Low-conceptual complexity and Trump's foreign policy

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The Plutocrat President: Low-Conceptual Complexity and Trump's Foreign Policy

Abstract

This article examines President Trump's foreign policy behaviour as a product of a leadership style that is entrenched in a plutocratic worldview. We apply elements of Hermann's leadership traits framework to Trump's engagement with NATO, and characterise him as a low-conceptual complexity president, enabled by limited search for information and advice, a confrontational and insensitive approach to his environment, and proclivity to violate international norms and rules. We show that Trump's low-conceptual complexity is underpinned by a plutocratic worldview which is transactional and money-first. We argue that while this signals *change between* Trump and his predecessors, this plutocratic approach has been one of the most significant sources of *consistency within* Trump's administration.

Introduction

The presidency of Donald Trump has been described as historically exceptional almost as soon as he entered the White House. His inconsistent and often contradictory approach to global affairs has made it hard to study the making of his foreign policy systematically, with the presidency often characterised by a 'doctrine of unpredictability' (Fuchs 2017; Sullivan 2017). Trump's first major foreign policy speech as presidential candidate gave the signal that the most consistent aspect of his foreign policy would be its inconsistency: having declared that "since the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union, we've lacked a coherent foreign policy", he moved quickly to state, "We must as a nation be more unpredictable. We are totally predictable … We have to be unpredictable, and we have to be unpredictable starting now"

(*New York Times*, 2016). From the outset, the unpredictability of Trump's foreign policy on a wide range of issues has been enabled by the highest rate of cabinet and senior staff turnover in history (Chalfant, 2018; Saunders, 2018; Rakich, 2019), and the president's negligent approach toward the foreign policy bureaucracy (Osnos, 2018; Drezner, 2019).

We propose that while the making of Trump's foreign policy has marked a considerable departure in both style and substance from previous administrations, his foreign policy behaviour has been mostly constant across a multitude of issues. Accordingly, we draw on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) literature on leadership styles, and specifically, those studies concerned with foreign policy behaviour as a product of conceptual complexity, as manifested through value judgements of right/wrong, good/bad, risk aversion and logical reasoning. We suggest that a constant and simplified plutocratic worldview underpins Trump's low-conceptual complexity. It can be summed up as a transactional, money-first prism through which Trump understands his environment and deals with people and policy issues: those who pay their "fair share" are allies; the ones who do not, are adversaries. Similarly, complex political and diplomatic questions are often treated as business opportunities or economic endeavours which supersede broader geopolitical considerations.

This article proceeds as follows. We begin with a review of the literature on presidential leadership traits and conceptual complexity and proceed to present our case for Trump as a low-conceptual complexity president who draws primarily on a plutocratic worldview in his engagement with foreign policy. We then demonstrate the continuity in Trump's foreign policy behaviour concerning his engagement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation NATO. As early as his presidential campaign and throughout his presidency, Trump has been consistent in dealing with NATO allies and policies as a function of expected financial obligations. Among other instances, this has been evident through his insistence that members meet their

two per cent defence spending as a condition of the US abiding by its commitments to the organisation, including Article V. We conclude by discussing the relevant theoretical and policy implications of our findings.

Leadership traits and conceptual complexity

The linkage between the personal characteristics of the president and his conduct in the foreign policy arena is well established. Studies into the psychological and cognitive makeup of leaders have played a vital role in developing FPA from its early days in the 1950s to the present. More than four decades ago David Barber (2008, 6) observed in his seminal study of the presidential character that "[a] President's personality is an important shaper of his Presidential behavior on non-trivial matters", while Charles Hermann (1974, 166) similarly noted that foreign policy decisions "may be the manifestation of the personal characteristics of a key decision-maker who is little affected by either the pulling and hauling of bureaucratic politics or the pressure of a small group to conform to its norm."

This seems self-evident particularly in the era of the imperial presidency and given the constitutional power at the president's disposal to define his administration's foreign policy goals, structure the foreign policy machinery to his liking, and choose his key foreign policy appointments. Given the hierarchical nature of the American presidential system, it is not surprising that the conduct of foreign policy is ultimately derived from the president's personality. Barber (2008, 445-446) defines 'character' as forming the core of the president's personality: it is "the force, the motive power, around which the person gathers his view of the world and from which his style receives its impetus." For example, the president's choice of his advisory group is understood as a function of personality traits such as cognitive style, orientation towards conflict, feelings of efficacy, experience, competence, desire for control, attitudes to conflict and screening of information and advice (for example Johnson 1974;

George 1980; Neustadt 1990; Hargrove 1993; Hermann and Preston 1994; Preston 2001; Mitchell 2005; Siniver 2008).

