

THE TRUMP OF «MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN»: A FURTHER POPULIST ALTERNATIVE? BETWEEN LATIN AMERICAN INFLUENCES AND THE TRADITION OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY

Resumen

La hipótesis que se encuentra en la base del presente artículo de investigación considera el populismo como una reacción a la democracia representativa tradicional. Como adquisición del pueblo, de su propia dimensión decisional. En este contexto, se evalúa el caso político de Trump a través del análisis cualitativo de su estrategia comunicativa y de las medidas políticas que han caracterizado los primeros meses de su presidencia con el objetivo de averiguar su pertenencia al estándar de la tradición del populismo norteamericano o, incluso, latinoamericano.

Palabras claves

Populismo, democracia, Estados Unidos, América Latina, Trump.

Abstract

The present research article starts from the hypothesis of populism as a reaction to traditional representative democracy. As an acquisition by the people, of their own decision-making dimension. In this context, the Trump political case is analyzed with a qualitative methodology over its communicative strategy and the political measures of the early first months of his presidency aiming to place his belongings to the canons of the tradition of North American populism or even Latin American.

Key words

Populism, democracy, United States, Latin America, Trump.

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EL TRUMP DE «MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN»: ¿UNA ULTERIOR VARIANTE POPULISTA? ENTRE INFLUENCIAS LATINOAMERICANAS Y LA TRADICIÓN DEL PEOPLE'S PARTY*

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Introduction

Populism is a fluid concept that, depending on places or historical time, assumes different meanings. Used to describe various political situations and political movements with heterogeneous purposes, in some cases it

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is considered as inclusive and supportive, in others as intolerant and discriminatory towards minorities; at times it seems to put at risk the constituted democracies, at other times it would open possibilities towards new forms of popular participation (Urbinati, 2014, pp. 10-15). So, it is a term that is presented with a conceptual slipperiness that does not allow to grasp it firmly, oscillating between a precise meaning and a substantial vagueness (Taggart, 2000, p. 9). It is a term that designates a polymorphous and undefined phenomenon (Taguieff, 2003, p. 23) an iridescent entity (Merker, 2009, p. 3). However, focusing attention on the core of its political essence, and considering it in its relation to the system of representative government, in a way it makes sense to value it as the scream of pain of democracy, as the reaction of ordinary citizens, who ask for political action closer to their interests in relation to the actions carried out by traditional political institutions (McCormick, 2012, p. 20).

The latter end up representing the people in a weak way or, in any case, not corresponding to the reality of the current historical moment; they are unable, then, to read the present. These actions end up, more simply, reflecting a largely virtual image of the people. However, it seems to us that populism should not be interpreted as a concept antagonistic to democracy, but rather to traditional representative democracy. The leader, the party or the political movement, are seen as the direct means to make the instances from society, generally anti-oligarchic, and to compensate for economic inequalities or aversion to ethnic minorities, cooperating or bypassing into the formal or institutional places for the formation of political decisions, *in primis* the parliamentary assemblies.

This institutional concern transforms the leader or the political movement into a resonance box of the states of mind of the people. This filter guarantees the purification or, rather, the mitigation, and as such becomes a typical tool of a representative democracy.

Then, we could find ourselves in a situation in which the people, understood as a majority of themselves, rise up against a minority that may be the privileged in an economic sense. In this case, the demand is expressed to counteract the social inequality, or it could go against a cultural, religious or ethnic minority, in which case forms of not so evident racism are manifested.

Sometimes, the two instances come together, complicating - in our opinion - the distinction between democratic and anti-democratic populism, right or left and, in some way, between generically positive or negative. In the first meaning, which refers to the redistribution of wealth and land ownership, populism has found some reception in the Americas. In Latin America the leader who guided the peasants to the government of



the country becomes the central figure in the formation of populist movements and transition to democratic regimes. In the United States the experience of the People's Party at the end of the 20th Century, can be read as a politics reappropriation by the American people (a process already begun in the late seventeenth through the *Great Awakening*) (Urbinati, 2014, p. 10).

With this premise, it becomes significantly interesting to make a broad reflection on the characteristics of the American tradition of populism and to frame the figure of the President of the United States, Donald Trump, in the field of populism.

This is through an analysis of his electoral campaign and in reference to the political measures that he adopted as president, in order to understand in what terms he can be considered a populist leader and, in this sense, to what extent he can connect with the historical tradition of North American populism. In addition, the analysis will tackle whether or not it is possible in some way to bring it closer to Latin American populism. On the basis of this premise, therefore, it seems appropriate to start with the evaluation of the main characteristics of Latin American tradition of populism.

The people and their leader: the key words of Latin American populism

Populism in Latin America as a paradigm in itself obtains consistency by the political regimes that appeared in the 20th Century¹, thus differentiating itself from the movements of the 19th century such as *caudillismo*. In these regimes, the key element is leadership, which becomes an almost constant feature of the political life of this geographical region. Then, in addition to the types of politics, this tradition is identified with the leader, with his ideas and his story (Taggart, 2000, p. 101).

The most well-known populisms were Getulio those of Vargas in Brazil (1930-1945), that of Perón in Argentina (1945-1955), that of APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, a party founded in Peru in 1924 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre) which never managed to reach power, that of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement constituted by Víctor Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia (1952-1956) and many others in Colombia and in México. In all these cases, there were common elements, this is the reason

1. In this sense, we find interesting the consideration of comparing the transformations of Latin American populism with certain periods of Marxism. To go further, see Cerutti Guldberg (2009, pp. 2-12, pp. 3-4).



because we can speak of a Latin American paradigm. The development of certain political demands would originate in the stage of transition from an agricultural economy to the industrial economy, which can be defined as a stage of modernization, thus linking to the concept of nation and nationalism (Gellner, 2008). However, Latin American populism was a nationalist one, sometimes tending to the exaltation of the ancient tradition of people, at other times - at least ideologically - manifesting itself as anti-American, anti-imperialist and anti-pituitary. In addition, it was a strictly urban phenomenon, which involved masses of recent immigration to the cities.

