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Trump, Populism, and American Foreign Policy

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Abstract: Employing a discursive understanding of populism and combining it with insights of poststructuralist International Relations theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis, this article examines the conceptual links between foreign policy and populist forms of identity construction as well as the ideological force that populism can unfold in the realm of foreign policy. It conceptualizes populism and foreign policy as distinct discourses that constitute collective identities by relating Self and Other. Identifying different modes of Othering, the article illustrates its arguments with a case study on the United States under Donald Trump and shows how the Trumpian discourse used foreign policy as platform for the (re)production of a populist-nationalist electoral coalition. Unlike common conceptions of populism as ideology that misrepresents reality, the article argues that the discourse develops its ideological appeal by obscuring the discursive character of social reality and promising to satisfy the subject's illusive desire for a complete and secure identity.

Introduction

The election of Donald Trump in the United States has perhaps been the most striking manifestation of the recent populist upsurge. Populists across the world appeal to ‘the people’ and pit them against ‘the elite’ that is accused of undermining popular sovereignty (Moffitt 2016). A famous real-estate mogul and reality TV star, Trump had no experience in government and presented himself as outsider who will “drain the swamp in Washington” (Trump 2016a) and fix a system that is “rigged against [...] the American people” (Trump 2016b) – rigged by corrupt elites who “sold out their country” by putting the “needs” of the American people “second to the citizens of foreign countries” (Trump 2016c). In his election campaign, Trump contested the bipartisan consensus on American internationalism that guided US foreign policy since World War II: he called NATO obsolete, accused US allies of ripping the US off through unfair trade practices and defense burden-sharing, and suggested that the promotion of the liberal international order would not be in American interest (Brands 2017; Ikenberry 2017).

The prominent role of foreign policy issues in Trump’s campaign indicates that populism is not limited to domestic politics. The populism and International Relations (IR) literature, however, has paid hardly any attention to the international aspects of populism. While the populism literature makes reference to international phenomena such as globalization or the European Union (EU) (cf. Mudde 2007), it offers no analysis of the ways in which populists use or conduct foreign policy. IR scholarship, by contrast, has only very recently begun to address the phenomenon of populism more systematically (Chryssogelos 2017; Verbeek and Zaslove 2017; Plagemann and Destradi 2019). This emerging literature follows predominantly an understanding of populism as ‘thin’ ideology, which frames politics as a battle between the ‘pure’ people and the ‘corrupt’ elites accused of flouting the general will (Mudde 2007), and seeks to discern the impact of populist ideology on foreign policy. Though foregrounding

the notion of ideology, this approach offers very little insights into the concept of ideology itself – for instance, what makes populism ideological or how this ideological dimension generates the appeal of populism – thereby raising questions about the analytical value of using the concept of ideology in the first place. In addition, IR studies following this approach grapple with distinguishing populism from the ‘thicker’ ideologies with which it is combined and identifying policy preferences that are distinct to populism and would not equally apply to a nationalist foreign policy as well (cf. Verbeek and Zaslove 2017; Plagemann and Destradi 2019).

The tendency to analytically conflate populism and nationalism can also be found in parts of the IR literature on Trump. This literature has, inter alia, discussed the impact of Trump on US grand strategy and the liberal world order and core tenets of his foreign policy such as economic nationalism and a transactional understanding of international relations (Brands 2017; Carpenter 2017; Drezner 2017; Wolf 2017; Friedman Lissner and Rapp-Hooper 2018; Jervis et al. 2018; Lake 2018; Stokes 2018). Though some scholars argue that Trumps departure from US foreign policy fundamentals is less dramatic than popularly perceived (Stokes 2018), most studies suggest that Trump poses a threat to US foreign policy and the liberal order and blame his populism for it. Though often referring to Trump’s populism, many scholars take the meaning of populism more or less for granted or essentially equate it with (economic) nationalism (Carpenter 2017; Drezner 2017; Friedman Lissner and Rapp-Hooper 2018; Lake 2018). This also applies to the scholarship that links the Trump phenomenon to the return of a “distinctively American populism”: “Jacksonianism” (Mead 2017, 3) which understands America as “a folk community bound together by deep cultural and ethnic ties” originating primarily in a common European heritage, White identity, and Protestantism (Mead 1999/2000, 9). Moreover, Mead’s ‘Jacksonian’ argument runs the risk of reifying and essentializing the sociopolitical categories it seeks to explain, since it seems to affirm the

populist claim that US society is indeed divided into two antagonistic and homogenous blocs: the liberal elite in metropolitan areas versus the ‘pure’ people in the American ‘heartland’.

