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The Role of the President of the United States of America in Foreign Policy: A Political-Historical Perspective

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Başkanının Dış Politikadaki Rolü: Siyasal ve Tarihsel Bir İnceleme

Abstract | The role of the president of the United States of America has been carefully balanced by the founding fathers in the US constitution. This article examines whether a US president is able to play a leading role in foreign policy while operating within constitutional limits. It further investigates whether a strong role of the president in foreign policy objectives contributes to greater stability and success in foreign policy goals. Particular attention is given to the impact of war powers, bureaucratic structures, public opinion, and the media. The article argues that, although presidential influence over foreign policy has expanded significantly over time, it remains constrained by both constitutional provisions and political factors. As a result, U.S. foreign policy is shaped by a dynamic interaction between executive initiative and institutional oversight.

Keywords | Foreign Policy of the United States, History of the United States, History of International Relations.

Öz | Amerika Birleşik Devletleri başkanının ABD dış politikasındaki rolü, ABD'nin "kurucu babalar/founding fathers" tarafından kesin anayasal çerçevesinde yürütme ve yasama güçleri arasında erklerin hizasında bir denge gözetilerek dikkatlice tasarlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, ABD başkanının anayasal denge ve denetim mekanizmaları içinde kalıp ABD dış politika sahnesinde ne ölçüde belirleyici bir rol oynayabildiğini incelemektedir. Ayrıca, başkanın dış politika karar ve uygulama sürecindeki güçlü konumunun dış politika hedeflerinde istikrar ve başarıya katkı sağlayıp sağlamadığı değerlendirilmektedir. Bu kapsamda savaş yetkileri ("war Powers"), bürokratik yapısı, kamuoyu ve medyanın etkisine önem atfedilmektedir. Çalışma, başkanın dış politikadaki etkisinin tarihsel süreç içinde önemli ölçüde artmış olmasına rağmen, bu etkinin hem anayasal düzenlemeler hem de siyasal faktörler tarafından sınırlandırıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, ABD dış politikası, başkanın yürütme inisiyatifleri ile kurumsal denetim arasındaki dinamik etkileşim çerçevesinde şekillenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler | ABD Dış Politikası, ABD Tarihi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Tarihi.

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Historical and Constitutional Factors of the US Presidents Role in Foreign Policy

To discuss the roles of the President of the United States and Congress in US foreign policy, the historical background of the development of US government institutions and policies foreign and domestic must be considered. Within that scope, the research question consists of determining to which extent a US president is destined to actively shape foreign policy with his political concepts and priorities towards foreign actors within the constitutional framework of checks and balances. Considering societal developments and political necessities during the founding phase of the United States in the late 18th and early 19th century, a certain framework of roles for President and Congress in the field of foreign policy was established. It shall be defined which factors are enabling the US president to establish a stronger role in foreign policy and in how far domestic policy factors are to be taken into consideration.

Aiming to investigate the evolution of the President's role in US foreign policy, an historical overview regarding the definition of his role shall be given in a general way, focusing on constitutional rules and debates. It should be taken into consideration that foreign policy as well as US domestic policy are subject to continuous change, leading vice versa to an evolution of the role and definition of those institutions within more than two centuries of American history in the frame of a changing world order and the growth of American power in the concert of nations. (Khan&Sabir,2013, ss143-163) In the past as well as the present political setting, conflicting views between both parties as well as opportunities for cooperation are often defined within the concept of cooperation or "bipartisanship". As public opinion became increasingly influenced by the media, especially after the emergence of mass media, the media-now in print as well as online-, but also lobbying groups and think-tanks are defined as factors of increasing importance that naturally do influence shaping the self-definition of presidency. Nevertheless, those institutions are also frequently being employed themselves by US government institutions, including the office of the President, the Department of State and others. (Haas,2002, ss.5-8)

