

ASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN STATECRAFT UNDER TRUMP PRESIDENCY

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically describes and analyzes the Trump administration's statecraft toward Mexico, which is shaped by immigration policies, trade relations, and security concerns. The paper argues that the administration leaned towards a transactional and coercive strategy, using economic pressure, border security tactics, and diplomatic threats to shape its statecraft policies toward Mexico. Notable policies like the "Remain in Mexico" program, the renegotiated USMCA from NAFTA, the use of tariffs, and the threats of tariffs played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of bilateral relations between countries. While certain measures aim to promote America's economic and security interests, some administration policies also weakened trust among both countries and posed humanitarian challenges. The theories of classical realism and constructivism were also employed as the theoretical framework of this paper. Lastly, the paper suggested ways to improve US-Mexico relations by highlighting the importance of comprehensive immigration reforms, joint counter-narcotics operations, balanced economic trade agreements, and strengthening diplomatic ties.

Keywords: Statecraft, Hegemony, State power, Economic Statecraft, Military Statecraft.

Introduction

America has transformed its statecraft as geopolitical circumstances changed under different administrations and international events. Historically, America is known to have practiced an isolationist foreign policy and statecraft based on unilateral decisions geared toward economic benefits; however, during WW I, America briefly shifted from an isolationist statecraft to an interventionist policy. After the war, the country moved back to its isolationist policy. The post-WW II period, however, marked a watershed in America's statecraft policy because this was the period America rose as a global power actively involved in the international system, shaping and influencing international norms. With its new status, the country established a new international order based on American ideas, values, and beliefs. During this period, the country was additionally involved in the establishment of several multilateral institutions like the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, and NATO as a means to promote global cooperation, development, and security in the international society. The US, for a long time, when interacting with other states in the international system, particularly in regards to its relations with Mexico, the state has used various approaches that include the use of coercion, force, diplomatic engagement, and cooperation. Over the years, America's statecraft policy toward Mexico has been shaped by economic and geopolitical interests, beginning with the creation of the Monroe Doctrine to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),

which was replaced by United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) under the Trump Administration in 2020. Under previous administrations like the Obama administration, America's statecraft toward Mexico was based on economic development and regional security alliances to promote regional cooperation; however, under the present Trump administration, there seems to be a change from this traditional statecraft policy. This argument is based on the fact that the Trump administration appears to be moving back to the pre-WW I America's isolationist statecraft policy that is only focused on America's interests. The Trump administration's "America First" statecraft policy has significantly changed America's statecraft towards Mexico, as the states' relations with each other is now transactional in nature, and includes the implementation of strict immigration rules, American-centered economic initiatives, and the use of coercion through tariffs.

To provide a better understanding of America's statecraft, this paper aims to shed more insight into present-day America's statecraft under the Trump administration, using Mexico as a case study. This paper also includes a conceptual framework to ensure that the terms used in this study are clearly defined. Additionally, a theoretical framework was provided in this paper, including the sources and materials used for this study's discussion.

Material and Methodology

For this research, the researcher used secondary data. Content and discourse analysis were used in analyzing various qualitative and quantitative secondary data sources. Content analysis according to Richardson (2007) focuses on the repetitive appearance of words, topics, and phrases within the text (Richardson 2007:237). According to Luo (2019), discourse analysis is a research method for investigating languages written and spoken in social contexts. These methods of analysis were used to analyze secondary data sources collected for this research. As a method of data collection, this paper used a secondary source of data collection. The secondary sources included library and internet materials such as articles, journals, reports, and existing literature that are relevant to the research topic. Existing data from reputable and peer-reviewed sources such as governmental reports, academic publications, and journal articles were utilized. In addition, this paper adopted a case study research design using America and Mexico as case studies to provide a better understanding of the concept of statecraft. This research methodology was used due to time constraints. However, another limitation of this research was the difficulty accessing data because there is limited literature and materials available on the subject matter.