Against this backdrop, this article employs an analytical framework that allows for capturing the interrelation of foreign policy, populism, and nationalism as well as the ideological force of populism. In particular, it examines how ‘the people’ Trump claims to represent are constructed through foreign policy and how Trump has used US foreign policy to stage himself as the representative of a popular will. Drawing on a discursive conception of populism (Laclau 2005; De Cleen 2017; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017) and combining it with insights of poststructuralist IR theory (Campbell 1998; Hansen 2006; Nabers 2009) and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Žižek 1989, Stavrakakis 1999; in IR, see Solomon 2015, Eberle 2017), this article understands populism as a discursive strategy of constructing a collective identity of ‘the people’ by linking together different (unmet) social demands and placing them into a joint opposition to an Other – the establishment or elite – which is accused of frustrating the fulfilment of these demands. By focusing on the distinct ways of creating collective identities through the establishment of political boundaries between Self and Other, a discursive approach provides not only analytical tools for distinguishing between populism and nationalism, but can also take into account different variants of populism. In addition, it allows for bringing populism scholarship in dialogue with poststructuralist IR which conceptualizes foreign policy as a discourse that (re)produces the Self (the state) by demarcating it from a series of (threatening) foreign Others (Campbell 1998; Wojczewski 2019).

Combining these approaches to populism and foreign policy, this article argues that the populist notion of the people can also be a subjectivity that is constituted and reproduced via the discourse of foreign policy and discusses different ways of using the discourse of foreign policy for the populist construction of the people. By identifying different types of Othering, the article shows how the Trumpian discourse used foreign policy as platform for construct-

ing a collective identity of the people as both nation and underdog, thereby combining nationalist and populist sentiments, and for heaving Trump to a position from where he can claim to be the 'true' representative of the people.

For understanding the appeal of this discourse, it is however necessary to go beyond a mere focus on Othering and examine its ideological or affective dimension. In contrast to common understandings of ideology as general belief-system or false consciousness, this article argues that ideologies can be conceived of as those practices that obscure the discursive construction of social reality. Informed by poststructuralist and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory (Žižek 1989; Glynos 2001), this approach to ideology studies the role of ideologies by analyzing the practices which make the illusion of an objective reality possible. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has introduced the notion of fantasy as such an ideological practice promising the Self a sense of fullness, certainty, and stability by placing it into a linear, coherent narrative and relating it to what challenges this secure sense of Self (Žižek 1989; Glynos 2008a). The ideological appeal of the Trumpian discourse lies, as this article will show, in the construction of such a fantasy narrative that channels emotions such as hope and fear and nostalgia and desire captured by Trump's campaign slogan 'Make America Great Again!'.

The article is organized as follows: The first section outlines the key features of a poststructuralist, discourse-theoretical understanding of populism, and how populism and its relationship to nationalism and foreign policy can be conceptualized from this theoretical perspective. The second section discusses the ideological appeal of populist discourses and how they, via the construction of distinct fantasies, mask over the essential incompleteness of (what is viewed as) social reality, thereby offering the Self the illusion of wholeness and identity. The third section briefly elaborates on the study's methodology, before the fourth section applies this analytical framework to the case of the US and shows how the Trumpian discourse has used foreign policy to (re)produce a collective identity of the people.

Relating Self and Other: The Discourses of Populism, Nationalism, and Foreign Policy

A discourse-theoretical approach to populism foregrounds a nonessentialist conception of identity and understands populism as a distinct discursive mode of constructing and claiming to represent the people (Laclau 2005). Attributing ontological primacy to the concept of discourse, it is based on the premise that all subjects, objects, and actions are meaningful, with meaning being conferred by particular systems of significant differences (Howarth 2000, 101). By establishing a relation between different elements, a discourse constitutes the meanings of subjects, objects, and practices and thereby provides a particular way of interpreting and understanding social reality (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105).

