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“Expertise and Naïveté in Decision-Making: Theory, History, and the Trump Administration”

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Introduction

Donald Trump has never claimed to be a foreign policy expert.¹ He does not like in-depth reading, and prefers one-page policy option papers with “lots of graphics and maps.”² He claims to have a “very good brain,” and promises to be a strong leader who puts “America first” and makes it “great again.”³ Should we believe him? His goals may well be laudable. But if my work on expertise and naïveté in foreign policy decision-making is any indication, President Trump, and his advisors, like other American and non-American leaders and their subordinates, will *unconsciously* follow a fundamentally biased judgment strategy. They will make the most important decisions of our time, those regarding choices of war and peace,

¹ Initial research for this essay was completed on 17 March 2017. Additional material was added on 10 April 2017.

² David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, and Peter Baker, “Turmoil at the National Security Council, From the Top Down,” *New York Times*, 12 February 2017, accessed 17 March 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/12/us/politics/national-security-council-turmoil.html?_r=0.

³ [Jessica Chasmar](#), “Donald Trump: I Consult Myself on Foreign Policy, ‘Because I Have a Very Good Brain,’” *The Washington Times*, 17 March 2016, accessed 17 March 2017, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/mar/17/donald-trump-i-consult-myself-on-foreign-policy-be/>; David A. Graham, “America First” Donald Trump’s Populist Inaugural Address.” *The Atlantic*, 20 January 2017, accessed 17 March 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/trump-inaugural-speech-analysis/513956/>; and Karen Tumulty, “How Donald Trump Came Up With ‘Make American Great Again,’” *Washington Post*, 18 January 2017, accessed 17 March 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-donald-trump-came-up-with-make-america-great-again/2017/01/17/fb6acf5e-dbf7-11e6-ad42-f3375f271c9c_story.html?utm_term=.533ea6970f3b.

by instinctively employing a “cognitive miser” or cognitive processing cost-minimizer strategy.⁴ Whenever system or state conditions are fluid enough for American decision-makers to disagree, to debate the merits of potential foreign policy actions, President Trump will prefer military instruments of policy to non-military instruments of policy, as long as his military experts propose and support such options. Otherwise, he will accept non-military initiatives, if they are offered and endorsed by his non-military specialists. Certainly, Trump appears to have a unique decision-making style, personality, and character; and perhaps each of his advisors does too. This is often the case with foreign policy actors.

But a flurry of recent examples do appear to illustrate the cognitive calculus perspective. The decision last week to hit a Syrian air base with cruise missiles is one; another is the decision re-route a carrier task force toward the Korean peninsula. And these are only the most visible cases. Other examples include the effort to develop a naval solution to punish Iran for January ballistic missile tests; the relaxation of American military rules of engagement in Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia; and the continuing effort to develop effective military solutions to stop North Korean nuclear advances.

In light of the vast U.S. military arsenal, and the comparatively small American diplomatic corps, the likelihood the United States will continue to use force is high, and perhaps growing. American forces are already on the ground, on the sea, and in the air in several war zones, and it seems likely this trend will continue. I fully expect the President to routinely call on his generals and admirals for policy solutions, and to approve their preferred options. Of course, he will also consult non-military experts, perhaps his White House advisors, Chief Strategist Stephen K. Bannon and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, among others. But only when military options are unavailable or not recommended by military experts will President Trump prefer non-military solutions.

Why do I so confidently offer this expectation? It’s not that I long for the continuing use of force or even always prefer diplomacy. But the results of my research on the *psychologically*-based cognitive calculus theory of decision-making, including “most likely” and “least likely” historical case tests, strongly indicate that in times of policy controversy, it is “most miserly” cognitive dynamics that will principally determine foreign policy preferences and choices.⁵

⁴ For detailed development of this perspective, see Lori Helene Gronich, “Choosing Force or Diplomacy: The Cognitive Calculus Theory in Foreign Policy Decision-Making” (manuscript in preparation); Gronich, “Why Britain Remained at Peace: The Cognitive Calculus Theory and Foreign Policy Decision-Making from the Anschluss to Munich,” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Montreal, Canada., 2011); Gronich, “The Cognitive Miser Theory Of Decision-Making And U.S. Responses To Nuclear Threats And Terrorist Attacks: A New Psychological Explanation For Policies of War And Peace (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 2005); and Richard H. Immerman and Lori Helene Gronich, “Psychology,” in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd edn., ed. Michael Hogan and Frank Costigliola (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 334-355.

