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Hood, Lauren M.

Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**U.S.-GERMAN DEFENSE BURDEN-SHARING SINCE
2014: COLLECTIVE DEFENSE OR FREE RIDER?**

by

Lauren M. Hood

September 2019

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Donald Abenheim
Uwe Hartmann

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**U.S.-GERMAN DEFENSE BURDEN-SHARING SINCE 2014: COLLECTIVE
DEFENSE OR FREE RIDER?**

Lauren M. Hood
Lieutenant, United States Navy
BS, Jacksonville University, 2013

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
September 2019**

Approved by: Donald Abenheim
Advisor

Uwe Hartmann
Second Reader

Afshon P. Ostovar
Associate Chair for Research
Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

Why does the United States continue to threaten NATO cohesion while pressuring the Federal Republic of Germany to increase its military strength and capabilities? Discord is highly evident among U.S. policy, words, and actions in what appears to be a burden-shifting problem. This thesis attempts to achieve three goals: (1) to assess whether the president fits best against the rational actor, bureaucratic politics, or organizational process theory; (2) whether the president is burden-sharing, burden-shifting, or potentially even free-riding; and (3) how the president's rhetoric, actions, and policy differences impact foreign policy execution. Hypothesis testing compares and contrasts competing models of foreign policy behavior and applies them to the real-life behavior of the United States between January 2014 and August 2019.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GNP	Gross National Product
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRF	North Atlantic Treaty Organization Response Force
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

How does collective defense work in the aspects of strategy and treasure? In particular, this study poses the question as to why the White House urges for a stronger Germany to support its share of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) burden, yet simultaneously threatens to blow up the trans-Atlantic foundation of this collective defense by removing the United States from the alliance as happened in the years 1918–1922 and as the United States threatened, say, in the 1950s. The question of burden-sharing in NATO is, as the scholar Wallace Thies observed, older than the Washington Treaty (1949) itself.¹ In the most recent episode of this perennial issue of security and defense affairs, trans-Atlantic alliance cohesion and the costs of collective defense frequently make news headlines and have been popular since the 2011 NATO Libyan campaign and especially since the 2016 Trump presidency. From even as early as the moment the U.S. elections revealed Trump’s victory in 2016, journalists offered ominous headlines with such phrases as “unprecedented uncertainty.”² However, those in the United States who adhere to the diplomacy of collective defense ran their own headlines, often appearing to smooth down any ruffled feathers between the skeptics of collective defense and its defenders. In 2016, the *New York Times* even affirmed that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg agreed that Europe must do more, yet was also confident the United States “will maintain American leadership in the alliance and will maintain a strong commitment to European security.”³

¹ Wallace Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20–76.

² Matthias Gebauer et al., “‘Extreme and Unprecedented Uncertainty’: NATO Prepares for Trump Presidency,” *Spiegel Online*, November 16, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/worry-grows-over-trump-threat-to-european-security-a-1121536.html>; Christoph Schult, “Alliance of the Likeminded: Germany’s Anti-Trump Strategy Begins to Take Shape,” *Spiegel Online*, July 27, 2018, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/germany-government-begins-unveiling-its-anti-trump-coalition-a-1220471.html>.

³ Dan Bilefsky, “NATO Chief ‘Absolutely Confident’ Donald Trump Will Maintain U.S. Role,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/world/europe/nato-trump-us-stoltenberg.html>.

Since the rise of a globalized Germany in a Europe more or less unified in the first decade of the new century, the German-American relationship has once again become a cockpit of the burden-sharing challenge, especially for those who see the dollars and cents of defense budgets as the ultimate ratio of what is, in fact, a much more complex process of how democracies associate themselves for collective defense.⁴ A fair amount of hope lies with the notion that the United States and Germany will continue their deeply rooted alliance despite talk of alienation and the dissent that exists among both those in Washington who are disdainful of Berlin and those in Berlin who long for a non-trans-Atlantic world order.⁵ Regardless, the Alliance still appears to be in jeopardy due to friction caused by strong isolationist ideations. Why, then, does the United States continue to pressure the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to increase its military strength and capabilities?⁶ Critics in Washington have lambasted the Bundeswehr's (Germany's military force) aging technology after the burden-sharing spasm during the Libyan campaign in 2011, to say nothing of the earlier episodes in the 1960s and 1970s in German-American relations wherein the collective defense effort and the political economy of such effort has sparked controversy.⁷ Since the NATO decision to beef up its forces for operations on the continent of Europe on the traditional model after the Russian blow in Crimea against the post 1991 European order, the United States has once again emphasized the inadequacy of Germany's defense spending.⁸

⁴ Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, *Soldiers, War, Knowledge and Citizenship German-American Essays on Civil-Military Relations* (Berlin: Miles-Verlag, 2017), 97–151.

⁵ Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger, "Schlechtes Verhältnis: Wieso Die Deutsch-amerikanische Freundschaft Trump überstehen Wird [Bad Relationship: Why the German-American Friendship with Trump will Survive]," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 30, 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/trumps-praesidentschaft/die-deutsch-amerikanische-freundschaft-geht-bergab-15863477.html>.

⁶ Griff Witte, "Merkel and Trump Agree the Ailing German Military Needs a Boost. Why Isn't It Happening?" *Washington Post*, June 21, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/merkel-and-trump-agree-the-ailing-german-military-needs-a-boost-why-isnt-it-happening/2018/06/20/cbd16ac-5f91-11e8-b656-236c6214ef01_story.html?utm_term=.12bc33314349.

⁷ Kjell Engelbrekt, Marcus Mohlin, and Charlotte Wagnsson, *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons Learned from the Campaign* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2015).

⁸ "Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast," NATO, last updated January 21, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

Even from the beginning when trans-Atlantic collective defense was just a notion in the epoch 1947–1949, there was disagreement on whether collective defense would prove to be a viable endeavor beyond the needs of a particular exigency of war and whether it would then collapse because of altered diplomacy of reduced tension and shift diplomacy back to the antagonism of the past. Particularly during the Korean War in 1950–53 and the rise of the hydrogen bomb, the Western Europeans saw defense of their “collection of small states” against the Soviet Union as an impossibility unless they relied on the Americans to provide leadership, weapons, and statecraft; the Americans, meanwhile, saw Europe as a potential superpower that needed to do more if it wanted to stand a chance against the Soviet Union.⁹ This difference in perception led to the still-current argument in certain U.S. sectors today: America should be doing less for collective defense and everyone else should be doing more, including increasing not only the size of the European defense forces but also their quality.

In particular, in the post–2014 world, questions arose about the ability of German troops in NATO to successfully integrate with forward-allied states (the so called NATO enhanced forward presence) during joint exercises in such places as the Baltics and Poland.¹⁰ Integration issues stemmed not only from an equipment, doctrinal, and technology standpoints but also from the much older issue of the feasibility of a multinational force.¹¹ At the same time, however, and true to a pattern that has existed in one form or another since the early 1950s, the United States is also threatening to decrease its role or to withdraw entirely from NATO.¹² This suggests a discrepancy in either policy or vision, especially in the executive branch, and it is this dichotomy of engagement and

⁹ Wallace Thies, *Why NATO Endures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 113.

¹⁰ Ben Knight, “German Military Short on Tanks for NATO Mission,” *Deutsche Welle*, February 15, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-military-short-on-tanks-for-nato-mission/a-42603112>.

¹¹ Martin Zapfe, *Efficacy, Not Efficiency: Adjusting NATO’s Military Integration*, Research Report No. 118 (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015), 1–3, https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/NDC_Zapfe_-_Efficacy_not_Efficiency.pdf.

¹² Thies, *Why NATO Endures*, 1–24; Donald Abenheim, “Germany and the United States in the Age of Terror,” *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 4 (Autumn, 2003): 62–81, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol56/iss4/6>; David Charter, “Leave NATO and You Will Boost Putin, Trump Warned,” *Times*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/leave-nato-and-you-will-boost-putin-trump-warned-fh27mbgdt>.

withdrawal now ensnarled in a cost balance sheet of trans-Atlantic collective defense about which forms the core question of this thesis.

Certain aspects of policy appear to bolster a more hands-on foreign policy by helping to strengthen Germany in an effort to both create a more cohesive NATO in the face of Russian aggression and, by extension, to bolster the security of Europe. The countervailing factors appears to be the attempt to adopt an “America First” or isolationist policy. That is, that the United States should withdraw from Europe and let the Germans and others sort themselves out while diverting time, money, and resources toward an Asia-centric U.S. grand strategy that also emphasizes homeland security against geopolitical upheaval from all azimuths (i.e., from the California/Arizona and Texas borders).¹³

B. IMPORTANCE

The U.S. Navy is called upon to play a mounting role in NATO’s enhanced forward presence at a time when U.S. security policy and especially the domestic political debate about this policy is in uproar. How can a future officer charged with service in, say, the Baltics or elsewhere on the horizon of great power competition, make sense of the U.S.–German burden-sharing debate? What is going on here in reality as phenomena stir behind the headlines, and do the headlines really say something of importance to this young officer-strategist who aspires to aid the U.S. Navy to grapple with the strategic and operational facets of great power competition?

In particular, on the level of grand strategy and the U.S. posture relative to the Russian attempt to overturn the European order, there are implications for NATO countries and their future relationships with the United States. A policy and strategy of America First as well as a notional U.S. withdrawal from the Washington Treaty immediately poses the issue of the place of Germany as the dominant power in Europe relative to the other leading European nations as well as Russia and the world beyond (e.g., China, India, and others).

¹³ Richard Lloyd Parry, “U.S. Naval Shift to Asia ‘Will Leave Gaps in NATO Defence,’” *Times*, June 4, 2012, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/us-naval-shift-to-asia-will-leave-gaps-in-nato-defence-qqtw9s569tj>; Warren Richey, “Terror and the Mexico Border: How Big a Threat?” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 15, 2017, <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2017/0115/Terror-and-the-Mexico-border-How-big-a-threat>.

Does current U.S. foreign policy endorse the return of German world power in a system of lesser statecraft and entente in favor of the quasi-19th century system, especially as manifested from 1890 until 1914? Will NATO countries let Germany rise and take lead and is this role really in the U.S. national interest? Granted a strategic culture that is skeptical of war and military power, if not downright pacifist, are the Germans ready to take on the mantle of being the dominant military power in Europe amid the revival of Russian power since about 2008 and a possible U.S. retreat from Europe as was the case in the years 1922–23? Is the United States preparing NATO for the eventuality of future American isolationist policy as say, operated in the period of 1923–1938?

When one reflects on the headlines about burden-sharing and German-American tensions since the Trump presidency, these questions arise about what role the United States sees for Germany in Europe. Within NATO, Germany is irrefutably the strongest European member of the Alliance. Germany has also become Europe's regional power, earning itself the nickname of Reluctant Hegemon. At the same time, how does political Berlin, in its various institutions, react to the pressure from Washington, D.C., and how does this pressure manifest itself in day to day defense relations, which remain quite close despite rhetoric to the contrary?

German policy for a long time has been a riddle to Americans.¹⁴ What factors of policy explain German foreign policy and its use of armed forces for the ends of such foreign policy?¹⁵ While the FRG played a key role as center of gravity in the Cold War, since national unity in 1990, the size and strength of its armed forces has fallen in response to the urgency to rebuild East Germany. The might of the FRG's armed forces has also fallen as a general reluctance in German statecraft to follow the path of, say, the United States, the United Kingdom (UK), and even France in far-flung military campaigns to enforce a western order. This process became acute circa 2002 with the split in the Western Alliance over the United States and its coalition partners in the Iraqi campaign. At the time,

¹⁴ Abenheim, "Germany and the United States."

¹⁵ German Ministry of Defense, *On German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* (Bonn: Federal Minister of Defence, 2016), <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/white-paper-german-security-policy-and-future-bundeswehr>.

the campaign was said to be wielded against the spread of weapons of mass destruction but later turned out to be a chimaera. This epoch then passed into history in 2007, when Putin made clear his desire to restore Russian power in Europe.¹⁶

As a result of these factors, the Bundeswehr consistently demonstrates its shortcomings in relative strength and defense spending which are a source of irritation not only in allied capitals but also in Washington, D.C.¹⁷ It is a disservice to the truth to assume the priorities of security and defense in NATO and other such international organizations are dictated in a linear fashion from Washington to Berlin.

The defense posture of the FRG is a result of domestic and international politics and also of a commercially and internationally entente- and détente-oriented statecraft that is often hard for Americans to understand, even if they are inclined to do so. For instance, a difficult civilian-military relationship operates within the parties in the German Parliament where defense spending is never popular and has long been viewed as a reluctant necessity. This fact was true even at the height of the Cold War, which was, in part, taking place in two Germanies.

Moreover, because of the cabinet and parliamentary democracy, a sensitive civil-military dynamic operates among the Chancellery, Defence Minister, and Finance Ministry. For this and other reasons enumerated later in this study in detail, the Bundeswehr has been reduced in force and especially starved for resources in a process that began in the process of unity in 1990 and took a nose dive after the 2008 financial crisis.