Populist discourses are articulated around the signifier 'the people'. As discursive nodal point, it is the prime reference point for creating a collective meaning-system that unites different social actors in a common political project. The notion of 'the people', as Laclau argues, symbolizes a so-called empty signifier. An empty signifier is a signifier without (a distinct) signified, that is, it can take various, and even contradictory, meanings, thereby allowing different actors to identify with a particular political project (Laclau 2005, 69f./85ff.). While empty signifiers give discourses their identity by providing a common point of reference for different positions and thus representing the chain of signification articulated by the discourse as a whole, the construction of this chain is made possible through, what Laclau and Mouffe call, logics of equivalence. A logic of equivalence creates a commonality between different social demands qua subversion by placing them into a common opposition to an Other (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 127). In populist discourses, the establishment serves as such a common negation against which different unsatisfied demands can be represented as equivalent insofar as the establishment is accused of frustrating these demands, thereby serving as common enemy for the constitution of a popular identity (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 311). Thus, the elite becomes the antagonist that is blamed for depriving the people of

their sovereignty and identity, enabling populist actors to claim that they represent this unaddressed popular will.

By focusing on the constitution of collective identities through distinct ways of relating Self and Other, a discursive approach offers analytical tools for distinguishing between populism and nationalism. While populism is often – both analytically and empirically – linked to or conflated with nationalism, populist and nationalist notions of the people are not identical. While populism constructs ‘the people’ as ‘underdogs’, ‘powerless’, or ‘silent majority’ by relating them through a down/up antagonism to an illegitimately powerful, out-of-touch elite, as De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017, 309f.) have shown, nationalism constructs a collective identity through an in/out distinction by relating the national community to its constitutive outside (e.g., other nations or immigrants). Though nationalist discourses often make reference to the people, they typically moderate the emptiness of the notion of the people and give it a relatively concrete meaning by defining the people in ethnic-cultural or nativist terms.

This understanding of populism and nationalism as boundary-drawing practice demarcating the Self from the Other resembles the way in which poststructuralist IR has conceptualized foreign policy as a discourse that constructs and reproduces a Self (the state) in opposition to (dangerous) Others (Campbell 1998; Hansen 2006; Nabers 2009; Wojczewski 2018). This implies that “[n]o state possesses a prediscursive, stable identity” (Campbell 1998, 12) but is “constructed by the discursive practices of those who speak about, write about, and act on its behalf” (Doty 1993, 310). Relating the state to the international system as a space of difference, Otherness, and dangers, the practice of foreign policy does not merely denote, as conventionally understood, the external orientation and relations of a state but (re)produces the very entity in whose name it operates by creating and sustaining a sense of belonging and commonality among the members of the political community.

While the discourse of foreign policy constructs state and national identities by drawing a

political boundary between inside and outside, it can also, as this article argues, be established as a key site for the (re)production of the populist notion of the people. Foreign policy then serves populist actors, in opposition or government, as platform to assert themselves as ‘true’ representative of the people, thereby creating a popular identity and social order. While De Cleen and Stavrakakis’ (2017) discourse-theoretical typology of populism and nationalism is based on a spatial differentiation and would thus arguably link the practice of foreign policy to nationalism’s in/out distinction,¹ there are also different ways in which populist actors can use the discourse of foreign policy to construct a populist project (Wojczewski 2019). These discursive strategies can be identified by studying how the populist core categories (‘the people’ and ‘the elite’) can be placed in different antagonistic relationships in the realm of foreign policy, ranging from a pure populist up/down antagonism to antagonisms characterized by both inside/outside and up/down dichotomies:

(1)Foregrounding an up/down antagonism, a discourse can represent the people-as-underdogs who have been disenfranchised by a ‘corrupt’ foreign policy that is driven by the interests or morals of the elite or dominated by the special interests of powerful actors within the state such as corporations or the military-industrial complex. Both left-wing and right-wing populist discourses can employ such a representation of foreign policy to unite ‘the people’ in a common front against an establishment accused of betraying the ‘common’ people and their popular will in the state’s foreign policy.

(2)Right-wing populist projects typically seek to reinforce this people/elite antagonism by grouping together establishment and foreign Other and making them a collaborative ‘enemy of the people’. Accusing the domestic power elite of colluding with foreign forces (e.g., other states, international organizations, or migrants) and thereby depriving the people of their on-

¹ For a study that aims to develop a discourse-theoretical typology of populist and different variants of non-populist foreign policies, see Eberle 2018.

tological and physical security², this discursive strategy provides right-wing populists with a powerful antagonistic Other against which a collective identity of the people-as-nation-and-underdog can be constituted and sustained once the populist actor is in government.