⁵ For more on the methodological significance of these types of tests, see, for example, Harry Eckstein, “Case Studies and Theory in Political Science,” in *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 7, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-138; and James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 98:4 (November 2004): 653-669.

The Cognitive Calculus Theory

The cognitive calculus theory builds on earlier work in international relations by using a single cognitive processing bias, 'cognitive miserliness,' to bring together the central features now associated with organizational and bureaucratic process perspectives, group role and governmental hierarchy, and those traditionally linked to an individual cognitive processing point of view, mental biases. In doing so, it overcomes the key limitations now associated with each, and provides a robust explanation of foreign policy choice.⁶ The theory specifically addresses the fundamental policy choices of war and peace, and suggests that it is the *routine yet unconscious* individual preference for mentally cheap judgments that prompts people in hierarchical groups to behave in predictable ways.

Specifically, the theory proposes that decisions are made in two stages: problem definition followed by solution definition. At each stage, an individual is either in the leader or chief group decision-maker role, or the advisor or subordinate to the group leader role. During problem definition the leader acts *before* the advisor, using his or her *expert* knowledge to identify a topic of concern. Here the leader distinguishes issues that must be addressed now from those that can be considered later. And advisors then respond to the leader's assessment, recognizing the leader's problem, but relying on their own *novice* knowledge to adopt or embrace the leader's frame, accepting or extending the leader's reasoning.⁷

With the problem now identified and recognized, the solution definition stage of decision-making begins.⁸ Here it is the advisor, not the leader, who acts first. The advisor generates options for action, and recommends a solution to the group leader. These options are drawn from the advisor's stockpile of *expert* knowledge; that way, the advisor can stand behind the solution, regardless of any questions or concerns that might be raised. The leader then selects a solution. Ironically, the choice the group leader will make will reflect his or her storehouse of *novice* knowledge, something that he or she is *least* able to criticize since it is

For a more general review of these and other case study strategies, see Jack S. Levy, 'Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,' *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25:1 (Spring 2008): 1-18.

⁶ For classic organizational and bureaucratic process contributions, see Model II and Model III in Graham T. Allison, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971). For early critiques, see Stephen D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)," *Foreign Policy* 7 (Summer 1972): 159-179; and Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4 (December 1973): 467-490. For a classic study addressing beliefs and affective biases, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). For a foundational contribution considering the interaction between cognitive limitations and governmental hierarchies, see John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

⁷ For earlier work emphasizing the significance of framing or problem representation in foreign policy decision-making, see, for example, Barbara Farnham, ed., *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory in International Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); and Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss, eds., *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998):

⁸ For early work underscoring the significance of cognitive heuristics in solution selection, see Alex Mintz, Nehemia Geva, and Steven B. Redd, "The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision-Making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform," *American Political Science Review* 91:3 (September 1997): 553-566.

difficult to independently know how it will work in detail. Since the cognitive miser theory suggests that a leader will act *before* an advisor in problem definition, and *after* the advocate in solution definition, it is the expertise of the chief decision-maker that is crucial in *defining* the problem but not in solving it, and the expertise of the advisors that is crucial in arriving at a solution but not in recognizing the problem. *In this way, leaders see what they know, but approve what they do not; advisors see what they must, and offer what they can.*⁹

**CHART I
THE COGNITIVE CALCULUS THEORY OF DECISION-MAKING**

PROBLEM DEFINITION STAGE OF DECISION

		DOMAIN OF KNOWLEDGE	
		Expert	Novice
ROLE	Leader	Most Miserly	Least Miserly
	Advisor	Least Miserly	Most miserly

SOLUTION DEFINITION STAGE OF DECISION

		DOMAIN OF KNOWLEDGE	
		Expert	Novice
ROLE	Advisor	Most Miserly	Least Miserly
	Leader	Least Miserly	Most miserly

Note: An *intermediate* level of knowledge is always expected to be “moderately miserly” for leaders and advisors.

⁹ Relying on an *intermediate* domain of knowledge is considered *moderately* miserly. Note here that cognitive miserliness is a *metaphor* used describe the *unconscious* and *psychologically*-based process of human judgment. It reflects neither a comprehensively rational nor an economically-focused inference strategy.