Literature Review

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations, statecraft can be defined as the expert technique of executing diplomatic relations between nations to achieve national goals and interests. Margaret Thatcher, in her 2002 book "Statecraft," which mirrors her perspectives from her tenure in office, exemplified statecraft as "the role nations play in promoting and ensuring global security" (Talbot 2023). Talbot (2023) asserts that although there are various definitions of the term statecraft, this definition is widely used in the international political system. Through a historical lens, the traditional understanding of the concept of statecraft stems from the realist Niccolo Machiavelli and his book titled "The Prince". The author examines the methods that 'the prince' must employ to defend his power, along with defending both himself and the state from possible internal and external threats. Machiavelli notably and controversially advocated for the protection of the rights of the prince and his state by whatever means necessary. However, a large part of Machiavelli's book (The Prince) focused on the internal protection and maintenance of power in the state (Talbot, 2023).

As cited by Talbot (2023), in his 1977 book "Statecraft," Charles Anderson notes that the term "statecraft" is an ancient North European term for "the philosophy of governing". The strategy used by Alasdair Roberts in his most recent book, *Strategies for Governing* (2019), likewise covers all facets of the establishment, maintenance, and modification of the nation and the government at all levels, including its internal, foreign, and macro level (Talbot, 2023). According to Talbot (2023), statecraft may be used to refer to the research and study of states and governments and how to effectively create, manage, and develop them domestically and globally (2023). From a personal perspective, statecraft can simply be defined as the act of effectively governing a state through the use of diplomacy, effective political tactics, proper economic management, and military advancement. There are various key features of statecraft, and they include the following:

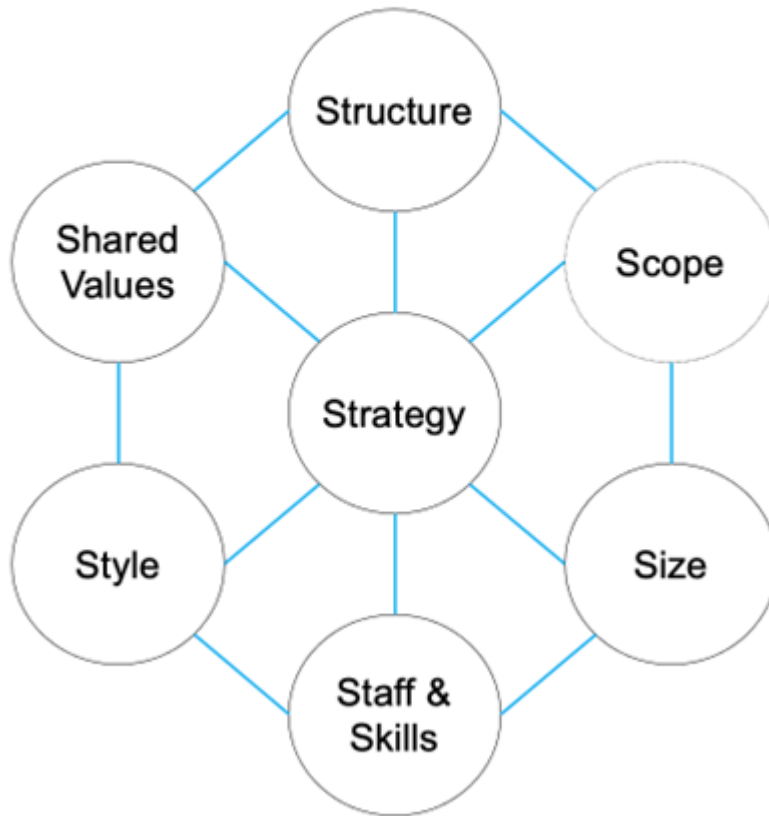
- **Diplomacy:** This is a tool used by nation-states to promote and protect their national interest through peaceful means that involve negotiations, alliances, and treaties to manage international relations.
- **National Security:** Another key feature of statecraft is national security. The whole concept of statecraft aims to protect the state from both internal and external threats.
- **Political Leadership:** This is also a key feature of statecraft because it aims to exercise governance through laws and policies, along with institutional practices to sustain order and authority in the state. Without political leadership, a state cannot exist, and by extension, without states, the concept of statecraft would not exist.

