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# The Anti-Analytic Presidency Revisited

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**Abstract:** In his first months as president, Donald Trump has demonstrated an unprecedented aversion to expert-oriented decision making. This essay examines how Trump’s presidency exposes tensions in what Skowronek and Orren (2016) refer to as the “policy state”, especially within institutions that produce expert analyses of presidential action. While an absence of policy expertise has hampered Trump’s agenda, his administration has also taken steps to discredit unfavorable analyses, subvert rules requiring the use of objective analysis, and construct new institutions to promote ‘alternative facts’. By deepening public division and distrust, such activities may restructure the political environment in which the Trump presidency itself is judged.

## Introduction

“We must think big and dream bigger.”  
Donald Trump (2017b)

“I do get worried that the average American doesn’t know what to believe anymore.”  
Keith Hall, quoted in Ryssdal (2017)

Donald Trump’s business career began in 1971 with an inheritance: a real-estate firm founded by his grandmother in 1923. As a President, Trump is also an heir. He has inherited, among other things, a robust executive branch, a mature welfare state, a divided electorate, and a dysfunctional Congress. Yet Trump’s ability to accomplish his agenda hinges on more than his own management of this bequest. It also depends on how a broader network of institutions evaluates his policy ideas.

As Skowronek and Orren (2016) suggest, contemporary politics plays out in a “policy state,” a thickly institutionalized world dominated by the idea that government can and should solve problems, empowered by a prodigious set of legislative and bureaucratic institutions. A central characteristic of the policy

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state is that interest groups, politicians, and bureaucrats alike increasingly legitimate themselves not with appeals to constitutionality or ideals of “rightness” but by standards of “performance,” as defined by competing cadres of policy experts (O’Connor 2001; Cairney 2016). This is the long legacy of what Moynihan (1965) once referred to as the “professionalization of reform.” Evaluations of presidential performance rely on monthly jobs reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Jencks 1987). Legislative proposals must endure scrutiny from economic models predicting their effects on budget deficits and economic growth (Joyce 2011). In the courts, the “law and economics” approach to jurisprudence emphasizes evaluative standards from microeconomic theory (Teles 2008). Cost-benefit analysis and the statistical valuation of human life are commonplace inside bureaucratic agencies (Sunstein 2014). In this context, policy victories are, unsurprisingly, harder to claim. Contemporary progressives face difficulties defending the effectiveness of federal programs against an onslaught of ‘performance’ initiatives (Moynihan 2008). Simultaneously, conservatives find themselves at pains to justify their opposition to those programs in ‘policy rational’ terms (Skowronek 2009).

It warrants attention, then, that Donald Trump has demonstrated an almost singular allergy to such modes of justification. During the presidential campaign, Trump and his surrogates disputed the results of multiple independent analyses suggesting that his tax plan would largely benefit corporations and high-income Americans while reducing revenue by \$6.2 trillion, but failed to provide any evidence to support their claims (Calmes 2016). Nineteen times during the campaign, and again without evidence, Trump said that unemployment figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics were “totally fiction” (Ingraham 2017). As he put it during one of his New Hampshire rallies, “Don’t believe those phony numbers when you hear 4.9 and 5 percent unemployment. The number’s probably 28, 29, as high as 35” (Colvin and Rugaber 2017). Even so, after the release of a positive February jobs report – just weeks after Trump took office – the President retweeted the *Drudge Report’s* headline “GREAT AGAIN.” Press secretary Sean Spicer suggested that while the numbers were “fake before”, they were “real now” (Ingraham 2017). By then, however, Spicer had developed a reputation for epistemic disputes with the media. In his first press conference, he excoriated journalists reporting on Trump’s inauguration, flatly lying about the crowd size at the event. Presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway defended Spicer’s lie by calling it an “alternative fact” in an interview with NBC’s *Meet the Press* (Davis and Rosenberg 2017). Within 4 days, Amazon.com sales of the book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had increased by 9,500 percent, a jump some journalists attributed to Conway’s interview (Neary 2017).