(3) Another discursive strategy that combines populism's up/down with nationalism's inside/outside antagonism pits 'the people' against transnational power elites. While left-wing populist discourses would foreground the up/down antagonism and represent this elite, which can be situated in inter- and supranational organizations or multinational corporations, as a small but illegitimately powerful group that has no (direct) democratic legitimacy, right-wing populist discourses would additionally emphasize their status as *foreigners* who illegitimately seek to interfere into the affairs of the sovereign national community. This representation of transnational elites as 'enemy of the people' can not only be used by populists in opposition, but is also a particularly attractive discursive strategy for populists in power, allowing them to blame the transnational Other for preventing the government from restoring popular sovereignty.

When a people/elite antagonism is constructed in the realm of foreign policy through one of these discursive strategies, this antagonism is centered on the question of popular sovereignty and implies that a populist foreign policy is sovereignty-oriented. While the perseverance of sovereignty is typically seen as a key objective of all states, as IR realists highlight in particular, populist discourses politicize and contest what is typically considered to be the state or national interest by claiming that it only serves the establishment (and potentially the foreign Other) but not the 'common people', the 'man in the street', or the 'silent majority'. This, in turn, allows populists to claim that they are the voice of 'the people' and will restore popular sovereignty. This identity of the populist actor rests, like the identity of the people-as-underdogs, on a process of Othering through which the populist actor is differentiated from

² For the relationship between ontological and physical security, see Rumelili 2015.

the political establishment – typically by highlighting its status as political outsider (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 64/73) – and placed alongside ‘the people’.

While the discursive construction of the people/elite antagonism is the prerequisite for populist politics, the appeal of populism, as the following section will elaborate, also lies in its ideological or affective dimension that can explain why a particular populist project is effective in mobilizing ‘the people’.

Populism and Ideology: The Affective Force of Populist Discourses

The characterization of populism as ideology has become almost commonplace in contemporary populism scholarship (Mudde 2007, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, Müller 2016). What exactly makes populism ideological is however less clear. By understanding populism as an ideational belief-system, Mudde and other scholars drawing on the thin-centered ideology approach seem to make a distinction between ideas and a (material) reality which is misrepresented by populism, thus offering a rather conventional understanding of ideology as ‘misrecognition of reality’. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, by contrast, the very assertion that there is an objectively given reality is already ideological, because our access to this reality is always mediated by discourses which merely offer a *particular* understanding and interpretation of social reality at the expense of alternative representations. Accordingly, ideologies can still be defined in terms of misrecognition or distortion, however not of how things ‘really’ are, but of the purely discursive character of social objectivity (Glynos 2001). As such, ideologies conceal the purely discursive constitution of subjects and objects (Norval 2013, 160) and thus their ontological *lack* that prevents them from obtaining a full, stable, and secure identity, since this identity can only be established by difference and Otherness. Drawing on Lacanian theory, Laclau uses the notion of lack to highlight that identities have no extradiscursive foundation and thus remain essentially incomplete (Laclau 1990, 39). This

inherent lack is rendered visible in situations of dislocation when particular phenomena or experiences cannot be represented or explained by a pre-existing discourse (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 14). A dislocatory event confronts the Self with its incomplete identity and is therefore typically experienced as crisis (cf. Nabers 2015). While poststructuralist scholarship typically conceptualizes this crisis in rather structuralist terms, the case of populism shows how populist actors can co-construct this sense of crisis by dramatizing and perpetuating dislocatory events (cf. Moffitt 2016, 114ff.). Populists blame the elite for this “experience of a lack” (e.g., lack of political representation or justice) and present different societal actors as collective victim of this crisis, heaving the populist actor to a position from where it can claim to represent this popular will and offer a way-out of the crisis (Laclau 2005, 85).

A Lacanian approach sheds light on the underlying dynamics that generate and sustain discursive processes of Othering. Accordingly, it is the lack of a complete identity that stimulates desire to overcome this lack (and the anxieties, uncertainties, and insecurities associated with it) and orients this desire toward an empirical object that promises the realization of wholeness or the solution to our current ‘crisis’ (Solomon 2015, 15/37f.). This is achieved by the ideological device of fantasy. Narrated within discourses, fantasies picture a course of action that promises to satisfy the subject’s desire for a sense of wholeness, certainty, and security and thereby obscure its ontological lack (Žižek 1989; Stavrakakis 1999; Glynos 2008a; Eberle 2017). Populist discourses channel this desire toward the object of ‘the people’ which promises to reestablish social objectivity as well as the absent unity and harmony of society. As signifier of lack, the empty signifier of the people attempts to represent what is missing in a society: the sovereignty of ‘the people’ and thereby offers an attractive source of identification that promises the subject to overcome this lack.

