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Examining Trump's foreign policy, one year in

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President Trump was elected on the promise to make America great again. As best as one can decipher from a campaign that consistently contradicted itself and was headed by a candidate with no real foreign policy experience, this meant prioritizing U.S. interests and security and improving America's standing in the world.

Russia and China's growing assertiveness, fears over terrorism and cyber security, and costly military quagmires Afghanistan and Iraq certainly indicated a need to reassess American foreign policy. Yet, after a year in office, it remains unclear how the president's approach to foreign policy will accomplish this reassessment. The bigger question is what are the core principles of Trump's foreign policy? And how have these principles affected U.S. interests and status in the world?

The Trump Doctrine seems to consist of three characteristics: protectionist trade policies (dubbed "economic nationalism"), cracking down on immigration in the name of security (e.g., the current travel ban), and basing foreign policy decisions on personal relationships rather than strategic interests.

The first two characteristics of Trump's foreign policy approach are deeply ideological. For example, Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement was based on the notion that the agreement was taking jobs away from Americans. In reality, the TPP would have expanded economic freedom and was projected to increase growth and American jobs. While NAFTA may not suffer the same fate as the TPP, Trump's insistence on renegotiating parts of it is creating tension between the United States and its two neighbors, Mexico and Canada.

Similarly, the president's focus on countering terrorism via immigration, which he suggests is the most prominent threat to the American homeland, ignores empirical evidence saying otherwise. Not only is 99.7 percent of migration legal, but the greater threat facing the U.S. homeland is coming from domestic right-wing groups. It is not coming from refugees nor is it coming from Muslim migrants inspired by jihadism. Furthermore, none of the countries listed in the travel ban have been responsible for terrorist attacks within the United States.

The most disturbing characteristic, however, remains the president's penchant for choosing inexperienced national security officials as top foreign policy advisors. For instance, the

president chose Rex Tillerson, the ex-CEO of ExxonMobil, to lead the State Department. Tillerson, however, had no foreign policy experience, which was blatantly obvious during his confirmation hearing, but was offered the position because of his business expertise.

As a result, the State Department is in disarray and roughly half of the positions, including an ambassadorship to South Korea, remain empty. Similarly, Trump named Jared Kushner a senior advisor to the White House simply because he is the president's son-in-law. In his capacity, Kushner is tasked with addressing some of the most intractable international disputes and routinely meets with other world leaders; he was just recently in Saudi Arabia _ his third trip this year.

The president's nepotism, contempt for the political process and democratic institutions, and attempts to discredit the media by making claims of "fake news" and "alternative facts" are all hallmarks of authoritarianism. Trump continues to surround himself with yes-men (and women, like UN Ambassador Nikki Haley), resulting in a self-proclaimed foreign policy of "principled realism," which is in fact inconsistent, incoherent, and bears little resemblance to realism.

Still, Trump has yet to implement major changes to U.S. foreign policy.

What has changed is the United States' reputation and image, both of which have steadily declined under Trump.

In sum, a year of the Trump Doctrine has not fundamentally changed U.S. interests or U.S. foreign policy, but has eroded the moral high ground the United States' used to enjoy — and use to its advantage.

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