While our knowledge of the belief systems of the president and his advisors cannot predict foreign policy behaviour, it is evident that cognitive processes form an integral part of how presidents view the world and make policy decisions. There is consensus in the literature that presidents who were more engaged in foreign policymaking were naturally interested in foreign policy matters or possessed some foreign policy experience (Hermann 1980; Crabb and Mulcahy 1988; Hermann 2001; Boetcher 2005; Rubenzer 2005; Gallagher and Allen 2014). This not only made them more personally involved in foreign policy making, but it also made them more sensitive to the external environment in which they operated.

In the absence of experience, expertise or interest, especially when operating under conditions of uncertainty and stress, leaders may deal with their environment through certain 'sense-making heuristics', such as cognitive, affiliative and egocentric processes (Janis 1989). Cognitive schemes refer to the use of simplified images of reality and the selective treatment of incoming information to bolster these simplified portraits of the more complex reality, to the extent of ignoring evidence which may not fit into the leader's constructed image of reality (often via the use of historical analogies). Affiliative heuristics describe modes of thinking that seek a solution to the problem at hand, but only if it will preserve harmony among the president's advisory group. One of the most adverse consequences of this conservative approach is Groupthink, where the emphasis on conformity may lead to irrational decision-making (Janis, 1982). Finally, leaders may rely on egocentric heuristics to satisfy personal motives or emotional needs, which may include the desire for control and power or self-aggrandizement. Leaders with deep egocentric needs or desires are more likely to harden their positions and put forward more hawkish views for fear of appearing 'soft' to their allies as well as adversaries (Janis 1989).

In this article, we study the president's cognitive behaviour as a measure of conceptual complexity. Originally presented by Margaret Herman (1987) as one of seven leadership traits, conceptual complexity refers to the degree of nuance in how leaders view other people, places, ideas and situations. High-conceptual complexity leaders understand reality through a multi-dimensional prism. They are sensitive to contextual variables and rely on information gathering and deliberation before making decisions. On the other hand, low-complexity leaders generally do not differentiate the dimensions of their environment. They view the world in binary terms (good/bad, friend/enemy), and are thus more likely to make decisions based on intuition and emotion which are derived from a single basic worldview (Hermann 1987 and 1993; Dyson 2006 and 2018; Yang 2010; Foster and Keller 2014). Accordingly, several studies have suggested that low-conceptual complexity leaders are more likely to act decisively based on limited information or consultation. They are also less likely to be sensitive to international opinion and are more likely to pursue confrontational courses of action and violate international norms (Driver 1977; Hermann 1984; Preston 2001; Shannon and Keller 2006).

In the next section, we examine the extent that these leadership traits shape the presidential character of Donald Trump. In particular, we frame the president's business-first, transactional approach to global affairs as a unique plutocratic worldview which in turn produces his low-conceptual complexity.

Trump's low-level complexity

One of the most noted features of the Trump presidency has been the acute gap between his significant support base of blue-collar workers who subscribed to his populist rhetoric about the need to fix the federal government and fight global anti-American interests, to a Trump administration populated by billionaires and multi-millionaires. This is, without doubt, the wealthiest cabinet in American history, even without the president's reported net worth of $3.1

billion. It is estimated that Trump's first 17 cabinet-level picks (not all were confirmed by the Senate) had an accumulated wealth greater than that of a third of all American households, or 43 million American citizens (Kopf 2016).

The ubiquitous presence of wealthy individuals in Trump's White House and other positions of influence in the federal government has led many observers in the weeks and months following his election to lament the rise of the "populist plutocracy" in the Trump administration (Linker 2016; Rubin 2016; Becker 2017; Heuvel 2017; Pierson 2017; Roubini 2017). The concept of plutocracy – "the rule of the wealthy" – is not a recent phenomenon in American politics or is unique to the Trump administration. Its provenance can be traced back to the long period between the end of the Civil War and the Great Depression, which has often been described as the "plutocratic era": President Theodore Roosevelt, for example, warned at the turn of the twentieth century that "of all forms of tyranny the least attractive and the most vulgar is the tyranny of mere wealth, the tyranny of a plutocracy" (2016, 3111).