These were masses that had not been protected until that moment by any union, without any form of social integration, without political protections and already far from their own rural world. For mass willing to listen to the proclamations of who proposed to mobilize them, using an ideological message populist type, focused on the apology of the values that people believed as their own, without mediation by institutional structures, but directed to a direct relationship with leader (Bongiovanni, 1996).

It was a leadership that, taking advantage of the economic and political crisis, presented itself as one that, through the strategy of its action, manages to give stability in an age of instability (Taggart, 2000, p. 112). In Latin America, populist policies were reformist, but not revolutionary. For example, both Perón and Vargas, when developing their electoral bases, tried to strengthen the workers to broaden the bases of their own consensus. Then, the concentration of powers in the positions that they had led to the result of a greater centralization of the powers that, in any case, already existed in these political systems (Taggart, 2000, p. 113). Then, the emphasis on the personalized and charismatic leadership, implies the change but not the revolution, since it simply serves to embody the popular will in a kind of total overlap between the people and their leader. Therefore, to frame Trump in this paradigm seems to be a forced operation, especially in consideration of the important differences referred to the political-institutional and social context and, also, of the proven and solid American democracy.

However, the rapidity of some of its political measures, which are already present in its electoral program, makes us think of the attempt to identify with his electoral base, presenting himself as the somebody who, once in power, would not cut the direct relationship with the people through an institutionalization, but strengthens it. In fact, it seems an attempt to a strong personalization of politics, rather than a charismatic leadership on the Latin American model. However, the lack of an adequate placement of Trump's political action has triggered, especially from



a media point of view, an anomalous process of double negative comparison with the Latin American countries. On one hand, Trump is compared -in a derogatory sense- to Latin American populism, thus fostering the idea that the last elected president is a kind of anomaly in the context of the American political culture. On the other hand, Trump's policy on immigration - particularly the Mexican one - fuels racism against Latin American populations though considered regular emigrants and in some cases already US citizens, as "inferior" to American born citizens.

Then emerges an universe of prejudices that, in fact, unites both the American right and the left. In this sense, it is interesting to try to answer the question regarding the consideration of Trump as a pure populist. Michael Kazin, expert on American populism, remains doubtful, since he does not have "clear who the people would be" in his political speech². In fact, not being a true conservative, even though he was a candidate of the Republican Party in the presidential elections, in some aspects the example of a rebel populist leadership could be defined, which in any case is not a novelty in the history of the populism in the United States³.

Indeed, Kazin's perplexity stems from the fact that in the American tradition two different typologies of populism were affirmed, which can only be defined in a simplistic manner on the left and right spectrum. The first focused its opposition exclusively upwards, that is, towards those economic elites and their political proponents, who have betrayed the confidence of the citizens who perform an essential job for the nation. In this case, a concept of a town based on the idea of class is developed, which does not imply support or opposition towards any ethnic or religious group. The second typology, to which Trump seems to relate, is one that always moves against those who have undermined the economic interests and political rights of ordinary people, but in this case the concept of the people is stricter. We speak of the "real" Americans, that is, those of European origin.

Anyway, in his analysis, Kazin comes close to the idea we mentioned earlier, that of populism as a reaction to the crisis of democracy, especially when he recalls the words of the historian Woodward: "There is a need to wait and also to trust that there are future disorders to shake the places of power and privilege to provide the periodic therapy that seems necessary for the health of our democracy"⁴.

2.Cf. Takis S. Pappas, *Donald Trump defines the term, authentic populist*, openDemocracy, de: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/takis-s-pappas/donald-trump-defines-term-authentic-populist>.

3.Cf. Takis S. Pappas, *Donald Trump defines the term, authentic populist*, openDemocracy, de: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/takis-s-pappas/donald-trump-defines-term-authentic-populist>.

4.Cf. Michael Kazin, *Trump and American populism*, Foreign Affairs, de: <https://www>.



Populism: the “karst river” of American politics

In the United States, the term populism began to have a precise meaning when the People’s Party, called as such in 1890, arose in the political arena. The populist uprising of the late eighties took place on the basis of the economic decompensation of the second half of the century, which caused a strong deflation that damaged the fields of the inhabitants of the South and the West in particular.

The fall in prices from an increase in supply was not offset by an adequate monetary policy by the federal government and, additionally, creditors and large financial groups were favored at the expense of the debtors, thus creating problems especially in the fields, where the farmers (small landowners) were forced to rely on bank credit to run their farms. In addition to price variations in the international market and imbalances in the monetary policy, farmers were also affected by the abuses of the companies on which the marketing of their products depended on (rail transport, silos and warehouses, packaging). In fact, they no longer felt like “the chosen people of God”, but as harassed by the so-called money power of Washington and Wall Street (Bergamini, 2010, pp. 113-135). In the fields, the first farmers’ organizations began to emerge, which later ended up in the Farmer’s Alliances, managing to elect numerous representatives in the state legislative assemblies. In 1890, these groups came together in the People’s Party which, in 1892, presented its own presidential candidate, James B. Weaver, under the slogan: «*Equal rights to all; special privileges to none*». The People’s Party reached the 8% of the vote, a result that, in fact, credited it as an emerging political force and, in the following presidential elections, stipulated an alliance with the Democratic Party, supporting the candidate William J. Bryan, whose victory could play in favor of the interests of the agrarian sector, limiting the influence of big industries on the politics. However, the project also failed due to the inability to find allies, both because of xenophobic and fundamentalist positions, and the excessive insistence on the agrarian world that, in fact, prevented links with the urban working masses, since the latter were trained also by ethnic groups that had few relations with the farmers of the South and the West, and who often appealed to white supremacy.