Trump's apparent disregard for evidence is more than rhetorical bluster. Rather, it exposes tensions in the policy state, especially within institutions that produce expert analyses of presidential action. In this essay, I examine how the policy state and the analysis it produces have collided with Trump's presidency. I begin by tracing how policy-analytic institutions have both shaped presidential agendas and led to the rise of what Williams (1998) calls the 'anti-analytic' presidency. Trump's abrasion with the policy state has led to significant legislative challenges during the first months of his administration. In response, the administration has taken steps to discredit experts and analyses that cast doubt on its agenda, subvert rules requiring the use of objective analysis, and construct new institutions to promote 'alternative facts.' By deepening public division and distrust, such activities may restructure the political environment in which the Trump presidency itself is judged.

## The Policy State and the President's Agenda

Expertise and policy analysis have been central to the development of the American state. The emergence of American social science is itself closely linked to Progressive Era projects of 'rationalizing' politics at the local, state, and national levels (Ross 1992). As schools of public administration developed, a growing cadre of experts, many of whom came to staff the executive branch, agitated for significant policy changes based on evidence and impartial analysis and ultimately for reforms that increased their own authority within the national state (Skowronek 1982). During the New Deal, economists played a critical role in restructuring employment policy (Weir 1992). The development of Cold War systems analysis redefined how government planned and budgeted both defense and domestic programs (Light 2005). The growing ranks of policy analysts, both within government and at private think tanks, have altered public and elite perceptions of anti-poverty efforts (O'Connor 2001). The result of this process is that politics is often dominated by technical arguments about 'means' rather than normative arguments about 'ends' (Banfield 1977; Stone 1988).

The Presidency is exemplary of this trend. Beginning in the Progressive Era, the White House slowly transformed from a relatively minor player in American politics into an "institutional presidency," buttressed by expert organizations such as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), and the National Security Council (NSC) – that aid in the planning and development of White House policy (Burke 2000; Hirschman and Berman 2014).

This institutional apparatus does not always allow presidents to easily accomplish their goals (Rudalevige 2002). While Franklin Roosevelt legitimated his

policy accomplishments by pointing to newly developed indicators of economic growth, sluggish Gross Domestic Product figures threatened the reputations of future presidents (Coyle 2014). Institutional conflict between the legislative and executive branches has also created a more competitive environment for the recommendations of White House experts. In response to Richard Nixon's impoundment of funds, Congress passed the Budget Act of 1974, enhancing its power over the budgetary process and creating the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) (Joyce 2011). Ideological conflict has also stimulated the growth of private policy research organizations. Beginning in the 1970s, an organized conservative movement financed the creation of think tanks like the Heritage Foundation in part as a reaction to what it viewed as an 'establishment' of liberal organizations like the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute (Rich 2004).

Compared to democracies like Germany or Denmark, where state institutions either mediate or coordinate the production of policy knowledge, public and private research organizations in the US compete with one another to shape the policy agenda (Campbell and Pedersen 2014). As a result, no *single* set of organizations plays a dominant role in the formulation of presidential policy ideas (Weir 1992). While the Heritage Foundation was a relative newcomer in the early years of the Reagan administration, its comprehensive plan for reforming all aspects of government gave it significant leverage in the executive branch (Rich 2004, pp. 53–55). When it comes to selecting presidential policy alternatives, the CBO plays an especially important role, since it routinely evaluates the effects of presidential budget proposals and estimates the costs of legislation that requires significant spending. The budget office's suggestion that only about 40 percent of the items in President Barack Obama's 2010 stimulus plan would lead to economic growth by the end of the fiscal year led to significant changes in the package (Joyce 2011). Analysis of costs can help to shape public opinion about legislation and may also trigger deficit-neutrality requirements within laws like the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go-Act of 2010, which requires budget sequestration for deficit-increasing legislation (Joyce 2011).