Because decisions involving war and peace tend to be approved at the highest levels of government, most regularly in the executive branch, I initially tested the theory by addressing the top echelon of state power. I presumed that the actions of the nation's chief foreign policy executive would illustrate the expectations associated with the leader role, and that the actions of advisors, whether inside or outside the government, would support the hypotheses associated with the subordinate role. Since the most basic distinction between war and peace is that acts of war necessarily involve the use of force, I divided knowledge into classes or domains: knowledge about the use of force, that is, military instruments of policy; and knowledge about other issues or non-military instruments of policy. Leaders and advisors were considered to be either military experts and non-military novices; or non-military experts and military novices.

Given this division, I then measured levels of knowledge in a very straightforward way. Should a decision-maker have more education and career experience in military affairs, rather than non-military pursuits, he or she was classified as a military expert and non-military novice. If, on the other hand, an individual had more formal schooling and job experience in non-military topics, that person was designated as a non-military expert and military novice. In effect, actors with military training who also spent time as career military officers were deemed military experts while all others were deemed non-military experts. Non-military experts included career diplomats who had expertise in diplomacy or specific regions or nations of the world, or political advisors who had expertise in domestic politics.

Determining the operational difference between the problem-definition and solution definition stages of decision-making was a more difficult task. The theory includes a sequential order for decision stages *and* the actions of individuals. I therefore considered the problem definition stage to begin with the leader identifying an irritant, and to end with advisors recognizing the problem. Again, within the guidelines of the theory, I addressed each decision stage by considering problem definition to begin with the leader identifying an issue that involves a choice between war and peace. The problem definition phase was then considered to end when the president's advisors responded to his concern, perhaps offering comments or raising concerns.

Case Studies and Results

To establish the power of the theory, I investigated several historical cases. To test cognitive miser expectations and solution definition dynamics, I focused attention on a classic decision-making example, the U.S. and the Cuban Missile Crisis, a case in which President John F. Kennedy clearly saw the problem as a choice between war and peace, and his advisors agreed.¹⁰ This case strongly supported each solution definition expectation. Kennedy, a man with just three years in military service and nineteen years in non-military pursuits, approved the use of force whenever it was presented and endorsed by his military experts. Early on, he favored authorizing air strikes against the missile emplacements in Cuba. But when his military and air forces experts indicated that some missile sites might survive their planned attack, the President agreed to a naval quarantine instead. Kennedy did go on to consider additional options, including non-military actions, as long as they were proposed and endorsed by his non-military experts. But the President persistently gravitated toward military solutions, even after the naval quarantine was under way.¹¹

¹⁰ Gronich, manuscript.

¹¹ For a brief summary of Kennedy's preferences here, see Lawrence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (New York: New Press, 1992), 78-9. For

Going beyond this illustrative case example, I considered several additional historical choices, addressing attention to both problem definition and solution definition stages of decision-making. Here, I chose particularly challenging examples, that is, cases in which the *outcome* of war or peace was consistent with the *expertise*, rather than naïveté, of the chief decision-maker. I considered times when President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a military expert, declined to deploy ground forces during the Indochina conflict in 1953 and 1954, particularly during the siege at Dien Bien Phu, and thus kept America at peace; when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, a non-military expert, chose to engage in direct negotiations with Hitler on the question of Czechoslovakia, and avoided what might have been a disastrous war in 1938; when Lyndon B. Johnson, a non-military expert, offered to engage in unconditional negotiations with Hanoi in 1968, thus de-escalating the Vietnam War; and when Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, a military expert, approved the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, virtually assuring the U.S. entry into the Pacific war.¹²

Results from each of these cases strongly affirmed the cognitive calculus theory, and all supported even more fine-grained distinctions between individual knowledge domains than the simple expert and novice propositions I had initially set out. For example, in the Eisenhower and Tojo cases, I found that when a chief executive with deep army expertise has no diplomatic solutions presented or endorsed by non-military specialists, that leader will select policies reflecting an alternative domain, but still one they know *relatively* little about. In the Eisenhower case, the President, a career army and infantry officer, was firmly against sending army ground troops into combat, but when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, a non-military expert, was unable to offer and endorse any non-military solution, Eisenhower accepted the longstanding advice of Admiral Arthur W. Radford, a career naval aviator, and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: the President agreed to employ naval air forces, moving carriers to the Gulf of Tonkin, and authorizing naval air surveillance across the border separating Vietnam from communist China.¹³

