

Sofia Eliodori

Trump's populism and the Twitter diplomacy

(doi: 10.53227/101945)

Rivista di Digital Politics (ISSN 2785-0072)

Fascicolo 2, maggio-agosto 2021

Ente di afferenza:

()

Copyright © by Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna. Tutti i diritti sono riservati.
Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it>

Licenza d'uso

Questo articolo è reso disponibile con licenza CC BY NC ND. Per altre informazioni si veda <https://www.rivisteweb.it/>

Sofia Eliodori

Trump's populism and the Twitter diplomacy

TRUMP'S POPULISM AND THE TWITTER DIPLOMACY

After the electoral defeat of Donald Trump in 2020, the «populist moment» in the West seems to have taken a break. It is now time to reflect upon the effects that this particular period has had – and will have – in the future of international politics and the possible decline of liberalism. This paper aims to start a conversation on this topic, beginning from the analysis of the legacy of Donald Trump in American foreign policy-making. In order to interpret the 45th President's foreign policy approach, a general framework – related to the characteristics of his specific kind of populism – will be adopted. The thesis is that the traits of Trump's populism are nativism, anti-globalism, and isolationism; those facets applied to American foreign policy influenced the perception of change of the international role of the United States, being no longer the hinge of the global liberal order. Above all, the focus of the theoretical investigation will be the connection between his foreign policy decisions and statements and his peculiar use of the so-called Twitter diplomacy. Based on this perspective, the paper underlines the functions that his «social routine» of digital political communication played in American foreign policy through the global spread of his political thinking. Indeed, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, declared that at the time he was in charge he used to print the President's tweets early in the morning to schedule his daily agenda of foreign policy and diplomacy. In doing this, President Trump was not only bypassing the traditional media, but he was also bypassing other governmental bodies and the State's bureaucracy. Hence, the digital revolution plays a crucial role in detecting the novelty of the effects that Donald Trump's foreign policy had on fostering the perception of a possible decline of the international liberal order and the West as we have known it so far.

KEYWORDS *Donald Trump, Foreign Policy, Twitter Diplomacy, Populism, Theoretical Framework.*

Since the very beginning of Donald Trump's presidency – and, also before his election, during the 2016 electoral campaign – not only in the Us but all over the vast field of political experts and scholars, there has been a clear and widespread feeling that, to move beyond a superficial judgment, his foreign policy had to be studied to be understood (Hafner-Burton *et al.* 2019). His rise to power came slightly unexpected, together with a global «populist momentum» which, apparently, seems to have come to an end with President

Sofia Eliodori, Università per Stranieri di Perugia - Piazza Braccio Fortebraccio, 4 - 06123, Perugia – email: sofia.eliodori@unistrapg.it, orcid: 0000-0002-0768-7832.

Trump's defeat by President Joe Biden. However, Trump's political end shall be considered with caution as well as talking about him in the past tense. During his presidency, Donald Trump built many «special relationships» with right-wing populist leaders (Balmer 2019), based on common political opinions and shared international interests. Those relations, the common political approach, a shared «populist» framework, denote the figure of Donald Trump as part of a larger global political trend that coincided with the affirmation and unprecedented electoral success of populisms (Moffitt 2016). The theoretical categorization of Trump behind the large – and debated – concept of populism, was neither easy nor fast and has not yet exhausted the necessity to deepen the knowledge about the various aspects of his politics (Lowndes 2017; Norris *et al.* 2019).

Donald Trump's foreign policy is undoubtedly a controversial topic, which has stimulated scholars all over the world, especially in detecting the elements of novelty and continuity in comparison to the past, trying to understand, for instance: whether his foreign policy has been a *unicum*; what were his purposes; if his rhetoric was harder than his praxis; if he fits some classical theories (Nau 2021; Kroenig 2017; Jervis 2018). This paper aims to frame theoretically the United States foreign policy exerted by Donald Trump during his presidency, inside the conceptualization of «populism». Starting from the ideational approach, which refers especially to the work of Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, the first section of the paper will assess the specific characteristics of Donald Trump's typology of populism, highlighting the problems of relating foreign policy and Twitter diplomacy to populism (Plagemann *et al.* 2020; Sachs 2018; Wojczewski 2019). The second section of the paper will draw the features of three sides that constitute the structure of a triangular theoretical framework (Fig. 1) of populism in foreign policy based on the case of Donald Trump. Those sides are: 1) the top/down edge, which relates to the opposition between the international and multilateral elites against the American people; 2) the inside/outside edge, which relates to the importance for populism of defining who constitutes – and who does not – «the people» to identify their interests, that must be secured and sponsored through foreign policy; 3) the edge of past/future, which refers to the expected direction of the policies and whether they mean to build or deconstruct the existent. Those sides constitute an equilateral triangle (Fig. 1), the theoretical framework's plastic representation of Donald Trump's populist foreign policy. We conclude by seeking to assess the problem of the impact of Donald Trump's populist foreign policy on the «West».