The consequence of the defeat of 1896 was the rapid decline of the agrarian protest and the People’s Party, but not of populism and its mo-

foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-10-06/trump-and-american-populism.



tivations. In fact, many demands of the People's Party will be adopted immediately, so much so that it can be said that American populism was a form of reformism before inspiring liberalism, in turn a precursor of the New Deal (Canovan, 1981, p. 17; Taguieff, 2002, p. 115).

Indeed, despite the fact that the People's Party did not manage to insert itself in the traditional contest between the two parties that occupy the North American political scene, its importance goes further, since its themes will continue to be displaced in the depths of American political history (Taggart, 2000, p. 48). A basic characteristic of North American populism, which can be identified through this experience, is the movement from below, which is not linked to specific charismatic leaderships (as in the Latin American case), nor to groups of elites or theoreticians tied to particular abstract and ideological structures (as in the case of Russia). This is because we know that the People's Party was engendered by a mass popular movement (Taggart, 2000), that it had its roots in a set of anti-elitism and of eight-pointed ideas coming from Protestantism and the Golden age of Illustration. These ideas developed along at least six orientations. The first one is that of the producer, who conceived the American people as a community occupied in creating wealth as opposed to parasites; the second, that of anti-elitism, which manifested itself in suspicion against strong powers; the third that of anti-intellectualism, that is, distrust of intellectuals, guilty of living far from the people; the fourth, that of the supremacy of the majority in the affairs of government; the fifth, that of theological moralism rooted in religious traditions and finally that of Americanism, understood as patriotic nationalism that can reach the connotations of ethnocentrism (Merker, 2009, pp. 105-121).

These nuclear ideas, re-elaborated from the People's Party, such as the demands of workers at the beginning of the 20th century, opposed to the centralized state and the large companies, have been left in a left binary in the first transition. Then, in a second transition, they crushed to the right. In particular, from the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, with the Cold War, they acquired a conservative matrix. In this sense, one can simply think of the anti-communist policy of McCarthy's "witch-hunt," or George Wallace's race policy in the Southern States, to the policy of Nixon, Reagan, and so on. Substantially, looking to the United States, populist rhetoric can transform from reformist and progressive into conservative and reactionary (Kazin, 2014, pp. 3-5).

So, it seems to us that the two most relevant characteristics of North American populism are the movement from below, that spurges from demands that arise from ordinary people added in the form of a political movement, and the cultural background of American society, which has



its roots at the time of the first colonies. This allows to equally acquire left or right connotations, to be inclusive or exclusive, thus becoming a “karst river”, which resurfaces with different connotations depending on the historical circumstances. In this sense, favored by the political and the economic crisis, Trump has taken advantage of the populist instances, both left and right, presenting himself to the presidential elections as an anti-system and anti-power candidate, in line with the North American tradition of populism and in the totality of its historical development. A better perception of all this, and of the proximity to the models of populism mentioned above, can be obtained from the detailed analysis of Trump’s political language, and from his political *modus operandi*, both during the electoral campaign and during his presidency.

Trump’s populism: American or Latin American tradition? An analysis of the electoral campaign

Undoubtedly, it is not easy to circumscribe contemporary populist phenomena in rigid categories, but considering the case object of this study, we will try to speed up the understanding of the most recent evolutions of the populist paradigm, focusing attention on some central elements that seems to be more effective. Usually, the populist leaders are fed on the basis of cleavages between the establishment and the people that manage to develop; they promote at the same time and, as we will see, strategies used in the US campaign managed to involve Trump in the aura of the “new”, of the anti-elites -in clear opposition to Clinton, part of the elites- with the intention of dragging and channeling the heterogeneous protest vote. Technically, in one hand lies the typical construction of populist tactic character, meanwhile on the other hand the effectiveness of its implementation lies in the ability to strengthen the candidate himself against both the elites in general, and especially against the partisan apparatus, presenting it then as independent and totally disconnected from the old praxis. In fact, these basic reflections already allow us to draw a first parallel, since the image of the successful and histrionic entrepreneur who moves transversally with his highly charismatic and personalized language, reflects the strategy of Berlusconi in Italy and, at the same time, does not stray too far from the actual North American and Latin American currents. In this perspective, the audacious outsider supported by a network of new actors who occupy the partisan stage and who define themselves as “alternative forces”, goes back immediately to the first Chavism (Picarella, 2017). However, it is also inserted in the classic personalist currents, under the slogan “Make



America great again”, based on the state / discipline mix, Trumpism simplifies, politicizes and takes root in the movement of the Alt right (alternative right). Furthermore, the two movements feed over each other⁵, collaborating then in delineating with more precision the limits between the vague concepts of strong charismatic personalization / authoritarian populism, whose features were already found in Reaganism and Thatcherism, and which are simply declined today with the word ‘delegitimization’. It is a dangerous mixture that would bring to memory Arendtian reflections, and that still does not present something new compared to what was already known in the past both in Europe and in America. In this sense, Trump defined himself as the spokesman of a movement, but the scheme - clearly used by the President himself - of repetition / simplification of arguments, typical of the techniques of personalization of politics, could lead to an easy extremization⁶.

A deeper reflection, without a doubt, leads us to underline that, if on one hand the current historical-political moment has created the appropriate conditions for the occupation of the political context by the strongly personalized Trumpian leadership, on the other hand it is worth mentioning the role that have played the communication techniques that taking advantage of the moment, have forged the “personage” focusing on the controversial statements of the President. So, while it is true that the electoral campaigns of the last decades were mainly developed “in the media and through the media” (Mazzoleni, 2004, p. 176), what was launched in the last US election campaign is based on a well-packaged strategy. It is a strategy that corresponds perfectly to catch-all techniques, at times necessarily based on the element of charismatic personalization, since precisely this binomial allows to obtain two significant results, which are strengthening its own electoral base, and, at the same time, dragging voters in sectors of interest, by setting the strong message around which to develop the opinion of the collective imagination. It is well

5. The main characteristics of this movement are reduced to the presence of strong exclusionary, radical, sexist elements. The movement clearly moves away from traditional conservative positions, defining them inconsistent in the struggle against progressivism. Therefore, they are all elements that are perfectly framed in Trump’s speech, and that the militants of the movement have widely spread through the network, so much so that the communication strategist of the movement, Stephen Bannon, has been the director of the Trump campaign and, after the victory, the Chief Strategy Officer of the President.