Tojo, too, a longtime army infantry officer, made decisions affirming the cognitive calculus theory. As the Japanese Prime Minister and War Minister, he approved the Navy's suggestions, and agreed to the Pearl Harbor attack. Yet unlike Eisenhower, Tojo was not simply the leader of a top-level decision group, he was also an advisor to the Emperor, his nominal superior. Nevertheless, even after accepting the Navy's recommendation for war, Tojo was summoned by the Emperor to reflect on his decision again, and when he met with Emperor Hirohito, he presented the Army proposal alone. It was therefore the Navy's advice to the

detailed accounts showing that Kennedy was attracted to military solutions at least as early as October 16 see, for example, Chang and Kornbluh, 95; Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 92-96 as well as Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes, Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, concise ed. (New York: Norton, 2002), 47, 50; and Sheldon M. Stern, *Averting the "Final Failure": John F. Kennedy and the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2003, 75-76. For evidence regarding Kennedy's interest in military options in the post-quarantine period see, for example, Lester H. Brune, *The Missile Crisis of October 1962: A Review of Issues and References* (Claremont: Regina Books, 1985), 68-69; and Stern, 396-400.

¹² Because scholars continue to debate the influence of the Prime Minister and the emperor, the Japanese case offered an especially rich opportunity to test the leader and advisor provisions of the cognitive calculus theory.

¹³ Lori Helene Gronich, "Why American Remained at Peace: The Cognitive Calculus Theory, The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Indochina Crisis of 1953-1954" (paper presented at the bi-annual Policy History Conference, Richmond, Virginia, 2012).

Emperor, a non-military expert, which was crucial to the decision for Pearl Harbor, and Hirohito, not Tojo, who formally approved widening the Pacific war.¹⁴

The Chamberlain and Johnson cases also illustrate the power of the cognitive theory of decision-making and the more fine-grained expertise and naïveté distinctions, too. Here, however, the national leaders were experts in domestic political rather than military affairs. Chamberlain was a career businessman and Conservative Party politician who had spent forty-seven years in non-military affairs, and less than one year conducting international diplomacy. He was thus *relatively* less experienced in international diplomacy than in national politics.¹⁵ And although he persistently consulted with his military experts, hoping they might offer him a military solution to the question of Czechoslovakia, he was repeatedly rebuffed. As early as March 20, 1938, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that Britain was not prepared to go to war.¹⁶ The Prime Minister then looked to his non-military experts for advice, and selected each of the proposals they offered and also endorsed. But eventually they ran out of non-military solutions, and the Prime Minister then crafted his own international diplomatic initiatives.

A similar dynamic characterized the 1968 case. President Johnson, a career politician with *relatively* little experience in international diplomacy, was firmly counseled by his military experts that the war in Vietnam was going to be unwinnable; and when his non-military experts had no ready diplomatic proposals to support or endorse, the President chose to craft his own plan. Removing all preconditions for peace talks with Hanoi, he was elated when they agreed to his offer. Unfortunately, the President had no plan or terms in mind for

¹⁴ Notably, in the Japan case, the navy only agreed to war after successfully developing and testing the shallow-water bombing technique they believed necessary to execute the Pearl Harbor plan. For more on this case, including detailed evidence on how decision-makers at all levels of the government consistently illustrated cognitive miser strategies even when, like Tojo, they shifted roles, see Lori Helene Gronich, “The Cognitive Calculus Theory of Decision-Making: Explaining the Japanese Decisions in 1941” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, 2008). For similar patterns at multiple levels of government in the American and British, see Gronich, 2005, 2011, 2012, 2014, and manuscript.