1. Donald Trump's populism

The first necessary premise to this work is to explain why by saying «Donald Trump's foreign policy» we somehow identify the United States' foreign policy with the figure of the presidential power itself. The formulation of this problem is no obvious premise because, even if most literature recognizes the primacy of the President – who is Commander in Chief and Chief Diplomat – in determining and shaping the Us foreign policy, there are different interpretations (Hook *et al.* 2013). Those interpretations are especially about which are the dominant internal actors besides the President and whether his/her powers are enough to define the State's foreign policy (Wittkopf 1990). The perspective of this work is to accept that the presidential power has structural and political limits that come from the internal dimension of the State – for instance, from the role of the Congress – but also to underline the capability of a President: to orientate the goals of the American foreign policy; to interpret the interests of the United States through his/her understanding of the political reality and international relations; to choose the strategies to pursue these goals; to narrate those goals, interests, and strategies to other players and to the public (Wittkopf *et al.* 2005; Preston *et al.* 2004; Foyle 1999). Therefore, this perspective accepts the idea that the so-called presidential doctrines are a determinant factor in understanding the United States' foreign policy-making (Peterson 1994), although the presentation of a general doctrine of Donald Trump's foreign policy would fall out of the scope of this paper. This latest element of the possibility of interpreting and framing Donald Trump's foreign policy into a doctrine of his own, is a path already taken by some literature (Dueck 2019; Friedman *et al.* 2017; Renshon *et al.* 2021), whose objectives are to create logical and rational connections, design a theoretical texture, and make sense of policies and statements.

On the contrary, the operational attempt of this paper is to fit Donald Trump's foreign policy into an already existing theoretical framework, using the concepts that are useful to interpret foreign policy and possibly enlarging them to provide a better understanding of it. This work is focused on the theoretical analyses, while recognizing the necessity of further empirical research and evidences. The drive of this theoretical attempt is a perceived lack of understanding of Donald Trump's foreign policy in the current literature, even if this literature became vast in content and approaches in a short time. A general trend in the literature focused on Donald Trump's foreign policy, is trying to define its characteristics and trying to determine if it was more influenced by a legacy from previous doctrines and approaches or whether the elements of novelty played a significant role in shaping it. Besides those differences of in-

terpretation, there seems to be a general common opinion that the presidency of Donald Trump had a relevant impact on international politics, not only in terms of concrete policies adopted (for instance, the withdrawal from the Jcpoa and the Paris agreement on climate change) but especially in terms of a political rhetoric framework, a framework which, in this paper, is identified with the conceptualization of populism. The hypothesis behind the proposed conceptualization in this work is related to the theoretical framework of a specific kind of populism, namely the radical right exclusionary populism; there we find sufficient and adequate coordinates to interpret and understand Donald Trump's foreign policy. The theoretical framework assesses the necessity to build a structure, which connects statements, policies, objectives, and strategies of Donald Trump's foreign policy to intertwined political concepts within populism, explaining their logic and meaning. Therefore, starting from an ideational approach (Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.* 2017), this paper aims to build a theoretical framework that works like a map, a light structure that describes Donald Trump's foreign policy framing it into a broader concept – populism – which integrates other sub-concepts that are useful to explain the different parts that compose it.