The rise of policy expertise has not led politicians to behave more rationally. Rather, especially as policy analysis became more precise, public problems revealed themselves as infinitely complex and ambiguous (Banfield 1977). Such ambiguity has allowed politicians to wield analysis to advance partial solutions that match their partisan or group identities (Jones 1976). This is what Hecht (1998) calls *techno-politics*, the pursuit of political ends through technical means. The policy state has been an engine of techno-politics. For example, congressional scrutiny of presidential budgets has elevated the status of nonpartisan budgetary analyses produced by the CBO. While the CBO remains a prisoner of Congress, it retains high visibility and a "capacity to embarrass and even destroy top-priority legislation of the president and Congress" (Williams 1998, p. 220). During the

Clinton administration's failed attempt at health reform, congressional Democrats lobbied CBO Director Robert Reischauer to adjust the assumptions of economic models of the legislation's effects on the deficit. In the end, Reischauer refused to alter the assumptions and the CBO report citing deficit increases of \$70 billion dollars over 5 years became a crucial weapon for the legislation's fiercest opponents (Johnson and Broder 1996).

Precisely because of CBO's unique reputation for nonpartisanship and expert analysis, presidents and legislative leaders alike have found ways of manipulating legislation to meet the office's demands. As Saldin (2015) notes, members of Congress and organized interest groups have developed the capacity the cost of their legislative proposals from the CBO, resulting in costly policy failures. Presidents may also manipulate assumptions about taxes and spending that CBO analyses are premised upon (Elmendorf 2015; Weisman 2015). There is no better example of this than the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, commonly referred to as the "Bush tax cuts" (Hacker and Pierson 2005). Members of the George W. Bush administration knew that the CBO was required to assume that existing taxing and spending legislation would remain in place, even if those provisions were unlikely to be enforced in practice. As such, the administration generated revenue 'on paper' by assuming the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) would remain in place as-is. Since the AMT is not indexed for inflation, the share of Americans that would be required to pay it was expected to dramatically expand in the years following the passage of the Bush tax cuts. This assumption, however politically impossible, was a deliberate act on the part of the administration to understate the negative effects of the tax cuts on revenue.

In sum, the accretion of federal programs, bureaucratic institutions, and private think tanks has bestowed on presidents a highly fragmented and competitive context for policy knowledge. Yet that hardly means that evidence *informs* political debates.<sup>1</sup> Inside the competitive marketplace of ideas, 'alternative facts' have thrived *avant la lettre* (Rich 2004). The increasing expert scrutiny of presidential proposals has also generated what Williams (1998, p. 148) refers to as the "anti-analytic presidency." This is a style of governance marked by severe retrenchment of the executive branch's analytical capacities. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration enacted major cuts in evaluation and R & D units. Within the OMB, this meant tighter political control and a search for "quick fixes" rather than evaluations of long-term policy solutions. In the 1990s, Congress eliminated

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<sup>1</sup> Consider the findings of a recent survey of experts on the US policymaking process: a majority (54 percent) of respondents said that cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis have "only a little" influence on congressional decision-making. Respondents with extensive experience in policymaking were the most likely to give this response (Patashnik and Peck 2016).

analytical units like the Office of Technology Assessment and made significant cuts to the budget of support agencies like the Congressional Research Service and the Government Accountability Office (Williams 1998). These developments have weakened the credibility of policy analysis in government and limited its impact across partisan lines (Campbell and Pedersen 2014, pp. 74–75). As we will see, such legacies have important implications for Donald Trump.

## The Anti-Analytic Presidency Versus Obamacare

Perhaps owing to conflict within the White House itself, the Trump administration has appeared to take not one but multiple approaches to the politics of policy analysis. On the one hand, Trump has eschewed the technical ‘politics of means’ and interest-group intermediation so common in the policy state. Additionally, given the internal fragmentation of the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives, he has not taken his cues exclusively from party leaders. Instead, he has relied on symbolic or emotive language to defend his proposals, tapping into a vein of existing economic and cultural resentment in the electorate. In his first address to a joint session of Congress, Trump posited a declensionist narrative of a withering middle class, a decaying infrastructure, weakening national security, and a rising tide of urban violence. His election, he argued, represented a “rebellion,” in which, “quiet voices became a loud chorus as thousands of citizens now, spoke out together from cities small and large, all across our country” demanding that “America must put its own citizens first” (Trump 2017a).

On policy, Trump’s rhetoric remained at this symbolic remove. Health reform was emblematic. The President called on Congress to “repeal and replace Obamacare...with reforms that expand choice, increase access, lower costs, and at the same time, provide better healthcare” (Trump 2017a). To do so, Trump cited several vague proposals released by his presidential campaign, which included measures to allow the interstate sale of health insurance, health savings accounts, and tax credits. Prior analyses of these proposals revealed they would result in 16 to 25 million Americans losing healthcare coverage (Saltzman and Eibner 2016; Thomas and Lucey 2017).