From the U.S. perspective of super-high defense spending over an extraordinary period of time since 2001, Berlin stands accused by its international partners of having let funding and innovation be left by the wayside for far too long, as evident in the Bundeswehr's entropy. Nonetheless, Germany has been making improvements in its defense spending in recent years in response to the call by national leaders (not merely the

¹⁶ Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," President of Russia, February 10, 2007, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

¹⁷ German Ministry of Defense, *On German Security Policy*; Tom Dyson, "Managing Convergence: German Military Doctrine and Capabilities in the 21st Century," *Defence Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 264, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2011.590047>.

U.S. Executive Branch) to make a greater effort in defense not only for the traditional European theater but also beyond. Needless to say, such an increase in defense spending is unpopular among many German citizens who desire social welfare and who see the refugee crisis of 2015 as the dominant threat to safety and peace.

At the same time, the rest of NATO is eager to see Germany take the security lead in Europe to match its role in political economy and in the European Union (EU) (the fate of which is closely linked to European security).¹⁸ The United States continues to pressure Germany into expanding its power and influence across Europe, but with a statecraft that takes its cue from a different posture in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Bonn state was more of a willing junior ally of the United States in the Cold War.

With this dichotomy in mind, if Germany's existing growth trend of defense is not steep enough for the Americans, why does the White House, with its allied think tanks and political chattering class, urge for a stronger Germany while simultaneously threatening to hinder forward progress by removing the United States from NATO? This is the central research question this thesis seeks to answer. This is a spectacle filled with what seems to a new arrival to trans-Atlantic security too many contradictions to be believed or made sense of in any coherent way connected with strategy in the conventional sense. Yet, this set of contradictions is in fact the state of the U.S.-German relationship, and the present study aspires to make sense of it since the burden-sharing problematique is central to how democracies work toward the goals of collective defense.¹⁹

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis proposal focuses primarily on events occurring in or after 2014, and scholarly sources directly relating to the subject of President Trump are limited. At the same time, there is a sizeable literature of German-American relations and alliance cohesion as concerns the dollars-for-troops issue, references to which are made herein. The

¹⁸ Alison Smale, "In a Reversal, Germany's Military Growth is Met with Western Relief," *New York Times*, June 5, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/06/world/europe/european-union-germany-army.html>; Allan Little, "Why is Germany so Reluctant to Take a Lead in Europe?" *BBC News*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24037698>.

¹⁹ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 3–19.

issue of how to handle a post-war Germany is perennial one. The older record of this issue has essentially been lost to the policy community because of the September 11 attacks in the United States and their destructive effect of the public consciousness prior to 1989. However, during the Obama administration, the burden-sharing issues re-emerged first with the German role in the Libyan campaign in 2011 and then again in the wake of the Crimean episode in 2014 (wherein Russia annexed Crimea).²⁰

Media sources tend to agree that sending American troops in increments to supplement Germany is a favorable decision because, despite chances of inciting Russian action, the increases in American troop volume in Germany are more important to emphasize security and stability via encouraging a strong military and security relationship.²¹ German Defence Minister Dr. Ursula von der Leyen recently stated “The U.S. decision to increase the military presence here in Germany is a welcome sign of the vitality of transatlantic relationship and a commitment to our joint security.”²² As many America First proponents may ask, with more Americans in Germany, how could the Bundeswehr not be destined for greatness?

However, scholars of strategic culture, as well as partisan journalists who are inclined to dislike Germany emphasize the reluctance of the German people to increase its military due to an overwhelmingly pacifist nature throughout society.²³ The Bundeswehr in the 1950s became associated with the idea of being a “war prevention service and the Bundeswehr as a whole was called a peace movement.”²⁴ Once the Cold War ended, the reorientation of roles and missions to conflicts outside of Germany was controversial and

²⁰ Abenheim and Halladay, *Soldiers, War, Knowledge*, 97–151.

²¹ Andrea Shalal, “U.S. Military to Send 1,500 More Soldiers to Germany by Late 2020,” Reuters, September 7, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-germany/u-s-military-to-send-1500-more-soldiers-to-germany-by-late-2020-idUSKCN1LN299>.

²² Shalal, “U.S. Military.”

²³ Alexander Smith, “U.S. Presses Economic Giant Germany to up Its Military Spending,” *NBC News*, April 26, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/nato-ally-germany-urged-u-s-its-military-spending-n869206>.

²⁴ Jurgen Kuhlmann and Jean Callaghan, *Military and Society in 21st Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), 194.

the object of much civil-military friction as well as burden-sharing discord.²⁵ As a result of the alliance's solidarity in Afghanistan from 2004 onward via the highly unpopular NATO International Security Assistance Force and because of the austerity measures imposed after 2008, the Bundeswehr has shrunk and become the butt of budgetary neglect. This neglect has become overwhelming since 2014, when the Russian diplomatic revolution knocked Europe out of its slumber and was followed soon thereafter by the refugee crisis of the late summer of 2015.

Despite Germany's civil-military relations, which might not accord with the soldierly ideals of armchair strategists in blogs and on certain news programs, the U.S. government, the legislative branch, and the armed forces themselves see Germany as a strong and reliable ally. "Our political, economic, and security relationships, critical to shared prosperity and continued stability, are based on extensive people-to-people ties and close coordination at the most senior levels," according to an official statement on the United States Department of State website.²⁶ Scholar Wallace Thies theorizes with insight on the diplomacy and domestic politics of bargaining, burden-sharing, and burden-shifting between allies while maintaining a strong bond. His work explains how the United States can simultaneously demand more of NATO and Germany, insist on providing less, and yet still expect to foster a strong security relationship between the two nations.²⁷ One can well ask what sources of legitimacy and power enable the U.S. to make such far-reaching demands of an "ally;" an ally that was a former enemy in two world wars. Additionally, in the contemporary view of some in the U.S. administration, Germany is, in fact, an enemy once again. What, they ask, makes U.S. statecraft so exceptionally better than other countries that the United States feels the need to interfere in other countries' security policies? One argument might be the myth that the United States is responsible for the

²⁵ Kuhlman and Callaghan, *Military and Society*, 183–226.

²⁶ Abenheim and Halladay, *Soldiers, War, Knowledge*; "U.S. Relations with Germany," U.S. Department of State, July 3, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3997.htm>; Donald Abenheim, *Soldier and Politics Transformed: German-American Reflections on Civil-military Relations in a New Strategic Environment* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles, 2007); Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

²⁷ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*.

majority of the good in this world and that it is our God-given duty to help out the less-fortunate.²⁸

In the case of Germany today and also historically since 1945, the entente between the United States and Germany culminating in unity in 1990 has well availed both nations. However, German policy in U.S. eyes, however, is the subject of intense misunderstanding because of ignorance about how policy is made in Berlin, just as contemporary ignorance about policy in Washington operates in political Berlin. This thesis tries to unravel this ignorance by examining the obstacles in how policy is actually made and what factors operate in this process.

Regardless of the lack of scholarship since 2014 on this issue of German-American defense relations, certain books from the classical period of the Cold War remain relevant and provide some insight into issues the United States continues to face with Germany today. Henry Kissinger asserted, “European unity is... not an end in itself but a means to the strengthening of the West” despite Rooseveltian concerns that too much unity might leave “Eastern Europe permanently [under] the Soviet sphere of influence.”²⁹ This mirrors the current concern that a stronger Germany will not only fail to unify Europe, but also to perpetuate Russian aggressions.

Another salient point Kissinger made back in the late 1960s still holds true more than 40 years later is in regard to the foreign policy actions the United States has (and has not, for that matter) taken. He noted, “American policy has been extremely ambivalent: it has urged European unity while recoiling before its probable consequences.”³⁰ This is evident in both President Trump’s and former President Obama’s chastising of Germany for its failure to meet defense spending minimums, yet not actually taking any punitive

²⁸ Stephen Walt, Thomas Friedman, and Michael Mandelbaum, “An FP Debate: Just How Special is America Anyway?” *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (November 2011): 71–78.

²⁹ John Lambertson Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335.

³⁰ Harper, *American Visions of Europe*, 339.

measures to pressure Germany into making good on its promises to perform at a higher standard.³¹

As of this writing, the Department of State's website clearly and plainly states that the United States does nothing to provide developmental assistance to Germany.³² Is that because the United States wants Germany to increase its standing in Europe under its own power? Or is it because the United States does not actually want a unified Europe? This author believes that the United States truly does want a stronger, more unified Europe through the leadership of a powerful, assertive Germany but wants to ensure that the White House can leave itself a political egress point by which to avoid blame in the event of a catastrophic German failure to maintain peace against Russia.

The ambivalence Kissinger spoke of nearly half a century ago still continues. This ambivalence could also prove to be helpful in light of the fact that Europe as a whole is preparing to be left to its own devices. This eventuality of independence means the United States could drastically re-prioritize where and how it spends its budget overseas in the interests of both foreign and homeland defense.³³ Ultimately, President Trump may not actually be pushing an isolationist policy as is so described by prominent news sources.

The bulk of scholarly resources support the theory that President Trump's principled realism strategy is being executed via threatening trade wars, by publicly berating the Chancellery, and by avoiding increasing monetary support. These actions appear to be an effort to force Germany to increase its own defense forces and, by extension, become the lead nation of Europe in the continental unification and defense against Russian threats.³⁴ The source of apparent chaos and contradiction in U.S. foreign

³¹ Steve Goldstein, "Trump's Critique of Germany Is Not So Different from Obama's," *MarketWatch*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/trumps-critique-of-germany-is-no-different-than-obamas-2017-05-30>.

³² U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Germany."

³³ Niklas Helwig, *Germany and European Defence Cooperation: A Post-Atlantic Turn*, Report No. 245 (Helsinki, Finland: Center for Security Studies, Finnish Institute for International Affairs, 2018), <https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/8a1f5b0e-6c06-415a-a2f1-28d6008bba24>.

³⁴ Michael Anton, "The Trump Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, April 20, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/20/the-trump-doctrine-big-think-america-first-nationalism/>.

policy behavior is most likely a result of the organizational process theory of foreign policy analysis. While many publications surrounding the construction of foreign policy insist that either the bureaucratic politics model or the rational actor model is the most accurate explanation for America's conflicted foreign policy with Germany, both of these explanations are deeply flawed when examining what happens in reality.³⁵ Both models appear to "conceal the fact that a 'government' consists of a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own."³⁶ Stephen Krasner, international relations professor at Stanford, brings up a strong counterpoint in support of the impact individual leadership, stating that, despite the "inertia of a large bureaucratic machine" and "failures of the governmental structure," the choices in foreign policy "rest squarely with the President."³⁷

However, the organizational process theory is most compelling due to how organizations seek to influence the president's actions in their own self interests. In the case of foreign policy, the Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and Treasury are invested in the expansion and strengthening of Germany and the Bundeswehr in the interest of a stronger defense network both abroad and at home while simultaneously spurring the U.S. economy. The heart of President Trump's principled realism strategy appears to be in the right place, but singular policies, the timing of events, and the influence of individual leaders in office cloaks U.S. foreign policy toward Germany in a façade of isolationism, ambivalence, and ignorance.

D. HYPOTHESIS

This thesis asks why the White House pressures Germany and NATO to do more, yet also threatens to leave NATO altogether; such an exit may well prove disastrous for U.S. national security as NATO's collective defense directly and indirectly improves American security. The hypothesis of this study suggests that the United States has a

³⁵ Graham Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1969): 689–718.

³⁶ Allison, "Conceptual Models," 698.

³⁷ Stephen Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)," *Foreign Policy*, no. 7 (Summer, 1972): 159–179.

conflicted and turbulent foreign policy with Germany, one that a foreign area officer or strategist must strive to understand before he or she enters service at a level requiring policy execution.³⁸ This most recent chapter of turbulence has decidedly been created by the desire in the White House of the year 2018 to quickly burden-shift responsibilities away from the United States onto other NATO member states amid the diplomatic revolution that is “America First” as grand strategy. The comprehension of this imperative burden-shifting is made more problematic by the structure of the American government and by the president’s interest of preserving a domestic political climate favorable to the present administration in the upcoming election year 2020.

This friction manifests as discord apparent in not just President Donald Trump’s administration, but it did during former President Barack Obama’s time in office as well. The story can well be said to have started a century ago with the promise of Woodrow Wilson in the Fourteen Points. In fact, one can easily extend an analysis of German-U.S. tensions in security back into the past to more or less the 1880s, an effort outside the reach of this paper.

President Trump is voicing the eventuality of the United States exiting from the NATO alliance and perhaps has or has not selected Germany to fill this strategic gap, or, perhaps to reward Moscow with Europe as a geopolitical realignment to confront jihadism or an imperialist Beijing, or both. One can easily suggest that the U.S. executive acts solely to manipulate NATO into burden-shifting in favor of American interests. That is, such policy aims not to destroy NATO, but, as has been the case since at least 1947 (if not much earlier say in 1939), to make Europeans do the bidding of American policy and interests in Europe at the least cost to the American tax payer.³⁹

A united Germany is already once again a strong nation with a strong economy and what have been stable political and social institutions, which makes it a prime candidate for the leading role in a more European NATO. Presidents of the United States, particularly former President Obama, have made many allusions to the notion of a stronger Germany

³⁸ Abenheim, “Germany and the United States.”