The second necessary premise is related to the relevance of the topic proposed: why is it important to frame Donald Trump's foreign policy theoretically? After his one-term presidency, it is possible to answer this question with an ex-post perspective, observing his legacy in international politics and the redefinition of American foreign policy given by the new democratic administration and President Joe Biden. The satisfaction and commitment of the allies are some of the «litmus tests» for a hegemonic superpower that relays its power not only on a «hard» interpretation of it – economic and military power –, but also on the ability to persuade and engage others in pursuing shared common interests and goals. During and after Donald Trump's presidency, the dissatisfaction of the Western European allies became an essential factor in determining the reach of the lowest point of the relations with the Us. Many European leaders and policymakers recognized that – using the words of Josep Borrell, currently High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security – there was an ongoing «divorce in values» with the United States, a divorce caused by Donald Trump's attitude towards the traditional allies¹. Following a constructivist approach, in determining the wellbeing of

¹ «On the most important threats we've been discussing – climate change, multilateralism, the rise of China, terrorism, the war in Syria, trade – wherever you look there's complete disagreement between the States and Europe», Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell told me. It's no longer a matter of competitive commercial interests. It's a divorce in values» (Eder 2019).

the Western alliance – and, therefore, the wellbeing of the «West» – even the perception of public opinions matters. Surveys conducted in 16 countries by the Pew Research Center show that «the election of Joe Biden as President has led to a dramatic shift in America's international image. Throughout Donald Trump's presidency, publics around the world held the United States in low regard, with most opposed to his foreign policies. This was especially true among key American allies and partners» (Pew Research Center 2021). The so-called Twitter diplomacy played an essential role in spreading across the globe Donald Trump's narrative and rhetoric about the ability of the Us to be self-sufficient on an international political and diplomatic level. According to Finlayson (2013), in this paper political rhetoric is seen as a sort of projection of the populist thin-centered ideology, considering that «an ideology is not only a set of propositions but also a kind of argumentational resource; it is a 'playbook', providing ready-made 'cognitive shortcuts' to assist in grasping a situation but also ways of making political claims about it. Another way of putting this is to say that an ideology is a resource of rhetorical 'commonplaces' or *topoi* – general arguments that can be adapted to particular cases» (Finlayson 2013, 244-45). Trump's narrative is summarized by the slogan «America First» but it also supported by concrete sovereignist and unilateral policies, like imposing trade tariffs on traditional partners or fostering the disaggregation of the EU by supporting Brexit and sovereignist leaders. Before being banned from the most important social networks like Twitter and Facebook after the Capitol Hill attack on January 6, 2021, President Donald Trump tweeted multiple times a day on various topics and frequently on foreign policy. Those statements did not only reach his large public of followers (@realDonaldTrump had over 20 million followers on Twitter), but those messages were also reshared by traditional media all over the world, like newspapers and televisions. The social media enlarged the possibility of the former President of the United States to frame the international political rhetoric (Baum *et al.* 2019), the narrative of political reality, into his ideological point of view: the point of view of radical right populism. Besides the theoretical foreign policy reframing, Donald Trump's extended use of Twitter is often focused on divisive issues, and has multiple objectives related to the communicative potential of the social media. The use of Twitter diplomacy by President Trump – or Twiplomacy – is strictly related to his populist approach to politics (2.1), which simultaneously aims to connect directly with the public and bypass the mechanisms of traditional diplomacy.

2. Populism as a theoretical framework

The conceptual category of populism presents itself as extremely broad due to many diverse interpretations, containing very different political phenomena that require further specifications to be defined more precisely. Nonetheless, it is a category that is still scarcely used in the Us academic debate and even less in the field of foreign policy research; yet, starting with Donald Trump's political rise, an interpretative approach based on populism is slowly emerging in the literature. Considering the many different understandings of it, we can speak of a polysemic nature of the word «populism», which means that when referring to it is necessary to specify which conceptual definition – which «meaning» – one relies on to analyze a particular political phenomenon. In this work, the reference for the definition of populism is the one proposed by Mudde because the «thin-centered ideology» that works on oppositions allows us to define the characteristics of right-wing populism better while being aware that other possibilities – like left-wing populism – also exist. For Mudde, populism is «an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people» (Mudde 2004, 543). However, when studying right-wing populism, it is acknowledged here that the seminal work of Laclau (Laclau 1977) shall not be ignored, especially when it is recognized in this work that the role of social media has been crucial in determining the spread of Trump's populist strategic narrative and rhetoric. However, the ideology proposed in the various forms of populism is not as complex and articulated as others more familiar to us developed during the twentieth century, but is, instead, a subtle ideology or thin-centered ideology that moves around a core of concepts. The adaptability of the term «populism» to the right and left-wing forms is accompanied in this paper with Laclau's reading of the concepts of «people» and «elite» as «empty signifiers» (Laclau 1996). As proposed by Mudde later, the only specific connotation of those concepts is a moral connotation: good people, lousy elite. Moreover, Trumpian populism is characterized by being a derivation of the American Far-Right, also related to the Alt-Right (Borgognone 2019), where the adjective «alternative» is used in opposition of the more traditional moderate and conservative approach of the Republican Party. The application of those categories to a party or a leader's foreign policy is more controversial due to two main reasons: a) the studies about populism tend to focus on inner characteristics of the movements or the internal political issues they face in one country (Verbeek *et al.* 2017); b) foreign policy is generally considered, especially in democracies, to be less vulner-