The Virginia Declaration of Rights of June 1776, pre-dating the US Declaration of Independence with its strict focus on the natural rights of men and stressing the limitation of government power would influence scepticism towards strong executive power and a strong leader (Tarter,1991, ss.279-304). Within that scope, constitutional practices led to the evolution of constitutional articles that define the powers of these two pillars of US governance. It shall be added that the mere concept of a constitution itself was still a relatively new theoretical construct that had to be tested out in practice. For the specific case of the US, stresses that legal reasoning for communal political processes in the settler colonies of North America did move from the model of "common assent" towards the function

of “political referendum” (Komaromi,2012, ss.753-764). Given the evolutionary nature of constitutions per se, it is noteworthy to remember that the US constitution gradually developed during historical events during the post-independence war period. That period itself, as reflected within the famous “federalist papers”, was characterised by foreign policy concerns towards Spain and France. (Schofield,2002, ss.1-20) Risjord stresses the continuing influence of Virginia and Virginia federalists onto constitutional developments, casting their vote for more constitutional balances while strengthening the Bill of Rights (Risjord,1967, ss. 486-517). Whether a constitution itself poses a real “contract” à la Rousseau’s *contrat social* remains debatable; as known, different positions regarding the political role and powers of actors as the president did form an important part of this debate. (Hardin,1989, ss.100-120) From a purely formal viewpoint, the US Congress as well as the President of the United States are the two most powerful institutions in shaping US foreign policy. The term “concurrent power” has been used to describe the complex relation of power between the President and Congress. (Harlow,1943, ss. 604).

As stated in the Declaration of Independence, the young American nation defined itself in the frame of the ideas of enlightenment and basic human rights as a community of free men struggling against despotism and tyranny. (Hamilton, Madison and Jay,1788/2000, ss.419) It is of interest to note, that the reference to the rights of a free man is derived from the influential “Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England” which is not coincidental, as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were quite familiar with the canonical tomes. (Jayne,1998, ss.117) In this context, it is apparent that the legislative and executive powers were sought to be defined in such a way that no natural person or legal entity/institution would extend too much influence. Therefore, the role of the president was sought to be well balanced, powerful enough to lead the republic, but not to omnipotent to guarantee a fair distribution of power in a constitutional way. Given the conflict between the former thirteen American Colonies and the British Crown over a wide array of subjects, ranging from parliamentary representation to taxation and the limits of governmental power, this careful balancing seems quite logical from a viewpoint of political history. (Harlow,1943:145). Nevertheless, the founding fathers had to find an appropriate way to balance the distribution of powers between President and Congress.

The Federalists and Their Role in the Discussion of Presidential Power

It must be stated that the founding thirteen colonies originally also had to define the nature of relations between federal and state power to which the “Federalist Papers” provide an impressive historical testament. (Allen and Cloonan, 2004, s.150) Given the great prestige bequeathed upon the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, George Washington, who would be elected as the first president of the United States in 1789, the problem of a charismatic leader to be bound by the law