The election of Donald Trump – the first "billionaire" president – naturally drew increased attention to the plutocratic class. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel laureate in economics, criticized Trump's cabinet picks by pointing that an administration "staffed by plutocrats who are indifferent to inequality … could be expected to reward themselves" (2017). Other observers warned that "the plutocrats – Trump's real constituency – appear to be steering the administration toward a newly unfettered form of corporate oligarchy" (Foster 2017) and that "we might as well call the Trump regime by the appropriate name: plutocracy" (Paxton 2018). Trump has repeatedly brushed aside such criticism that his top appointments were "too wealthy", as he told his supporters in Iowa on December 2016: 'one newspaper criticized me: "why can't they have people of modest means?" Because I want people that made a fortune! Because now they're negotiating with you, ok?'. Six months later, Trump boasted, "And I love

all people, rich or poor, but in those particular positions I just don't want a poor person. Does that make sense?"

We suggest that much of Trump's foreign policymaking can be explained by his business-first, transactional approach, which in turn produces a plutocratic prism through which his low-level conceptual complexity is transmitted.[1] This simplistic worldview can be further understood as supplanting the president's lack of interest and knowledge in international relations. As others have noted (Hermann 2001; Gallagher and Allen 2014), low-conceptual complexity is directly related to a general lack of engagement in foreign policy and minimal attention to nuances in the conduct of foreign relations. According to Wolff (2017, 119), this erratic worldview has been evident from the early days of the Trump administration:

> If the Trump White House was as unsettling as any in American history, the president's views of foreign policy and the world at large were among its most random, uninformed, and seemingly capricious aspects. His advisers didn't know whether he was an isolationist or a militarist, or whether he could distinguish between the two. He was enamored with generals and determined that people with military command experience take the lead in foreign policy, but he hated to be told what to do. He was against nation building, but he believed there were few situations that he couldn't personally make better. He had little to no experience in foreign policy, but he had no respect for the experts, either.

At the heart of this low-level conceptual complexity is a plutocratic worldview which frames foreign policy situations through an economic-transactional prism which often supersedes a more nuanced calculation of political, diplomatic and national security interests. The evidence is abundant, across a wide range of policy issues. On climate change, Trump has supported and opposed policies from the same narrow plutocratic worldview. As a private citizen in 2009, he signed (together with other business leaders) a full-page ad in the *New York Times* urging President Obama, to take decisive action against climate change, primarily on economic grounds: "We recognize the key role that American innovation and leadership play in stimulating the worldwide economy ... Investing in a Clean Energy Economy will drive state-of-the-art technologies that will spur economic growth, create new energy jobs, and

increase our energy security" (Bump, 2016). Eight years later, in August 2017, President Trump backed out of the Paris climate change agreement, this time citing economic reasons against it: "The cost to the economy at this time would be close to $3 trillion in lost GDP and 6.5 million industrial jobs" (White House, 2017). For Trump, the agreement represented "a massive redistribution of United States' wealth to other countries. It's to give their country an economic edge over the United States. That's not going to happen while I'm president" (White House, 2017).

Other examples to support the linkage between Trump's plutocratic low-conceptual complexity include his choice of destination for his first overseas visit seemed inseparable from his business interests. Demonstrating insensitivity to diplomatic nuance by breaking with tradition dating back to President Kennedy whereby US presidents pay their first visit to Canada or Mexico, Trump chose to visit Saudi Arabia, where he signed deals worth more than $380 billion to American businesses (Memoli and Hennigan, 2017). Trump made no effort to hide his decades-long business interests in the Kingdom, boasting during his election campaign: "Saudi Arabia, I get along with all of them. They buy apartments from me. They spend $40 million, $50 million. Am I supposed to dislike them? I like them very much" (C-SPAN, 2015). The president made similar references to his experience in real estate during his historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, suggesting that North Korea's beaches could be a prime real estate location: "You could have the best hotels in the world right there. Think of it from a real estate perspective. You have South Korea, you have China, and they own the land in the middle. How bad is that, right? It's great" (Ralph 2018). Even when discussing the likelihood of his impeachment in 2018, Trump seemed more concerned with the economic consequences rather than his moral scruples. If I ever got impeached, he told Fox News, "I think the market would crash, I think everybody would be very poor", adding that

without his kind of thinking, “you would see numbers that you wouldn’t believe in reverse” (Jackson, 2018).