able – than other policies – to changes inspired by the politicians and leaders that follow one another in power.

The theoretical framework of populism is advantageous to interpret foreign policy because it relies not only on the vertical axis «top/down» (where we will see on the «top» we find the international élites of multilateralism conceived as antagonists of the nation), but it also relies on the horizontal axis «inside/outside» (where on the outside we will find the «others» conceived as foreigners in a broad sense, that must be excluded from the determination of the «inside»). This paper proposes the existence of a third dimension of populism, which consists of a third axis that can be called the «axe of time» where on the two apexes we find «past/future». This axis can be declined in terms of foreign policy while looking at Trump's case, not simply referring to the slogan «Make America Great Again» (which indeed is a reboot of a Ronald Reagan's motto) but in the interpretation of a preference for the past by acting for the deconstruction of the American external relations, and by dismantling agreements and the American commitment to global security and order. Conceptualized as a theoretical framework, the first two «spatial» axes and the third «time» axis, become the three sides of an equilateral triangle (Fig. 1) and form the backbone for the understanding of Trump's populist foreign policy, in addition, it is important to connect this structure to foreign policy issues.

In describing the characteristics of the different sides that compose the triangle of Trump's theoretical framework of foreign policy, the a) top/down side is particularly related to the anti-globalist attitude and narrative, the b) inside/outside edge is above all characterized as the nativist edge, and c) the past/future edge is especially correlated to the isolationist yearning of his foreign policy.



FIG. 1. Donald Trump's populist foreign policy triangle.

The eye is also on Veerbek and Zaslove (2017), who found four critical topics that are useful to detect and divide different kinds of populism. Those «salient foreign policy issues», which are expected to create distinct positions among populisms, are: «Their general attitude towards international politics, their position regarding global finance and trade, their position on transborder migration, and finally their stand on regional integration» (Veerbek *et al.* 2017, 499). It is even more interesting the conclusion that the international developments and environment are significant in defining the various populist movements because, due to the demarcation-integration cleavage proposed by Kriesi (Kriesi *et al.* 2008, 2012), populisms are forced to choose whether to be exclusionary or inclusionary in front of the public. This choice is at the foundations of their identities since it contributes to defining who is the «pure people» and who is not. In Veerbek and Zaslove's analysis, radical right populisms tend to have a general isolationist attitude, usually oppose regional integration like Europeanization (even if not European, Donald Trump was in favor of Brexit), are protectionists on trade and finance, and oppose transborder migration. This framework was developed before Donald Trump's rise to power, but it seems to apply effortlessly to his foreign policy attitude and narrative. Another relevant voice that has framed Donald Trump's foreign policy into a category called «Jacksonian populism», is the voice of the scholar Walter Russell Mead (2017), a classification that confers great relevance to identity and culture as contemporary fundamental factors in defining foreign policy. Mead underlines the disbelief of modern Jacksonian populists about the necessity of an American global engagement and the obligation to safeguard and build the global liberal order, as they consider those strategies not indispensable – or even damaging – for the American national security and prosperity.