had to be solved. George Washington himself did always insist on the supremacy of law but was also a focal point to define the young nation's identity. (Hoffmann,2010, s.31) Within that scope, domestic political power could be transferred power regarding foreign affairs and vice versa. This naturally would also reflect on the head of states' role in foreign relations. Within that scope, issues as the control over the armed forces, the relationship with other nations and the legal background of declaration of war were matters of such gravity that they were delegated to state legislatures in the Articles of Confederation. (Articles VI, VII, VIII, IX) (Jensen, 1937, ss. 120-142). Jensen concludes that those articles did remain a legal body and attempts to interpret those according to "nationalist" lines were thwarted. Yet, in the end the Constitution of the United States, under the influence of the more conservative federalists was adopted as a much more legalistic and conservative document. State legislatures therefore had to decide commonly over the issues, whereas the "federalists" and "anti-federalists" had to find a way to find common ground.(Allen and Cloonan, 2004, s.293) Article IX did lay the legislative powers into the hands of Congress, but as decisions were based on a consensus of state legislatures the efficiency of governance was not guaranteed and imminent decisions were postponed often. The federalist papers which pledged for stronger institutions and defined powers which would be able to act quickly on behalf of the people were based on this discussion, being basically a debate on the yet to be adopted constitution. (Peacock, 2010, s.56) The hate on despotism or "tyranny" (a clear reference to the British Crown) which lead to the American Revolution itself was considered carefully in the federalist papers. Referring to their knowledge of the classics, the authors carefully did compare the history of the late Roman Republic with contemporary politic developments and sought to model their constitutional proposals accordingly. Maybe most important, the founding fathers were well were aware of the potentially corrupting effects of power towards statesmen in the Roman republic and accordingly would craft the role of the head of state -also regarding the powers concerning foreign policy. (Burns, 1954, ss. 142-168) Within that scope, the authors tried to convince the audience that a closer union with more defined institutions (like the presidency) would not necessarily lead to tyranny. Therefore, the delicate matter of the separation of powers had to be well balanced and the office holders themselves would have to be show responsibility. (Allen and Cloonan, 2004, s.247) It should be stated that the principles of the authors which paved the way towards a constitutional contract are fully reflected in the Constitution itself and therefore still bear significance from a present perspective. Writing the federalist papers under the pseudonym of the legendary and imaginary Roman Republican hero Publius, the founding fathers, most strikingly Hamilton (besides Jay and Madison), rejected populist tendencies and the rise of a possible "people's tribune". This does not mean, that they did not endorse the principle of an "elitist, enlightened" leader. (Adair, 1955, ss.282-297)

Within that scope, Hamilton's view regarding the dangers of despotism on one side and on the other hand the more imminent danger of aggressive particularism is worth to be quoted: "On the other hand, it will be equally forgotten that the vigour of government is essential to the security of liberty; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well-informed judgement, their interests can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of the government." (Hamilton; Madison; Jay, 1788/2008, s. 13) As can be seen clearly in other statements in the federalist papers and in the constitution itself it was tried to balance powers between the institutions without hindering each other.

As stated in Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution, Congress has the right to declare war, and raise an army while the President of the United States according to Article 2, section two is the Commander-in chief of the Armed Forces and has the power to make treaties, but only if Senate approves this with a 2/3 majority. (United States Senate, U.S. Constitution. Art. I, § 8)/ (United States Senate, U.S. Constitution. Art. II, § 2) Here, the unique system of checks and balance that intends the institutions to control each other and was specifically created to prevent dictatorial powers comes into action. Especially the power of Congress regarding the declaration of war is one of the articles that practically changed its face and importance in the flow of time.

The Factor of Foreign Policy, The State of Emergency and Extraordinary War Powers

Esasında Hamilton provides the definition of presidential power that was current at the end of the eighteenth century: The militia factor which nowadays has no importance was essential as the president would have only the control over militia forces as by legislative provision called into duty. Even more important is his next statement: While the president is defined as supreme commander and director of the armed forces who are actually active on the theatre of war, only Congress would have the power to draft troops and declare war, as stated by Hamilton in No. 69 of the Federalist Papers .(Hamilton et al., 1788/2003, s. 388) Here it is clearly stated that the impact that historical, political and geostrategic changes imposed upon the executive and legislative institutions: In the end of the 18th century up to the first quarter of the 19th century the United States was rather in a defensive position compared with the great powers. (France, Britain, Spain et al.) A good example for the vulnerability of the young nation is the War of 1801-1805 between the United States and the Bey of Tunis where the U.S. did launch an amphibian intervention conducted by the US Marine Corps with the intention of protecting its interests and own commercial fleet (Brown,1976:273-290). International "common law" and customs were organized in such a way that war between states was opened by a declaration of war, which in the case of the U.S. clearly was in the hands of Congress. After a declaration of war it would take some time to draft and concentrate the troops to deploy them

to the battlefield.