Through fantasy, populist discourses unfold their affective power and appeal that is played out in a distinct form of narrative. While fantasies can be articulated in different types of dis-

courses, they are always structured around two interconnected storylines: an “idealized scenario promising an imaginary fullness” (e.g., the realization of popular sovereignty) once a particular obstacle is overcome and a “disaster scenario” that will materialize if this obstacle is not removed (Glynos 2008a, 283). The content of these storylines depends on the privileged signifiers of the respective discourse and the antagonisms it constructs; in the case of populism: ‘the people’ vs. ‘the elite’.

Both storylines evoke and channel specific emotions. The first storyline initially arouses feelings such as hope, desire, omnipotence, or nostalgia. By scapegoating the Other for blocking the promised state of fullness, a fantasy then triggers feelings such as fear, anxiety, anger, impotence, or victimhood, which are further aggravated by the ‘disaster’ storyline that represents the Other as existential danger to the Self. By representing the world through this binary, emotion-laden frame, fantasies simplify and personalize social, political, and economic processes and thereby reduce complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. In doing so, they also fuel resentments and prejudices existing in a society and arouse desire in their specific audience through acts of transgression, in which subjects derive unconscious pleasure from practices that are considered to be obscene, inappropriate, or politically incorrect (Žižek 1997, 25; Glynos 2008b, 694). Through such acts of transgression, populists can distinguish themselves from the political establishment and sustain the subject’s desire for identifying with the populist project. Hence, what makes such fantasy appealing is that it purports to offer the subject an extradiscursive “essence” and “foundational guarantee of sorts” (Glynos 2008a, 283/287) in that it directs feelings of lack, ambiguity, insecurity, or loss away from the subject and projects them onto the Other, thereby promising that the elimination of the Other will bring a complete and secure identity: the sovereign people.

Methodological Approach

Building on the theoretical framework outlined in the two previous sections, this article carries out a discourse analysis. The premise of a discourse-analytical approach is that language does not neutrally reflect a world ‘out there’ but plays an active role in constituting it. Accordingly, a discourse analysis searches for patterns in language-use and thereby seeks to identify and analyze the different signifying practices through which intersubjective meaning-systems are produced, stabilized, and contested in a particular body of texts (Howarth 2000, 10).

As the Trumpian discourse is an example for a leader-centric form of populism, the present article re- and deconstructed this discourse on the basis of Trump’s public statements. The body of texts for the analysis consists of Trump’s election campaign speeches, newspaper interviews, tweets (between the announcement of his candidacy till July 2018), the presidential election TV debates, foreign policy-related speeches and statements during his presidency, and his quasi-election manifesto *Great Again: How to Fix our Crippled America*. By analyzing this broad body of texts, the article takes into consideration different formats through which Trump sought to appeal to the people and illuminates how a populist actor employs linguistic and other semiotic means to unite them in a common political project.

The first step in the textual analysis is the search for the discourse’s nodal points and thus for privileged signifiers that appear to structure the textual data. ‘The people’ and ‘America’ can be identified as such privileged signifiers which reoccur in most texts and serve as main points of reference. Having identified appearances of these privileged signifiers in the textual material and terms that are used in concordance with them such as ‘the forgotten men and women’, the discourse analysis then interprets the meaning of these signifiers by analyzing the context in which the terms are used. In contrast to referential theories of language which assert that words obtain their meanings by referring to a world of objects, a poststructuralist,

discourse-analytical approach postulates that meaning is constituted in relation to difference. Hence, context refers here to the situating of signifiers in their textual surroundings and the detecting of patterns of relating different terms/concepts across texts. Key dimensions of this textual analysis are (1)predication and cooccurrences: identification of features attributed to the core signifiers in the textual material and of other concepts occurring in the sentences or paragraphs in which these signifiers are used; (2)subject positioning: search for classificatory schemes that place the privileged signifiers and other related concepts into particular categories and hierarchies (e.g., good/bad, in/out, or peaceful/dangerous); (3)narratives: identification of narrative structures in the body of texts which link actors, processes, and events into clear, simplistic, and coherent storylines.

The Trumpian Discourse and Foreign Policy: ‘Making America Great Again’

Dislocation and Crisis

The emergence of the Trumpian discourse can be understood as reaction to dislocatory events. Dislocatory events exceed discursive representation insofar as they cannot be fully symbolized or explained by a dominant discourse. By rupturing established identities and meaning-systems, dislocations confront the subject with its ontological lack – the absence of stable (extradiscursive) foundations on which its identities and understandings of social reality could be grounded – and typically leave the Self in a state of crisis. Dislocations often embody deep societal grievances such as a lack of political representation, equality, or employment.

