. It was signed into law in September 1940. By that time there was far greater support for serious defense measures, which Britain's steadfast stand against the onslaught of Hermann Göring's *Luftwaffe* had only served to solidify.

Nevertheless, American support for Britain was by no means unanimous. Even though American public opinion moved slowly but steadily in favor of supporting its allies with direct aid, a significant number of Americans vociferously opposed Roosevelt's decisions, because they believed he was intent on taking the United States into war. Led by a number of prominent politicians as well as the famous flyer Charles Lindbergh, the "America First" movement was started by students in the Yale law school. One of the most prominent members of that university's undergraduate student body, Kingman Brewster, would become one of the leaders of the movement. As editor of the *Yale Daily News*, he would write an editorial in spring 1941 that compared the introduction of conscription with the introduction of fascism into the United States. Ironically, Jimmy Carter would appoint him to be ambassador to Britain in 1977.

Roosevelt would gain sufficient support among the American people to win an unprecedented fourth term, but the furious assault of the "America firsters" continued unabated. Such was the degree of opposition to aiding the allies that the Congress of the United States renewed the draft by a single vote in July 1941 at a time when German spearheads were approaching Smolensk and it looked like the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse. Moreover, within the army itself, which had grown enormously as a result of the draft, there was a movement titled OHIO, an acronym for "over the hill in October." The threads of isolationism, typified by the America First movement, ran deep in the American polity until the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor finally brought the American people to their senses.

So what are we to make of this period of isolationism, when the United States clamped down with massive tariffs on imports; when it refused to have close ties with other major powers, much less participate in alliance; and when it closed off virtually all immigration? The period of the thirties certainly suggests that “America First” may not be a sensible direction towards which to steer the nation. In economic terms, the periods before the First and Second World Wars certainly suggest that the American economy has done far better when its markets as well as global markets have been largely unimpeded by tariffs. In terms of alliances, the great island power of Great Britain and the United States from the early eighteenth century through to the Cold War have done best in their conflicts when they have worked with continental powers against their opponents.⁸ Not only did the alliances that the United States forged in Asia and Europe win the Cold War, but the economic power and military deterrence resulted in victory without another world war.

1 For an examination of alliances to the conduct of grand strategy and the conduct of international relations, see Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray, eds., *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances* (Cambridge, 2016).

2 For a look at the Treaty of Versailles within its historical context, see Williamson Murray, “Versailles: the peace without a chance,” in Williamson Murray and Jim Lacey, eds., *The Making of Peace, Rulers, States, and the Aftermath of War* (Cambridge, 2009), 209–239.

3 For the rise of Mussolini and Hitler to power, see particularly MacGregor Knox, *To the Threshold of Power, 1922/33: Volume 1: Origins and Dynamics of the Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships* (Cambridge, 2007).

4 On the Manchurian crisis and the West’s response, see particularly Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League, and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (New York, 1973).

5 For the Spanish Civil War, see Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* (London, 2007).

6 For an examination of the German drive to destroy the European balance of power, see Williamson Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938–1939: The Path to Ruin* (Princeton, NJ, 1984).

7 For Roosevelt and the tangled politics of isolationism, see among a host of books, H. W. Brands, *Traitor to his Class: The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York, 2009).

8 For a discussion of grand strategy and maritime great powers, see Williamson Murray, “Grand strategy, alliances, and the Anglo-American Way of War,” in Mansoor and Murray, eds., *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances* (Cambridge, 2016), 19–46.



WILLIAMSON MURRAY serves as a Minerva Fellow at the Naval War College. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 with honors in history. He then served five years as an officer in the US Air Force, including a tour in Southeast Asia with the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing (C-130s). He returned to Yale University, where he received his PhD in military-diplomatic history under advisers Hans Gatzke and Donald Kagan. He taught two years in the Yale history department before moving on to Ohio State University in fall 1977 as a military and diplomatic historian; in 1987 he received the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award.

A Foreign Policy to Advance the Domestic Economy

Mark Moyar

President Donald Trump's avowedly nationalist foreign policy agenda has been roundly criticized, both in the United States and abroad, for its narrow focus on America's own interests. Some of the critics see as aberrant the very notion of putting American interests first, warning that it will promote "tribalism" and prevent cooperation among nations. In actuality, every US administration has put America's interests ahead of those of other nations, and every president at some point acknowledged as much in public, although not as often or as brashly as President Trump. The few presidents who initially downplayed US interests—Carter, Clinton, Obama—eventually had to bow to an American public that expected the government it funded to put American interests before other interests.