Another prominent area of foreign policy which Trump has viewed almost solely through a low-conceptual complexity prism of plutocratic interests is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First, Trump’s closest advisors on this issue are notable for their business dealings and for being political and diplomatic neophytes: Trump’s son-law and heir to a real estate empire Jared Kushner; Jason Greenblatt, Trump's chief negotiator who earned more than $1 million dollar in his last year as a Trump Organization lawyer before he joined the administration; and David Friedman, Trump’s choice as US ambassador in Israel who is also his long-term bankruptcy lawyer and a multi-millionaire (Maltz 2017; Melby, Campbell, and Allison 2017). As the president boasted several times, “deal making” was his team’s most impressive credential. On his choice of Kushner as chief Mideast envoy, Trump said: “You know what? Jared is such a good lad, he will secure an Israel deal which no one else has managed to get. You know, he’s a natural talent, he is the top, he is a natural talent. You know what I’m talking about – a natural talent. He has an innate ability to make deals, everyone likes him” (Times of Israel 2017). Trump praised his chief negotiator Jason Greenblatt in similar terms, referring to his “history of negotiating substantial, complex transactions on my behalf” as chief legal officer of the Trump Organization (Wilkie 2016).

The president and *The Art of the Deal* author made similar references to his business-like approach to the most intractable conflict of our time, telling reporters, "As a deal maker, I'd like to do the deal that can't be made. And do it for humanity's sake", while on another occasion he described the conflict as the "toughest deal of all" though he rated his chances of succeeding where all his predecessors had failed as “very, very good” (Ravid 2016; Graham 2017; *The Economist* 2017). Other examples of Trump’s low-conceptual complexity in his dealings with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict include his decision to half the U.S. aid to

Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) from $120 million to $60 million, on narrow economic grounds ("we pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect.… with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"(Sanchez 2018). He made the binary equation between alliances and money even more explicit in his 2018 State of the Union Address, He crystallised his approach to foreign aid through his low-conceptual, plutocratic approach during his 2018 State of the Union Address, with the binary equation between international relations and money: "American taxpayers generously send those same countries billions of dollars in aid every year. That is why, tonight, I am asking the Congress to pass legislation to help ensure American foreign-assistance dollars always serve American interests, and only go to America's friends" (White House 2018a).

Trump and NATO

One of the most prominent foreign policy areas in which Trump has exhibited his low-conceptual complexity even before entering the White House is US-NATO relations. His views of the alliance and his attitudes toward its members have been consistently shaped through a single calculus: do they meet the target spend of 2 per cent of their GDP on NATO? This target had been agreed by all members at the NATO summit in 2014, with a commitment to meet it by 2024 (NATO 2018a). In his dealings with NATO allies through this basic and binary prism, Trump has exhibited the key symptoms of the low-conceptual complexity president: search for limited information and advice, a confrontational style, and even a propensity to violate international norms, by refusing to adhere to his country's obligations until Article V of the NATO treaty (collective defence commitment).

Trump's plutocratic approach to NATO became evident as early as 2016 during his presidential campaign, where he first presented the 'fair share' narrative whereby members did not pay their dues. These comments accompanied a declaration that he would be "fine" if the NATO alliance were to break up, and questioned if there were even a need for NATO (Parker 2016). Asked if he would come to the aid of a NATO ally if they were under attack (as per the commitments laid out in Article V), Trump declared that he would first judge their contribution to the alliance before making such a decision (Bandow 2016; McCurry 2016; Jacobs 2016). Here, at the start of his political career, Trump signalled a willingness to act decisively, making comments that showed a strong commitment to a position based on little information or advice, or indeed a nuanced understanding of the existence and importance of international agreements and norms. The response from the military establishment to these proclamations has been unsurprisingly critical. Admiral James Stavridis (Ret), a former commander in NATO, wrote in defence of the alliance, castigating Trump's attacks on NATO and describing his questioning of the Article V commitment as a shaking of the foundations of the alliance (Stavridis 2019).