Like other populists, Donald Trump seized on fears and anxieties emanating from dislocations, in particular: (1)the dislocations of (neoliberal) globalization that rupture established conceptions of space, time, being, and belonging such as the nation or the state and create feelings of physical, ontological, and economic insecurity insofar as phenomena (e.g., capital

flows, shifts in production patterns, terrorism, humanitarian crises, or migration) that often originate beyond the state's control can affect everyday life and hollow out state sovereignty and political accountability (Kinnvall 2006; Rojecki 2016).

(2)The rise of illiberal capitalism through China which emerged as the world's second biggest economy and resisted political liberalization, while the US experienced a decline of its manufacturing base, widespread income stagnancy, and a severe financial and economic crisis in 2007-09. This contests the discursive representation of the United States as a nation that embodies universal values such as economic and political liberty and derives its own sense of greatness from the fact that its founding principles are not limited to America itself. In other words, China challenges the self-understanding of the United States as global leading power of the most successful and universally valid model of social order: liberal capitalist democracy (Nymalm 2013).

(3)The election of Barack Obama as first non-White president in US history dislocated ethnic-cultural representations of US identity which articulate a strong sense of White, European, and Christian identity (Lieven 2004, 93ff.). While Obama could as young, non-establishment candidate domestic strong anti-establishment sentiments that have existed since the financial and economic crisis within US society (Schier and Eberly 2017, 3ff.), his election simultaneously contested the hierarchical identity construction of the privileged White Self and the inferior non-White Other and symbolized the apparent decline of the dominance of White Americans with European ancestry.

Articulating and reinforcing these experiences of dislocation, Trump shaped a discourse that conjured up a sense of existential crisis, socioeconomic anxieties and grievances, and a complete disconnect between the American people and the establishment. In the words of Trump: "Our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore" (Trump 2015a); "we have lost million and millions of jobs to China and other countries" (Trump 2016d). "[W]e're

in the middle of a jobs crisis, a border crisis and a terrorism crisis like never before” (Trump 2016e). “We’re like a third-world country. [...] The idea of American Greatness, of our country as the leader of the free and unfree world, has vanished” (Trump 2015b, x/xiii). “Our country, in a certain sense, is disappearing” (Trump 2016g) – “the American dream is dead” (Trump 2015a).

Restoring the Sovereignty of the American People: Empty Signifier

The Trumpian discourse appealed to voters through a fantasy narrative that promised to overcome this deplorable situation and restore social order by obscuring the essential incompleteness of US subjectivity and thereby provide the Self with an imaginary essence and foundation that defines its place in the world. The narrative names the causes of this crisis and the path of action to be taken to eliminate it. Through this narrative, the discourse constructed a new subjectivity as a source of identification that holds out the promise of recapturing the perceived-to-be-lost (though ultimately unattainable) sense of wholeness. Following a populist logic, this subjectivity is expressed first and foremost through the empty signifier ‘the people’ as signifier of lack that can symbolize a range of social grievances – “our country lost its way when we stopped putting the American people first” (Trump 2016b) – and promises “a government of, by and for the people. [...] We Will Be One American People” (Trump 2016h) and “We Will Make America Wealthy Again. We Will Make America Strong Again. We Will Make America Safe Again. And We Will Make America Great Again” (Trump 2016i).

This is the ‘idealized’ storyline of the fantasy that promises an imaginary fullness: a united, harmonious, and strong people who rules itself. When “[t]he American People will come first once again” (Trump 2016j), America will, as the narrative promises, also restore its wealth, security, strength, unity, and greatness, thus recapturing its identity as global leading power.

This promise to *restore* popular sovereignty and American greatness provides the subject with ‘foundational guarantee’ by depicting a mythical image of the past when the American people allegedly possessed a complete and secure identity. Through his election slogan ‘Make America Great Again’, Trump thus sparks the nostalgic desire for the restoration of a ‘golden age’ and the security, status, and simplicity that this glorious past seemingly provided: “We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth—and we will bring back our dreams” (Trump 2017).

For popularizing this narrative and establishing a close connection to ‘the people’, Trump has relied heavily on *Twitter* which allows him to bypass intermediary institutions such as the conventional media and “appeal at a personal level to anyone who is against anything and make him or her feel like part of a vast shared community without having to meet or even acknowledge any of its other members” (Osborne and Roberts 2017, xxvii). This makes *Twitter* an ideal instrument for constructing a popular identity.