Dimensions of Statecraft

As cited by Talbot (2023), Roberts (2019) attempted to discuss a framework for the study of statecraft through various levels of macro and microanalysis. Talbot (2023) further asserted that there are '7S' paradigms, and how government uses its authority may influence and be influenced by all seven of these aspects of statecraft.

STATECRAFT

the '7S' approach



Source: Talbot (2023), statecraft in seven dimensions.

- 1) **Strategy:** This is the ultimate goal, course, and objective of the state's legislative body and leader. All of the other six components of statecraft might be altered by this single component. But this component can also be shaped and altered by the other dimensions of statecraft. Additionally, unanticipated circumstances, opposition, and even changes in the administration might affect strategy, because each administration comes with its strategy and goals. The strategy may be "deliberate," "emergent," or a combination of the two (Talbot, 2023).
- 2) **Structure:** This refers to the general form of the nation and its administrative components. For example, is the state a representative democracy? Is there a separation of powers in its federal structure? Does it practice a federal or unilateral administrative structure? How many tiers of government are present in the state? (Talbot 2023). All this makes up what we define as the structure of a state, and all these factors also influence what pattern of statecraft the country would practice and what states the country would have as allies. The structure simply means the shape and nature of the state. The Western countries, for example, practice democracy, and we often see them forming alliances with other democratic states; these alliances are formed based on strong political ideologies shared among those states.

- 3) **Scope:** Scope is about the range of areas of society the state seeks to influence and to what degree, and using what instruments. Compared to previous centuries, states in the contemporary international system seek to control larger aspects of social activity as a new form of political influence and power (Talbot, 2023). Western Countries like the US have used social ideals and activities as a means to influence and control the norms and ideologies of the modern international system; they have used language, culture, and even the movie industries to expand their social influence.

The concept of scope as an element of statecraft also includes the state's ability to solve state problems. Talbot (2023) noted that some states have been criticized for doing too much, while others have been criticized for doing too little. Some states, like Nigeria, have not been able to deal with problems of unemployment, lack of education, and insecurity. Often, the country has been criticized for doing too little to resolve these issues.

- 4) **Size:** Over time and particularly in the past fifty years, the size of administrations of countries has been a topic of discourse in the international system. During the 1970s and 1980s, developed countries like the US, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan directed efforts toward diminishing the size of their state institutions. Additionally, the International Monetary Fund tried to enforce structural adjustment policies that involved state downsizing in various developing nations (Talbot, 2023). This is because managing large governmental institutions can be financially demanding. A lot of resources would go into the maintenance and management of oversized governmental institutions. When discussing size in elements of statecraft, often time emphasis is often placed on the need to shrink governance institutions, finance, and organization
- 5) **Staff and Skill:** The most important asset for every state's operation is its workforce and expertise. The nation, on its own, is helpless without enough capable individuals working for it. How the state's public service ministries, agencies, and institutions are staffed and skilled is critical for the growth and development of the state (Talbot 2023). China, for example, is trying to establish a productive labor force for quality development. this can be achieved by having well-skilled staff who would steer the affairs of the state to promote state development and growth. When discussing staff and skill in statecraft, the focus is placed on establishing a productive labor force equipped with skilled staff.
- 6) **Style:** How political leaders behave and direct the government, its agencies, and society at large is referred to as style. The leader can be autocratic or democratic, liberal or conservative. All of these shapes define the concept of style in statecraft (Talbot 2023).
- 7) **Shared Values:** A functional state and governing system are built on shared beliefs. A state becomes more fragile in the absence of some common ideals that unite it and its citizens (Talbot, 2023). A state can have multiple shared values, but without these shared values, states often fail in the international system.

Type of Statecraft

There are various forms of statecraft that a country can employ when relating to other states, and they include the following:

- **Military statecraft:** This is the employment of coercion, as well as the threat of force to accomplish political goals, such as intervention, deterrence, and defense.
- **Economic statecraft:** This is the application of economic instruments as tools for foreign policy advancement through trade agreements, sanctions, and the supply of foreign aid.