³⁹ Harper, *American Visions of Europe*; Thies, *Friendly Rivals*.

in the past; however, in recent months the current presidency has become more aggressive in its threats to remove the United States from NATO. The German-American relationship in the Obama administration evolved into close entente; however, the change of administrations, true to form that reaches back to at least the transition from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration in 1961, is often fraught with difficulty.⁴⁰

Starting in 2015, President Trump made no secret of his personal desire to activate the “ditch” clause of the Washington Treaty and this, in turn, has unleashed a new great debate about the U.S. role in trans-Atlantic security which then becomes a chapter in the German-American relationship. Despite President Trump’s appearance of promoting an isolationist policy, one can suggest that his rhetoric engages the merits (or flaws) of organizational process theory to create a stronger, more resilient Europe and, by extension, American national security.⁴¹

Some theories suggest the dissonance in American foreign policy toward Germany and the rest of Europe is a product of incumbents in the Oval Office. Theorists and social media commentators alike blame President Trump for singlehandedly threatening the safety and unity of Europe by flaunting his aggressive behavior and firing condescending rhetoric toward Chancellor Angela Merkel and the other NATO members. A prevalent news headliner advertises that President Trump heckles Germany for more effort and wants to relieve the United States of the foreign defense spending because of a disjointed and “obsolete” NATO.⁴² President Trump berates Germany, as well as many other NATO

⁴⁰ Abenheim and Halladay, *Soldiers, War, Knowledge and Citizenship*; Julian Barnes and Helene Cooper, “Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. from NATO, Aides Say amid New Concerns over Russia,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html>.

⁴¹ Niall Stanage, “The Memo: Trump Puts Isolationism at Center Stage,” *The Hill* December 27, 2018, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/423037-the-memo-trump-puts-isolationism-at-center-stage>.

⁴² Katrin Bennhold, “German Defense Spending is Falling Even Shorter. The U.S. Isn’t Happy,” *New York Times*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/19/world/europe/germany-nato-spending-target.html>.

members, for not pulling its monetary weight and failing to meet the obligatory two percent of gross domestic product (GDP) spending for defense capabilities.⁴³

Other theories suggest that the current president is merely a cog in the grand entity of bureaucratic politics. Such theories, as discussed throughout Hilsman's book, suggest that politicians motivated by money, arms/equipment contracting sales, market fluctuations, and a myriad of other factors and that they all compete and bargain against one another, making them act independently in their own self-interest to create an incongruous stance with Europe.⁴⁴

Still other foreign policy behavior theories suggest that President Trump is making his decisions to the best of his abilities based on the information made available to him and that the decisions are slowed down or altered entirely due to the nuances of organizational process theory.⁴⁵ Proponents of these theories assert that the president remains the ultimate authority on policymaking, but his ability to effect his desired changes to both domestic and foreign policy is limited due to the structure and flow of the American government.

Condensing down relevant, accurate, and factual information into a reasonably understandable model for young strategists to use cannot be done without first examining which theory (or theories) best explains the behavior of the current administration. How can one expect to navigate plans for the future of the international arena without a fairly readable map? The president's advisors on foreign policy and grand strategy do not benefit from choosing from all potential courses of action. Rather, they perform at their best when provided a small, finite number of the most plausible and lucrative options to provide the president.

In the same way, we must not try to analyze all political behavior theory and present them as potential avenues but instead look at the environment through the only the most

⁴³ Bennhold, "German Defense Spending," "Germany's Angela Merkel Talks up NATO Role and Military Spending," *Deutsche Welle*, July 7, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-angela-merkel-talks-up-nato-role-and-military-spending/a-44566816>.

⁴⁴ Roger Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs: Conceptual Models and Bureaucratic Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1987).

⁴⁵ Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making*, 55–57.

useful lenses to hopefully arrive at a reasonably close approximation for today's leaders and strategists to use when planning for the near future. With the right political theory tools, perhaps young, enterprising minds can accurately forecast the future between the United States and Germany to adequately protect the populations with a relevant, articulated foreign policy and grand strategy.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis seeks to achieve three goals: (1) to assess whether the most plausible model for explaining the current state of affairs between the United States, Germany, and NATO is the rational actor model, the bureaucratic politics model, or the organizational process model; (2) whether the current president is burden-sharing, burden-shifting, or potentially even free-loading entirely; and (3) a comparative analysis between the words, deeds, and policy of former President Obama and President Trump. These three goals work toward establishing a simplified process which today's strategist can apply to the United States to anticipate future changes in foreign policy with Germany and NATO.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that President Trump is trying to burden-shift NATO responsibilities and the organizational process model is responsible for the discord within the administration's foreign policy behavior. To test this hypothesis, this thesis compares and contrasts competing models of foreign policy behavior and applies them to the real-life behavior of the United States between January 2014 and January 2019. This thesis analyzes and compares public statements that Presidents Trump and Obama made against what policies their administrations actually applied. This thesis also intends to determine whether Presidents Trump and Obama were acting in the interests of either burden-sharing or burden-shifting by analyzing their motivators and the benefits and/or consequences of their decisions. To meet the goals of this study, sources include news outlets, government publications, official websites, and the literature of prominent theorists for international relations, burden-sharing, comparative politics, defense economics, and foreign and domestic policymaking.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction and includes the establishment of the research question and an overview of actions and policies the United States has undertaken in regard to Germany and its military. Chapter II assesses under which theory of policymaking the United States best fits, given the rational actor, bureaucratic politics, and organizational process theories. Chapter III examines whether the president is burden-sharing, burden-shifting, or free-loading. Chapter IV examines the differences between and implications of the rhetoric, policy changes, and actions of Former President Obama and President Trump. Chapter V is the final chapter and draws overall conclusions and guiding remarks for strategists, policymakers, and other such interested parties who may find utility in a distilled set of principles for understanding the current administration. Also, Chapter V sets forth areas deemed worthy of further research as well as any significant implications for the United States, Germany, NATO, and Europe.

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II. POLICYMAKING THEORIES, APPLIED

A. RATIONAL ACTOR MODEL

The rational actor model is the first model against which we analyze the behavior of the United States. This model operates under the parameters that an actor makes decisions to the best of his abilities and chooses only those the options that present the optimum benefits-versus-costs ratio for his state. There is a reason the rational actor model is one of the most widely used mechanisms for foreign policy analysis; it may be appealing to believe that state interactions are based on the actions of leaders all trying to maximize state power.

Naturally, Americans may find solace in believing the U.S. presidents are always acting in the best interests of America. For example, Americans had for a long time viewed Germany as a potential adversary; an individual could not be faulted for believing that any actions the U.S. president takes against Germany are, therefore, automatically in support of American security and protection. After all, it was not an uncommon perception that not only had Germany started both world wars, but was also that it was not so much a victim as an accomplice to the political party responsible for the extermination of nearly the entire Jewish orthopraxy in Europe.⁴⁶ Indeed, just about anyone performing a quick search about the purpose of NATO will inevitably come across this famous quote from the first secretary general: “[NATO was created] to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”⁴⁷

Despite a historically negative view of Germany and a rocky start during his early years with the White House, former President Obama went to great lengths to promote a positive relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, often referring to her as his

⁴⁶ “Remaining Jewish Population of Europe In 1945,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/remaining-jewish-population-of-europe-in-1945>.

⁴⁷ “Origins: NATO’s Leaders,” NATO, accessed July 23, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_137930.htm.

friend, and in spite of the odds, Americans' opinion of Germany changed for the positive as Obama's time in office progressed.⁴⁸

It follows that much of the United States was in favor of former President Obama's assertion that a strong partnership with Germany was important to American national security.⁴⁹ In addition, Obama's ratings actually improved after 2014, suggesting that Americans were happy with his refreshingly diplomatic perspective in comparison to his predecessor, George W. Bush, whose doctrine was looked upon as "overly bellicose" and "unjust."⁵⁰ Former President Obama did indeed keep the United States from starting any new wars and attempted to reduce future issues by bringing home troops from Afghanistan and other conflict areas. While his methods were not without targeted air strikes, harsh criticism, and accusations of sowing seeds of conflict, former President Obama's diplomatic tendencies did prevent costly protracted wars with Iran, China, and Russia while he was in office.⁵¹ Therefore, it appears that the and relating to Germany were in keeping with what the rational actor model might predict about the former president's behavior: he made decisions that preserved the interests of the United States and its national security, rather than pursue courses of action that were self-serving or otherwise narrow-sighted.

In comparison to his predecessor, President Donald Trump's handling of Germany has been, at face value, more aggressive. Even during his campaign as a presidential candidate, President Trump asserted repeatedly that he would either hold Germany and the rest of NATO accountable for meeting the terms of collective defense spending or threaten to remove the United States from NATO entirely. Not sugar-coating his terms, Mr. Trump stated his opinion in 2015, "The Iran nuclear deal is a terrible one for the United States and

⁴⁸ Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc., *Perceptions of Germany among the U.S. Population: June 2018* (Washington, DC: Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018), <https://www.germany.info/us-en/aktuelles/-/2181960?openAccordionId=item-2181976-0-panel>.

⁴⁹ Barack Obama, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden: A Stronger Partnership with Europe for a Safer America," Scribd, September 1, 2019, <https://www.scribd.com/document/6245758/Barack-Obama-Joe-Biden-A-Stronger-Partnership-with-Europe-for-a-Safer-America>.

⁵⁰ Gary L. Gregg, II, "George W. Bush: Foreign Affairs," Miller Center, July 10, 2017, <https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/foreign-affairs>.

⁵¹ Christie Parsons and W. J. Hennigan, "President Obama, Who Hoped to Sow Peace, Instead Led the Nation in War," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-obama-at-war/>.

the world. It does nothing but make Iran rich and will lead to catastrophe.”⁵² Four years later, his message remains consistent; Iran needs to be prevented from having nuclear weapons and something needs to be done about the deal if that goal is to be achieved.

Supposing the current president is following the rational actor model, then it would make sense that his decision to pull out of the nuclear deal was in the best interest of American national security. However, the decision to pull out of the deal has diverged from the rational actor model at this point. Germany, NATO, and other world leaders are convinced that President Trump’s decision to hold Iran in violation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action terms is a disastrous misstep, placing another war in the Middle East back on the table.⁵³

Until now, the rational actor model has been useful because it provides a simple model with few contending factors in order to produce an easy-to-understand answer to political behavior. However, this author suggests that the rational actor model’s elegance is also its downfall. This model does not make sense for use against current politics because the bulk of the evidence suggests that, while presidents announce choices that are in the best interests of the United States, they are somehow being prevented from effecting the change they wish to see and the United States does not appear to be behaving as a unitary actor.

For example, former President Obama asserted that NATO members ought to be paying more toward their defense spending and used diplomacy as his primary method of trying to achieve his goals, but no measures to reach this goal were ever actually implemented. Why make such demands in support of a safer, more secure world and then not follow them up with action?

⁵² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “The Iran nuclear deal is a terrible one,” Twitter, April 5, 2015, 4:06 p.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/584129948916514818>.

⁵³ Julian Borger, Saeed Kamali Dehghan, and Oliver Holmes, “Iran Deal: Trump Breaks with European Allies over ‘Horrible, One-sided’ Nuclear Agreement,” *Guardian*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/08/iran-deal-trump-withdraw-us-latest-news-nuclear-agreement>.

In yet another example, former President Obama was adamant that military force was not how the United States ought to be solving the world's problems; he himself is quoted as saying, "Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail."⁵⁴ How, then, does that explain why he called for a reported total of 542 drone strikes for a total body count of 3,797 souls?⁵⁵ Why would he not choose to push that task to other allied countries to keep the United States from resorting to exerting the violence to which he was so vocally opposed? Why kill terrorists and face losing the moral high ground when capturing them could have provided vital information? After all, "kill operations significantly reduce the intelligence available from detainees and captured material," as was determined in a U.S. Department of Defense study.⁵⁶ Perhaps these actions were due to more than just a rational country making rational choices... the rational actor model cannot explain the actions of a country whose president could so passionately advocate for diplomacy yet also admit that killing was his "strong suit."⁵⁷

Was President Obama simply an outlier to the rational actor paradigm? Hardly. Any quick search of current news headlines today is fraught with criticism of President Trump's behavior (or of any U.S. president, for that matter). How can the United States possibly endanger itself by threatening conditions for war with Iran? What end does vitriolic rhetoric across social media platforms and press conferences alike possibly achieve without damage to American national security, let alone to the economy at home or to the safety of government personnel abroad?

The overwhelming amount of evidence suggests that the actions of U.S. presidents are not synonymous with the actions of the United States as explained using the rational

⁵⁴ Bob Dreyfuss, "Obama Says War Is Not the Answer," *Nation*, June 29, 2015, <https://www.thenation.com/article/obama-says-war-not-answer/>.

⁵⁵ Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," *Politics, Power, and Preventive Action* (blog), January 20, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data>.

⁵⁶ James Downie, "Obama's Drone War Is a Shameful Part of His Legacy," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obamas-drone-war-is-a-shameful-part-of-his-legacy/2016/05/05/a727eea8-12ea-11e6-8967-7ac733c56f12_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c11e49d341f0.