Yet the White House lacked the analytical capacity to translate these symbolic goals into viable policy. As of March, 2017, the administration had released its budget plan, but had not yet nominated 6 of 7 leadership positions at OMB. Similarly, while Trump had released an executive order on the US trade deficit, 3 of 4 leadership positions in the Office of the US Trade Representative remained empty (*National Journal* 2017). Trump did not name a chairman of the Council of

Economic Advisers until April of 2017 (Jamrisko 2017). Other White House organizations, such as the US Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Environmental Quality were still vacant at the time of this writing (Kang and Shear 2017; *National Journal* 2017).

Thus when it came time to translate his health-care promises into policy, Trump delegated the task to Congress. With House Republicans in the driver's seat, new political problems arose. In December of 2016, the CBO announced that it would not consider bare-bones insurance plans endorsed by congressional Republicans to count as coverage for the purpose of policy analysis (Kliff 2016). It soon became clear that CBO's analysis of virtually any Republican plan on the table would illustrate significant losses in insurance coverage and higher levels of out-of-pocket spending. After trying and failing to introduce a plan to delay the implementation of repeal for 2 years, Republicans pressed forward with drafting a replacement plan, the American Health Care Act, without availing themselves of hearings or CBO analysis (Alberta 2017).

When the budget office released a report showing that the legislation would result in a loss of insurance for 24 million Americans, Republican leadership attempted to discredit the findings. White House budget director Mick Mulvaney suggested that estimating the impact of the legislation was "not a good use of CBO's time" (Taylor 2017). Speaker Ryan argued that the coverage drops only reflected the fact that the Republican plan removed the ACA's individual mandate and that millions would simply now choose to forego coverage, "People are going to do what they want to do with their lives because we believe in individual freedom in this country" (Bump 2017). Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price simply ignored the CBO's findings when questioned about them: "I firmly believe that nobody will be worse off financially in the process that we're going through" (Woodward and Alonso-Zaldivar 2017). Other Trump surrogates suggested that the CBO was "corrupt" and its findings were misleading. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, for example, started a Twitter hashtag #abolishtheCBO (Lui 2017). Democrats eagerly defended the CBO as a "virtually unassailable" source of expertise on public policy, quoting copiously from its analysis of the repeal legislation in press interviews (Woodward and Alonso-Zaldivar 2017). Moderate Republicans in the so-called "Tuesday Group" also bristled at the CBO score and began to register their uncertainty on the vote not long after its release (*The Hill* 2017). Yet the House Freedom Caucus, whose members referred to the leadership's plan as "Obamacare Lite," proved to be the loudest opponents of Ryan's legislation. Their insistence on a more aggressive proposal to eliminate tax subsidies and consumer protections, combined with moderates' doubts, led House leaders to cancel a planned March 24 vote on the legislation (Alberta 2017).

In the ensuing weeks, however, House leaders reignited the AHCA by accommodating the Freedom Caucus's demands. The vehicle was a floor amendment sponsored by moderate Tom MacArthur (R-NJ) and the Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-NC) that allowed states to opt out of some of the ACA's most popular consumer protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions and essential health benefit requirements (Jost 2017). To move the bill to a vote, House leaders took several steps to limit the traceability of members' choices (Arnold 1990). Most importantly, they allowed the vote to take place prior to the release of an updated CBO analysis. After a narrow vote of 217-213 with 20 Republican defections, former CBO director Douglas Elmendorf criticized the move as violating congressional norms. "This is not a post-office naming bill," Elmendorf said, "[t]his is an overhaul of the US health care system, and to proceed to a vote without any serious estimates of what it will do to the country is unbelievable to me" (McCaskill 2017). His predecessor, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, disagreed, suggesting that it was sufficient for Republicans to take a vote when the base bill had already been scored. Speaker Ryan took Holtz-Eakin's line in interviews and his chief of staff tweeted links to each of the CBO's previous scores (Parks 2017). Consistent with its prior actions, the Trump administration also went further to discount the CBO's analysis. HHS Secretary Tom Price simply refused to acknowledge the results of the existing CBO score, suggesting that there would be no coverage losses as the result of cuts to Medicaid (Kiely et al. 2017). The day after the legislation passed, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders, told reporters: "I think I know the gospel pretty well. I would say the CBO is not the gospel. They have been wrong before. They can certainly be wrong again" ("White House Briefing as Senate Takes on House GOP Health Plan" 2017). Tom Price continued to take this position when, weeks after the vote, the CBO released a new analysis of the AHCA that included the MacArthur amendment (Sullivan 2017).