Constructing a Collective Identity of ‘the People’: Antagonism and Foreign Policy

Having provided an image of America’s perceived-to-be-lost sense of wholeness and greatness, the Trumpian discourse then projects this lack onto the Other and blames it for having caused this deplorable situation and preventing the Self from recapturing its identity. The antagonistic Other serves as fantasy object insofar as it obscures the essential incompleteness of the ‘American people’ and leads the Self to believe that this fullness is attainable once the Other is overcome. However, it is the very presence of an Other through which ‘the people’ Trump claims to speak for comes into being in the first place.

A discourse can only succeed in the struggle for discursive hegemony if it identifies ‘credible’ Others that can be represented as blockages to a complete and stable identity. Put differently, a particular discourse can only resonate within an audience if it addresses positions and

sentiments that already reside in a certain society and is thus in keeping with sedimented meanings of Self and Other. This does not imply that sociopolitical categories such as ‘the people’ are prediscursive entities; rather that discourses do not exist in a vacuum but are embedded within previous or parallel discourses and need to relate to these discourses in order to unfold their credibility and appeal (Laclau 1990, 66). The Trumpian discourse and its practices of Othering are thus less an expression of Trump’s worldview but an ensemble of articulations that already existed in the discursive field and were linked together into a discursive framework.

For constructing a collective identity of the people, the discourse presents a range of frustrated social demands as equivalent by placing them into a common opposition to the establishment and a series of foreign Others. These practices of Othering indicate an interplay of the logics of populism and nationalism, whereby two overlapping collective identities are constructed along the lines of both up/down and inside/outside antagonisms: the people as underdog and nation. In the following, it is shown how foreign policy served as a site for the (re)production of these identities.

By representing US foreign policy as being corrupted by ‘special interests’, the Trumpian discourse articulates a populist up/down antagonism between the ‘common’ people as down-group and the establishment as up-group that “sacrificed their security, betrayed their prosperity, and sold out their country” (Trump 2016b). Instead of pursuing a “policy of Americanism” that puts “the American people first”, the establishment allegedly switched to “a policy of globalism, focusing on how to make money for large corporations who can move their wealth and workers to foreign countries all to the detriment of the American worker and the American economy” (Trump 2016b). This “special interest monopoly in Washington, D.C.” results, as Trump claims, from “the collusion between the wealthy donors, the large corporations, and the media executives” (Trump 2016i) with incompetent political elites who

entered into “many disastrous trade deals” (Trump 2016b) that “strip us of our jobs, and strip us of our wealth as a country” (Trump 2016j) and “got us into many foreign policy messes” (Trump 2015b, 31).

In particular, Trump railed against his opponent Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election campaign and made her the symbol of a corrupt political and economic system: “Hillary Clinton isn't just part of the corrupt establishment, *she is the corrupt establishment*” (Trump 2016h; emphasis added). Hillary Clinton, as Trump asserted,

has supported virtually every trade agreement that has been destroying our middle class. She supported NAFTA, and she supported China's entrance into the World Trade Organization – another one of her husband's colossal mistakes and disasters. [...] We've lost nearly one-third of our manufacturing jobs since these two Hillary-backed agreements were signed. [...] In return, Hillary Clinton got rich! [...] Bill and Hillary used the State Department to enrich their family at America's expense. She gets rich making you poor (Trump 2016b, 2016j).

By making Hillary Clinton the scapegoat, the Trumpian discourse constructs a fantasy object that allows for simplifying and personalizing complex social, political, and economic developments and challenges by diverting feelings of lack, ambiguity, insecurity, and loss away from the subject and projecting them onto the Other: It is Clinton who blocks the wholeness of the American people and once this ‘obstacle’ is removed the subject’s desire for a complete and secure identity can be fulfilled. Consequently, the Trumpian discourse also blames Clinton for almost every international crisis or problem: “The Hillary Clinton foreign policy has cost America thousands of lives and trillions of dollars – and unleashed ISIS across the world. [...] Her decisions spread death, destruction and terrorism everywhere she touched”

(Trump 2016b). This personalized and radically simplified representation of international relations is in keeping with populism's people/elite antagonism by constructing the nefarious political establishment as root cause of all problems. Trump leaves no doubt "why Clinton's tryout for the presidency has produced one deadly foreign policy disaster after another":

Hillary Clinton has perfected the politics of personal profit and theft. She ran the State Department like her own personal hedge fund – doing favors for oppressive regimes, and many others, in exchange for cash. Then, when she left, she made \$21.6 million giving speeches to Wall Street banks and other special interests [...]. They totally own her, and that will never change (Trump 2016b).