Upon entering office, Trump maintained this theme of NATO allies contributing their 'fair share', by making consistent references to the 2 spend target. In an early meeting in the White House Trump repeatedly framed this budgetary commitment on defence spending from all members of NATO as a debt owed to the US rather than a national defence spending commitment, until his chief of staff eventually interrupted Trump in order to correct him (Woodward 2017, 78). Here, Trump's comments on NATO reveal again this decisive commitment to positions based on limited understanding and limited consultation with others. In a later meeting, Trump complained, "I think we could be so rich, if we weren't stupid. We're being played [as] suckers, especially NATO" in a later meeting (Woodward 2017, 124). This perception of NATO as a financial burden is reflective of the president's low-conceptual

complexity, whereby others are judged through a binary prism of their perceived monetary value.

This simplified worldview was again on display at the May 2017 NATO summit in Brussels. Trump called for NATO allies to "finally" meet their spending obligations, declaring that "massive amounts of money" were owed (Lutz, 2019; BBC News 2017). His confrontational approach was both verbal and physical. First, he engaged French President Macron in an "eyebrow-raising" handshake to assert his dominance, and that Macron himself described as a "moment of truth" (Friedman 2017; Henley 2017). This physical confrontation was then followed by Trump making confrontational comments in a private meeting, describing Germany as "evil" (or bad, depending on the translation from the German reports), for the number of cars that they sold in the US, while not contributing sufficiently to NATO (Levin 2017). In the run-up to the summit in the following year, Trump made repeated references to this issue on Twitter, referring to the members' financial obligations as a debt owed to the US, asking, "Will they reimburse the US?" and declaring, "Many countries… are also delinquent for many years in payments" (Trump 2018). This misunderstanding of the NATO financing structures, conflating the payments that members make for the maintenance of the institutional apparatus with the target for member's defence spending, demonstrates a low-conceptual complexity which is underpinned by lack of information and consultation, which in turn leads to a confrontational and binary mode of engagement.

This was particularly evident at the G7 meeting in June 2018, a month prior to the NATO summit, where Trump described NATO as being "as bad as NAFTA", and defended the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea at a meeting with several NATO leaders (Washington Post, 2018), which, at the very least, demonstrated once again his disregard for international norms and agreements as a key trait of the low-conceptual complexity president. Some members as being debtors to NATO and the US, because of these playing the US for "suckers"

as he described it in meetings earlier in his administration (Woodward 2017, 124). When travelling to the NATO summit in July 2018, Trump spoke to reporters, again referring to the "fair share" theme that runs throughout his engagement with NATO. Again in blunt comments to the media, he said that what Germany, Spain and France had "done to the United States", demanding that they spent more on defence (DW 2018). In private meetings, he declared that should other NATO members not meet the 2% spending target, he would "do his own thing" (Friedman 2018). Before the start of the second day of the summit, Trump tweeted that "the US pays tens of Billions of Dollars too much to subsidise Europe" (Trump 2018), characterising the relationship between the US and NATO in purely money-first, cost-benefit terms. Trump was also reported to have launched a "verbal assault" on the gathered NATO delegates, describing them as "deadbeats". Reportedly, the Prime Ministers of Denmark and Norway pushed back against this assault, as did the President of Lithuania. As German Chancellor Merkel crossed the room for a private discussion with allies on how to deal with Trump, the Dutch Prime Minister told him that NATO members had increased their spending by $70 billion (although unrelated to Trump's rhetoric), signalling to Trump that he could use it as a victory before the media (Glasser 2018). Evidently, those dealing with Trump perceived this money-first focus he held at the summit and used this in order to prevent him from derailing the discussions.

Following the summit, Trump continued to highlight the 2 per cent target, although this time he praised his allies for raising $33 billion, and praising his own efforts at improving the balance sheet from the previous year, whereby "[o]nly 5 of 29 countries were making their commitment" (White House 2018b). Perhaps the most telling evidence of Trump's plutocratic, binary approach to a global and complex policy issue was his emphasis that the US commitment to NATO is "very strong, remains very strong, but primarily because everyone – the spirit they have, the amount of money they're willing to spend, the additional money that

they will be putting up has been really, really amazing to see it… People are paying money that they never paid before. They're happy to do it. And the United States is being treated much more fairly" (White House 2018b).