While the AHCA would ultimately face a tougher battle in the Senate, the House vote itself demonstrates that both the Trump administration and Republican leaders in Congress have shifted their approach to the politics of policy analysis. Rather than trying to design legislation to "game" the scoring process, they have taken advantage of ambiguities in the norms surrounding CBO scoring – allowing consequential votes to occur in the absence of a score and dismissing the validity of CBO analysis out of hand.

## The Presidency of Alternative Facts

If a lack of analytical capacity has led Trump to delegate policy details to Congress, the administration has also taken several steps to reorient the use of policy

knowledge within the executive branch. Scientific advisory boards made up of academic researchers that advise federal agencies have been a central target for the administration. In early May, the Environmental Protection Agency fired half of the members of an 18-person scientific advisory board that reviews the soundness of the agency's research methodology (Davenport 2017). A week later, the Department of the Interior announced that it would suspend the operations of 200 of its advisory panels (Eilperin and Dennis 2017).

Such moves reflect wider trends in the politicization of scientific advice in federal agencies. In March, for example, the House passed legislation requiring the EPA to replace academic scientists with more industry representatives on its boards (Henry 2017). Yet the Trump administration has done more than fire experts. Rather, it has used Executive Orders to alter the informational context in deliberations over public policy in three distinct ways (see Table 1). First, Trump has restricted federal agencies' use of existing policy analysis. Executive Order 13783, for example, directs the Environmental Protection Agency to ignore updated data on the "social cost of carbon" when scrutinizing regulations. Second, Trump has required executive agencies to conduct new policy analyses with the aim of justifying his administration's goals. This includes the publication of statistics on the terrorism-related crimes committed by foreign nationals, a major report on trade deficits, and the review of regulations that create burdens on taxpayers. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Trump has also created new organizations that are designed to produce policy analysis related to presidential priorities. This includes the creation of task forces on regulatory reform, crime prevention, and Opioid addiction.

It is not uncommon for contemporary presidents to create ad hoc bodies in response to widely acknowledged public problems (Zegart 2017). Yet in at least one case, Trump has seemingly created an electoral commission with the intention of spreading abjectly false information. During and after the 2016 election, Trump made numerous unfounded claims about massive voter fraud, even suggesting that fraud itself was the reason he lost the popular vote (Davis 2017). In early 2017, he thus proposed the creation of an Advisory Commission on Electoral Integrity. While it remained a low priority for the administration during its first 100 days, Trump signed the order creating the Commission two days after Trump fired FBI Director James Comey. As the Commission's vice chair, Trump appointed Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach (R). Like Trump, Kobach has long made claims about widespread illegal voting by noncitizens in the US, also without evidence. Kobach has also headed campaigns for tougher voter identification laws (Fessler 2017). The Commission, like the rhetoric that created it, may help to further polarize public perceptions of electoral integrity (Enten 2017). The creation of such organizations suggests that the phrase 'anti-analytical' does not