- **Psychological Statecraft:** This is the use of manipulation of public opinion within domestic and international spheres to achieve the state's desired goals and objectives.

Brief Historical Overview of American Statecraft

The United States of America is a country situated in North America. The country consists of fifty federal republics, which include Hawaii island in the Pacific Ocean and Alaska in the Northwest. The country is bordered by Canada on the north, by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, by the Pacific Ocean on the West, and it is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico on the South. The United States ranks as the fourth-largest country by land mass in the world after Russia, Canada, and China. Washington, DC, established in 1790, serves as the nation's capital city (Gopnik et al, 2025). In terms of population, it has over three hundred forty-three million nine hundred sixty-nine thousand populous, the United States of America is also home to a diverse population of various races, cultures, and ethnicities (Gopnik et al, 2025). According to (Gopnik et al, 2025), in terms of its gross domestic product (GDP), the US is the world's greatest economy. The economic growth of the country is mostly due to its sophisticated industrial development, but it is also partially a result of its abundant natural resources and massive agricultural production (Gopnik et al, 2025).

Over time, in contemporary international society, the US has grown to be a global power with vast economic, political, military, and socio-cultural influence. The country has arguably become the backbone of contemporary international society. However, the nation did not always pursue an internationalist foreign policy. According to Chervinsky (n,d), under President George Washington's administration, in the 18th-19th century, the country adopted an isolatory statecraft policy as a means to exclude itself from foreign wars and intervention (Chervinsky (n.d.). Additionally, in the 19th century, according to Loveman (2016), America's statecraft policy was focused on economic growth and border expansion, as the country tried to acquire more, beginning with the Louisiana acquisition in 1803, followed by Texas annexation in 1845, and capturing territories after the Mexican-American War in 1846-1848. During this era, as well, America's statecraft was also focused on the Monroe Doctrine, which stated that America would maintain a neutral ground and not interfere in the affairs of Europe (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). In the 20th century, however, America's statecraft shifted briefly from an Isolationist to an interventionist policy during WW I. America's involvement in the War was a response to Germany sinking America ships, and the letter sent to Mexico by the then German ambassador proposing a military alliance, promising to return the lands America seized during the Mexican-American War. After this message was intercepted, America officially declared War on Germany on April 6th, 1917, and began supporting the Allied forces by providing them with various forms of aids, including military troops, arms and ammunition (History.com Editors, 2017). After the war, President Wilson also proposed the creation of the League of Nations as a means to promote global peace and security. The President at that time seemed willing to change US foreign policy and statecraft to an interventionist policy, however, the Senate rejected his proposal to join the League of Nations, and after the war ended, the country went back to its isolationist policies.

After World War two began, the US once again shifted from an isolationist to an interventionist policy. The involvement of the US in the war played a critical role in the defeat of the Axis Powers. However, after the war, this time, the US maintained an interventionist policy and statecraft strategy. The nation was now willing and able to lead the world into a new international order. This interventionist statecraft approach was essential as the country effectively utilized this approach during the Cold War period, as a means to promote American ideas like capitalism and democracy, to restrict communist expansion. The country employed diplomatic statecraft strategies through the Marshall Plan and the creation of NATO to promote

American ideologies. Additionally, the United States also employed military statecraft policies during proxy wars in countries like Korea and Vietnam to deter the expansion of communism in the international society.

After the Soviet Union collapse during the Cold War America achieved the sole status of a superpower, a status that has followed the country from that era till date, in the contemporary international system, the US statecraft is often guided by technological advancement, globalization, and emerging security challenges like terrorism, migration, and cyber threats. From 1945 till date, the United State seem to have evolved from early isolationism to an interventionist policy, growing to become a global leader shaping geopolitical and international norms. However, under the Trump administration, the United States of America seems to be heading back to its previous isolation statecraft policy.