⁵⁷ Mark Halperin and John Heilemann, *Double Down: Game Change 2012* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 55.

actor model. A young strategist must realize that either the United States is not a rational actor or, more likely, that the United States cannot be treated as a unitary entity if a strategist wishes to plan for future behavior with its friends or foes alike; whether the United States perceives Germany and NATO as friends, foes, or “frenemies” has yet to be seen.⁵⁸

B. BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS MODEL

While the rational actor model is an easily understandable theory of behavior, its simplicity is also its biggest critique. Enter the bureaucratic politics model, arguably one of the most complex models in political theory. Similar to the rational actor model, the bureaucratic politics model also asserts that a state leader is operating to maximize the benefits while minimizing the costs of navigating within the international arena.

However, the bureaucratic politics model adds another few layers of complexity as it recognizes a troubling facet of reality: states are not unitary actors but, rather, are composed of competing organizations and within these organizations are individuals highly motivated to achieve their own desires and are able to noticeably influence the other people and organizations surrounding them in order to reach their goals. As Graham Allison puts it, the behaviors and actions of government can be understood “not as organizational outputs, but as outcomes of bargaining games” played by a multitude of actors focused “not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems...according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals.”⁵⁹ With this model, the president, despite being king of the castle, sits upon a throne supported by a turbulent mass of independently thinking actors embroiled in the perpetual struggle for realizing their own political victories.

The fact of the matter is that both former President Obama and President Trump could have directed all the ultimate decisions about sanctions, budget manipulation, military action, or international organization interactions that he wanted, but neither were

⁵⁸ Russell A. Berman, “Trump vs. Merkel: Friends or Frenemies?” Hoover Institution, July 27, 2017, <https://www.hoover.org/research/trump-vs-merkel-friends-or-frenemies>.

⁵⁹ Allison, “Conceptual Models.”

or have been able to control the statements and actions of other entities within the rest of the United States, not to mention the goings on within their own cabinets, leading to results that were seldom exactly what they originally intended. The effects of these intertwined, competing entities within the American system are undeniably impacting how other leaders interact with the United States and how we perceive international behavior.

The nature of politics requires a “diversity of goals and values that must be reconciled before a decision can be reached.”⁶⁰ Inherently, there is friction between the president and one or more of his “three dozen other offices, boards, and councils, some of which were established by statute and are permanent and some of which were the creatures of a particular president and are temporary.”⁶¹ It does not matter whether the rubbing points are between particular objectives or goals; resistance is just as easily met at the discontent about the ways and means to an end in which all parties are in agreement.

For example, despite the apparent unity in the U.S. administration of the time, there were still some deep ideological differences between former President Obama, his vice president, and his secretary of state. Mr. Joe Biden and Mrs. Hillary Clinton were even referred to as each providing the yin and yang for their president’s foreign policy decisions throughout their time in the White House.⁶² This dichotomy between Obama’s left- and right-hand personnel is a glaring beacon pointing to how the president could, in fact, advertise against the use of the military to solve problems and yet authorize drone strikes to dispose of those few thousand individuals (including about 324 civilians).⁶³

Similarly, President Trump is faced with endless amounts of turmoil across the spectrum of government employees. Questionable social media commentary aside, some politicians are so passionately convinced that his decisions while in office are so poor that

⁶⁰ Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making*, 68.

⁶¹ Hilsman, 135.

⁶² Peter Baker, “A Biden Run Would Expose Foreign Policy Differences with Hillary Clinton,” *New York Times*, October 9, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/10/us/politics/a-biden-run-would-expose-foreign-policy-differences-with-hillary-clinton.html>.

⁶³ Micah Zenko, “Obama’s Final Drone Strike Data,” *Politics, Power, and Preventive Action* (blog), January 20, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data>.

they are calling attention to certain accusations in the hopes that something will be enough to justify an impeachment. However, the events surrounding potential impeachment are another matter entirely and are not examined under this thesis due to its still-volatile nature.⁶⁴

Regardless, the many points of view in the present U.S. administration do not apparently have much of a braking effect on President Trump in national security. This can be said of such issues as the U.S. membership within NATO. The Senate Armed Services Committee passed a bill in early 2019 that included a provision to suspend the budget bill's funding for an entire year should the United States remove itself from NATO.⁶⁵ The suspension of funds for keeping American troops safe is quite the incentive for President Trump keep ties with the alliance.⁶⁶ This bill is evidence, if it were needed, of the constitutional fact that the powers to national security are divided between branches of government as is the Anglo-Saxon custom. The bureaucratic politics model is useful because it allows for the very real factors of checks and balances and the civil military structure, all of which have an effect on the outcome of the U.S. behavior internationally.

However, this model does not seem to be the best fit for modeling American foreign policy behavior because of the sheer volume of possible factors at play. The polar opposite of the "macro" view perspective from the rational actor model, the bureaucratic politics model presents the viewer with the "micro" perspective, focusing not on broad strokes of unitary actor decisions but instead on the actual "pulling and hauling" of different competing interests.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Alex Moe and Jane C. Timm, "In Lopsided Vote, House Kills Effort to Impeach Trump," *NBC News*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/house-vote-impeachment-resolution-against-trump-n1030791>.

⁶⁵ S. 1790, 116th Cong. (2019) (enacted), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1790/text>.

⁶⁶ Joe Gould, "Senate's Pentagon Budget Bill Would Obstruct Trump from Leaving NATO," *Defense News*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/05/23/senates-pentagon-budget-bill-would-obstruct-trump-from-leaving-nato/>.

⁶⁷ Yanan Song, "The U.S. Commitment to NATO in the Post-Cold War Period" (master's thesis, SOAS University of London, 2016), <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/id/eprint/30241>.

Additionally, all the nuanced reactions happening in real time seem to be too volatile to be worth using for forecasting outcomes because it seems the outcomes were not the original goal to begin with. Indeed, according to Hilsman, “the bureaucratic-politics model suggests that the outcome is largely not what was intended by the participants but is the resultant in the force diagram of their pulling and hauling.”⁶⁸

Another major criticism of this model is that issues frequently transcend the boundaries of the institutions within the government. As Allen S. Whiting points out, particularly common problem is that “factions in a department like State are often allied with like-minded factions in Defense against rival State department factions who are also allied with still other Defense department factions” and are formed not necessarily around the organization itself but instead around influential individuals based on ideological or personal affiliations.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, it appears that the bureaucratic politics model requires excessive amounts of intimate knowledge of the factors at play to arrive at a useful number of potential outcomes for planning for future relationships between the United States and its trans-Atlantic link. As complex an architecture that undergirds the United States governmental bodies, use of this model seems better suited for analyzing why decisions *were* made as opposed to what decisions *will be* made.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS MODEL

The organizational process model provides yet another method of trying to understand the drivers behind how states function and why they behave the way they do. Similar to the bureaucratic politics model, this model looks at a state as led not by a leader, but rather, by a series of government entities all operating together and interlocked like gears within a machine. This model focuses its attention less on the individuals within the organization and more on the flow of directives down the chain of command from the

⁶⁸ Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making*, 78.

⁶⁹ Hilsman, 77.

president down through different departments and committees and how those decisions are actualized.

One of the most striking examples of the difficulties encountered during the journey of a presidential directive is from the Cuban missile crisis. Robert F. Kennedy wrote in his memoir of his brother:

The president believed he was president and that, his wishes having been made clear, they would be followed and the missiles removed. He therefore dismissed the matter from his mind. Now he learned that the failure to follow up on this matter had permitted the same obsolete Turkish missiles to become hostages to the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

One could argue that this is just a grave example of the failure of a president to inspect what he expects, but the organizational process model forces us to ask ourselves, “Why must a president inspect what he expects if he is, after all, president?” Presidents’ directives appear to be falling victim to the review, approval, and enactment phases of the organizational process model. As the organizations process the information given to them by other organizations, take action, and pass the information along, it is apparent to the author of this thesis that “government behavior... can thus be understood less as deliberate choices than as the outputs of organizations.”⁷¹

Returning to the relationship between former President Obama and Chancellor Merkel, the president’s policies were surprisingly predictable once one attentively follows how the organizational process model applies. How could former President Obama admit to spying and violating the sanctity of personal privacy with someone he calls a friend and routinely visited?⁷² Simply put, perhaps he did not order wiretapping of Chancellor Merkel; he more likely directed the National Security Agency (NSA) to keep him informed and advised on Germany’s behavior. One should also note that the intelligence entities in the United States and Germany have for decades had a contradicted relationship.

⁷⁰ Hilsman, 59.

⁷¹ Hilsman, 55.

⁷² Tony Romm and Erin Mershon, “EU: Friends Don’t ‘Spy on Each Other,’” *Politico*, October 29, 2013, <https://www.politico.com/story/2013/10/european-union-nsa-friends-do-not-spy-on-each-other-099035>.

Therefore, is it any surprise that a powerful agency (especially one known for its employees caricatured as spooks) was using wiretaps to monitor not just Angela Merkel, but many other allied leaders for decades?⁷³ One cannot say with certainty at this point, but the NSA probably opted to provide a national signals intelligence solution and the president, regardless of whether he was aware of the spying, allowed it to happen because he was ultimately getting what he wanted.⁷⁴ One should also ask the obvious question: who benefited the most from the Germany-NSA scandal? Additionally, where along the timeline was this question sourced since 2008, in which the Russians have since gone to the offensive in Europe to unseat what they deem to be U.S. hegemony? The NSA scandal and the Snowden revelations, as well as the deeds of Wikileaks, fit well within the pattern of so called Russian “malign measures” or the revival of past practices designed to wage psychological warfare and subterfuge against the United States and its allies as in the Cold War.

During his time in office, President Trump is also subjected to the flexing, molding, and slowing of his directives. Revisiting the example of President Trump’s allusions to removing the United States from the NATO Alliance, the inclusion of a “break glass in case of NATO emergency” clause in the 2019 Pentagon budget bill is an interesting case to examine under the organizational process model. Here, an organization took action to include a safety net for a contingency against the president, not for what he did, but for what he *might* do in the future. The justification, according to Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), is that “[This bill] gives Congress the opportunity to debate and overturn a decision if we think it’s unwise.”⁷⁵

Should President Trump decide to pull out of NATO, he would have to contend not only with NATO members themselves but with those factors in the constitutional and civil-military structure of this nation who have a say in what is neither a kingdom nor a

⁷³ “U.S. Spy Agency Tapped German Chancellery for Decades: WikiLeaks,” Reuters, July 9, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-usa-spying-idUSKCN0PI2AD20150709>.

⁷⁴ David E. Sanger and Mark Mazzetti, “Allegation of U.S. Spying on Merkel Puts Obama at Crossroads,” *New York Times*, October 25, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/25/world/europe/allegation-of-us-spying-on-merkel-puts-obama-at-crossroads.html>.

⁷⁵ Gould, “Senate’s Pentagon Budget Bill.”

presidential dictatorship. The U.S. Senate was crucial to the creation of NATO and the worldwide posture of the U.S. military, and other security entities also depend on the bases and forces in and of NATO allies.

President Trump will be forced to wait while the Senate and other interested parties decide whether he made the right decision before they will authorize the funds to physically remove from Europe the U.S. servicemembers supporting NATO. This is an example of how the Senate likely accomplished this by crossing interagency boundaries and combining the interests of the Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security to influence the effects of decisions made in the Oval Office.

Additionally, the delay caused between the president's decision to pull out of NATO and the removal of Americans from NATO can be categorized as a failure on the president's part to effect change because of simple truths of government and the formation of security policy in detail. As Allison stresses in his explanation of the Cuban missile crisis,

In the face of well-founded suspicions concerning offensive Soviet missiles in Cuba that posed a critical threat to the United States' most vital interest, squabbling between organizations whose job it is to produce this information seems entirely inappropriate. But for each of these organizations, the question involved the issue: 'Whose job was it to be?'⁷⁶

Should President Trump decide to pull out of NATO, he will be faced with the squabbling of organizations trying to determine whose job it is to take ownership of the problem, whether or not the president is correct, whether another investigation of President Trump's conduct is warranted, what timeline the removal (if any at all) ought to follow; the list goes on. In all likelihood, the president could decree the removal of the NATO tomorrow and the actual removal would not happen for another four years. By then, the White House would have a new elected official and could decide to reverse the decision and ultimately effect a net action of zero, all due to today's Senate placing one clause in this year's funding bill.

⁷⁶ Allison, "Conceptual Models," 705.

The organizational process model is likely the most useful in the context of interpreting for U.S. foreign policy behavior because it allows for more articulation than the parsimonious rational actor model yet pushes aside the clutter resulting from the too-granular lens of the bureaucratic politics model. In an ideal situation, the young strategist preparing his or her brief for the geographic combatant commander would have access to all relevant briefings made to and by the president as well as all of the minutes taken from every convening of minds within the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and anyone else relevant to the environment at hand. He or she would be able to piece together all the competing motives of the key influencers in the White House, combining the information to paint a realistic image of the immediate future.

Unsurprisingly, such a situation seldom occurs and the strategist must make the best of whatever documents, public statements, and news sources to which he or she can be availed and massage them together to form a general impression of the future. With such limited and incomplete information, his or her best chance at giving an admiral a coherent menu of options is to identify what organizations are creating the most influence, tease out what their motives and goals appear to be, and determine whether the president would be able to strongarm the subordinate organizations who are charged with receiving the directives.