What has been less common in recent history is the wariness of free trade, international institutions, and overseas commitments espoused by President Trump and his subordinates. The administration's policy preferences in these areas are not, however, at all new. Protectionist trade policies were a preoccupation of the US government from its inception. The first piece of legislation ever passed by the US Congress was the Tariff of 1789, which was intended to protect American companies against foreign competition. When the nation declared war on Britain in 1812, the adverse consequences of British trade practices ranked at the top of the list of national grievances.

Henry Clay's American System, begun in the aftermath of the War of 1812, pursued economic nationalism as a means of nurturing American industry so that it could catch up with British industry. Protectionism persisted through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Not until the maturation of American industry in the 1940s did the United States become a strong advocate of free trade—a policy more advantageous to a mature economy than a fledgling one. During the Cold War, several presidents flirted with protectionism, most notably Richard Nixon, who in 1971 slapped a 10 percent tariff on all imported goods, but until Trump's election there had been a bipartisan consensus in support of low trade barriers.

Prior to World War II, opposition to alliances and multinational institutions pervaded US foreign policy and public opinion. Beginning with George Washington, American statesmen and citizens believed that alliances risked entangling the American project in the messy problems of other nations. The idea that the United States could stay in its shell except when it needed to annihilate dangerous enemies came to the fore with Andrew Jackson. After the brief surge in international engagement that led the United States into World War I, suspicion of alliances and overseas enterprises returned as doubts proliferated about the sagacity of American intervention in the Great War. In 1920, the Senate refused to ratify the



M Y F L A G

IHEREBY pledge
allegiance to my
flag, and to the
Republic for which
it stands; One Nation
indivisible with Liber-
ty and Justice for all

Treaty of Versailles because of concerns that national sovereignty would be subordinated to the League of Nations. Warren Harding's views on international engagement were much the same as those of Trump, and he articulated them just as bluntly. The Neutrality Acts of the 1930s gave bipartisan sanction to a policy of aloofness from Europe.

Those whose memories do not stretch back much further than 2009 are inclined to believe that Trump's reluctance to apologize for the United States and its pursuit of its interests is out of the ordinary. In fact, many of the nation's earlier leaders mortally opposed issuance of apologies for the nation and its self-interested foreign policy. During a trade dispute in 1835, Andrew Jackson rebuffed a French demand for an apology with the remark that "the honor of my country shall never be stained by an apology from me for the statement of truth and performance of duty." When Woodrow Wilson advocated giving Colombia an apology and an indemnity of \$40 million for the Panama Canal, Theodore Roosevelt declared that he could not have imagined that an American would "betray the honor and interest of the American people by submitting to blackmail."

Trump has been drawn to the policies of yesterday by the attitudes of middle- and lower-class Americans, whose incomes have been hit hard by the influx of cheap immigrant labor and the outsourcing of jobs to low-wage countries. This disillusionment also has its precedents. Surges in immigration of unskilled workers from Asia in the late nineteenth century and from southern and eastern Europe in the early twentieth century sparked complaints of depressed wages for native workers and resulted in stiff new restrictions on immigration. American elites who today buy luxury cars from Japan and large-screen TVs from Korea, who employ landscapers from Mexico and housecleaners from Guatemala, too readily dismiss as "nativist" the popular disillusionment with open trade and open borders. They would do well to pay more heed to the concerns of those Americans whose pocketbooks bear the brunt of globalization, and whose neighborhoods and schools shoulder the problems of illegal and unassimilated immigrants.

Trump's policies will be judged on the extent to which they produce economic growth and increase wages for the middle and lower classes. For better or worse, the effects of other factors will likely play only a minor part in how the administration's performance is viewed—Bill Clinton is seen as presiding over a period of economic success in the 1990s even though it depended heavily on the tech bubble, and prevailing criticisms of George W. Bush's economic record have given short shrift to the impact of the 9/11 attacks. The economic indicators will be critical in deciding whether the country retains Trumpist policies beyond his time in office, or writes them off as a failed experiment in nationalist populism.



MARK MOYAR is the director of the Center of Military and Diplomatic History in Washington, DC. In April 2017, Basic Books will publish his sixth book, *Oppose*

Any Foe; The Rise of America's Special Operations Forces. He is currently writing the sequel to his book *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*. Moyar has served as a professor at the US Marine Corps University and a senior fellow at the Joint Special Operations University and has advised the senior leadership of several US military commands. He holds a BA summa cum laude from Harvard and a PhD from Cambridge.