Brief Introduction of Mexico

Despite its challenges as an emerging economy, Mexico remains one of the leading social and political powers across Latin America. Mexico is a country located in southern North America and the third largest country in Latin America after Brazil and Argentina. The country is characterized by extreme class division. There are the extremely wealthy elite and the extremely poor class, there is little or no room for the middle class in the nation. The country is endowed with vast natural mineral resources and is a major exporter of machinery and transport equipment. It is home to the world's largest Spanish-speaking population and consists of 31 states (Parkes, 2025).

The country has an estimated population of over 127.9 million, with roughly four-fifths of Mexicans residing in metropolitan areas as a result of massive migration from the rural to urban areas of the country. The capital, Mexico City, is one of the world's most populated cities and metropolitan regions (Parkes, 2025). In terms of economic development, Mexico has gone through several financial growths that resulted in incredible social progress, followed by crashes that saw an enormous decrease in the living standards of the lower and middle classes. Even though the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has strengthened links with the United States and Canada, the nation's economy is still fragile (Parkes, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

Classical Realism

This is a dominant school of thought in the field of International Relations, it is often linked to thinkers like Niccolo Machiavelli, Hans Morgenthau, and Thomas Hobbes. The theory emphasizes power dynamics, self-preservation, self-help, anarchy, and national interest. According to Sheriff (2022), the international system mimics the state of nature in which existence is solitary, nasty, brutish, and poor (Sheriff, 2022:1). Classical realists hold the assumption that states are the primary actors in international relations. Secondly, realists believe that the state is a unitary actor. They argue that a state's action in the international system is guided by its national interests. In addition, according to Antunes and Isabel (2018), state decision-makers are rational actors, and they always pursue their state's national interest. The theory of classical realism argues that all leaders, regardless of their political views, understand this as they try to run their state's affairs to survive in a competitive environment (Antunes and Isabel 2018). Realists like Machiavelli in his book *The Prince* (1532) emphasize that the primary concern of a leader is to promote national security, and this should be done by any means necessary. Realists argue that if necessary, the state should be willing to use force if it would guarantee its survival.

However, the theory has been criticized for placing so much emphasis on states as primary actors, ignoring the presence of other non-state actors in the international society. It has also been criticized for ignoring the importance of mutual interest and cooperation in international society (Antunes and Isabel, 2018).

Application of Theory

In this paper, the theory of classical realism will be used as the theoretical framework to explain how the Trump administration's statecraft toward Mexico is guided by the principles of national interest, economic statecraft, national security, and self-preservation. The choice of this theory is based on the fact that the Trump administration's policy and statecraft toward Mexico reflect realist ideas on national security, self-preservation, and the use of coercion.

Constructivism

Constructivism, developed from the teachings of thinkers like Alexander Wendt (1992) and Peter Katzenstein (1996), highlights how ideas, identities, norms, and social interactions play a crucial role in influencing how states behave (Theys, 2018). In contrast to realist or liberal theories that focus mainly on material power and institutional limits, constructivism suggests that states and their actions are shaped by social constructs, shared ideas, values, and how they perceive the world around them. According to Theys (2018), constructivism revolves around social norms, identities, and interests. Constructivists believe that states can possess various identities, which are shaped through their interactions with other actors. These identities reflect how an actor perceives other actors, and this self-perception influences their interests. (Theys, 2018). For constructivists, understanding identities is crucial because they argue that these identities play a significant role in shaping both interests and actions.

The Theory, however, has been criticized for limiting the importance of national interest, power, and resources in shaping social interactions and states' actions (Adeniji, 2022).

Application of the Theory

Applied to this paper, this theory will be used to argue that Trump's statecraft towards Mexico is also shaped by the social perception states have towards Mexico. The paper will argue that during Trump's first tenure (2017-2021) and second tenure (2024-till date), the administration's statecraft and relationship with Mexico have been significantly shaped by socially constructed narratives, especially around immigration, trade, and security.

