

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

As the paper reaches its conclusion, the author recalls the goal of the paper to answer the question “How does Donald Trump's idiosyncratic factors influence US foreign policy towards the Trade War with China?” Based on the analysis that has been performed in Chapter 2 and 3 under Hermann’s conceptual framework on Leadership Traits Analysis and Preston’s Typology of Leadership Styles, it was found that Trump had adapted beliefs in which he perceives the world as underdeveloped and economically stuck, where he was taught to outperform others in order to succeed. This in turn shaped his motives to have a competitive mentality, in which he constantly views the world as a competition where he has to win on any given occasion. As he develops his view of the world as a businessman, he establishes that most of his relationships are deemed transactional and any interactions that require him to contribute an effort will also need to reap a result where he could receive the bigger advantage or benefits. Therefore, this created a superiority in his decision-making style, where he often disregards advice from his advisors and relies on his personal judgment to make decisions that are profit-oriented towards his interests. Donald Trump’s decision style is also heavily influenced by his dominant interpersonal style that views other parties with opposing interests as a threat. Additionally, he also views his political opponents as inferior to him, a lesson he had learned from his father in his early career. As a result, Donald Trump’s idiosyncrasy factors have reflected greatly towards his ‘America First’ foreign policy; an orientation towards an

inward-looking United States that avoids international intervention, in which he does not hesitate to challenge counter parties who possess different interests and perspectives towards international trade.

Through Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis, Donald Trump's idiosyncratic factors are further explored by his ability to control events, his need for power, his conceptual complexity and self confidence, and his motivational factors. Although the paper has thoroughly described how Donald Trump's idiosyncrasy factors affect his leadership as a president, in this part of the study, Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis specifically exhibits how Trump's idiosyncrasy influenced the outbreak of the Trade War with China from 2018 to 2020. During his presidential campaigns, Trump has openly stated that he will assert China as a threat for being a currency manipulator and promised to restore jobs to Americans by decreasing China's influence on US' international trade relations. In reality, Trump had published this statement to provide a populist narrative to blue-collared workers who occupied the majority of his potential votes. He exhibited the trait of challenging constraints towards China because he was more determined to win the elections rather than taking the role of president. Furthermore, his businessman mindset had put his focus mainly to reduce the trade deficit between the US and China, hence becoming the main drive of him initiating the Trade War. He disregarded the negative implications of the Trade War towards the rest of the world because he lacked openness towards information, especially in foreign policy.

Furthermore, Trump's high level of self-confidence contributes to his principled and closed mindset, which resulted in his tendency to involve his idiosyncrasy towards policy-making compared to relying on substantial data and advices from his administration. Lastly, his trait for ingroup bias and a general distrust for others explains how Trump prefers to confront China in a coercive manner and perceives China as an 'evil' adversary. It is also often found that Trump uses China as a scapegoat for his impulsive decisions in adding more tariffs during the Trade War, stating that China was not up for negotiation when in reality Trump just wants to have the upper hand in this dispute.

In the last conceptual framework, the paper concludes Trump's idiosyncrasy factors that influenced the Trade War against China by using Preston's Typology of Leadership Styles. Using Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis as a reference, Trump's leadership style was set to be defined as a Director-Maverick. Trump's leadership style displays a centralized decision-making that prefers direct control and involvement throughout the policy process. In addition, Trump advocates his own policy views, frame issues, and set specific policy guidelines towards the trade war against China; although heavily relying on his own policy judgments, with little to no substantial debate and analysis towards US' role in international trade. He prefers to obtain a zero-sum game in the tariff war against China, where he could gain the most advantage and having the most control. Hence, when Trump established the Phase One Deal in 2020, Trump demanded that China pay an additional \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods to compensate for the loss that China have 'caused' due to unfair

trade practices. Subsequently, Trump also displays a low need for information and limited personal interest in foreign policy, where he mainly avoids collecting a general range of information and drives his policies by his idiosyncratic views and principles. This also explains his ulterior motives to prove that he was able to overcome trade tensions against China during his presidency due to his competitive mentality, but undermining the negative consequences that the US has to endure in years to come.

During the course of this study, several findings emerged that were not thoroughly discussed by the researcher but could be explored by future researchers. Firstly, the exploration on the topic of Trump's belief in racial superiority and its potential correlations with the trade war that occurred during the same period could also be delved into further. This aspect raises important questions that warrant further examination. Secondly, it was observed that Donald Trump, as a presidential figure, adopted a distinct one-on-one diplomatic style when interacting privately with other actors who he most deemed as a threat, for example China, South Korea, and Russia. This aspect could be further investigated to examine these preferences and determine whether they had any influence on the trade war between the United States and China. Thirdly, a detailed analysis of the implications of the trade war on international trade and the specific idiosyncratic factors introduced by Trump that could impact subsequent administrations is an interesting aspect that has not been discussed. This research focuses on studying idiosyncratic factors, which are analyzed at the individual level. It contributes to understanding the decision-making process and foreign

policy actions. Therefore, this study titled "Donald Trump's Idiosyncratic Factors in Initiating Trade War against China" will provide new insights for researchers in the field of international relations.

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