6. In fact, the standard applied by Trump has been the strong stigmatization of the central axes of its electoral program, that is, zero tolerance on immigration - simplifying the message with the binomial immigrants = guilty of insecurity, of being a threat to both the American cultural identity and the employment, which they take (“steal”) from the Americans-; the need to withdraw from free trade agreements, identified as the cause of fall of the American economy; the plague of the displacement of jobs to China, and, finally, the personification of himself as the only one capable of restoring American greatness.



understood that the total fusion leader / communication that is carried out on occasions of highly personalized electoral turnings, not only favors even more the personalization tendencies of the policy, but creates the propitious conditions for the conquest of the political spectrum⁷.

It is a combination that has been verified, without great surprises, in the last US electoral campaign because, in effect, the technique of spectacularization and storytelling that is set in motion during the North American presidential competitions is well known, so much so that literature on the subject, he has spoken, on the occasion of horse-race campaigns, of “Americanization” of politics. In fact, the language and style used by Donald Trump fits and reflects this dynamic perfectly, since, in the first place, the “personage-candidate” has managed to star in the political space completely eclipsing both his counterpart and his own party.

Second, aware of the transversality and the multidirectionality of the NTC, Trump has focused all his strategy on the network⁸, resulting in an explosion of popularity, and, in terms of our analysis, has confirmed the techniques generally applied by leaders personalized-populists. More specifically, Donald Trump has led all the polls and has become the candidate with the highest number of followers in the network⁹ and, precisely, this strategy has revealed all its effectiveness, rolling a result that - from the beginning - showed Clinton’s advantage¹⁰.

Indeed, at this point of the reflection, it is worth asking what are the elements that, *de facto*, have favored the Trumpian wave. In this perspective, the consideration of some key variables around which the communication machinery that has taken off in the President’s campaign has gravitated, represents, according to our opinion, an important clarifying guide.

7. According to Ureña, this “is the propitious context for the appearance of ideological and political currents that involve new languages and strategies. Populism, with the citizen as a base around which it is articulated, finds a propitious means to develop”, cfr. Daniel Ureña, *El arte de hacer campaña en España y Estados Unidos: ventajas y similitudes*, «Tribuna Norteamericana», 19, p. 43. Disponible en: http://www.institutofranklin.net/sites/default/files/files/tribuna-19_4_web.pdf

8. As we will see immediately, through social networks and videos, as well as for example, broadcasting Q & A (Question and Answer) directly through Periscope.

9. Particularly, in reference to social networks, since the pre-campaign Trump had 12 million 127 thousand followers on Twitter, while Hillary Clinton with 9 million 407 thousand; on Facebook, with 4.06 million and on Instagram with 465,000. In addition, in consideration of the polls, Trump headed the polls of the primary of the Republican Party (23.4% of average), surpassing the other candidates Ben Carson and Marco Rubio, respectively, of 4.3 percentage points and 13.5 points percentages. The data refer to the average of all the surveys that were published on October 14, 2015 by the Real Clear Politics portal (www.realclearpolitics.com).

10. To check what we have just mentioned, for example, the famous face-to-face (whose audience exceeded 100 million), which, on the one hand, has been won by Hillary Clinton (62%), on the other hand it has shown that really the most cited on the network (especially Twitter) has been Trump.



First, we want to emphasize the strategy of projecting the image of the candidate as a superhero, who does not give content, but ideally, pushing the debate towards secondary themes for the other candidates. Then, arises the “laboratory packaging” -with Hollywood touch-offs around the personage that embodies patriotism, which mobilizes channeling emotions¹¹.

From this moment on, begins the propaganda, based on the constant growth of the levels of anxiety developed around the identification of a common enemy, through the harsh appeal and extremization of conservative ideals, an enemy against of which he presents his “simplified solution”, that is, to raise walls. All this has become reality through the heavy load of symbolism, which begins with the “Make America great again” printed on T-shirts and hats and which continues with the omnipresence on flags and bald eagles finally exploding into short videos. A condensation, that aimed at obtaining only one result, which is, the reaffirmation of the support by its electoral base and getting an echo in uncertain states; an objective that his political-electoral marketing team knew he could achieve through the focus of all media in the big show. Secondly, precisely in Trump’s style has made him the preferred showman of the media - so much so that many of his expressions have starred in the journalistic titles of the following day¹² - since for the logic of media formats they have been very attracting their little politically correct statements on immigration, with respect of women or other politicians¹³.

The quick overview that we have outlined allows us to configure the elucidations about the attempts of parallels that guide the current reflection. In fact, the form of strong personalization / populism that arises from the radical dramatization of the pillars of its program, the drawing of the latter on the channelization-politicization-polarization of social tension, the strong leadership incarnation / ideal of refoundation-restoration of the State by means of the control of the apparatus of the same one, they would trace an obscure *fil rouge* with the chavista tactics in Venezuela which identify the State with the image of the candidate. Likewise, the Trumpian “great again” strongly pushed on the protectionism / nationalism combination, which would converge perfectly with the Dilmanian “new economic matrix” program.

11. For example, with respect to just the three debates, the slogan (Make America Great Again) is repeated more than 20 times.

12. Realizing in this way a difference with the classic communication strategies, in which the techniques oscillated between clarity / concretion of the discourse or, conversely, confusion / nebulosity of the same. To deepen, see Del Rey Morató (2007, p. 47).

13. Very quickly, insults to Jeb Bush, for speaking Spanish; sexist cast comments directed at a FOX anchor and criticism of the conservative candidate for her physical appearance; and, clearly, racist statements against Latin American immigrants.