That situation changed from the end of the 19th century, when means of transport and technology to deploy troops as far as overseas developed with an increasing speed reaching its climax in our days, as U.S. global military power is based on the ability to deploy its armed forces nearly everywhere in the world in a relatively short time backed by military bases, navy and aircraft carriers. Furthermore, strategic definitions ranging from “small wars” (local interventions) towards large scale military conflict changed the US Joint Chief of Staff’s perception of military action. (Cox,1996, s.24) That also did mean that the self-definition of the American role in world politics has changed dramatically. When it is assumed that the geopolitical situation of the United States in the eve of the 19th century it seems clear that congressional power to declare war or to levy troops was much more important than nowadays. Surrounded by hostile neighbours like Spain and the U.K. as well as hostile Indian tribes the need for special powers in war time granted to the president seemed to be justified as foreign invasions like the war of 1812/13. In other words, the concept of the American soldier as such had to be contemplated (Herrera,2013, ss.42-57).

Congress itself was clearly a strong institution ready to challenge the presidents’ actions most prominent so in the in the field of foreign affairs. Linked with the increasing number of newspapers press influence and public opinion became a factor of growing importance in the relation between president and congress. Andrew Jackson was the first president to appeal directly to the public over the heads of Congress. Lobby groups represented in and outside of congress where a factor that developed to check or influence public opinion. (Nerone, 2011, ss.743-759) In contrast to those gradual developments, the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, conceding with the outbreak of the American Civil war of 1861-1865, resulted with a dramatic increase of presidential powers especially in the domestical sector. As the Union was torn apart by separatist ambitions of the Southern States, Lincoln on one hand did not ask Congress for a declaration of war as it was defined as a rebellion, on the other hand he used wartime powers granted to the president in an extensive way in order to regain territorial integrity From a legalistic perspective, Lincoln is the first president to have stressed the need of extraordinary authority towards Congress in wartime (Guelzo,2007, ss.42-49) . Although the war powers as imposed by Lincoln, including the de facto state of occupation and limited rights imposed over the former rebellious states by his successor Grant, may be defined as authoritarian, it has to be remembered remember that the state of emergency was given in all means. As war powers could (and can) be only granted by the Legislative represented through Congress they cannot be used arbitrary by the president without consultation which will dissolve the claims of total dictatorial power, Congress and judiciary continue to watch each of the president’s actions. Contemporary 19th century scholars as Dunning, writing about 20 years after the ending of the conflict, while rejection

the use of arbitrary power weighted the necessity of the state of emergency against personal rights from the background of political sovereignty versus the thwarted and denied right of secession (Dunning, 1886, ss. 163-198). In other words, civil rights could temporarily be denied in the face of a national emergency based on a doctrine of national sovereignty. As legal oversight was however preserved and ultimately restored, the overall definition “authoritarian “ will fit better as these special powers were and are limited to the time the actual threat continues.

Bureaucracy, Congress and President: Interplay and Conflict of Interests

Another important factor which limits the president's power is the state bureaucracy. While the president has the power to appoint his own team to leading positions it is extremely difficult to change the mechanism of a well-established bureaucratic institution in a way that is not common or approved by itself. While the president has the authority to delegate his supporters and leading officials to decisive positions, reserving the right to terminate appointments of government employees deemed as undesirable two fundamental obstacles remain. As seen during the second Trump administration, judicial review of personal decisions de facto limits a president's position of power over the state bureaucracy in the US (Free, 2026, ss. 186-102). Furthermore, deep personal cuts or changes do influence the operational capacity of government institutions, a fact that on the long term is unfortunate for an administration.

Besides bureaucracy as such, the composition of the House of Representatives and Senate are a key factor that influences foreign policy. If seats are occupied by the opposition the president may have a hard stand in order to realize his own goals, for example the approval of military or financial aid to a foreign nation. Senate committees that are active in the fields of national defence and foreign policy may act more independently and controversial to the president's policy than may be expected even if the committee's chairman is appointed from his own fraction. (Tower, 1981, ss. 229-246). Furthermore, the change of international politics and strategy also does affect the form in which policy or even military actions are about to be executed. A military action had not necessarily to be linked with a formal declaration of war and over time became the common way of U.S. military action. This seems to limit Congressional power and boost the president's position but in fact an unpopular military action will rise opposition in Congress and in the public as well, challenging the president's stand. Hitherto, any president will usually try to gain public support via the media as well as trying to convince Congress if a military action is planned.