III. BURDEN-SHARING, BURDEN-SHIFTING, OR FREE RIDING?

In search of a new age normalcy, will the United States continue to share the burden of collective defense in an alliance statecraft that it made over decades or will it recede into a 21st century isolationist policy under a revival of the Harding and Coolidge administrations of the 1920s and the public opinion of the time? Conversely, has the United States begun the process of shifting its responsibilities toward achieving the ultimate end of becoming a free-rider on the defense of others by using skillful or even cynical attempts to compel others to defend it? To answer these questions, we must look at the differences in behavior between burden-sharing, burden-shifting, and free-riding, the definitions of which are not as self-explanatory as they appear in headlines and even in the policy analysis of beginners.

A. BURDEN-SHARING

The sharing of defense burdens is part of the misery of alliances and coalitions that have long troubled statesmen and puzzled scholars of both war and peace long before NATO was born in 1949.⁷⁷ One can well understand the task by citation of what is an old Cold War text, but all the more insightful since the basic structures and issues remain unchanged more or less since a generation ago. Explained by Charles Cooper and Benjamin Zycher, burden-sharing is split into two schools of thought: fundamentalism and Atlanticism.⁷⁸ This report, published by the RAND Corporation in 1989 as the Cold War epoch of burden-sharing was reaching a climax, reflects precisely the concerns about NATO burden-sharing three decades later. While the following differences may seem to be about splitting hairs, the reality is that each approach to the issue of burden-sharing draws different solutions of how to proceed with NATO's future of collective defense,

⁷⁷ Abenheim and Halladay, *Soldiers, War, Knowledge*, 97–151; Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 72.

⁷⁸ Charles A. Cooper and Benjamin Zycher, *Perceptions of NATO Burden-sharing*, R-3750-FF/RC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1989).

Germany's role therein as Europe's leading power, and whatever estrangement there has been in U.S.-German bilateral relations since 2016.

Fundamentalism is characterized by the measuring contribution to the alliance based on the amount of defense spending with respect to gross national product (GNP). This is a method well favored in certain disciplines and also championed by those persons and entities who believe that a nation's defense effort can be counted like a large corporation's balance sheet of profits and losses. On the other hand, Atlanticists measure alliance contribution through the more qualitative and at times more diffuse nature of the military/support inputs and how they relate to European defense. In other words, Atlanticists ask not "how much money did you spend?," but "how well did you spend your money?"

The argument between how *much* is spent versus how *well* it is spent is older than the alliance itself. The two percent rule (which is in fact but one of a long series of NATO forces goal, not a legal requirement as is often wrongly stated in the press) is frequently cited in discussions of NATO participation, but does it even matter? One should look beyond this simple number and examine the leading issues of policy and strategy in the period since the focus has lurched away from the NATO ISAF and to the space in Europe between the Baltic and Black Seas. Some theorists argue this figure is perfectly irrelevant and a waste of time.⁷⁹ For instance, national security analyst Anthony Cordesman believes the time spent arguing over how much GDP ought to be spent on defense would be time much better spent trying to devise a realistic plan in detail on how simultaneously to deter Russian aggressions and to bolster existing deterrence and defense measures in Europe.⁸⁰ Cordesman explains that having the perpetual guns versus butter argument might not matter, if it were not for the fact that Russia is a credible threat now more than ever. NATO's members cannot sit idly by and must instead make larger strides toward actualized defense measures:

⁷⁹ Anthony Cordesman, "NATO's Pointless Burden Sharing Debates" (working paper, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019), 1–12, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/190221_NATO_Burden_Sharing_Commentary.pdf.

⁸⁰ Cordesman, "NATO's Pointless Burden Sharing Debates."

[NATO] requires a clear set of strategic goals tailored to the different needs of the Northern Flank, Baltic, Central Region, Southern Europe, and NATO's Southern Flank. It requires nation-by-nation force plans based on what member countries actually can and cannot do over a period of years, and it require the countries in the rear to be able to provide rapid and effective reinforcement. It also means that NATO countries addressing key new needs like integrated air-missile defense, cyberwarfare, and asymmetric political warfare, as well reexamine nuclear deterrence and out of area requirements.⁸¹

This statement is a sound argument, and comes from a figure with vast and senior experience versus the tendentious bile from certain figures in think tanks and elsewhere who today believe in no collective defense, and want, instead, a hegemonic security order or some return to the statecraft in the 18th century based on an opaque diplomacy as well as shifting coalitions that serve narrow interests. Cordesman's argument boldly calls out many across the board for their incompetence, and he states that such deliberation is counterproductive to the security of the Western world.⁸² However, his 2019 report brings light to the fact that the GDP and defense expenditure problem is a glaring issue that must be addressed by not only the United States but also the rest of the alliance. Perhaps the president must use Cordesman's approach to reassess how best to keep NATO from being a reactionary force. Rather than insisting NATO countries meet the suggested two percent goal, maybe the president should insist NATO countries focus on how to more effectively generate a credible deterrent in networking with one another. Cordesman rightfully points out, as do the Atlanticists, that the problem is not a lack in the quantity of money spent, but the lack of unity of effort.

The fundamentalists see U.S. military forces in Europe as a means to help Europeans defend themselves, while the Atlanticists see these forces as a means of serving the Americans' own national security as well as collective defense in a wider sense. The Atlanticists also view NATO Alliance cohesion as a "continuing objective," in contrast with the fundamentalists' position that "NATO cohesion is assumed," —what is, in fact, a proposition that the record of the past does not always sustain, as today in the case of

⁸¹ Cordesman, 6–7.

⁸² Cordesman.

Turkey, or, previously, in the cases of France or Greece (De Gaulle's withdrawal from the integrated SHAPE system).⁸³

What Cooper and Zycher wrote in their 1989 report still applies:

In the final analysis, the critical difference between the two approaches may be that the Fundamentalist approach sees burden-sharing as an issue that can, and indeed should, be addressed independently of other issues, whereas the Atlanticist approach sees burden-sharing as one among many other important issues that have to be integrated politically to permit the continued cohesion of NATO. Consequently, a Fundamentalist approach lends itself to public confrontation about spending levels and risks adverse reactions by lower-spending European members to the threats and pressure involved, whereas an Atlanticist approach stresses the need for political skill and compromise to maximize contributions, but risks public cynicism and dissatisfaction in the United States.⁸⁴

Published by RAND Corporation as the Cold War epoch of burden-sharing was reaching a climax, the report by Cooper and Zycher reflects precisely the concerns about NATO burden-sharing three decades later. Not for the first time has the president of the United States been critical of NATO members' reluctance to meet agreed-upon defense expenditures based on percentage of their GDP while being concerned with the possibility of a U.S. exit from Europe and the potential Russian aggression (following Crimea). Regarding the Pentagon's budget bill containing a provision for President Trump breaking off ties with NATO, some senators are concerned that the mere existence of the provision will cause Europeans baseless worry about the Americans leaving the alliance.

However, the American behavior in detail in the ongoing reinforcement of NATO begun in 2014 does not actually suggest (as of yet) any intent for the United States to withdraw from NATO via Article 13 of the Washington Treaty. President Trump urging the Europeans to focus on their defense spending is overtly fundamentalist. While some are interpreting his sharp criticism of NATO members and the organization itself as a prelude to cutting ties, others firmly believe President Trump is directing at European nations the identical burden-shifting rhetoric used also in former times in an attempt to

⁸³ Cooper and Zycher, *Perceptions of NATO Burden-sharing*, 8.

⁸⁴ Cooper and Zycher, 10.

force them to share the load of collective defense. However, burden-sharing implies a fair and proportionate load to be distributed among all parties. Throughout the history of the alliance, its members have struggled to set defense spending goals as a means to address the guns or butter argument as well as to mount an effective collective defense based on operational and strategic requirements—a thing that is manifestly not a science, nor is it manifestly contained in a spread sheet. If President Trump is trying to shift the burden-or dispose of it altogether, why not just cut United States defense spending from upwards of three percent back down to two percent, thereby forcing other NATO members to pick up the slack?

Simply put, one might assume that President Trump does not think NATO is useless. He has said that NATO is “obsolete,” not that NATO ought to be shut down or disbanded.⁸⁵ Perhaps he believes that NATO needs to change and adapt to the issues of today. Not only has President Trump increased defense spending during his time in office, despite his rhetoric to the contrary, but the U.S. side has consistently reinforced the measures for collective defense that were undertaken in the wake of the Crimean annexation, measures that have, in fact, been accelerated in the past two years. In fact, the NATO joint budget (versus the respective national defense budgets that are then apportioned by a complicated process to the defense tasks of the alliance operational commands) has enjoyed 22 percent of its budget as direct funding from the United States since 2014.⁸⁶ This joint budget is not especially large in comparison with the overall U.S. defense budget, nor in comparison to the top allies, either, but it is the budget used for certain combined, joint operations of the alliance.

One can say that President Trump perhaps does not view NATO as a waste of money. If he did, his economic acumen might compel him to either reduce direct funding

⁸⁵ Donald Trump, “N.A.T.O. is Obsolete,” Twitter, March 24, 2016, 4:47 a.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/712969068396093440>.

⁸⁶ Herman Matthijs, “The Funding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,” *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 3, no. 1 (June 2015): 54, <https://doi.org/10.15640/jppg.v3n1a3>; Rob Garver, “Does NATO Really Owe the U.S. Money?” *Fiscal Times*, May 26, 2017, <https://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2017/05/26/Does-NATO-Really-Owe-US-Money>; “Funding NATO,” NATO, last updated June 27, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm.

to NATO and use those funds elsewhere in his network of defense spending or to remove the United States from NATO altogether. President Trump has already demonstrated his preference for diverting money away from what he believes are lost causes and reallocating funds toward his policy goals.⁸⁷

Ultimately, the question remains: What plan does President Trump have in mind for NATO and Germany if his rhetoric implies Alliance disintegration but his actions imply support? Perhaps instead of a burden-sharing strategy, he is actually practicing the art of burden-shifting, which is a much underappreciated but nonetheless ever-present phenomenon associated with coalitions and alliances. It is a fact understood by very few journalists and commentators on this topic alike.

B. BURDEN-SHIFTING

As one leading U.S. scholar has rightly noted, “Burden-shifting is the art of manipulating alliance relationships for political gain.”⁸⁸ Burden-shifting exists because the alternative of burden-sharing is far less palatable for alliance members due the challenges of how an alliance of democratic nations have combined for collective defense function and because domestic politics always plays an outsized role in defense affairs—no matter what certain scholars suggest to the contrary. Allies tend to believe that “every member’s burden-share is about right, ‘except for his own, which they [think is] too high.’”⁸⁹ In order to enjoy the benefits of the alliance while minimizing their own costs, the solution is to remain in the Alliance and lessen one’s own burden via various stratagems, the character of which solution is loud but not well understood save by those who best understand it. These few are not as loud as the burden-shifters. In fact, NATO has never lost a member

⁸⁷ Rebecca Morin, “Trump Administration Cancels Nearly \$1 Billion in Funding for California High-speed Rail,” *USA Today*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/05/16/trump-administration-cancels-nearly-1-b-funding-california-high-speed-rail/3697609002/>; Ginger Gibson, “Trump Budget Seeks Cuts to Domestic Programs, Medicare, Favors Military and Wall,” Reuters, February 13, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-budget/trump-budget-seeks-cuts-to-domestic-programs-medicare-favors-military-and-wall-idUSKBN1FW0BL>; Tara Golshan, “Trump’s 2020 Budget Proposal Seriously Cuts the Nation’s Safety Net,” *Vox*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/3/11/18259789/trumps-2020-budget-proposal-cuts>.

⁸⁸ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 8.

⁸⁹ Thies.

once it joined the alliance, most notably because liberal democracies will always work hard to maintain an alliance because “they both need and want the approval and support of other liberal democratic states.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the costs of neutrality and military autonomy are more expensive in the end.

If each member chooses to join and stay inside the collective defense of NATO because it cannot afford to defend itself but also balks at the cost of member dues, the only natural way to cope is to find ways of bargaining with other members to minimize costs. The problem is how anything can possibly get accomplished when no one wants to foot the bill for solutions that are intended to benefit the whole. Thies asserts that members avoid such deadlock through “large and competent bureaucracies” and “extensive economic and military resources.”⁹¹ These two factors allow for members to have varying abilities for lobbying and marketing their interests or cause as well as to have leverage behind their perspectives or motives. He explains,

First, the larger the member, the greater the staff resources available to draw up plans for conducting the alliance’s affairs, formulate arguments in support of those plans, and press those arguments on the other members through multilateral and bilateral channels. Second, the larger the member, the more indispensable its contribution, thereby encouraging the smaller members to be receptive to its views. This suggests that the creation and growth of NATO-the-organization can usefully be viewed as the product of intensive lobbying by the larger members pursuing organizational arrangements supportive of their efforts to shift burdens to their partners.⁹²

What this explanation means is that the United States has had the upper hand in both of these categories from 1949 onward, as when compared essentially to every other member within NATO, thereby explaining why the United States has such a high degree of influence on NATO. Moreover, the United States has provided vital military assistance in the first phase of NATO in the early 1950s, and, with its primacy in nuclear weapons as

⁹⁰ Thies, *Why NATO Endures*, 294; David G. Haglund, “North Atlantic Treaty Organization,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 27, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization>.