Nevertheless, the construction of the internal enemy would perfectly align with Thatcherism, whose enemies were the unions, as well as with the most classic American tradition, an enemy that today Trump identifies with Latin Americans and Muslims, announcing to stop this avalanche with respect to the famous wall and a record¹⁴.

In fact, following this route, the consideration of the variable demagogu-nationalism would strengthen in this aspect some coincidences with the populism of Latin American matrix, but also with the characteristics of North American tradition, coming to label the new President with the appellative of “Yankee caudillo”¹⁵.

In effect, Trump’s political style and his gestures would be adapted to the Latin American tendency, since the polarizing language that generates social fractures is typical of the latter, which in recent times, has been well represented in the campaign for the plebiscite for peace in Colombia. And, if on one hand, the proclamations of the President to fight for the forgotten would fall perfectly in the original tradition of American populism, it seems appropriate to remember that Peronism was also built on the struggle for the *descamisados* and, generally, Latin American populism historically has disguised itself behind the promises to transform unjust and unequal systems. However, this last variable would also lead us to the most recent forms of global personalization-populisms.

So, it is well understood the difficulty and, often, the confusion that arises from the varied nuances underlying these analogies. In this sense, in our opinion, it is fundamental for understanding Trump’s “phenomenon” to anchor these analysis in both the specific historical-political matrices that unleashed populism in the US and Latin America, as well as in the political-institutional typifications that underpin the two contexts.

Specifically, reconnecting with the reflections raised at the beginning of this article, the Latin American populism of the last decades can be understood as a response to the crisis of the hegemony of republican institutions, whose emptiness is filled by the leader’s highly charismatic domination. The specific features that shaped and characterized what will be known as Peronism, Chavism etc., can hardly be reproduced and, moreover, the approach of Trumpism to the latter later discordant the confines of these complicated issues. It should also be noted that Trump’s “Latin Americanization” is based on an artificial discursive technique,

14. This explains better the aforementioned, since in an ideological sense xenophobia-islamofobia does not differ much from what was anti-Semitism, while in a political perspective the phantom of terrorism has replaced the Bolshevik threat.

15. More specifically, we are referring to a column by Ishaan Tharoor published in The Washington Post, in which this name is symbolically strengthened with a photomontage that Trump superimposes on a Pinochet image.



since, in the first place, it symbolically presents Latin American leaders and processes in a contemptuous manner, and then linking the current President with these processes contributes in designing a panorama characterized by anomalies and obscurantism, thus trying to make a difference in respect to the past. Hence, in the second place, the metaphorical attack continues properly against Latin America, since the relationship with the President's controversial measures and actions tends to nourish the image of the Latin American region stifled by violence and authoritarianism.

In this perspective, resuming what has already been evidenced, strategies and political praxis attribute Trump to both the contemporary casuistry of strong personalization / leadership of politics, as well as to the classic North American populist topics, and also to the theme of the "imperial presidency", represented by the institutional uniqueness of the four consecutive governments of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or by the suspension of the constitutional guarantees required by George Bush junior and accepted by the US Congress after the attack on the Twin Towers, or by executive decrees of Obama's minority legislature. Undoubtedly, these are political practices that go beyond the constitutional limits¹⁶, but which, as we shall see shortly, can be contained by the proper functioning of the democratic system.

Conclusions. The new "model" of Trump as an effect of the transformations of contemporary democracies

That is understood as a pathology, a deviation, as the most evident symptom of the crisis of contemporaneity or, conversely, as the element through which to revitalize the agonizing democratic institutions, it is true that in recent years a relevant space of political science has been occupied by studies and reflections that seek to investigate the causes of the populist rise, both in Europe and in America. If, on one hand, it is undoubtedly a topic characterized by numerous nuances that, furthermore, underline the great ambiguity that underlies the very concept of

16. In effect, Franklin Delano Roosevelt has been the only president of the United States to be elected for more than two consecutive terms; while the increase in executive decrees, generally, represents an imbalance in relations at the institutional level and, clearly, feeds the concentration of powers in the hands of the leader / president. Likewise, the institutional decision taken after the attack on the Twin Towers "altered the equilibrium guaranteed by the theory of the separation of powers, a principle to which constitutional guarantees are related. In addition, according to the Constitution of the United States, these guarantees can only be suspended in the cases established by the Suspension Clause, that is, in the presence of internal rebellion or an invasion" (Picarella, 2016a, note 44).



populism, on the other, we consider the understanding of the spiral that today is overwhelming the whole world¹⁷.

The contemporary political systems, whose features appear more and more fluid¹⁸, have undoubtedly constituted the fertile *humus* that has nourished one of the cardinal elements of the most recent “populist waves”, that is, discontent. Indeed, taking simply into account two broad and general issues, such as the economy and immigration¹⁹, we realize the solid basis of disappointment on which the contemporary populist phenomenon has been based. Although, it is indisputable that solid institutions represent a counterweight capable of containing this dynamic, however, the current political context is evidencing the submission to significant transformation phenomena of the old democracies institutionalized also by political systems generally considered the cradle of democratic ideals.

In fact, the understanding of the paradigm that seems to be prevailing in the world panorama can be reduced to a key reflection that involves some basic factors, as such the logic that founded the ideal of economic-commercial globalization, whose effects favoring a ‘de-construction of sovereignty’ (Eisenstadt, 2002), has driven as anticipated towards the claim of hard nationalist practices.

In effect, the decisional relevance of the great economic forces, the presence of increasingly technical governments, the harsh rules of the game imposed by the multilevel government, have eroded the traditional concept of sovereignty, and clearly this institutional de-consolidation explains the recovery of protectionist policies and, at the same time, joins the next element that contributes to the so-called drift of contemporary political systems.