By 2019, Trump has earned the title of the "world's most famous NATO critic" (Jackson 2019). Trump's negative view of NATO was further highlighted in the first weeks of 2019 when reports emerged that he had considered withdrawing the US from NATO on several occasions (Barnes and Cooper 2019). In February 2019, he declared that "there are many countries that take advantage of us very seriously, both at NATO and on Trade" (Jackson 2019). On the eve of the 70th NATO anniversary summit, Trump announced, "When I came it wasn't good, and now they're catching up" approving of the increase in defence spending which fits well with his money-first approach (Herszenhorn and Toosi 2019). In response to a question whether he was still considering withdrawing the US from NATO, Trump answered that he was pleased that NATO members were "paying" (Browne 2019). Trump did however continue to call for an increase in spending commitments, again suggesting that the 2 per cent spending target may need raising to 4% (Jackson 2019) and in doing so echoing his comments during the July 2018 summit where NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg dismissed this call for an increase in the target (BBC News 2018b).

Trump perceives NATO through a prism focused on the 2% spending commitment, and his wish for NATO members to meet this target. This viewpoint on NATO stems from his money-first, transactional approach to Global affairs. Trump's approach to global affairs is also at the root of his low conceptual complexity leadership style, typified by four key characteristics. Trump has a tendency to act in a decisive manner, based upon limited information and limited consultation with others. He demonstrates a lack of sensitivity to international opinion in his public and private statements. Trump displays an inclination to pursue confrontational courses of action and a likelihood to violate international norms.

Trump's low conceptual complexity, with its root in his transactional and money-first approach to global affairs, has profoundly affected his relations with other NATO leaders and NATO as an institution. Trump's focus on the 2% spending target, when combined with his low conceptual complexity leadership style, has led to his confrontational approach to NATO summits and public statements, to his decisive declarations with their basis in limited information searches and limited consultation. In acting in this manner, Trump has demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to international opinion, especially the opinion of other NATO members. Behaving in this way has also led him to violate international norms, foremost among them the norm of NATO members not to question the Article 5 commitment, the commitment that an attack on one member will be responded to as an attack on all members of the NATO alliance. His limited information search, limited consultation, confrontational behaviour, lack of sensitivity to ally's opinions, are all demonstrated through this questioning of Article 5. He is unaware that the only time Article 5 was invoked was in response to 9/11, and is unaware that over 1000 non-US NATO personnel have died in the conflict in Afghanistan, following the invoking of Article 5 (*New York Times* 2017).

Conclusion

The unprecedented rate of staff turnover and the lack of a functioning bureaucracy make the study of the Trump presidency particularly challenging. Indeed, it lends itself to obvious characterisations of change in the making of US foreign policy. However, by applying the framework of low conceptual complexity, we aimed to show that Trump's approach to foreign affairs has been more continuous than erratic, as a by-product of a fixed plutocratic worldview. As demonstrated repeatedly in the NATO case, this leadership style is invariably enabled by limited information and sensitivity to the external environment and is thus likely to result in

confrontational courses of action and violation of international norms. In foreign policy terms, and eschewing any normative judgments, this suggests that there is a high degree of consistency in Trump's foreign policy agenda, once again due to the lack of critical voices within the administration to challenge the president. It's not that the Trump administration is subject to groupthink, as much as led by a single individual that is largely impenetrable to outside influences. Future research would, therefore, benefit from similar studies of other foreign policy issues to deepen our understanding of the making of US foreign policy under Trump. This would also help scholars to place Trump's foreign policy behaviour in relation to his successors, in a more comparative and systematic framework of analysis. More broadly, it would be worth studying how third parties respond to low vs. high- conceptual complexity leaders.

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[1] Recent media studies also explore Trump's character and conduct as a 'celebrity politician', however we see this aspect of his personality as mostly a by-product of the broader framework presented in this article. For example, his elevation to a particular type of TV celebrity would not have possible without his low-conceptual complexity and transactional approach to his environment. On these studies, see for example Ouellette (2016); Wood, Corbett and Flinders (2016); Kanihan and Rim (2018); Lalancette and Raynauld (2019); Street (2019).