The War Powers Act of 1974 clearly increased the influence of Congress, forcing the president to ask for formal approval by Congress within 60 days of military action. Congress in case of disapproval has the power to cut the financial sources for the aforesaid action that also has to be reported to congress within 48 hours of conclusion. It basically does not limit the president's role

per se, but forces the definition whether a military action by US forces is counted as war or not withing constitutional limits. President Carter in 1974 explicitly asserted Congress' right to define war operationally and was paradoxically able to enhance presidential leverage as the ambiguity between war and military action was lifted, shifting that responsibility towards Congress. In other words, Congress is given a clear definition of the nature of the military action while the President is forced to justify any action undertaken by the respective presidential administration (Carter,1984, ss.101-134). It is noteworthy that the conflict between Iran and the US during the Trump administration led for the first time in history to a concurrent resolution by both chambers (House and Senate) of Congress invoking said Act to end hostilities with Iran (Reuters, 2026). Despite the constitutional uncertainty and the likelihood of the Act to maintain a rather symbolic role as the president may still reign in his veto, the dynamic role of constitutional processes remains a visible factor in the field of US foreign policy.

Given the diverging states of power development between Congress and the president, it seems to be logical that both parties have a shared interest in developing a constructive atmosphere of dialogue and mutual trust in order to reach effective outcomes. Hamilton and Tama are agreeing that an effective consultation process between Congress and President is the best way in ensuring the desired outcome in foreign policy. (Hamilton & Tama,2002, ss. 72) Summarized, the relative institutional inertia of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus limits radical presidential change and action in foreign policy contributing towards Congressional control and the preservation of constitutional checks and balances in foreign affairs.

A De Facto Expansion of Presidential Power

It may be concluded that while Congress and Senate did largely preserve their constitutional role in terms of power and political control, the office of the President of the United States did indeed accelerate its power together with the need to react to geopolitical events within the growing influence of the US on the world stage. Indeed, the Constitution did envision an ideal, not a real-world formula for presidential powers that had to adapt over the course of history. According to Marshall, the presidential access to information, the expansion of the branch of the federal executive as well as the presidential office's prestige and his relationship with the media are to be counted among factors of interior politics that influenced the increase of presidential power in foreign affairs. (Marshall, 2008, ss.5095-522). Peterson mentions that the constitution accedes relatively limited power to the presidential office in terms of foreign affairs with mirroring the presidential role in interior politics. Yet, facing external security challenges since the founding of the US, stretching towards the Cold War and post-Cold War era, executive power was de-facto need to react quickly to a changing scope