Precedents for the New Nationalism

Kori Schake

Donald Trump has cultivated comparisons between himself and President Andrew Jackson by hanging the portrait of Jackson in the White House, making pilgrimage to Andrew Jackson's grave, and pointedly emphasizing that he, like Jackson, "fought to defend forgotten men and women from the arrogant elite of his day."¹ It is a choice distressing to those who associate Jackson with illiberal policies of slavery, Indian removal, and refusing to enforce Supreme Court verdicts.²

It has fueled an avalanche of journalism about "new nationalism," which is thought to be somehow more virulent and dangerous than previous iterations. This is deeply unfair to President Trump and his supporters—and a key to the bitterness many of them feel at the political establishment, which has tended to ignore their concerns and stigmatize their beliefs.

Nationalism as an idea grew out of the Enlightenment. Prior to that, monarchs held power by force. Nationalism was the belief that government could have an attractive power. It conveniently reduced the demand for the state to enforce its hold on people living within territory claimed by the sovereign.

The United States has always had a particularly resonant nationalism, relying as it does on association with our creed rather than ethnicity or territory as the basis for our nationalism. This is what Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman calls the "invention of America." Lincoln described our political values as "the electric cord in that Declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men together."³

The idea of a "new nationalism" precedes the conflating of nationalism with despotism in the twentieth century; the phrase actually comes from Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1910 urged an expansion of government activism to better protect human welfare.⁴

In our current fevered political climate, however, the new nationalism is flipped on its head, defined by what it opposes: immigration, trade, globalization, political correctness. The *Economist* is more restrained than most in its pejorative caricature: "Reagan's America was optimistic: Mr Trump's is angry."⁵

Trump is said to represent a dangerous force if not new in American history, then at least in its repudiation of the post-World War II order.

What President Trump actually represents is a pretty routine disaffection by American voters with our government, willingness to experiment with a new direction, pendular correction from what we were exasperated with in the previous administration, and high degree of trust in the constraining benefits of our political institutions. The work of sociologists Bart Bonikowski and Paul DiMaggio shows that the American public is divided pretty stably over time into four groups, with the largest faction of people—about 30 percent—exhibiting what Bonikowski calls "ethno-cultural exclusion, along with a low level of pride in the state."⁶ Their preferred definition of American is a Christian who speaks English and was born in the United States. Journalists have characterized this group as low-education and low-income white males. In fact, Bonikowski and DiMaggio's data suggest a



majority of women, 68 percent of blacks, 55 percent of Hispanics, and more Democrats and Republicans also hold those views.⁷ The new nationalism, then, is not some backlash of the white working poor, but—as President Trump has asserted—a broad-based movement of people fed up with the direction they perceive our country moving.

Nor does the “America first” ideology of President Trump’s foreign policies represent a “new nationalism.” Its main thrusts—economic protectionism, the belief allies are taking advantage of the United States, and concern about immigration changing the character of America—have long and bipartisan pedigrees in American politics. If Robert Taft had beat out Dwight Eisenhower for the Republican nomination for president in 1952, that might well have been mainstream conservative policy. At the height of the Cold War, American administrations had to devote an enormous amount of effort to beat back legislation annually sponsored by Senator Mike Mansfield that would have forced withdrawal of US forces from Europe because allies paid too little. Jefferson’s purchase of Louisiana was criticized in its time for admitting to citizenship Catholics who were believed because of their religion to lack the independent thought necessary in a democracy. For a reminder that every wave of immigrants to America has created concern about dilution of the country’s essence, see Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish Became White*.

The American political system is particularly susceptible to nationalism in both its positive and nasty forms—which is simply to say that our political system is tied more tightly in accountability to the public than are even most other democracies. Allies of the United States quail at our routine willingness to elect inexperienced or rough-hewn presidents, our risk tolerance for throwing aside inherited dogma or established

policies, and our national penchant for sounding our “barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world” (as Walt Whitman phrased it in section 52 of “Song of Myself”).