⁹¹ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 9.

⁹² Thies, 9–10.

well as other weapons, has placed the continental Europeans in NATO especially on their back foot. This generalization especially applied in former times to the Bonn FRG in the first decades of its own national defense in the alliance.

To resist being constantly bent to the Americans' will, allies need to increase the amount of bargaining power by increasing their amount of indispensability. This goal is accomplished by either increasing the size of their contribution to NATO or by having a more convincing argument to rebut the impressive strength of the American media. However, this argument must be unique. According to Thies, "The circumstances claimed must be unique so that other members cannot cite them to justify exceptions of their own and sufficiently long-lived that the others cannot argue that the grounds for an exception, however reasonable at present, will disappear shortly."⁹³

Traditionally, smaller countries have opted for the latter since it is not fueled by money, machinery, and military force. Instead, it operates under the intangible force of extenuating circumstances or of various exceptions to the rules often fashioned by U.S. accountants in defense affairs who imagine that all allies operate under the same civil military fundamentals as the United States. Which option sounds cheaper and easier: producing a fleet of tactical air-to-air combatant aircraft or finding reasons to blame the previous government for creating an unfavorable economy that hampers any defense spending of use to the alliance? Some countries do occasionally opt for the former when they think they could get away with it. As per Thies,

As a group, NATO members spend large sums every year on defense, but such sums do not necessarily translate into steadily improving capabilities for deterrence and defense. One reason why is the tendency of NATO members to use their defense budgets to buy big-ticket items like ships and planes, which they can point to as evidence of how much they are doing, but not the crews or spare parts needed to operate them effectively.⁹⁴

This is also a statement that has applied to the United States itself at many times in the record of NATO since 1949 (i.e., in the early 1980s).

⁹³ Thies, 141.

⁹⁴ Thies, 169.

For example, the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force suffered from a lack of forethought when, earlier in their relationship with NATO, they bought a "large force of aircraft" to satisfy the "fee" of NATO membership; however, by the late 1980s, they had no aircrew to fly them.⁹⁵ In the 1970s, because of its Indochina war, the U.S. side had allowed its armed forces charged with the collective defense of western Europe to decay to an alarming degree, which had emboldened, in turn, the Warsaw Pact to modernize greatly during the decades of the 1970s and into the 1980s, such that NATO's forward defense was in doubt at the time that the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

Decades later, Germany suffers with the problem of too drastic cuts in defense and a force structure now unsuited to continental missions versus the International Security Assistance Force's role in Afghanistan. Germany has increased its defense spending annually in a remarkable manner, but the Bundeswehr struggles to adjust to the shift in roles and missions back to a European focus.⁹⁶

The more prevalent strategy appears to be that which focuses on the member as a victim of some sort of unique, temporary, debilitating situation that requires a pardon from providing full support to NATO without giving the other members a reason to also request a pardon. Wallace Thies explains:

Ever since the mid-1950s, the Atlantic Alliance has included at least fifteen countries with great disparities in wealth, population, and industrial development. NATO members have seized on these disparities to claim exceptions to the principles and norms to which all subscribe, on the grounds that theirs is a unique case or that special circumstances prevent them from doing as much as their partners would prefer.⁹⁷

As NATO celebrates its 70th birthday in 2019, the headlines are full of the same story; Germany is no exception. Germany has a strong, globalized economy, yet allies are urging it to do more and take the lead in NATO as lead nation to compensate for the

⁹⁵ Thies, 169.

⁹⁶ Ansgar Rieks, "Security Challenges in a Developing World: A German Air Force Perspective" (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, August 13, 2019); Talal Hussein, "German Military Still Facing Resources Shortage, New Report Finds," *Army Technology*, January 31, 2019, <https://www.army-technology.com/news/german-military-report-2019/>.

⁹⁷ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 134.

perception of U.S. retreat, its Asian pivot, and so on.⁹⁸ However, Germany's reasoning was that the restrictions of domestic politics and the international system related to the military and defense spending and that its economic growth is not as good as headlines portray.⁹⁹ In more recent years, Chancellor Merkel has made progress with getting Germany to take the lead in NATO, but it is slow going. She blames the delays on her "coalition partner, the Social Democrat Party," which is yet another example of a leader highlighting inadequacies in politics as an explanation for not meeting minimum NATO guidelines.¹⁰⁰ In fact, Germany's NATO ISAF involvement with Afghanistan demonstrates military integration and performance progress in leaps and bounds when compared to an earlier era, wherein post-Cold War Germany rearmament was delayed not only due to financial concerns but for political implications with NATO commitments as well that collided with domestic politics and national goals amid division.¹⁰¹ Germany has since transformed from a somewhat reclusive position where the German government maintained "fundamental doubts regarding the economic and military conditions of a conventional buildup" into a country whose military is evolving into a force capable of full-spectrum operations.¹⁰² As stated in a 2018 report from the German Federal Ministry of Defence:

In the course of the past few years, the Bundeswehr has been subjected to a profound transformation to adapt to the new task spectrum. Its organizational structure, procedures, personnel and equipment have been geared to meet the continually changing demands. The Bundeswehr has become familiar with thinking in terms of networked structures. The contributions of the Bundeswehr to a networked, national preventive security scheme are numerous; they comprise the employment of Bundeswehr units to safeguard civilian elements in crisis regions, military training and equipment support, assistance with the reform of the security

⁹⁸ Little, "Why is Germany so Reluctant?"

⁹⁹ Dyson, "Managing Convergence;" Marcel Fratzscher, "Germany Is No Poster Child for Economic Growth," *Washington Post*, November 27, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-worldpost/wp/2017/11/27/germany-economy/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4329628aa26a.

¹⁰⁰ Witte, "Merkel and Trump Agree."

¹⁰¹ Hubert Zimmermann, *Money and Security: Troops, Monetary Policy, and West Germany's Relations with the United States and Britain, 1950–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 37–38.

¹⁰² Zimmermann, *Money and Security*, 40.

sector in crisis-afflicted countries, active support of NATO and EU accession states and participation in peace-building and peace-keeping operations in order to lay the foundation for the establishment of public and democratic institutions and for the reconstruction of the economy and society.¹⁰³

The Bundeswehr is actually improving; yet President Trump, as a skeptic, continues to verbally to attack such leaders as the German Chancellor. Perhaps this criticism is because, as one might suggest, such leaders may be actively trying to improve NATO by burden-shifting, rather than trying to destroy it. Since the current president (2019) has been in office, President Trump may well have achieved many defense spending goals asked of NATO. President Trump may be a more confrontational negotiator and is less constrained by custom to confront the Allies or not about it.

In an effort of self-defense against the United States' persistent demands to step up their performance, a common tactic for certain NATO members (in absence of the ability to meet demands genuinely) is to manipulate the measures of their defense expenditure. In the advent of President Trump proposing an additional increase of defense spending from two percent to four percent, the likelihood of expenditure report manipulation is high.¹⁰⁴ This poses a problem because inflated defense spending measures have a propensity to obscure the reliability of future military capabilities not just for real-world conflict but also for joint exercises. The time to address military shortcomings is probably best *before* a news article features a statement of soldiers using black-painted broomsticks in lieu of actual tank turrets.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ German Bundestag, *Information from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces Annual Report 2017*, 59th Report (Berlin: German Bundestag, 2018), https://www.bundestag.de/blob/554772/e70a53c4708baed83f7ceba9e2e954f4/annual_report_2017_59th_report-data.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Steve Holland, "Trump Says NATO Countries' Burden-sharing Improving, Wants More," Reuters, April 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nato-trump/trump-says-nato-countries-burden-sharing-improving-wants-more-idUSKCN1RE23P>.

¹⁰⁵ Judy Dempsey, "Germany: From Machine Guns to Broomsticks," Carnegie Europe, February 27, 2018, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/75653>; "Troops Tote Broomsticks at NATO War Games," *Local*, February 17, 2015, <https://www.thelocal.de/20150217/germans-troops-tote-broomsticks-at-nato-war-games>.

President Trump appears to be, in effect, padding the odds to be in his favor for future conflicts in Europe. If so-called underperforming NATO members are pressured to increase their efforts and are motivated by the fear of wavering U.S. commitment, perhaps they will find ways to satisfy American expectations.

The problem is that the United States is no different than any other NATO member when it comes to controlling the facts about defense economics.¹⁰⁶ The fact that President Trump is a former businessman is known. Between graduating with a major in economics, his numerous real estate properties, and his time hosting a reality television show, the average American is aware his background does not conform to the model of statesmanship found in U.S. presidents since more or less Herbert Hoover in 1928.¹⁰⁷

In contrast, an example of a more conventional career is found in former President Barack Obama. He graduated with a degree in political science and started his political career first as a community organizer and eventually progressed into a position in the U.S. Senate before his election as president in 2008.¹⁰⁸ Most Americans likely acknowledged that former President Obama rose via familiar steps to his national role. It is no surprise that two vastly different biographies as well as differing public perceptions of these men's skills would result in two different approaches to leading the country. While critics of the Obama administration can decry his efforts at social welfare (despite the fact that the U.S. defense budget was restricted somewhat in his term, but remained at very high levels), the Trump administration has made higher defense spending as one of its hallmarks of policy and spending. As this thesis highlights later, this difference in perception is important to realize because, despite the burden-sharing headlines and rhetoric that appeared in the eyes of the public, it did not drastically effect change in what policies were actually pursued.

Many analysts argue whether defense spending increases the economic strength of the United States. In an effort to quantifiably compare the effects of defense spending on

¹⁰⁶ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 101–106.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Duignan, "Politics," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump/Politics>.

¹⁰⁸ Jeff Wallenfeldt and David Mendell, "Barack Obama," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Barack-Obama>.

economic growth, economists created specific formulas to analyze historical trends. The two primary models are the Feder-Ram and the adjusted Solow. The Feder-Ram model is a supply side model popular with theorists and economists alike due to the “appearance of a direct link from theoretical model to econometric specification,” and it has been often used often in modeling trends for the guns and butter debate.¹⁰⁹ However, the Feder-Ram model appears to have little mention in mainstream economic growth literature, as determined by the analysis by Dunne, Smith, and Willenbockel.¹¹⁰ In contrast, with its Keynesian, demand-side perspective, the augmented Solow model is more frequently cited, as it draws attention to the appealing multiplier effect, wherein “an exogenous increase in military spending increases demand and, if there is spare capacity, increases utilisation and reduces unemployment of resources.”¹¹¹ However, the augmented Solow model has its own criticisms, as it is so restrictive in its formula that it excludes factors such as institutions which economists tend to find too valuable to dismiss.¹¹²

The ways in which the two models are applied results in different perspectives of how military and defense spending impact economic growth. Some argue that defense spending boosts economic growth due to “spillover,” or effects such as “improved infrastructure, enhanced aggregate demand, and decreased unemployment.”¹¹³ Others argue that defense spending has too many opportunity costs and fail to improve the economy as well as other ventures such as education, infrastructure, and health.¹¹⁴ Still others argue that the relationship between defense spending and economic growth is unclear or even irrelevant. In fact, Uk Heo’s analysis found that neither model succeeds in proving a meaningful link between defense spending and economic growth. He found,

¹⁰⁹ J. Paul Dunne, Ron Smith, and Dirk Willenbockel, “Models of Military Expenditure and Growth: A Critical Review,” *Defense and Peace Economics* 16, no. 6 (2005): 453.

¹¹⁰ Dunne, Smith, and Willenbockel, “Models of Military Expenditure,” 455–456.

¹¹¹ Dunne, Smith, and Willenbockel, 450.

¹¹² Dunne, Smith, and Willenbockel, 456–458.

¹¹³ Albert Wijeweera and Matthew J. Webb, “Using the Feder-Ram and Military Keynesian Models to Examine the Link Between Defence Spending and Economic Growth in Sri Lanka,” *Defense and Peace Economics* 23, no. 3 (February 1, 2012): 305.

¹¹⁴ Wijeweera and Webb, “Using the Feder-Ram,” 305.

In conclusion, as earlier work by Heo (2000) found, the relationship between defense spending and economic growth in the United States is statistically insignificant regardless of which models are used to examine the relationship. Considering that defense spending is projected to continue to rise, this finding has important policy implications for the U.S. government on the grounds that increased defense spending is unlikely to have a significant, direct effect on the U.S. economy.¹¹⁵

The problem with difference in foreign policy formulation appeared at first to be due in part to the juxtaposition of former President Obama's defense cuts and the sequestration with President Trump's sharp increase in defense spending. Upon further investigation, however, using this comparison of defense economics in an attempt to determine the motivations in foreign policy design between the two U.S. presidents does not advance any insight in this inquiry into burden-sharing in its essence. A better approach would be to determine whether the personages, as well as future presidents, are well-versed enough in the nuances of defense economics and alliance cohesion to firmly grasp the apparent futility in using military spending to influence the economy or even to produce combat power--- this question may be well worth the effort encompassed in future theses.