of foreign affairs. On the other hand, Peterson also stresses the factor of popularity and the increase and decrease of the role of the president as commander in chief. Pointing that a popular “war president” as during World War II would enjoy popular support and less challenge in his deployment of military forces, that role might diminish with more unpopular military expeditions as during the Vietnam War. (Peterson, 1994, ss.215-234). Basically, due to his ability to react more quickly and formulate aims of foreign policy and reactions to external security threats, the US president enjoys a more dominant role in foreign affairs compared to Senate and the House of Representatives. Gartner does add the assumption that the role of the President as commander in chief with the ability to deploy troops overseas and his ability to conduct agreements with foreign powers did add to the expansion of presidential power. Within that scope, the evolution of a grand strategy foreign policy added to the need of granting the federal executive more power to conduct that policy, resulting in foreign policy as being shaped by the US president with a greater intensity level. (Gartner, 2011, ss.499-534). In conclusion, it might be said that the US constitution envisions President and Congress to cooperate while pursuing different approaches among constitutional lines is still not impossible. John Choon Yoo firmly underlines that Congress has de facto lesser power over foreign affairs in comparison to the President and is to be seen more as a controlling than an executive institution. He also stresses that war time executive power asserts much more power over military and foreign affairs for the president, even descending into domestic affairs, as shown on the example of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. However, it is also mentioned that the strong executive role for the presidency in foreign affairs is much more balanced in interior politics, where the checks and balances of Congress and the Courts provide an excellent balanced model for cooperation. (Yoo, 2018, ss.205-272). As a more current example of the use of the presidential office’s decision over military affairs, the second Trump administration’s confrontative stance towards Congress in deploying and withdrawing US troops to and from foreign soil is debated with an emphasis towards presidential constitutional backed authority. In general, post 9/11 2001 military driven and security conscious U.S. foreign policy gave US presidents the possibility to rely on a much broader interpretation of executive authority in military operations, thereby reinforcing the trend of executive dominance in foreign affairs (Meiers, 2010, ss.149-186). Furthermore, John C. Yoo asserts that the responsibility for military operations is more likely to be taken by the president himself than by Congress due to the more cautious debate based political culture. In summary, the US constitution did vest the president with vast executive powers regarding military operations, while a continuous balancing and testing of initiative between President and Congress takes place according to the needs of realpolitik geopolitical developments as well as public opinion. In other words, the interaction of constitutional rules and political realities creates a system in which presidential leadership is both empowered and constrained.

Historical Examples – The Public Opinion Factor

The federalists and mainly Hamilton were clearly striving to prevent presidential power in the fields of domestic and foreign policy to reach levels of contemporary European princes or an elected dictator as in the case of the Roman Republic. Hereby the constitutional check and balance mechanisms were to be developed in harmony without preventing the United States of pursuing its geostrategic interests in relation to foreign states. Historical examples of charismatic presidents who expanded their influence in foreign affairs help illustrate how public and domestic political support can strengthen presidential leverage while remaining constrained by constitutional limits. President Lincoln's emergency powers have already been mentioned, yet those were naturally directed closely to domestic policy in employing military might to preserve the Union as such. Lincoln may have enhanced his authority but did operate largely within constitutional boundaries, furthermore his foreign policy strategy was also largely shaped by his Secretary of State, Seward. Both politicians masterfully were able to minimize foreign intervention in balancing the rivalry between France and Britain. (Fry, 2019, s.113) Yet, Lincoln's greatest legacy, the declaration of emancipation freeing American slaves and declaring them citizens did not only bolster his domestic position in the Northern States but also made his appeal onto the public opinion in Europe more powerful. Thus, the Lincoln administration coupled with Seward's diplomatic balancing did transform President Lincoln's domestic popularity into a tool of foreign policy that gained the hearts of foreign liberal audiences opposed to the institution of slavery. Therefore, a correlation of domestic popular support had translated into foreign policy leverage- supported by the American public but also the public opinion abroad, securing the geostrategic security of the US against foreign intervention. (Crichlow, 2005, ss. 411-423)

Another popular president who was able to rally the American public behind his ambitious foreign policy was Theodore Roosevelt. Establishing the US firmly among the contemporary Great Powers of the early 20th century, Roosevelt's interventionist foreign policy aimed at securing the US geopolitical dominance in the Pacific and the Americas. Roosevelt believed in manifest destiny and its historical role in leading the American nation towards its rightful place among the world powers. However, he was always keen to gain not only approval of the political elite, but also of the American public. (Thompson, 2019, s.29). Roosevelt in general, being very conscious about his image in American politics, strove to use his successes in the international arena to bolster his role in domestic policy. Thompson demonstrates that Roosevelt was critical of the constitutional limitations towards his room for manoeuvres on the international stage and sought to counterbalance Congress in masterfully playing public opinion to his own advantage. (Thompson, 2015, ss. 571-590) The change of isolationist foreign policy based on the Monroe doctrine under Theodore Roosevelt linked with a missionary doctrine of securing democracy and freedom along the lines of "Manifest Destiny" while

securing American strategical and economic interests on a global scale would deeply influence perceptions of US foreign policy (Ricard, 2006, ss. 17-25).