¹⁵ For corresponding assessments of Chamberlain’s non-military expertise, see Keith Middlemas, *Diplomacy of Illusion: The British Government and Germany, 1937-1939* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1972), 60; Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933-1940* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 257-271; David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain*, vol. 1, *Pioneering and Reform, 1869-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Neville Thompson, *The Anti-Appeasers: Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 30s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 169; R.L.Q. Adams, *British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement, 1935-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 54, 66-67; and R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (New York :St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

¹⁶ The Chief’s central conclusion was that Britain, together with France “or any or all of the...small south European states of Yugoslavia, Greece, Roumania, Hungary and Turkey,” would be militarily ineffective in any conflict with Germany over Czechoslovakia. Moreover, even if the United States, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and the Soviet Union all remained neutral, Italy and Japan were likely to join on the German side and expand the war beyond Europe, thus threatening British interests in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East. These British military experts therefore indicated “there was nothing Britain could do to save Czechoslovakia should Hitler wish to take it.” Quoted in Adams, 54, 56, 57.

producing an agreement. Diplomatic discussions were slow to begin, and they did not reach a successful conclusion—on his watch.¹⁷

Overall, then, the cognitive calculus theory offers a robust explanation in a variety of important historical cases. It not only accommodates the actions of leaders and advisors who are confronting choices of war and peace, it accounts for the order of action and the choices of individuals inside and outside of governments and in top-level groups as well as lower echelons or divisions. Still, as other decision-making analysts have noted, it is certainly possible that the Trump administration may be different.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the evidence so far is not promising. The president, a career businessman who has spent a lifetime in commercial pursuits, particularly real estate and the entertainment industry, has no military experience; and many of his closest White House advisors have spent no time in the military. The exception here is Stephen K. Bannon.

So will the President prefer to use instruments of force rather than instruments of diplomacy whenever he is faced with a choice between war and peace, and his military experts propose and endorse military action? The evidence so far is as follows.

Trump Administration

Although it is always tricky to rely on contemporary accounts rather than archival documents,¹⁹ news reports about decision-making in the Trump administration do offer some illustrative support for “most miserly” hypotheses. The President, as the chief decision-maker, seems to be relying on his *expert* non-military knowledge to guide problem definition, and then selecting solutions that are offered *and* endorsed by his military specialists, if such solutions are available.

For example, with respect to the civil war in Syria, the President has just changed policy direction, moving the U.S. from an indirect military role to a direct one. Apparently, after viewing gruesome television images of civilian victims of a chemical attack, the third chemical attack in less than two weeks, and the only one televised in America, Trump defined the problem at hand as the “horrific” pictures showing the killing of “innocent children, innocent babies—babies, little babies... [that] crosses a lot of lines...many, many lines, beyond a red line.” To Trump, a man with intimate knowledge of real estate redlining and national television,

¹⁷ See Gronich, 2011, and Gronich, “The Cognitive Calculus Theory of Decision-Making: Explaining the American Turn Towards Peace in Vietnam, 1968” (paper presented at the joint annual meeting of the International Security and Arms Control Section of the American Political Science Association and the International Security Studies Section of the International Studies Association, Austin, 2014).

¹⁸ For suggestions that the president may face special hurdles on the state or bureaucratic levels of analysis, see Robert Jervis, “President Trump and IR Theory,” *H-Diplo/International Security Studies Forum Policy Series: American and the World—2017 and Beyond*, 2 January 2017, accessed 5 January 2017, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/policy/1-5b-jervis>. For predictions on how Trump, a unique personality with an unusual and perhaps very demanding decision-making style, may act while in office, see Richard Ned Lebow, “Trump the Tweeter,” *H-Diplo/International Security Studies Forum Policy Series: American and the World—2017 and Beyond*, 2 January 2017, accessed 15 January 2017, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/policy/1-5d-trump-tweeter>.

¹⁹ See, for example, Richard H. Immerman, “Eisenhower and Dulles: Who Made the Decisions?” *Political Psychology* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1979): 21-38.

it was now time for a new foreign policy direction, perhaps even one that would distinguish him from his predecessor, Barack Obama. Trump’s advisors apparently agreed.

CHART II EXPERT AND NOVICE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENTS

Top-Level Trump Administration Foreign Policy Decision Makers^a

NAME	AFFILIATION	Experience (in years)		Level of Knowledge (by domain)	
		Non-Military	Military	Expert	Novice
Mr. Bannon	White House	34	7	Non-military	military
Ms. Conway	White House	28	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Gingrich ^b	White House	52	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Greenblatt	White House	25	0	Non-military	military
Ms. Haley	State	23	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Juster	White House	31	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Kushner	White House	14	0	Non-military	military
Mr. McGahn	White House	26	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Mnuchin	Treasury	32	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Navarro	White House	42	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Pence	White House	36	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Pompeo	CIA	25	5	Non-military	military
Mr. Priebus	White House	23	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Ross	Commerce	58	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Sessions	Justice	48	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Trump	White House	49	0	Non-military	military
Ms. Trump ^b	White House	13	0	Non-military	military
Mr. Tillerson	State	42	0	Non-military	military
Gen. Dunford ^c	Defense	0	40	Military	non-military
Gen. Flynn ^{d, f}	White House	3	33	Military	non-military
Gen. Kelly ^c	Homeland	1	46	Military	non-military
Gen. Mattis ^c	Defense	4	41	Military	non-military
Gen. McMaster ^d	White House	0	33	Military	non-military
Gen. Neller ^c	Defense	0	42	Military	non-military
Gen. Nicholson ^d	Defense	0	35	Military	non-military
Gen. Selva ^e	Defense	0	37	Military	non-military
Gen. Votel ^d	Defense	0	37	Military	non-military

^a Includes top-level decision-makers in place by 17 March 2017 who have been reported to participate in foreign policy discussions with the president.

^b Private citizen on 17 March 2017.

^c Career marine officer.

^d Career army officer.

^e Career air force officer.

^f Private citizen, beginning 13 February 2017.

Sources: *New York Times*; *Washington Post*; CNN.com; “HKS to Establish the Kenneth I. Juster Fellowship Fund to Support Outstanding Students in International and Global Affairs” (press release), 20 January 2011 <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/press-releases/juster-fellowship-fund>; *TRINITY Magazine*, “Q&A with Kellyanne Conway ’89,” <http://www.trinitydc.edu/magazine-2006/qa-with-kellyanne-conway-89/>; Wikipedia.

As far as we know now, only his military experts offered him potential solutions. General Joseph Votel, Commander of the U.S. Central Command, General H.R. McMaster, White House National Security Advisor, and General James Mattis, Secretary of Defense proposed three different options. Later, Mattis recommended and endorsed only one: the missile strikes. Trump quickly agreed, and the weapons were in the air within hours²⁰

Turning to the Israel-Palestine dispute, Trump also seems to be relying on his non-military knowledge of real estate, to define the problem. From his point of view, “there is limited land left, and every time you take land for settlements, there’s less land left.”²¹ His advisors, both those who are *novices* in military affairs, like Bannon and Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, and those who are *novices* in non-military affairs, like Secretary of Defense James Mattis, General Michael Flynn, the first White House National Security Advisor who was forced to resign, and General H.R. McMaster, his replacement, seem to be accepting his point of view. We do not yet know what policy the President will eventually choose; Trump has indicated he has not

²⁰ There is no evidence that the President’s non-military experts offered or endorsed any non-military solutions before the military solutions were being considered. Compiled from U.S. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in a Joint Press Conference, 5 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint>; Abby Philip, “Trump on Syria: ‘I Now Have Responsibility,’” *Washington Post*, 5 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/04/05/trump-on-syria-i-now-have-responsibility/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.9980ae057b7b; Greg Jaffe, “The Main Question After Strikes on Syria: How Does Russia Respond?” *Washington Post*, 6 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-main-question-after-any-strikes-on-syria-how-does-russia-respond/2017/04/06/316c22b0-1aff-11e7-855e-4824bbb5d748_story.html?utm_term=.19fca6dae2f8. Michael R. Gordon, “With Strike Aimed at Halting More Gas Attacks, U.S. Tries to Send Syrians Message,” *New York Times*, 7 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/world/middleeast/american-military-pentagon.html>; Helene Cooper, “After Chemical Attack, Asking if U.S. Remarks Emboldened Assad,” *New York Times*, 7 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/us/politics/bashar-al-assad-syria-chemical-attack.html>; Mark Landler, “Acting on Instinct, Trump Upends His Own Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, 7 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/world/middleeast/syria-attack-trump.html>; Peter Baker, Neil MacFarquhar, and Michael R. Gordon, “Syria Strike Puts U.S. Relationship with Russia at Risk,” *New York Times*, 7 April 2016, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/world/middleeast/missile-strike-syria-russia.html>; Ashley Parker, David Nakamura, and Dan Lamothe, “Horrible Pictures of Suffering Moved Trump to Action on Syria,” *Washington Post*, 7 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/horrible-pictures-of-suffering-moved-trump-to-action-on-syria/2017/04/07/9aa9fcc8-1bce-11e7-8003-f55b4c1cfae2_story.html?utm_term=.fb1b9d87f472; Dan Lamothe, Missy Ryan, and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “U.S. Strikes Syrian Military Airfield in First Direct Assault on Bashar al-Assad’s Government,” *Washington Post*, 7 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-weighing-military-options-following-chemical-weapons-attack-in-syria/2017/04/06/0c59603a-1ae8-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.be763f5f5ec9; Michael D. Shear and Michael R. Gordon, “63 Hours: From Chemical Attack to Trump’s Strike on Syria,” *New York Times*, 8 April 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/us/politics/syria-strike-trump-timeline.html>.