Findings and Discussion

The Trump administration's statecraft towards Mexico is a blend of economic pressure, strict border security, and diplomatic coercion, which has reshaped the dynamics and relationship between the US and Mexico. This section of the paper aims to discuss and analyze the key elements of the administration's statecraft and assess the impact of the administration's statecraft on both countries through a critical lens. The administration's statecraft is based on the following:

Immigration and Border Security

The immigration and border security laws are vital aspects of Trump's administration's statecraft approach towards Mexico. As reflected in its laws, the Trump administration's statecraft policies are focused on the construction of border barriers and the implementation of Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), also known as the "Remain in Mexico" program (Klingner, 2018). This policy required asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while courts in the US processed their cases. The implementation of this policy received heavy criticism from

human rights organizations, who argued that this policy exposed asylum seekers to violence and subjected them to terrible living conditions. Additionally, the "zero tolerance" of the administration policy also gained criticism from significant international and domestic civil society groups because the policy briefly separated immigrant families. Organizations like the Human Rights Watch (2018) criticized the administration for this policy because it resulted in the separation of nearly 3000 children from their parents. These immigration policies created tensions between the US and Mexico, as Mexico received more asylum seekers and faced growing humanitarian challenges.

Within the context of the theory of classical realism, this policy exemplified the concept of self-help, state selfishness, and national security protection, as the US shifted the burden of hosting asylum seekers onto Mexico and also made efforts to secure its border against external threats. The strategy aligns with his "America First" policy, portraying Mexico as a threat to America's border and economic security. Furthermore, within the context of self-help, in 2019, under the Trump administration, the government threatened to increase tariffs on Mexico by 5% to coerce the Mexican government into improving its border security. Mexico responded to US pressure by establishing the National Guard to control illegal border crossings (Boucher and Ugarte, 2025). In 2024, Trump once again employed his statecraft strategy of the use of tariffs to pressure Mexico to accept Mexican migrants who illegally settled in the US (Boucher and Ugarte, 2025).

During his presidential campaign speeches, one could clearly see that Trump viewed Mexican immigrants as criminals, and he portrayed them as an economic threat to American citizens, reinforcing negative stereotypes about Mexicans. According to the theory of Constructivism, states base their actions on their perceptions of identity, and Trump's discourse depicted Mexico as a threat to American security. His perception of Mexicans as a potential threat to America's national security has negatively influenced his statecraft policy toward Mexico, causing him to deter from past US-Mexico friendly relations under previous administrations like the Obama and Clinton administrations, to an "American first" statecraft policy based on coercion, use of force, and the threat to use force.

Security and Counter-Narcotics Cooperation

The Trump administration's statecraft towards Mexico is also being shaped by security concerns and military statecraft, especially regarding organized criminal groups and drug cartels. Based on the theory of constructivism, due to the political ideology of Mexico in the international system as the hub of drug cartels, the administration highlighted the role Mexico has to play in the fight against drug trafficking, particularly the flow of fentanyl and other opioids into the United States of America. Despite opposition from the Mexican government for security concerns, the Trump administration in 2025 branded all drug cartels, including Mexican drug cartels, as terrorist organizations (Osgood, 2025). Further straining diplomatic ties between both countries.

Since Trump's first tenure in office, the Mexico-US security alliance and relations have become strained because of Trump's frequent criticism of Mexico's security initiatives and his unilateral decision to send American troops to the border (Cancian, 2025). Creating complications and tensions between both countries, negatively impeding security partnerships between both countries. Within the framework of the theory of classical realism, it can be argued that the actions of the administration are guided by the need to promote and protect its national security. And if necessary, the state should be willing to use force if it guarantees its survival. From the actions of the Trump administration, it is safe to assume that his statecraft towards Mexico is being shaped by military statecraft as a means to promote its national

security. However, within the framework of Constructivism, one can argue that the administration's statecraft towards Mexico is not solely based on security, but it has also been influenced by the political identity of Mexicans as criminals and drug traffickers in the international society. Because of this preconceived notion, the administration is taking drastic protective measures.