Undoubtedly, the strong split between rulers and the governed - emblem of the broad crisis of politics and representative democracy - offers fertile ground for actions aimed at stripping the meaning of traditional institutions and occupying the political vacuum produced through the total personalization / spectacularization of the policy and, therefore, of an attractive language. Finally, properly referring to this last aspect as the construction of political discourse is no longer placed on the ideologi-

17. On these issues, among others, I would like to point out Picarella (2016b); Picarella (2015).

18. Checking in fact the Baumannian liquidity process of modernity. To deepen, see Bauman (2003).

19. Since in the post-industrial countries the result of the mixture of globalization and neoliberal and capitalist practices has been the dismemberment of large productive sectors and a strong precariousness, in the countries characterized by a less advanced economy this same mixture has led to the loss of national control. This issue is significantly linked to immigration issues, because the corollary of the strong crisis that has distinguished the global economic-political landscape in recent years has been the strong intensification of migration flows, and the consequent tensions in the host countries.



cal approaches, but rather deviates towards the strong crushing of it on structures capable of occupying the disenchanted political space, namely, exclusion, nationalism, xenophobia and fear.

Contemporary praxis, then, readjusts the politics, for the purposes of promoting it, to the classic friend-enemy categories (Picarella, 2016a), pushing towards an alarming totalizing dimension, which also puts to the test those that, historically, have been considered among the most stable and institutionalized democracies.

In this sense, therefore, there seems to be a blurring of the differences that the classical literature on the subject has frequently underlined between the European, North American and Latin American populist tendencies, until arriving at what seems to be a surprising mixture between the typical elements of each one.

A quick overview of the events that have convulsed the global scene in recent years demonstrates the route that has been established in both continents, reflecting, in addition, where the balance hangs between the need to guarantee of social justice / security and the inability to offer a solution by traditional political institutions.

Strong polarization, politicization of social concerns through the feeding of fear in matters of internal security and economy, has undeniably represented the recurrent framework in the political speeches of contemporary leaders. The reproduction / repetition on a large scale of these messages, the successful mix between nationalism, growth of inequalities, social fear and channeling it towards immigrants, in fact, has contradictorily polarized the wave of anti-system protests that are igniting the systems of contemporary politicians.

The crisis of the traditional political-institutional anchors that underlies the global socio-economic conflict that we are witnessing today, symbolized to a large extent by the anti-establishment vote, is abruptly shaking both sides of the ocean, in fact, verifying the above said in terms of a probable dilution of the different populist traditions.

Basically, although it is true that for example in Europe the populist currents have generally approached extremists and xenophobic positions, on the contrary, in America they are rooted in ideals of a progressive mold. However in the last decades, there has been an interesting transformation that it has veered toward right-orthodox positions²⁰ condensing into what has been defined a form of ‘authoritarian populism’.

20. More specifically, in the United States these “evolutions” have been evident above all from the Reaganian and Nixonian style, culminating in the Tea Party chauvinism. In fact, if, on the one hand, these transformations seem to bring North American populism closer to forms such as French Poujadism, and, referring to more recent times, to Italian Berlusconiism, on the other hand, Latin American trends do not seem to escape these recurrent themes that, in a very basic way, we can summarize in a policy of channeling fear.



Indeed, the extreme patriotic exaltation, the immigrant-enemy, the threat of integrationist policies for the national economy and culture have been the leitmotiv that has guided all the electoral campaigns of personalized contemporary leaderships and that, paradoxically, has been totally embodied in the strategy of the President of the United States, in which the traditional mechanisms of citizen participation have been supplanted by the extreme push towards the indignation.

In this sense, despite the numerous protests that have been replicated around the world²¹, and that highlighted the danger represented in terms of freedoms and fundamental rights by the measures secured by the President, the first days of his administration have been key to try to transform the “epicenter” of your electoral strategy into reality. However, in consideration to the first year of the presidential mandate, what can be highlighted is that the attempts to implement the promises vigorously drawn in the electoral campaign by Trump have represented a spiral that, internally, has shaken the country causing the explosion of ethnic-social tensions, and also developing isolationist fractures in the name of the “American first” at the international level.

A synthesis of the steps that have marked the first stage of the Trumpian presidential administration seems opportune for the purpose of understanding the extreme link between political action and explosive rhetoric.

So, properly in consideration of the electoral affirmations, in the first place, the replacement of the health reform *Obamacare* has not yet been verified for the purposes of developing a more free health insurance market, and, although it is true that the health plan of the predecessor has been dismantled in some points by the tax reform, however the impossibility of fulfilling one of the President’s toughest promises has demonstrated in this case the strength of the partisan balancing.

Properly this aspect, refers to the consideration of the other promise cited, since the partisan stop to the health reform had to be ‘politically’ re-balanced through the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. In effect, if good economic indicators are recorded -and the tax reform has been repeatedly justified as a stimulus for economic growth - at the moment what seems to be registered is a ‘situation of commitment’²², in which the biggest beneficiaries of the reforms are the powerful corporations.

21. More specifically, at the time of the inauguration of the President, marches have been held in 50 States of the Federation, rapidly bouncing around the world: in fact, according to the data disseminated by The Action Network (<https://actionnetwork.org/>), 673 anti-Trump marches have been registered internationally.

22. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation in the next ten years taxes will rise for those who will have incomes below \$ 75,000, and, according to the Tax Policy Center will be a significant reduction in taxes only for those who are placed above 225 thousand dollars.