The top/down edge in Donald Trump's populist foreign policy

In his foreign policy, Donald Trump tried to represent that rift between the people and the elite typical of populisms, regardless of their variants. The elites against whom the Trumpian rift is concentrated are not simply identifiable in that 1% of the Us population – who had, moreover, been the target of other movements with an opposite political approach such as Occupy Wall Street (Lowndes 2017) – which holds the economic resources, and consequently the political and social resources to seek prosperity and power, elites, by the way, represented by the tycoon Donald Trump himself. The elites against which Donald Trump's populism is focused are the ones considered guilty of the opening to globalism, cosmopolitanism, and interculturality, placed inside and outside the country. Therefore, these «foreign-policy»

elites (Clarke *et al.* 2017) are the fundamental cause of economic marginalization and the annihilation of the «self» and of the elements that these «people» perceived as definers of their own identity (Panizza 2017). Therefore, on the «top» side of the edge are situated the global elites conceived, particularly, as the multilateral and international institutions, while on the «down» side of the edge lies the American people, exploited and endangered by the interests of those elites (Parker 2016). Hence, the goal of the new American foreign policy projected by Donald Trump must be to free the American people from the influence of those elites. Those supra-national elites are pleaded guilty «for their cosmopolitanism and for imposing progressive ('liberal' in the Us sense of the term) measures regarding issues such as gay rights, gender relations, and abortion» (De Cleen 2017, 450).

This process of «liberation» includes the mediatization of foreign policy through social media, considering that the phenomenon of mediatization is a direct consequence of populist ideology for three main reasons: a) the need for disintermediation concerning the structures that traditionally act as intermediate bodies between politics and the electorate, that is, traditional media, parties, and trade unions; b) the need to open a direct and unmediated dialogue with their targeted «people»; c) the quest for personalization, an essential feature for far-right populisms, where leaders take a central role in political representation (Weyland 1996). As Christina Schori Liang points out (2008, 5), these motivations are accompanied by a radical simplification of the political discourse, as the populists «encourage 'plain speaking' and they believe they represent the common man from the street whom the traditional leadership elite has forsaken». In this sense, the case of Donald Trump presents itself as paradigmatic, born and built outside the Republican Party, which he then climbed through the participation to the open republican primaries, opening a direct and personal dialogue through the possibilities offered by new social media, with a simplified language by definition in the then 140 characters of Twitter, now doubled. Donald Trump frequently tweeted about foreign policy, seeking support from his «people» and attacking his international opponents, perpetuating the narrative of conflict viewed from his populist radical right approach. Following Chrysosgelos (2017) and Zürn (2004), the prominence of the digital and social media revolution in spreading populist concepts and narrative about foreign policy stands clear, because populists interpret global affairs focusing on direct relations with the public but also with other actors rejecting complex policy-making processes. Without the independent variable of the digital revolution, and its specific weight in the populist phenomenon, the cross-bordering spread of the populist thought and rhetoric in international relations would probably have been much lesser thing.

The edge inside/outside in Donald Trump's populist foreign policy

While with the definition of the top/down edge, we coped with the consequences of determining foreign policy through the main terms of opposition in populism – the elites versus the people –, with the edge inside/outside, it is possible to define who is considered to be part of «the people» by the populist political proposal of Donald Trump. This settling of who is considered «inside» and who must be «outside» determines the identity of «the people» and contributes to defining the goals, the means, and the strategies to pursue a populist foreign policy. Starting from the definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology by Mudde, Trump's populism has expressed itself on the relationship between inside/outside, referring to a particular form of nationalism: nativism. The term nativism is defined by Mudde (Mudde 2007) as «an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state» (Mudde 2007, 9). Therefore, Donald Trump's populism (Prr) can be defined as an «exclusionary populism» (Mudde 2007; Mudde *et al.* 2013), which uses nationalist arguments (De Cleen 2017) to cope with migrations and immigrants, one of the greatest concerns of populist radical right (Prr) parties and leaders (Eatwell 2017). Hence, in the «inside» side of the edge lies not all the American people but the expected – and later confirmed by the 2016 and 2020 elections – constituency of Donald Trump: mainly white, non-liberal, and located in the heartland of the United States. On the opposite «outside» fraction of the edge, we find those American citizens and people who live in the Us that are not legitimately considered to be part of the «Trumpenvolk» (Oliver *et al.* 2016), based on a nationalist and ethnic perspective, and moreover, it includes the foreigners and foreign countries. This split between the designed interests of the «inside» against the interests of the «outside» does not only contribute to defining the domestic dimension of politics but also its external dimension. This approach legitimizes Donald Trump's unilateral and transactional approach to international politics.