Economic Statecraft

The Trump administration's relations with Mexico are also largely based on economic statecraft and transactional policies. The administration pushed for the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which he repeatedly described as a “disaster”. The administration called for the replacement of NAFTA, and in 2020, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) took effect, replacing NAFTA (Lobosco, 2020). The new agreement made provisions for stricter labor laws, intellectual property protection that helped American industries, and strict compliance costs in Mexico. Based on the classical realism theory, this can be viewed as an example of power maximization, as the US sought better terms of trade at the expense of weaker partners like Mexico. According to Boucher and Ugarte (2015), Mexico accounts for 16% of the United States of America’s trade, and a tariff war with Mexico will also have an impact on US economic interests, especially when it comes to goods like food, gasoline, and automobiles (Boucher and Ugarte, 2015). However, the US is more powerful and economically dominant in the international system, as such, Mexico cannot afford to be in a trade war with the US, reinforcing America’s economic dominance in the international system.

Shifting Diplomacy

America for a long time under previous administrations focused on using diplomatic statecraft strategies through cooperation and building diplomatic ties with regional states like Mexico. However, Trump’s statecraft towards Mexico is based on the use of coercion, threats, and a unilateral approach to diplomacy. The Trump administration has shied away from America’s norm of mostly using a diplomatic and interventionist statecraft approach, to an isolationist and unilateral approach to relations with states in the international system, similar to America’s statecraft pre-World War 1, reshaping present relations in the international system. The administration seemed to have shifted from the use of smart power (which is a combination of hard power and soft power) to the use of hard power and a military statecraft approach through coercion, the use of force, and the threat to use force as a guiding principle toward its relations with states in the international society. The Trump administration seems to have strayed from the use of diplomacy and soft power as a guiding principle towards its relations with Mexico, and presently focuses on the use of economic pressure through tariffs and the use of force to guide its relations with Mexico.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper argues that the Trump administration's statecraft approach towards Mexico is largely based on military statecraft through coercion, and economic statecraft based on transactional gains, prioritizing short-term wins over overall long-term stability. The paper suggests that these state-crafted actions and policies are largely based on the promotion of border and national security, economic prosperity, and preconceived ideologies about Mexico. Some initiatives like the USMCA aim to promote economic growth and other policies on immigration created tensions and humanitarian challenges. The administration's statecraft policy towards Mexico is also guided by the use of tariffs, threats, and a unilateral approach to making decisions, highlighting a coercive form of diplomacy that in the long run would have detrimental effects on the relations of both states.

Recommendations

The following recommendation suggests ways to promote a more stable and mutually beneficial relationship between the US and Mexico, however, these recommendation requires the willingness and collaboration of both countries.

- 1) **Comprehensive Immigration Reform:** This can be achieved by addressing the root causes of migration in Central America by establishing development projects and establishing of humane immigration policies. For example, initiatives such as the US-Mexico Development Cooperation Framework, which aims at creating employment opportunities and social construction programs in Mexico and Central America, can help reduce the flow of irregular migration in North America.
- 2) **Joint Counter-Narcotics Operations:** A strategy that combines counter-narcotics with border security, respecting the sovereignty of Mexico as well as promoting cooperation among both states, will provide a better means to minimize transnational crime. For instance, initiatives such as the Mérida Initiative, which facilitated intelligence-sharing and security training, should be alternated to focus on community-led anti-crime strategies rather than just militarized enforcement, as a means to promote security.
- 3) **Balanced Economic Trade Agreements:** Trade agreements should focus on the long-term economic benefits for both countries, avoiding the use of economic pressure. The USMCA framework, for example, promotes economic cooperation and development, however, the framework should also include equitable labor practices and environmental protection laws without the use of threats or abrupt policy shifts.
- 4) **Diplomatic Engagement:** The Trump administration's statecraft towards Mexico has been shaped by coercion and the use of force. The administration should focus on establishing diplomatic relations through bilateral agreements based on mutual interest and respect instead of the use of force, threats, or unilateral actions. Joint economic forums and summits modeled after the USW-Mexico High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED) can enable cooperation in security along with trade and energy. The creation of additional programs like this can strengthen diplomatic relations between both countries.

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