A drift in the neocon sense that, secondly, follows internally through the action of normative deregulation, and the abolition of the decisions of its predecessor. Some examples are the two decrees authorizing the construction of the Keystone XL and Dakota pipelines, in spite of allegations of environmental disasters that could be caused by them and by the protests of the Sioux tribe that feels threatened the water supply -, as well as in the abolition of the limits for the sale of weapons for the mentally ill, and in their appointment of the judges that. All of these has inevitably, divided the Senate and pushed towards a remodeling of the socio-civilian panorama. To this are united, undoubtedly, the great shadows registered at international level. Transcending the integrationist line and not considering the position of the analysts who have always identified this agreement as the means to counterbalance the Chinese rise, among the first executive orders is the exit of the TPP (Trans-Pacific Economic Cooperation Agreement). Likewise, and in order to project the beginning of the implementation of some of the most pompous electoral promises, the other executive order authorizes the construction of the famous wall between the United States and Mexico, the strengthening of border control, the harsh action against the so-called “sanctuary cities” and the blocking of visas for refugees (120 days for all and 90 days for the citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Iraq). Zero tolerance on immigration, which culminates in the serious border crisis - that is, the separation of children from their parents, guilty of illegally entering the US, a separation that will last until the final verdict of entry or expulsion - and that has unleashed the attention of international organizations and the UN itself about the inadmissibility of this policy. And, finally, is important to highlight also the President’s decision to leave the Paris Accords, announced during the electoral campaign and, again, justified in light of the “need” to guarantee the interests of authentic America²³. A will that, on one hand, shows the clear break with the action that characterized the Obama administration, strongly committed in the fight to counteract the effects of climate change, and that, on the other hand, disconcerts the delicate international balances.

Properly in consideration of this last aspect, if the G7 that met in Taormina at the end of May 2017 has shown the fragility of the new international relations within Europe²⁴, which culminate in the protectionist

23. «I am faithful to my solemn commitment to protect America and then announced that the United States will withdraw from the Paris Agreement. But, I am ready to negotiate a new agreement »(...)« The terms of this Agreement imply a great disadvantage for the United States »(...)« and we will not allow other Countries to laugh at the United States »(...)« I have been elected by the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris». The videos can be consulted in www.cnn.com

24. In fact, a diplomatic freeze, evidenced in the axis that has been formed between Macron-Merkel-Gentiloni, and that properly underlines the impossibility of renegotiating the Paris Agree-



measures required by Trump in the name of national security - the only tool that allows bypassing the will of Congress - that is, customs tariffs for cars, aluminum and steel, it is impossible not to consider what is being researched elsewhere, that is, more particularly, the recrudescence of relations with Venezuela and with North Korea.

In fact, despite the initial desire to establish respectful political, energy and economic relations, the course of the months has presented a progressive aggravation that culminates in the declaration by Trump of the application of massive and rapid economic sanctions in case of the implementation of the Constituent Assembly demanded by Maduro, an imposition surrounded by a harsh repression of the protests that hardens even more the oppositions between the leaders. Indeed, on one hand, Trump has affirmed not to exclude a possible military option to face the serious Venezuelan crisis while, on the other hand, Maduro has evoked the old scheme of imperialist conspiracy, underlining a profound revision of relations with North America and Venezuela's response capacity in case of US aggression. A threat that, paradoxically, could strengthen Maduro, once again giving legitimacy to the *Chavista* argument of the struggle against the US empire for the defense of national sovereignty, and that, in addition, could presage the formation of a dramatic world scenario, that at moment is held to the limit of strong public threats.

In effect, what at the beginning has been labeled as a new isolationism in international politics, almost seemed to take up neocon strategies with the nightmare of a war on two fronts, that is, without taking into account the Afghan front, on one hand the crisis with Venezuela and on the other hand, the sudden break with North Korea. The latter, characterized by an uncontrollable escalation based on demonstrations of forces on both sides, since within only three weeks North Korea has launched two inter-continental missiles potentially capable of reaching the US which, in turn, has perfected the anti-missiles defense tests.

Indeed, the intensification of this crisis - crowned with the harsh threats of Kim Jong -Un of definitively ending those trying to suppress the socialist country, and Trump's responses of being ready for a preventive disproportionate military solution, capable of annihilating them - it contributed to overwhelm a scenario that presented itself as highly complicated²⁵, and that has found its moment of relaxation at the Singapore

ment, since in the joint statement of the three leaders highlights «sadness for the election of the United States and firm conviction that the thrust generated in Paris is irreversible and can not be renegotiated».

25. In fact, fears at the international level are probably proven by the fact that, in reference to Venezuela, the Pentagon has specified that it has no indications on possible armed interventions, in view of the North-Korean intimidations, they were complicated the declarations in terms of



Summit between Trump and Kim Jong-Un. Undoubtedly, the result of this 'historic transition' has a more interesting sense in terms of geostrategic, since behind the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program lies both the elimination of a constant element of risk in the northeast of Asia, as well as a new international legitimacy for Korea, and the promise of suspension of US-South Korea military exercises, eventually this last one well received by China and Russia.

Russia, which from the beginning has been in the sights of Trump on the issue of Russiagate, and which exited totally victorious at the Helsinki meeting²⁶, whose reading inexorably rejects the capitulation of Trump and the inability to lead a new world leadership, against the strengthened international role of Putin's Russia.

The rapid overview we have drawn allows us to bring some partial reports on the first year of the Trumpian Presidency, both internally and externally. In reference to the first level, the social fracture seems to be very deep, today more than ever, and the attitude of the president himself has often fueled the divisions between the different souls of the United States.

De facto, what became clear from his first steps is the route that Trump wants to rigorously respect in his administration, evidently so as not to disappoint his electoral support base and, of course, the big vot-

preparation for action and evaluation of all kinds of options of some senior officials of the air forces and the national security system. In practice, Japan and Russia are strengthening their air measures and, in addition, Mosca along with Beijing invite to leave aside the rhetoric and to consider moderate attitudes to limit the high risk of an armed conflict. It should also be noted that the North Korean crisis has also exacerbated relations with China, blamed by Trump for lack of collaboration; in fact, in a few tweets the President of the United States writes "I am very disappointed with China. Our foolish leaders of the past allowed China to earn hundreds of billions of dollars each year through bilateral trade (...) They do nothing for us on the North Korean question, just talks. We can no longer allow it, China could easily solve this problem!". For its part, Beijing diplomatically underlines the will to work together with the international community to denuclearize the Korean territory and together with the US to balance bilateral trade. Indeed, the relations that move in the Asian board do not seem simple, since if in a commercial perspective China and North Korea continue to increase trade (+ 10% in the first quarter of 2017, compared to the same period of the year past) however at the diplomatic level the relations between the two countries cooled down at the end of 2012, when China supported the UN sanctions against North Korea, also considering the possibilities of applying new sanctions in case of other atomic tests; in this sense, the indecision of China over North Korea - justified above all in consideration of the role of the latter of being the Asian limit to American influence - seems to leave the way to a great distrust between the two, but, properly the complexity of these relationships, check that this question is much more intricate than of the imagined.