That responsiveness to the public will is, however, also the great vibrancy of American democracy. Andrew Jackson spoke for the aspirations of frontier communities thirsty for land and security and access to capital, for slaveholders adamant at preserving their way of life, for a population restive under political dominance by educated elites. Jackson governed erratically, brutally, and in many ways unsuccessfully. But he revived American democracy, passing the torch from an east coast establishment living in safety and cultural superiority, to the harder life, rougher mentality, and challenges of the frontier. In his excesses, Jackson also activated antibodies in opposition to his policies, mobilizing the civic powers that undergird our democracy into greater activism. Donald Trump is likely to give American democracy another such civics lesson—appreciation for limited government, the power of the courts and civil society to rein in the Executive, reminders of obscure but important concerns of the Founders (who knew about

POLL: WHAT TERM BEST CHARACTERIZES THE LIKELY AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY OF THE NEAR FUTURE?

- Neoconservative interventionism
- Realist pragmatism
- Isolationism
- Jacksonian nationalism
- Traditional postwar engagement

the emoluments clause two months ago?)—that his actions have once again brought to the fore.

1 CNSNews.com Staff, “Trump: Andrew Jackson Fought to Defend Forgotten Men and Women from Arrogant Elite. Sound Familiar?” CNSNews (March 18, 2017), <https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/cnsnewscom-staff/trump-andrew-jackson-fought-to-defend-forgotten-men-and-women-arrogant>

2 Michael Gerson, “Opinion: Trump has picked a deeply disturbing hero,” *The Washington Post* (March 16, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trump-has-picked-a-deeply-disturbing-hero/2017/03/16/006d44e6-0a6a-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html?utm_term=.cd9f7bb36da1

3 Quotation from Lincoln’s “Speech at Chicago, Illinois” (July 10, 1858) in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 2: 1848–1848 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 500.

4 For the text of Theodore Roosevelt’s speech, “The New Nationalism (August 31, 1910),” along with Robert S. La Forte’s

commentary, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Osawatomie Speech,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32.2 (1966), 187–200, see <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/trnationalismspeech.pdf>

5 “Trump’s world: The new nationalism,” *Economist* (November 19, 2016), <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21710249-his-call-put-america-first-donald-trump-latest-recruit-dangerous>

6 See Jesse Singal, “These Are the 3 Types of American Nationalism,” *NYMag.com* (October 18, 2016), <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/10/these-are-the-3-types-of-american-nationalism.html>

7 Bart Bonikowski and Paul DiMaggio, “What 4 types of American nationalism can tell us about Trump voters,” *Washington Post* (February 6, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/06/true-or-false-real-americans-are-christian-speak-english-and-were-born-in-the-u-s/?utm_term=.f79dc568874f



KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. During the 2008 presidential election, she was senior policy adviser to the McCain-Palin campaign.

From 2007 to 2008 she was the deputy director for policy planning in the state department. During President Bush’s first term, she was the director for Defense Strategy and Requirements on the National Security Council. Projects Schake contributed to include conceptualizing and budgeting for continued transformation of defense practices; the most significant realignment of US military forces and bases around the world since 1950, creating NATO’s Allied Command Transformation and the NATO Response Force; and recruiting and retaining coalition partners for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Trump's Nationalism Is Nothing New

Katherine A. Becker

"Nationalism"—like globalism and globalization—has become a loaded and ill-defined term. The ambiguity, some argue, is intentionally fostered by globalists. So let us be clear: Globalization is concerned with business opportunities in a transnational and global market, as a prelude to creating worldwide homogeneity. Globalism, a Western idea, ultimately leads to the post-modern dream of a worldwide political system in which western European leaders will dictate laws governing international policy at the expense of the nation-state that eventually will become irrelevant and wilt away. Inherently then, "globalism" is opposed to "nationalism." Xenophobes, admittedly, can at times employ nationalistic rhetoric to further bigoted agendas, but in its original context, a nationalist was simply a person who advocated political independence for his country and viewed foreign relations through the lenses of his own country's narrower self-interests.

So it matters how we define nationalism and the historical context in which Donald J. Trump is said to be a nationalist. Today globalists define nationalism as something akin to 19th- and mid-20th-century European imperialism that culminated in Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini; each in differing ways seeing racial purity as a state religion and seeking to dominate their neighbors through theories of racial and military superiority. Trump, of course, is accused of this sort of retrograde nationalism, yet he is also allegedly smeared as an "isolationist" who has no desire to play a constructive and interventionist abroad. We cannot have it both ways in dubbing Trump's nationalism

as somehow both aggressive and imperialist and yet also blinkered and recessional. Still, there are precedents in US history to support the notion of a populist politician being both nationalist and yet circumspect about unilateral foreign intervention. Historically, the American public has been rabidly patriotic but not to the extent of wishing to spread, at great expense, American exceptionalism abroad.