The edge past/future in Donald Trump's populist foreign policy

Unlike the other two dimensions of Trump's populist foreign policy, this third dimension is more related to the goals and strategies, rather than the targets. Like in Walter Russell Mead's scheme, where foreign policy tradi-

tions hold a central role in determining today the principles that guide foreign policy and establish the ideals that shape it, different populisms create different representations of a country's place in the world. In Populist radical right (Prr) movements, the relation with the past is exceptionally relevant when, for instance, the forefathers are believed to be the roots and true spirit of the nation; a spirit that, after troubled times, must be restored to make foreign policy consistent with what is considered to be the real identity of the country (Panizza 2017). This focus on the past happens while, on the contrary, left-wing populisms are often focused on expanding the traditional concept of the national community adding new people in the quest for a new definition of the country itself, a definition that transcends the traditional borders. In Trump's point of view, in recent years and especially during George W. Bush Jr. and Barack Obama's presidencies, the United States lost its capacity of self-determination, a capacity that, however, Trump believes was stronger before them, considering his presidency a corrective to the previous 16 years of foreign and security policies (Dombrowski *et al.* 2018). Therefore, in the «past» side of this edge, in Trump's populist foreign policy lies first and foremost the United States «arcadia» of the Jacksonian era (Mead 1999/2000), where isolationism was a concrete option, with a more recent «past» – considered a modern ideal – which is, in particular, the Reagan era. Like in that period, characterized by the bipolar opposition with the Ussr, nowadays it would have been impossible to totally isolate the Us but, however isolationism must be a yearning to strive for, through unilateralism and disengagement (Wertheim 2018). The concreteness of the priority of disengagement is symbolized, for instance, by the opening to dialogues and consolidation of the Doha 2020 agreements with the Talibans, the Trump administration seems to have done anything in order to grant the Us an exit strategy from the country. This «hard approach» which could just seem pragmatic, is backed by those considerations and references. The Reagan era is frequently cited in foreign policy as Trump's inspiration for his attitude called «advancing peace through strength»². In contrast, on the «future» side of the edge lies the «scarecrow» of populist radical right movements, the prospect of a world where political goals are collectively and internationally defined, where interests are negotiated, where boundaries are less efficient, and identities are mixed. Considering that the international liberal elites are pleaded guilty for this dangerous drift, the longing for the ideal «past» shall be pursued through the deconstruction of what is considered the product of those powerful elites, starting from specific multilateral organs and agreements.

² See Foreign policy issues archives from the Trump administration.

3. Conclusions

Before and after Donald Trump's rise to power in the Us, many European countries as well experienced different left-wing and right-wing populisms that challenged the development and stability of their democracies. Looking at Donald Trump's foreign policy through the lenses of the theoretical framework of populism proposed in this paper, its central features emerge: a) anti-globalism and anti-liberalism, b) nativism and c) isolationism. These features are connected to the global populist momentum and specifically rooted in the American Jacksonian populism (Clarke *et al.* 2017). The impact of this foreign policy setup and narrative – besides the theme of concrete «continuity and discontinuity» with previous presidential administrations – has been strong, especially on the perception of the role of the Us by the traditional allies in the West and, moreover, has been fostered by his digital political communication. After the end of his presidency, it would be useful to resonate more on the «trumpian lesson» and heritage on foreign policy, related in particular to the necessity of further theoretical and empirical research on the connection between the his usage of the Twitter diplomacy and the spread of his populist rhetorical framework. Moreover, there is also a need for scholars to challenge the understanding of a broader field: connection between the digital revolution and populism. Therefore, the end of Donald Trump's presidency has left backlashes, particularly in terms of trust and perception of reliability towards the Us from the traditional western allies. Since the end of WWII and the advancement of the global liberal order, the integration and cooperation among western democracies have settled goals and strategies based on the conviction that there was a common need to trust each other to promote peace, security, and economic prosperity (Zakaria 1998; Smith 1994). Donald Trump's populist foreign policy seems to have put into question this belief (Wertheim 2018), not only through the concrete provisions and actions of his foreign policy but, particularly, through the narrative and theoretical framework portrayed in this paper and of which the oppositions top/down, inside/outside and past/future are the fundamental joints. Even though this could sound like an oxymoron, the Us, the demiurge of the international liberal order, through Donald Trump's populist foreign policy, aligned rhetorically with actors that opposed it (Cadier *et al.* 2020). Therefore, in terms of the impact of populism on foreign policy, it is possible to highlight here a dramatic change in American foreign policy during Trump's presidency in terms of content, process, and procedures. In particular, Donald Trump's attempt to jeopardize the commitment and belief in Western alliances, offered a new way to interpret America's

role in the world that differed from the classical post-WWII interpretation described above, and about which we hope for further studies and research.