Such NATO operational and strategic activities since Crimea in 2014 as the NATO Response Force (NRF), which includes the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), forces a different member each year to enter the spotlight as they host the readiness force. Leading up to the assumption of the NRF, the host country is required to have a six- to 18-month training and exercise period to ensure the host country is adequately prepared.¹¹⁶ Returning to the example of Germany, issues with the Bundeswehr were not so glaringly obvious to the rest of the world until the Panzergrenadierbattillon was part of a NATO exercise designed for preparing the German Bundeswehr for the VJTF in 2016.¹¹⁷ After receiving harsh criticism, the German government increased its efforts and presented

¹¹⁵ Uk Heo, "The Relationship between Defense Spending and Economic Growth in the United States," *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (December 2010): 767.

¹¹⁶ "NATO Response Force Fact Sheet," NATO JFC Brunssum, accessed July 29, 2019, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-response-force-nrf-fact-sheet>.

¹¹⁷ Luke Hurst, "Germany 'Can't Explain' Use of Broomsticks Instead of Guns in NATO Exercise," *Newsweek*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.newsweek.com/germany-cant-explain-use-broomstick-instead-guns-nato-exercise-307902>.

higher reported figures on defense spending to placate President Trump yet reports find that the German military is nonetheless struggling with the imperatives for European roles and missions. However, increased defense spending has not necessarily correlated to an improved military as of yet, but improvements may simply be slow to be realized by the United States.¹¹⁸

So, if President Trump is demanding NATO members do more, is his goal to get the entire alliance to meet the U.S. levels of performance in support of a fair burden-sharing agreement? Or, on the other hand, is he preparing the international arena for an environment where the United States can do less in the political dance of burden-shifting? Based on public statements, previous behavior, and his background as a businessman, it appears President Trump is, as has been the common fashion for NATO members, simply setting up a burden-shifting arrangement. This well-known personality in the executive branch has not invented this process, but he has added a new and noteworthy chapter to its record.

C. FREE-RIDING

Free-riding is not so straightforward a definition as the name suggests; free-riding in this context is not necessarily characterized as doing nothing while someone else does all the work. Free-riding in the NATO context is when a member enjoys the benefits of Alliance membership (security and power provided by stronger, wealthier states) and, despite recognizing that other members' work is necessary, chooses not to contribute a proportionate amount of effort. Germany's Constanze Stelzenmüller stated in 2018 that Germany had been free-riding on the United States, but perhaps the time for change has come.¹¹⁹ The difference is doing nothing at all versus doing less than what one *ought* to be doing based on the capacity to meet expectations.

¹¹⁸ "Germany Informs NATO of Largest Increase in Defense Spending in Decades," *Xinhua Net News*, May 18, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/18/c_138067633.htm; Husseini, "German Military."

¹¹⁹ Albert Drones, "GDP-Based Burden Sharing in NATO: The Politics of Defense Financing," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, 2018), <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/59649>.

While it could be argued that the majority of Europe is free-riding on the efforts of the United States, that argument stems from a perception warped by American news outlets and unbridled social media rants. To be fair, the average American is probably quite susceptible to the image of Europeans riding on Uncle Sam's coattails. After all, American exceptionalism is almost certainly responsible for an entire line of merchandise sporting the phrase "Back to Back World War Champs," a questionable description of how history actually unfolded.

If NATO is supposedly only being supported by the United States while other members are being portrayed as shirking their duties, how has NATO continued to exist in a climate of supposed free-riding? The answer: they are not free-riding. The numbers and the varying ways of measuring NATO contribution indicate that members are engaged in active bargaining with one another; the standard defense spending percentage of GDP may be misleading and pessimistic.¹²⁰ As Thies notes, "Large members...do enough that the smaller ones do not lose faith in their ability to serve as reliable protectors. Small members...do enough to remain in the good graces of their larger partners."¹²¹ When this balance of doing enough is threatened, the magic of liberal democracies is their remarkable capacity for overcoming "not just once but again and again...the kind of internal disagreements that destroyed virtually all prior and many contemporary alliances."¹²²

The issue of free-riding is no different. Time and time again, NATO members cite all manner of ways they contribute to the alliance, thanks to both malleable defense effort metrics and the NATO Defense Review (an institutional mechanism that requires all members to fully disclose in-depth information on current and projected force capabilities).¹²³ The Europeans' attitude toward NATO is indicative of the U.S. behavior in the future. Also a member who benefits from NATO in more than one capacity, the

¹²⁰ Jo Jakobsen, "Is European NATO Really Free-riding? Patterns of Material and Non-material Burden-sharing after the Cold War," *European Security* 27, no. 4 (2018): 490–514, <https://doi.org/10.15640/jppg.v3n1a310.1080/09662839.2018.1515072>.

¹²¹ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 11.

¹²² Thies, *Why NATO Endures*, x.

¹²³ Thies, *Friendly Rivals*, 150.

United States does not want to sacrifice membership for the sake of saving what is essentially pocket change in the American budget. Therefore, in order to maintain the deterrence, access, and influence NATO membership affords the United States, President Trump is likely not looking to shrug the weight of NATO from his shoulders; he probably realizes he cannot afford to lose the leverage he already has in terms of economic advantage and world influence.

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IV. WORDS, DEEDS, AND POLICY

A comparative analysis between how the rhetoric, actions, and policy between former President Obama and President Trump is warranted to explore the extent to which these facets of behavior impact the execution of foreign policy. In the case of Germany and NATO, the two presidencies displayed a stark contrast in personality; how did this affect the implementation and design of foreign policy with NATO allies, if at all?

A. WHAT U.S. PRESIDENTS HAVE SAID AND HOW THEY ACTED IN FACT

As mentioned earlier, the personality styles relative to alliance cohesion between President Trump and former President Obama are quite dissimilar. Former President Obama went to great lengths to remain composed, calm, and collected when meeting with allies and, in particular, with Chancellor Angela Merkel. Even when criticizing NATO members, he did so in a way that carried overtones of praise rather than of scrutiny or abrasiveness.¹²⁴ Former President Obama leaned more toward the custom of Alliance cohesion rhetoric as it has evolved from the time of the Churchill-Roosevelt declaration of the Atlantic Charter in March 1941 and as reconfirmed by virtually all U.S. presidents since that moment.

In contrast to his predecessor, President Trump tends to come off as abrasive, condescending, and loud when discussing responsibilities between NATO members. In this aspect, he somewhat resembles a lost moment in the 1960s with the private sentiments of John F. Kennedy but also the public statements of Lyndon Johnson at the time that De Gaulle withdrew from the integrated military structure and the Indochina war escalated. Curiously, he affects an air of brotherly fraternity with the president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. In fact, at least one prominent news source promotes opinion pieces suggesting President Trump's questionably pleasant praise of President Putin belies a deeper relationship fraught with scandal, campaign fraud, and, by some allegations, of

¹²⁴ Nolan D. McCaskill, "Obama Urges NATO Members to Pull Their Weight," *Politico*, November 15, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/obama-nato-pay-fair-share-231405>.

outright treason.¹²⁵ As Elliot Abrams discussed in a *Foreign Affairs* journal article, any Russian actors hoping for a special relationship with President Trump likely regret any assistance they may or may not have provided him during his campaign... “When it comes to Russia, the Trump administration has adopted a negative tone, sometimes exuding real hostility.”¹²⁶ In this respect, the sharp change of diplomacy does not appear to have operated.

Whereas former President Obama seemed to attempt friendliness between allies, President Trump favors a style of diplomacy drawn from his earlier life in real estate and popular culture, as well as what appears to be less concern with the customs of diplomacy embraced by others. As summarized by Dombrowski and Reich,

Trump’s rhetoric and proposed foreign policy pronouncements have often significantly departed from Obama’s and have alienated many allies. But the operational differences over the first six months of his presidency are far less dramatic. As one *New York Times* headline suggested — perhaps prematurely, given that the new administration was barely two weeks old at the time: ‘Trump embraces pillars of Obama’s foreign policy.’ Such evaluations recur. Almost four months later, for example, another headline suggested that ‘Trump’s “secret plan” to defeat ISIS looks a lot like Obama’s.’¹²⁷

Former President Obama maintained favorable relations in Europe in that open disagreements were not put into the public domain as the first step, but the niceties of alliance cohesion had pride of place while giving credit to NATO members where credit was due. Such policy appeared to reward Mr. Obama with high public opinion in the international arena as mentioned in a 2017 Pew research report.¹²⁸ Contrastingly, President

¹²⁵ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Case against Impeaching Trump* (New York: Hot Books, 2018); Madeleine Albright, “Will We Stop Trump before It’s Too Late?” *New York Times*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/06/opinion/sunday/trump-fascism-madeleine-albright.html>.

¹²⁶ Elliot Abrams, “Trump the Traditionalist: A Surprisingly Standard Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 4 (July/August 2017):10–16.

¹²⁷ Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, “Does Donald Trump Have a Grand Strategy?,” *International Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September 2017): 1013–1037, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix161>.

¹²⁸ Richard Wike, Jacob Poushter, and Hani Zainulbhai, “As Obama Years Draw to Close, President and U.S. Seen Favorably in Europe and Asia,” Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project, August 28, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/06/29/as-obama-years-draw-to-close-president-and-u-s-seen-favorably-in-europe-and-asia/>.

Trump’s conflating of facts and seemingly relentless “vitriolic rhetoric” is making NATO members question their faith in the American president.¹²⁹ However, are such vastly different personalities resulting in world perceptions that affect their ability to create and act upon changes in foreign policy?

Former President Obama not only praised NATO efforts, but also worked to forge a close relationship with Chancellor Merkel over the course of his presidency. Former President Obama made several trips to Berlin, where he engaged in the U.S.–German diplomacy as has operated since the 1950s and which has been an important part of the process of alliance between Washington and Bonn/Berlin since then. His efforts to foster a positive relationship with Germany and the rest of Europe in turn drew much praise in the European and general world public. In fact, former President Obama was perceived favorably according to a Pew research study and was even labeled a “superstar” according to a 2011 article in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*.¹³⁰

Even those who criticize former President Obama’s foreign policy behavior as disappointing do acknowledge that he was responsible for certain foreign policy achievements critical for maintaining the status quo. In a journal article published in the *International Spectator*, David Unger emphasizes that former President Obama succeeded in freezing Iran’s uranium enrichment program, reducing American troop involvement in Afghanistan, and adding much-needed flexibility to U.S. policy with Cuba.¹³¹

In the wake of the Crimean aggression by Moscow, former President Obama made a call to arms in 2014 when he attended the 25th Wales Summit. In his speech, former President Obama asserted to Poland that,

he had come not only on behalf of the United States but also on behalf of the NATO alliance ‘to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Poland’s

¹²⁹ Kristine Berzina, “Allies Wonder What Will Remain Sacred in Trump’s Administration,” *German Marshall Fund of the United States* (blog), November 10, 2016, <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2016/11/09/allies-wonder-what-will-remain-sacred-trumps-administration>.

¹³⁰ Wike, Poushter, and Zainulbhai, “As Obama Years Draw to Close;” Lucas Pettersson, “Changing Images of the USA in German Media Discourse during Four American Presidencies,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2011): 35–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877910384182>.

¹³¹ David Unger, “The Foreign Policy Legacy of Barack Obama,” *International Spectator* 51, no. 4 (2016): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1227914>.

security.’ He continued: ‘Article 5 is clear — an attack on one is an attack on all. And as allies, we have a solemn duty — a binding treaty obligation — to defend your territorial integrity.’¹³²

Alarming, President Trump makes statements in a nature quite opposite to Mr. Obama’s affirmations to NATO. President Trump’s allusion to abandoning the Article 5 commitment is a wildly different direction in the strategy held since the Truman years. Consequently, many officials went to great lengths to assuage concerns. As told in a 2017 *International Affairs* journal article,

Clearly, Trump’s rhetoric about NATO being obsolete (an assertion subsequently retracted), his delayed—and then belated—endorsement of Article 5 in June and his proposed rapprochement with Russia potentially hollow out the core of this relationship. From this perspective, an assertion of strategic continuity would appear questionable. Indeed, Trump officials implicitly recognize the danger of seeming to undermine NATO. Three of Trump’s most senior foreign and security policy advisers—Vice-President Mike Pence, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—all journeyed to Europe to reassure NATO allies. Moreover, General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, the current Supreme Allied Commander Europe, crisscrossed the continent offering a message that the Trump administration would sustain American commitments and responsibilities.¹³³

What, then, are the implications of such rhetoric? Once can surely say that President Trump’s deviations from the strategic norm are anomalies, but are they having the effect he desires if his staff is attempting to backpedal from what he says in public? The author of this thesis initially thought this friction was the main source of conflict, but the research for this study suggests, in turn, that the subject is more complex and the truth is not always to be found in the headlines.

B. CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES IN POLICY

When Donald Trump was elected as the president of the United States in 2016, scholars and journalists, and reporters alike were convinced that the Obama’s foreign

¹³² Anne Applebaum, “Obama and Europe: Missed Signals, Renewed Commitments,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (September/October 2015): 37–44.