There were always tensions over the proper notion of nationalism, an idea that was not always defined as expanding American power abroad or seeking to conflate race with national identity. True, populist and nationalist Andrew Jackson, the racist slave-holding first President of the Democratic Party, did not believe in assimilation and passed the exclusionary Indian Removal Act (1830). Ninety treaties followed that resulted in the mass removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands. Yet, Americans did not support Jackson's idea of enslavement of "Indians," as some slaveholders had wished; and even Jackson's populist adherents were largely supportive of assimilation programs.

President James Polk (1845–1849), also by modern standards a bigot and slaveholder, started a war in Texas to expand slavery, simultaneously providing a pretext for war against Mexico to annex the West. While the borders of the US were thus being redefined, the American public was largely supportive of such policies. But just twenty years later, nearly 400,000 also voted with their lives to end slavery and had not much wish to intervene abroad.

Economic “nationalism” as voiced by Trump also is nothing new. Republican policy in the late-1800s was always supportive of high protective tariffs with government interest in business regulation to promote collective prosperity. In 1890, the Billion-Dollar Congress passed the McKinley Tariff when the “Idol of Ohio” promised that the US would lower their tariffs—but only if other countries did the same. Like Trump, he redefined free trade as “fair trade.” However, while the public largely supported tariffs and protectionism to shield American businesses and jobs, they also demanded regulation and government oversight of commerce. The railroads were the most important transportation “big business” of the day, and the average small businessman insisted on a “fair use” policy to ensure reasonable and transparent rail rates. Grover Cleveland gave it to them in 1887 with the Interstate Commerce Act. Again, there are plenty of historical precedents for Trump jawboning private enterprise to calibrate hiring in terms of American interest, and demanding trading partners adopt reciprocity in trading with the U.S.

Like many Americans who sought to push big businesses toward nationalist concerns, prior American nationalists, again like Trump, also rejected both imperialist and proto-globalist agendas. American public outrage was so great in the aftermath of William McKinley’s war of annexation in the Philippines (1899-1902) that public figures as diverse as Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, Mark Twain, and Jane Addams all joined the Anti-Imperialist League, on grounds such interventions were neither fair to the occupied nor served the interests of average US citizens. Likewise, following the end of the Great War, the public resoundingly rejected Wilson’s League of Nations and instead favored a more nationalist notion of US exclusion from transnational government. Long

before Trump there was an American tradition of defining nationalism, quite apart from race, as instead promoting US economic interests and defending America militarily—but without becoming bogged down in drawn-out foreign wars or treaties and “entangling” alliances if they were judged not to be in U.S. interests.

Admittedly, after World War II in a Cold War environment, Americans begrudgingly conceded that the United States should stay involved in world affairs. But they still did so with reservation. So when in the late-1970s Ronald Reagan established an “America First” policy, campaigning to retain the Panama Canal, the American public supported him. They cheered his unapologetic chauvinistic declaration that the Soviet Union was an “evil empire,” that the Kremlin’s leaders were criminals, liars, and cheaters and that a strong US foreign policy should be coupled with military strength. But the American public understood this muscularity less as unthinking nationalism than a US-led and unified western European effort to hasten the inevitable implosion of the Soviet Bloc—and thus a way to end the Cold War and relieve burdens from the American military. Likewise, participation in the UN and NATO in no way implied that Americans would accept some globalized European-led world society in the aftermath of the Cold War, any more than they supported fighting for years in Vietnam and beyond.

Trump then is not so much an enigma. In the past American nationalists, without European-like fascistic appeals to racial purity, have squared the circle of intervening abroad without seeking foreign annexations, and in calibrating both economic and military policy in terms of what best enhanced the prosperity and security of American citizens.

KATHERINE A. BECKER is professor of History, College of the Sequoias and Bakersfield College.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the American precedents, if any, for President Trump’s supposed new nationalist American foreign policy?
2. How do Trump’s assertions about foreign policy differ from the Obama’s administration’s “lead from behind” protocols?
3. Can NATO be reformed without American ultimatums about European nations’ meeting their NATO defense spending requirements?
4. Do limited air strikes against perceived threats constitute interventionism?
5. To what degree will bilateral defense pacts begin to replace traditional multinational defense alliances?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE TRUMP’S CHINA CHALLENGE



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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Hoover Institution, Stanford University
434 Galvez Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6003
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington
The Johnson Center
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-760-3200