References

- BAUM, M. and POTTER, P.B.K. (2019), *Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy in the Age of Social Media*, in «Journal of Politics», 81(2), pp. 747-756.
- BALMER, C. (2019), *Salvini proclaims Italy to be Washington's best EU ally*, Reuters, 18 June, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-usa-salvini/salvini-proclaims-italy-to-be-washingtons-best-eu-ally-idUSKCN1TJ00J>.
- BORGOGNONE, G. (2019), *Dal paleoconservatorismo alla Alt-Right. Le idee politiche della destra reazionaria statunitense nell'era globale*, in «Storia del pensiero politico», 2, pp. 297-322.
- CADIER, D. and LEQUESNE, C. (2020), *How Populism Impacts EU Foreign Policy*, Eu-Listco Policy Paper Series, available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4282193> (last accessed on 10 July 2021).
- CLARKE, M. and RICKETTS, A. (2017), *Donald Trump and American Foreign Policy: The Return of the Jacksonian Tradition*, in «Comparative Strategy», 36(4), pp. 366-379.
- CHRYSSOGELOS, A. (2018), *Populism in Foreign Policy*, in THIES, C.G. (ed), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DE CLEEN, B. (2017), *Populism and Nationalism*, in C. ROVIRA KALTWASSER, P. TAGGART, P. OCHOA ESPEJO and P. OSTIGUY (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 434-460.
- DOMBROWSKI, P. and REICH, S. (2018), *Beyond the Tweets: President's Trump Continuity in Military Operations*, in «Strategic Studies Quarterly», 12(2), pp. 56-81.
- DUECK, C. (2019), *Age of Iron: On Conservative Nationalism*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- EATWELL, R. (2017), *Populism and Fascism*, in C. ROVIRA KALTWASSER, P. TAGGART, P. OCHOA ESPEJO and P. OSTIGUY (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 462-487.
- EDER, F. (2019), *POLITICO Brussels Playbook Hungary's change of heart – US-EU relationship burns – Fighting words*, Politico, February 18, available at <https://www.politico.eu/newsletter/brussels-playbook/politico-brussels-playbook-hungarys-change-of-heart-us-eu-relationship-burns-fighting-words/>.
- FINLAYSON, A. (2013), *Ideology and Political Rhetoric*, in M. FREEDEN, M., L. TOWER SARGENT, and M. STEARS, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 197-213.
- FOYLE, D.C. (1999), *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, New York, Columbia University Press.

- FRIEDMAN, G. and SHAPIRO, J.L. (2017), *The Limits of the Trump Doctrine*, in «Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development», 9, pp. 12-21.
- HAFNER-BURTON, E.M., NARANG, N. and RATHBUN, B.C. (2019), *Introduction: What is Populist Nationalism and Why Does it Matter?*, in «The Journal of Politics», 81(2), pp. 707-711.
- HOOK, S.W. and JONES, C.M. (2013) (eds), *Routledge Handbook of American Foreign Policy*, London, Routledge.
- JERVIS, R. (2018), *President Trump and International Relations Theory*, in R. Jervis, F.J. Gavin, J. Rovner and D. Labrosse (eds), *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 3-7.
- KRIESI, H., GRANDE, E., LACHAT, R., DOLEZAL, M., BORNSCHIER, S. and FREY, T. (2008), *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- KRIESI, H., GRANDE, E., DOLEZAL, M., HELBLING, M., HÖGLINGER, D., HUTTER, S. and WÜEST, B. (2012), *Political Conflict in Western Europe*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- KROENIG, M. (2017), *The Case for Trump's Foreign Policy: The Right People, the Right Positions*, in «Foreign Affairs», 96(3), pp. 30-34.
- LACLAU, E. (1977), *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, London, New Left Books.
- LACLAU, E. (1996), *Emancipation(s)*, London, Verso Press.
- LIANG, C.S. (2008), *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign Policy and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, London, Routledge.
- LOWNDES, J. (2017), *Populism in The United States*, in C. ROVIRA KALTWASSER, P. TAGGART, P. OCHOA ESPEJO and P. OSTIGUY (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 299-338.
- MEAD, W.R. (1999), *The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy*, in «The National Interest», 58, pp. 5-29.
- MEAD, W.R. (2017), *The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal Order*, in «Foreign Affairs», 96(2), pp. 2-7.
- MOFFITT, B. (2016), *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press.
- MUDDE, C. (2004), *The Populist Zeitgeist*, in «Government and Opposition», 39(3), pp. 541-563.
- MUDDE, C. (2007), *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- MUDDE, C. and ROVIRA KALTWASSER, C. (2013), *Exclusionary vs Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America*, in «Government and Opposition», 48(2), pp. 147-174.