¹³³ Dombrowski and Reich, “Does Donald Trump Have a Grand Strategy?” .

policy was doomed to be undone by the volatile, antagonistic president-elect. Then-candidate Trump promised many changes to the previous administration he asserted was doing a disservice to the American people. He promised to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, to rebuild the military, and revamp trade agreements during his campaign, and has made good on many of his promises while he has yet to fulfill others after two years in office.¹³⁴ Additionally, President Trump's actions, however, did not appear to overturn the foreign policy environment which he inherited from former President Obama. In fact, of 19 cases analyzed by Paul MacDonald, President Trump has pursued policies similar to those of Mr. Obama in at least nine separate instances.¹³⁵ The changes President Trump has made seem to be erratic; some of his policies were in line with his campaign promises, while others seemed contradictory to both his and his predecessor's foreign policy goals; MacDonald showcases the contradictions in President Trump's behavior and rhetoric in the case of Afghanistan.¹³⁶

Similarly, President Trump's changing of the guard in his cabinet was also surprisingly less chaotic than some sources anticipated. As Elliot Abrams describes, "The [Cabinet] appointments suggest that, at least on foreign policy, Trump wants reliable people who will give him sober advice largely untinged by ideology."¹³⁷ Matthew Kroenig agrees,

As Trump promised during the campaign, he has assembled a team of "the best and brightest" the country has to offer. Secretary of Defense James Mattis and National Security Adviser H. R. McMaster rank among the most influential military officers of their generation. Both are not only extraordinary leaders but also intellectuals capable of farsighted strategic thinking. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson served as the CEO of ExxonMobil for over a decade, running a corporation with revenue larger than the GDPs of many small nations and overseeing operations in more than 40 countries. Rounding out the national security cabinet, Vice

¹³⁴ Scott Horsley, "Progress Report: President Trump's Campaign Promises, 2 Years Later," National Public Radio, January 20, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/20/686531523/progress-report-president-trumps-campaign-promises-2-years-later>.

¹³⁵ Paul K. Macdonald, "America First? Explaining Continuity and Change in Trumps Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (2018): 401–434, <https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12804>.

¹³⁶ Macdonald, "America First?"

¹³⁷ Abrams, "Trump the Traditionalist."

President Mike Pence, UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coates, and CIA Director Mike Pompeo are all experienced and accomplished politicians.¹³⁸

However, as this and other authors determined, all these changes President Trump made have not necessarily been revolutionary. In fact, it seems to the author of this thesis, as well as to others, that the foreign policies (and grand strategy, for that matter), have not undergone any fundamental changes. Dombrowski and Reich have analyzed,

It is... easy to attribute the Trump administration's apparent incoherence to his own volatility, or the inexperience or incompetence of his staff. All may exist. But beyond the noise generated by and about Trump, much the same (albeit employing different language) was said about Obama. This doesn't mean — as some critics contend — that the alternative is chaos, purely reactive tactics, a transactional approach; or — more analytically — that there is no underlying logic to American strategic behaviour. Indeed, Obama and Bush faced many of the same problems and — despite their professed differences — each responded to a variety of foreign policy challenges in markedly similar ways... As we have demonstrated more comprehensively elsewhere, examples of strategic continuity across recent administrations have ranged from the massive enhancement of America's border security resources to the ways in which they have combated nuclear smuggling, piracy, human trafficking and the drugs trade, and how they have addressed issues of both collaboration and friction with Russia.¹³⁹

This work examines the nuances in behavior across several U.S. presidents but points out critical components of foreign policy relevant to this thesis. Specifically, the author of this thesis agrees with their conclusion that

The evidence suggests that the Trump administration, like its two predecessors, is employing calibrated strategies... Despite Trump's abrasive rhetoric, there has been to date less of a sharp break with traditional operational strategies than was widely anticipated. Many of the new administration's strategies are comparable to those of its predecessors.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Matthew Kroenig, "The Case for Trump's Foreign Policy: The Right People, the Right Positions," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 3 (May 2017): 30–34.

¹³⁹ Dombrowski and Reich, "Does Donald Trump Have A Grand Strategy?," 1015.

¹⁴⁰ Dombrowski and Reich, 1035.

V. CONCLUSION

A. THE MOMENTUM OF FOREIGN POLICY AND BURDEN-SHIFTING

At the start of this thesis, the hypothesis was offered that the two most recent U.S. presidential administrations from 2008 until 2019 could be reduced down to a small number of elegant, coherent inferences about behavioral trends in foreign policy and the nature of the trans-Atlantic link. Perhaps the two men (Obama and Trump) in the Oval Office these past five years could be similar enough that some parsimonious, small-scale political equations could be synthesized from the chaos of public statements, official documents, and media coverage.

After the author's inquiry contained in these pages, the broad-stroked models appear to fail as a means to prepare the young strategist for a one-size-fits-most solution to forecasting the future defense relations between the United States, Germany, and NATO. Despite the indications that a reasonably simple solution was feasible, this author has arrived at the conclusion that the nature of foreign policy behavior is simply too highly dependent on the unique qualities of the intellect and character of a given head of state. With a nod to Metternich, Bismarck, and Kissinger, one can say that foreign policy itself appears to have its own irrefutable weight derived from the past. The policies which arise are in fact difficult for presidents to steer, despite the desire to emphasize a diplomatic revolution and to break with the customs of the past for whatever reason of belief or interest.

Where former President Obama excelled at statecraft in the school of Acheson, President Trump appears to fall short in this style of diplomacy. Where former President Obama succumbed to pitfalls, President Trump has emerged victorious. While some aspects of the differences between these presidencies can be attributed to the ebb and flow of organizational momentum in their cabinets, others are undeniably a result of media perception, and still others seem to materialize out of the nebulous haze of bureaucracy. The economy, state of foreign affairs, and collection of domestic policy issues were not vastly different between the two presidents' terms. The economy under former President

Obama was steadily recovering from the 2009 crash, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were slowing down, and the public was seeing progress with issues such as equality, healthcare, and environmental concerns. Similarly, with President Trump, the economy is still improving, the United States has avoided entering new conflicts, and the public is still benefiting from domestic legislation reforms.

It appears that the difference between these two presidents is largely (but not exclusively) due to how their personality in combination with statecraft is perceived by the rest of the world. Former President Obama was calm and collected during his well-written addresses and statements to the public, whereas President Trump is more known for his bold and brash social media presence as well as his questionable lack of refinement and tact. Former President Obama signified to his followers hope and change; meanwhile, President Trump's slogan is "Make America Great Again," which is a change of its own kind and gives hope, in turn, to the millions of U.S. citizens who are war weary and those in search of an elusive normalcy that was also the object of U.S. policy a century ago in a somewhat similar time of disillusionment with the outside world. No wonder that public opinion desires a positive rather than the vitriol of the recent past and present stoked with nationalism and isolationism.

Despite the stark contrasts in American leadership, this author was able to amass enough data to propose two statements to assist the young strategist fronted with the task of anticipating new directions in foreign policy with Germany and NATO. First, since the president of the United States (regardless of individual characteristics) is perpetually subjected to the dilution of his directives due to the nature of the administrative architecture, the organizational process model is the most applicable paradigm to today's political atmosphere. With the articulation lacking in the rational actor model but the simplicity lacking in the bureaucratic process model, anyone invested in preparing for future changes in foreign relations particularly with Germany and NATO is best served by this model. Identifying the organizations with the most influence and what they have to gain or lose will help lift the fog created by lobbyists, social media, or rogue public figures; while their voices may be loud, they most often seem to lack the clout required to have any measurable effect on policy change.

Second, the president of the United States has entirely too many assets to lose when deciding whether to remove America from the NATO Alliance. Despite President Trump's occasional threats to withdraw, he will almost certainly remain involved in European affairs. To pull out of NATO would cost the United States not only money, but also economic interests, geographical access, and immense amounts of leverage in world affairs. The president will likely choose to stack the deck in his favor before choosing to leave the table, chips in hand. To be a NATO member is to burden-shift, as has been the trend since the inception of the Alliance in its earliest post-World War II form. Therefore, the young strategist must determine not whether the United States will remain in NATO, but upon which country the United States will look for increased responsibilities and upon which to place burdens the United States wishes to shed.

The author of this thesis can well suggest in conclusion that, based on the two prior assertions: combining burden-shifting with the organizational process model may provide the most reasonable set of outcomes of Alliance cohesion between which the United States can be expected to choose. Additionally, both policymaking politics and domestic issues steer the direction of foreign policy but the president must somehow overcome political momentum if significant change is to be seen. Paul MacDonald's analysis of policy comparison draws a similar conclusion:

American foreign policy is shaped by a complicated array of factors, but domestic and bureaucratic politics can play important roles in generating policy change. When the issues involved are complex, present few obvious solutions, and involve long-standing American interests, we tend to observe greater continuity. When there are domestic political constituencies or bureaucratic actors that have strong preferences on a particular issue, and they can gain access to and leverage over the president, we tend to see change. In the case of the first year of the Trump administration, long-standing alliance relationships and established trade deals proved resistant to disruption.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Macdonald, "America First?," 43.

B. AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Due to time and budgetary constraints, this author deliberately avoided several areas of study during the process of creating this thesis. This author believes that a highly valuable endeavor is to examine the impact of the news and media on American public opinion *specifically* regarding the Obama and Trump administrations. Access to the Internet and, particularly, to social media platforms is easier than ever due to the ever-increasing technological advances. During the Clinton presidency, the idea of contacting someone in another country via the kitchen fridge was something one might hear from an episode of the *Twilight Zone*. Today, the Home Depot sells Samsung Smart Refrigerators, from which one can watch the news, check a Facebook account, and send a pen pal a Tweet—all from the door on the fridge.¹⁴² Social media is slowly, inescapably consuming the average household. With the bias inherent in social media circles leaving such a large footprint on day-to-day life, one cannot help but wonder what measurable effects the Internet is having on how the American public perceives the presidency.

Another area worthy of exploration is, similarly, how the Internet and social media change Europeans' perception of the United States and how that perception changes over time from president to president. If social media has as bold an effect as it does in the United States, perhaps social media is capable of warping the perception of the Europeans and impacting the way NATO countries prefer to deal with the United States.

Due to the changing nature of politics and the timing of this thesis, a third pursuit has elevated potential but could not be studied at this time; in fact, it will likely not be available for study for several years to come. That pursuit is the effects on American public opinion caused by what appears to be a rift forming within the Democratic party.¹⁴³ Under a two-party system, the public can support the president and his or her party or not,

¹⁴² “Samsung Family Hub Overview,” Samsung Electronics America, accessed August 7, 2019, <https://www.samsung.com/us/explore/family-hub-refrigerator/overview/>; “Samsung 24.2 Cu. Ft. Family Hub French Door Smart Refrigerator in Stainless Steel-RF265BEAESR,” Home Depot, accessed August 7, 2019, <https://www.homedepot.com/p/Samsung-24-2-cu-ft-Family-Hub-French-Door-Smart-Refrigerator-in-Stainless-Steel-RF265BEAESR/301328387>.

¹⁴³ Martin Armstrong, “Will the Democrats Split into Two Parties after AOC’s Threats?” Armstrong Economics, March 4, 2019, <https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/international-news/politics/will-the-democrats-split-into-2-parties-after-aocs-threats/>.

generally choosing to vote either Democrat or Republican. The Democratic Party is only recently showing signs of division and could be posing a problem for those who traditionally vote blue: “Do I stay loyal to my party or do I leave?” Older proponents of the Democratic party may hope the conflict is merely an aberration and will return to a state of normalcy after the 2020 election. On the other hand, younger Democrats may be compelled to seek a newer, more millennial-flavored varietal of the party and may be using social media as a means of turning the general public against both the Republican president and Democrat legacy they seem to rail against. Then again, perhaps the newest generation of voters will join the ranks of the Republican party, finding favor in some of their policies despite their mistrust in the current Republican president.¹⁴⁴ One way or other, future thesis students may be remiss to overlook such a nuanced, relevant phenomena as the effect of crumbling party politics on American presidential public opinion.

As the future state of world affairs becomes increasingly uncertain, strategists, both military and civilian alike, must seek enlightenment by applying historical trends to current events. No cut-and-dry formula may exist, yet America’s greatest thinkers must still focus on likely scenarios with Germany and NATO if our country is to be more than just reactionary to changes in NATO burden-shifting problem. The first steps are to recognize how decisions in the Oval Office are actually made and what happens to those decisions once they leave the president’s desk. Roger Hilsman paints a vivid image, describing, “Underneath our images of presidents-in-boots, astride decisions, are the half-observed realities of presidents-in-sneakers, stirrups in hand, trying to induce particular department heads, or congressmen, or senators to climb aboard.”¹⁴⁵ The key to adequately preparing for future change in foreign policy is to determine what particular factors cause those men to climb aboard.

¹⁴⁴ Chris Kahn, “Exclusive: Democrats Lose Ground with Millennials,” Reuters, April 30, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-millennials/exclusive-democrats-lose-ground-with-millennials-reuters-ipsos-poll-idUSKBN1110YH>.

¹⁴⁵ Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making*, 60.

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