The huge domestic and international popularity of President John F. Kennedy was directly transformed into his administration's leverage over foreign policy. Seeking to counter the appeal of communism towards newly independent Third World countries, JFK's soft power tools as US aid, the Peace Corps and other initiatives helped to transform Kennedy's administration's domestic policy power towards more initiative on the international stage. His hardwired and non-compromising stand during the Cuban Missile Crisis was unexpected and his deescalation following the crisis was likely owed to his wish not to decelerate his informal power- support in the press and the general electorate. (Holsti, 2004, s. 58) In Kennedy's handling of the Cuba Crisis we have an interesting example of a reverse effect of foreign policy decisions transforming into the boost of domestic policy strength. In the case of the Berlin Crisis of 1961, President Kennedy again demonstrated strength towards the Soviets to uphold the image of American containment policy, demonstrating Washington's determination to hold its ground. (Schild, 1998, ss. 91-131). This may serve as another example for the John F. Kennedy administration's use of domestic policy support by the American public to bolster his strength and justify the risk of military escalation towards House and Senate.

Conclusion

In conclusion we may ascertain that it is a fact that the president *de facto* has gained more executive power than suggested nearly 250 years before by the founding fathers. This growth of *de facto* executive power in the field of foreign policy closely correlated with the growth of American geopolitical engagement. Therefore, the office of the US president and his administrative role evolved as from "primus inter pares" among his peers and commander in chief who defended just his nation's own borders to the person controlling a gigantic military force all over the world. Considering the factors of check and balance by institutions as Senate, House of Representatives and Supreme Court, the power of the president is *de jure* limited to a shared institutional process. *De facto*, however, the president with changing geopolitical developments, ranging from the US Civil War to the post 2001 period, was able to enhance his control over the use of military power. The president is, however, due to constitutional law, not to be defined as an omnipotent actor in the fields of defence and foreign policy. Whatever his foreign policy attitude may be, he is bound to compromise with Congress. Furthermore, public opinion is an ever more determinative factor regarding foreign policy decisions, especially if combative troop deployments are involved. A popular US president is far more likely to decide towards a more confrontative foreign policy approach while Congress with its bipartisan and party-based decision mechanism will usually try to assert control over said decisions without being

much willing to assume long term responsibility. Yet the US constitutions with its checks and balances will never grant the president full control on the long term. To duly ensure that the president may fully endorse his own vision of foreign policy, each of the relevant constitutional institutions must be carefully balanced against each other while striving to get tacit approval or even support. Yet, domestic policy as well as informal factors as public opinion and the resulting stance of the media deeply affect the president's standing and effective leverage over foreign policy. A president whose actions fit in the interests of big economical players, willing and able to gain media support, influence the public in underlining national security interests will increase political leverage for proactive operations in foreign and military affairs due to higher popularity. Within that scope, given he has an even slight but loyal majority in Senate and the House of Representatives he is largely empowered to go on with his strategy, but never without being under constant control of constitutional institutions. However, a swing in his popularity and then loss of public and media support will inevitably result in public pressure if foreign policy actions are evaluated as too costly in terms of military, financial and political costs. Despite all his powers a U.S. president's foreign and security policy is too much controlled by Constitutional and non-constitutional factors to describe him as a more authoritarian yet constitutional based figure a la de Gaulle (France) or Kekkonen (Finland). High public approval as seen during the terms of Theodore Roosevelt or John F. Kennedy continues to be a deal breaker for any US president and ensures that besides Congress and the Courts the American public takes an active role, not unlike the "acclamatio" (acclamation) in the ancient Roman Republic. It may be concluded that the US president is able to gain more options in foreign policy if he is able to enhance his constitutionally controlled powers coupled with popular support on the domestic policy front. Congress will take its stance according to the divergent domestic agendas and weight it against popular opinion as well. In conclusion, the US president will have to move closely according to the constitutional framework but also shifting public opinion if a long term foreign policy strategy is envisioned.

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