**Table 1:** Policy Analysis Provisions in Trump Executive Orders.

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Orders altering use of policy analysis by federal agencies
– E.O. 13766: Expedites environmental review of “high priority” infrastructure projects
– E.O. 13783: Prohibits agencies from using the “social cost of carbon” to monetize greenhouse gas emission reductions
Orders creating new units for policy advice or analysis
– E.O. 13776: Establishes a Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety
– E.O. 13777: Requires agencies to create Regulatory Reform Task Forces to identify regulations for repeal, replacement, or modification
– E.O. 13784: Establishes the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis
– E.O. 13790: Establishes an Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity
– E.O. 13797: Establishes Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy
– E.O. 13799: Establishes Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity
Orders requiring the production of new policy analyses
– E.O. 13771: Requires agencies to identify two regulations to be repealed for every regulation they publish; requires agencies to annually submit costs of all regulations to OMB
– E.O. 13780: Requires the Department of Homeland Security to report the number of foreign nationals in the United States who have been charged or convicted of terrorism-related offenses, the number of foreign nationals who have ‘radicalized’ after entry into the US; the number of “honor killings” in the US by foreign nationals; and other information
– E.O. 13786: Requires omnibus report on trade deficits by US Trade Representative
– E.O. 13788: Requires heads of all agencies to review implementation of and compliance with “Buy American” laws
– E.O. 13789: Directs Secretary of the Treasury to identify regulations that place an undue burden on taxpayers, add undue complexity to federal laws, and exceed the statutory authority of the Internal Revenue Service
– E.O. 13792: Requires review of national monument designations under the Antiquities Act
– E.O. 13791: Requires review of Department of Education regulations to ensure compliance with prohibitions on federal interference with state and local control over education
– E.O. 13796: Requires performance review of international trade agreements

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Source: author’s analysis of all Executive Orders from Jan 20 to May 11 listed on the University of California, Santa Barbara *American Presidency Project*, [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/executive\\_orders.php](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/executive_orders.php).

adequately capture the Trump administration’s relationship to policy knowledge. Rather than simply de-fanging analytical units in the executive branch, Trump has built new institutions to mirror his symbolic appeals to voters.

In the absence of such institutions to justify his actions, Trump’s symbolic plans may be frustrated by policy realities. When a leaked Department of Homeland Security report revealed that Trump’s plan to construct a border wall would have cost more than double what Trump proposed, the White House responded

slowly and ineffectively (Ainsley 2017). Less than a week later, Trump dropped his plan to include a proposal for a down payment on the wall in a “must pass” short-term spending measure (Baker and Steinhauer 2017). Even so, he signaled to supporters that cost-benefit analysis had not killed his plan, tweeting: “Don’t let the fake media tell you that I have changed my position on the WALL. It will get built and help stop drugs, human trafficking, etc” (Baker and Steinhauer 2017).

On the other hand, Trump stands to benefit from the public’s ambivalence about policy. Despite generating a dense array of statutes, analytical units, interest groups, and experts, the policy state has not created an informed electorate. As Achen and Bartels (2016) note: “election outcomes are mostly just erratic reflections of the current balance of partisan loyalties in a given electoral system” (16). Voters find it difficult to attribute responsibility for changes in their own material situation. Incumbents are punished (and sometimes rewarded) for *forces majeures*; voters’ knowledge of policy details is limited, as is their capacity to assign blame and credit for gains or losses that originate in policy change. Consider, then, the vague, one-page tax plan released by the White House in April. The plan aims to reduce the business tax rate by 15 percent, not only for corporations but also for companies that now pay taxes through the personal income tax code (Davis et al. 2017). Since the reduction would cut revenue by \$2 trillion over a decade, paying for it without raising taxes elsewhere would require growing the economy by a less-than-plausible 5 percent (Cole 2017). If the administration and its congressional supporters learn any lessons from the Bush tax cuts, they may be careful to craft legislation to quickly deliver visible economic benefits to middle-class voters (Hacker and Pierson 2005). As Bartels (2005) suggests, public awareness of upwardly redistributive tax reforms is low. Boundedly rational middle-income voters may be likely to support Trump’s plan, especially if they perceive their own tax burdens to be high.

## Conclusion

During his first 100 days in office, Donald Trump appears to have been the prisoner of the policy state. In several important cases, Trump’s agenda has been damaged by his lack of expertise, his inability to recruit policy savants, and the publication of negative analyses of his proposals. The administration has responded in an adversarial fashion, attempting to publicly discredit its critics and directing federal agencies to disregard expert analysis. Trump’s allies in Congress have subverted norms around the use of CBO reports prior to significant roll-call votes. Newly created White House commissions and task forces may well promote “alternative facts.” Even if such actions do not ultimately advance

Trump's agenda, they are almost certain to sew the kind of dissonance, discord, and doubt that have come to define his presidency.

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