²¹ Peter Beaumont, “Trump in Apparent U-Turn on Israeli Settlement Growth,” *The Guardian*, 10 February 2017, accessed 12 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/10/trump-apparent-u-turn-israeli-settlement-growth>.

yet made a firm decision, but so far, as he puts it, “I’m looking at two-state and one-state [options] and I like the one that both parties like...I can live with either one. I’m happy with the one they like the best.”²²

Several additional examples offer support for cognitive calculus theory solution definition propositions. On Iran, just after the January missile test, the President was initially drawn to using military force. But Secretary Mattis, a career marine officer, seems to have neither recommended nor endorsed naval action, and Trump set that track aside.²³ The President has also considered using military force against North Korea. He “signaled his preference to respond aggressively against the North Korean [nuclear] threat,” but so far, at least, although he appears to have looked at options for a pre-emptive military strike, he has settled instead for sending the initial elements of an enhanced missile defense system to South Korea, and ordering a carrier task force to head toward the Korean peninsula. Perhaps he selected these limited measures because his military experts firmly advised him that “the United States...does not have the [military] ability to effectively counter the North Korean nuclear programs;” the missile defense system deployment was already planned, and the carrier task force provides a visible show of force without fundamentally altering the U.S. military posture in the region.²⁴ It is unclear whether President Trump’s non-military experts have also offered proposals regarding North Korea, but the United States rejected China’s overture to re-start six-party talks; declined to issue visas for North Korean participants in nuclear discussions in New York; and is apparently reluctant to impose new economic sanctions on Pyongyang.²⁵ We have yet to see the precise course the President will choose, but he and his military advisors seem to be illustrating “most miserly” solution definition dynamics. Trump, as a cognitive miser and military novice, appears to be leaning toward the use of force whenever such options are presented and endorsed by subordinates who are military experts.

Because America is already using force in conflicts ranging from Iraq and Syria to Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Somalia, I would expect President Trump, as a cognitive miser and military novice, to continue and

²² Peter Baker and Mark Landler, “Trump, Meeting with Netanyahu, Backs Away from Palestinian State,” *New York Times*, 15 February 2017, accessed 16 February 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/world/middleeast/benjamin-netanyahu-israel-trump.html>.

²³ See William Booth and Anne Gearan, “Israelis Aren’t Really Sure What Trump Just Said About the Future of Their Country,” *Washington Post*, 16 February 2017, accessed 20 February 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/israelis-arent-really-sure-what-trump-just-said-about-the-future-of-their-country/2017/02/16/128485fa-f45c-11e6-9fb1-2d8f3fc9c0ed_story.html?utm_term=.8f12e8db714a.

²⁴ See, for example, David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “Trump Inherits a Secret Cyberwar Against North Korean Missiles,” *New York Times*, 4 March 2017, accessed 5 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/04/world/asia/north-korea-missile-program-sabotage.html>; and Anna Fifield, “U.S. Navy Sends Strike Group Toward Korean Peninsula,” *Washington Post*, 9 April 2017, accessed 9 April 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-navy-sends-strike-group-toward-korean-peninsula/2017/04/09/0c00909c-1cfd-11e7-8003-f55b4c1cfae2_story.html?utm_term=.dabf8fdec661.