- NAU, H.R. (2021), *Trump and American Foreign Policy Traditions*, in S.A. RENSHON and P. SUEDFELD (eds), *The Trump Doctrine and The Emerging International System*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 71-97.
- NORRIS, P. and INGLEHART, R. (2019), *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- OLIVER, J. and RAHN, W. (2016), *Rise of the «Trumpenvolk»: Populism in the 2016 Election*, in «The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science», 667 (1), pp. 189-206.
- PANIZZA, F. (2017), *Populism and Identification*, in C. ROVIRA KALTWASSER, P. TAGGART, P. OCHOA ESPEJO and P. OSTIGUY (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 516-538.
- PARKER, A. (2016), *Donald Trump Says NATO Is 'Obsolete', UN Is 'Political Game'*, in «The New York Times», April 2, <http://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/04/02/donald-trump-tells-crowd-hed-be-fine-if-nato-brokeup/?r=0>.
- PETERSON, P. E. (1994), *The President's Dominance in Foreign Policy Making*, in «Political Science Quarterly», 109(2), pp. 215-234.
- PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2021), *America's Image Abroad Rebounds With Transition From Trump to Biden*, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/06/10/americas-image-abroad-rebounds-with-transition-from-trump-to-biden/> (last accessed on 10 July 2021).
- PLAGEMANN, J. and DESTRADE, S. (2020), *The Foreign Policy of Populists*, in «Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development», 15, pp. 110-119.
- PRESTON, T. and HERMANN, M.G. (2004), *Presidential Leadership Style and the Foreign Policy Advisory Process*, in E.R. WITTKOPF and J.M. MCCORMICK (eds), *Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 363-380.
- RENSHON, S.A. and SUEDFELD, P. (2021), *The Trump Doctrine and the Emerging International System*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- ROVIRA KALTWASSER, C., TAGGART, P., OCHOA ESPEJO, P. and OSTIGUY, P. (2017), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- SACHS, J.D. (2018), *Foreign Policy Populism*, in J.D. SACHS, *A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 137-144.
- SMITH, T. (1994), *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- VERBEEK, B. and ZASLOVE, A. (2017), *Populism and Foreign Policy*, in C. ROVIRA KALTWASSER, P. TAGGART, P. OCHOA ESPEJO and P. OSTIGUY (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 489-514.
- WERTHEIM, S. (2018), *Trump Against Exceptionalism: The Sources of Trumpian Conduct*, in R. JERVIS, F.J. GAVIN, J. ROVNER and D. LABROSSE (eds), *Chaos in the*

- Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 125-135.
- WEYLAND, K. (1996), *Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities*, in «Studies in Comparative Institutional Development», 31(3), pp. 3-31.
- WITTKOPF, E. R. (1990), *Faces of Internationalism: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- WITTKOPF, E.R., JONES, C.M. and KEGLEY, C.W. J. (2005), *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, Belmont, Thomson Wadsworth.
- WOJCZEWSKI, T. (2019), *Trump, Populism, and American Foreign Policy*, in «Foreign Policy Analysis», 16(3), pp. 292-311.
- ZAKARIA, F. (1998), *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- ZÜRN, M. (2004), *Global Governance and Legitimacy Problems*, in «Government and Opposition», 39(2), pp. 260-287.