26. The topics considered in the meeting were the question of Ukraine and in particular the North American openness to the annexation of Crimea, the problem of Syria, with the American request to limit the Iranian influence in the region, and the eventual renewal of the New Start Treaty, that is, the nuclear weapons reduction treaty. However, despite these issues, the game has been played properly in reference to the issue of Russiagate, i.e., the attempt of the Russian intelligences to manipulate the American elections of 2016, and which is resolved in a political-media disaster, with Trump that moves accusations against the intelligence agencies and some congressional commissions that had guided the investigations, to later rectify.



ers. In this sense, for example, is the ambivalent attitude of the President on the occasion of the violent urban guerrilla unleashed by the white nationalist extremists²⁷, who have invaded the small city of Charlottesville forcing the Governor of the State of Virginia to proclaim a state of emergency.

However, despite the consternation and quick condemnation by the US political world of these disgusting incidents, the strong criticisms directed at Trump's belated reaction do not stop, especially in light of the support of right-wing extremism for its electoral campaign²⁸. An ambiguous behavior, which, then, can be read as part of a precise political strategy, tending to amortize in front of the public opinion some cultural contents - which could nevertheless be inserted in dangerous recessive spirals - typical of the imaginary of the white nationalist extremists, that claim the supremacy of the white race and that they have played a relevant role for the electoral victory of the current President, cohesive in particular around protectionist and nationalist policies.

Unquestionably the victory of Donald Trump, while aligning itself with the personalist-populist world trajectory, also represents a political turnaround of the American interior level, as well as at the international level, blowing the ghost of a slide towards a stage of severe systemic conflict. Ignorance of the organisms and multilateral agreements, reckless acts such as the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the break with historical partners, the reactivation of old world crises, spill into a simple loss of strength and international prestige.

In the terms of this analysis, and based on what has been evaluated so far, Trump has expressed the victory of an even more modern version of the concept "personalization-leadership-candidate", and the guidelines that have guided his political praxis both in terms of electoral strategies and their first actions, seem to oscillate between stronger tendencies of personalization and a form of populism within which different currents are nuanced.

27. The violent clashes occurred on the occasion of the march "Unite the Right" to protest against the decision of the mayor to remove the statue of General Robert Lee, a slave of slavery and head of the Confederate forces during the Civil War (1861-1865). Between Nazi slogans to the cry of "Heil Hitler", the situation is precipitated when a car has been launched on anti-racist counter-demonstration, killing a participant.

28. Indeed, the President delays a few hours before commenting, according to the typical modality of the tweets, that "there is no place in America for this type of violence", adding later that "hatred and divisions have to end right now. We have to unite as Americans in love for our nation (...) we love our God, we love our flag (...) we want the situation in Charlottesville to be resolved, we condemn in the strongest possible terms this great demonstration of hatred that has come from different sides ». However, the controversy does not stop, as the same mayor of Charlottesville, Michael Signer, attributes the responsibility of these events to Trump and an election campaign that has fostered organized racism.



In this perspective, indeed, if the significant personalist dynamics have been evidently favored by the President's businessman background, however, it is worth mentioning the possibility of placing Trump himself in the groove of the American populist tradition. This represents his base of departure and, at the same time, the element of novelty of his style, constituted by the relevant decisionism that characterizes his political attitude, that represents a variable that would bring him closer to Latin American models, since assuming what we have previously considered, that is to say that these praxis and political conducts are also nuanced in the action of highly personalized leaderships, which have characterized the history of both the American continent and Europe.

In conclusion, it seems important to remember that for the purpose of the predominance of one tendency over the other, a fundamental influence will be decreed by the intervention of intra-institutional and intra-partisan elements²⁹, tending clearly to re-balance the democratic functioning of the system. It is therefore a question of properly observing the foundation of the same system on a typically democratic criterion, that is, accountability, and the contraction applied to these dynamics by the articulation of the constitutional state, considering the solid institutionally of American democracy, strongly anchored to the traditional checks and balances mechanisms³⁰.

29. Clearly, at the institutional level, we are referring to the checks and balances devices, which, as we will see, represent a fundamental counterweight to mitigate the power of leadership, mechanisms to which, at the political-partisan level, the dimension of the party in central office, that is, the counter-balancing that can be triggered from within the party. In consideration of this last variable, it seems that already within the same Grand Old Party there is a form of estrangement from the executive orders of Trump by Mitch McConnell, leader of the majority in the Senate. Important to consider, in addition, the approach of the liberal-democratic forces to the leftist positions guided by Senator Bernie Sanders, especially after the events in Virginia, which could shape the conditions for a strong block to the opposition.

30. Undoubtedly, has had a great effect the news of the denunciation of unconstitutionality of the decrees of the President on immigration matters by the general attorneys of 15 States of the Federation, argued by the threat that these measures constitute for the ideals of American society. In this sense, for example, the strong media resonance of the words of Senator Bernie Sanders: "Mr. Trump, you are not going to divide us up by gender, by race, by who we love. Your bigotry is bringing us together in a progressive movement. We are not going to retreat on women's right, immigration rights, workers' rights, health care rights, racial justice or climate change". Likewise, the aforementioned partisan stop to health reform moves in the sense of political-institutional rebalancing, as well as the shutdown, that is to say, the blockade of the budget due to the lack of a majority in the Senate, so rare in consideration of the majority of the president in the two branches of Congress.



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