²⁵ See Sanger and Broad on the American rejection of six-party talks. For additional details on other non-military measures, see, for example, Jane Perlez, “Trump Administration Cancels Back-Channel Talks with North Korea,” *New York Times*, 25 February 2017, accessed 26 February 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/25/world/asia/white-house-north-korea-talks.html>; and Perlez, “All Eyes on China as U.S. Signals New Tack on North Korea,” *New York Times*, 17 March 2017, accessed 17 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/world/asia/all-eyes-on-china-as-us-signals-new-tack-on-north-korea.html>.

perhaps escalate U.S. military involvement in these places, should his military experts, his subordinates and also cognitive misers, propose and endorse such policy solutions. At this time, General Mattis has already recommended relaxing military rules of engagement in Yemen, and Trump has agreed.²⁶ The President has also agreed to similar measures in Somalia, and is apparently considering a request from General John W. Nicholson, Jr., the Commander of American and NATO Forces in Afghanistan, to increase the U.S. troop commitment there.²⁷ Even the U.S. stance toward Japan seems to be taking on a heightened military focus, and placing additional American weapons or troops in that country may well be in the offing.²⁸

The Trump administration is not yet one hundred days old, but if its decision-making dynamics stay true to cognitive miser expectations, we are likely to have bloody times ahead. Whenever America is confronting choices of war or peace, and there is room for disagreement among people, it is likely that the president and his advisors will be cognitive misers, that is, they will *unconsciously* rely on mentally cheap judgment strategies to identify problems and select solutions. During the problem definition stage of decision-making, the president will recognize issues in ways that reflect his non-military *expertise*; his advisors will follow along, using their own novice knowledge about military or non-military affairs to accept or extend his assessments. Then, during the solution definition stage of decision-making, the order of action and the preferences of decision-makers will be reversed. Advisors will offer recommendations reflecting their individual arena of *expert* knowledge; and the President will choose solutions he can least criticize, that is, those that reflect his *novice* domain of knowledge, military force.

²⁶Missy Ryan and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "A Raid in Remote Yemen and a SEAL's Death Still Reverberate for Trump," *Washington Post*, 1 March 2017, accessed 2 March 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-raid-in-remote-yemen-and-a-seals-death-still-reverberate-for-trump/2017/03/01/0adc7b32-fd08-11e6-8ebe-6e0dbe4f2bca_story.html?utm_term=.dbd5131f22dc. Other military specialists, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., and General Michael Flynn, White House national security advisor, attended the meeting, as did non-military experts, including the director of Central Intelligence, Mike Pompeo, and White House aides Jared Kushner and Stephen Bannon. However, the contributions of these individuals are not yet clear.

²⁷ On Iraq and Syria, see, for example, Editorial Board, "Man Without and ISIS Plan," *New York Times*, 12 March 2017, accessed 13 March 2017, <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/opinion/man-without-an-isis-plan.html>. On Yemen and Somalia, see, for example, Charlie Savage and Eric Schmitt, "Trump Administration is Said to be Working to Loosen Counterterrorism Rules," *New York Times*, 12 March 2017, accessed 13 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/us/politics/trump-loosen-counterterrorism-rules.html>; and Savage and Schmitt, "Trump Eases Combat Rules in Somalia Intended to Protect Civilians," *New York Times*, 30 March 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/world/africa/trump-is-said-to-ease-combat-rules-in-somalia-designed-to-protect-civilians.html?_r=0. On the possibility of new force deployments to Afghanistan, see, for example, Dan Lamothe, "Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan Opens Door to a 'Few Thousand' More Troops Deploying There," *Washington Post*, 9 February 2017, accessed 16 February 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/09/top-u-s-commander-in-Afghanistan-opens-door-to-a-few-thousand-more-troops-deploying-there/?utm_term=.89871ce36c3f; and Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Security Reforms Falter, With Tough Fighting Ahead," *New York Times*, April 8, 2017, accessed 8 April 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/world/asia/afghanistan-army-training-corruption.html>.

²⁸ Motoko Rich, "Rex Tillerson, in Japan, Says U.S. Needs 'Different Approach' to North Korea," *New York Times*, 16 March 2017, accessed 17 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/16/world/asia/rex-tillerson-asia-trump-us-japan.html>.

Certainly, the implications of my work on the cognitive calculus theory, applied to the Trump administration, are worrying. The theory suggests that until a president with military expertise comes to office, or a president with non-military expertise is offered no desirable military solutions by his military advisors, the United States will continue to use force in states around the world. Perhaps by limiting, rather than expanding, the massive American military arsenal, and simultaneously growing rather than depleting the professional U.S. diplomatic corps, current conflicts can be resolved by diplomatic efforts rather than the use of greater force. But until then, as both historical examples and current policy directions suggest, the cognitive calculus theory of decision-making indicates that the world faces a dangerous future.

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