By asserting that establishment politicians like Hillary Clinton are 'owned' by banks, lobbyists, and special interests, the Trumpian discourse makes the American people underdogs who are not sovereign anymore in domestic and foreign affairs.

Alongside this populist mode of Othering, the Trumpian discourse also attempts to establish a direct link between the American establishment and the foreign Other and thereby intertwines populism's up/down with nationalism's inside/outside antagonism. The discourse not only blames the establishment for failing to "secure and defend the borders of the United States" (Trump 2016g) and the economic interests of the American people but also for actively colluding with the foreign Other, whereby the people are represented as both underdogs and nation. The populist signifier 'the elite' thus acquires its meaning in the Trumpian discourse, at least partially, through its articulation with nationalism's mode of Othering and vice versa. The foreign Other is part of what Trump calls 'globalism' or 'global special interests', symbolizing a very abstract, joint, and powerful force that serves as another fantasy object in that it links together various distinct and complex phenomena into a coherent and simplistic story-

line and produces a range of scapegoats that can be blamed for the dislocation and crisis of American identity: “illegal immigrants” from Latin America who are taking away jobs from “vulnerable American workers” and bringing crime, drugs, and violence into the US (Trump 2016e); allies such as NATO, the EU, or Japan who have “ripped off” America (Trump 2016m) by relying on the United States for their security and defense “without paying their fair share” (Trump 2016c), while outperforming the US on trade (Trump 2016n); and China’s “continued economic assault on American jobs and wealth” (Trump 2016c) through unfair trade practices such as “currency manipulation” or “theft of intellectual property” (Trump 2016j).

While this antagonistic pitting of the American people against outsiders and external threats follows first and foremost a nationalistic logic, it also has a populist dimension: The ‘globalism’ conjured up by the Trumpian discourse depicts not only a radically simplified image of world politics but also suggests that the American establishment has been gripped by an ideology which places the interests of multinational corporations and foreigners over the well-being of the American people. Moreover, when Trump unleashed his tirades against close US allies or called illegal Mexican immigrants “criminals” and “rapists” (Trump 2015a), he deliberately transgressed the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable in the normal political discourse and tried to distinguish himself from the “politically correct” establishment (Trump 2016l) that does not dare to speak the truth. Having aroused desire for the obscene in the audience, Trump, like most populists, partially backtracked on his statements and accused “the political media” of misrepresenting him and “trying to manipulate the people” (Trump 2015b, 14-15), thereby reproducing the populist divide between ‘the people’ and the ‘corrupt’ establishment.

Nevertheless, by drawing a political boundary between the nation and its out-groups, the Trumpian discourse moderates the ‘emptiness’ of the signifier ‘the people’. Through the con-

struction of a dangerous outside, the Trumpian discourse not only externalizes America's internal problems and represents America as an otherwise secure, peaceful, and law-abiding place, but also delineates what American-ness means. The border wall, which Trump promised in his election campaign, symbolizes in this context the attempt to reinstate the weakened boundary between inside and outside and the promise of complete physical and ontological security.

By externalizing dangers and projecting them, for example, onto illegal immigrants from Latin America and Muslims in particular, the Trumpian discourse appealed to nativist, xenophobic sentiments among White Americans. Though Trump sought to present himself as candidate for all "hardworking American patriots" (Trump 2016q) including "African-American and Latino workers" (Trump 2016j), the American people his rhetoric conjured were first and foremost White Americans. For his electoral coalition, Trump was able to retain the support of the traditional Republican voter base such as Christian evangelicals, rural and small-town Americans, and free marketeers who favor pro-business policies of deregulation, while simultaneously appealing to White working-class Americans in the Rust Belt states and thereby integrating a segment of the electorate, which has felt increasingly economically, politically, and culturally marginalized, into the Republican coalition (Fraser 2017; McQuarrie 2017).

The article's discourse analysis, however, indicates that nationalism's inside/outside and populism's up/down antagonism played an equally important role in the Trumpian discourse in terms of the frequency and intensity of these two modes of Othering in the textual data. In other words, Trump's electoral coalition was hold together by nationalism and populism in equal measure. This conclusion is also supported by survey data which shows that Trump's supporters stood out, compared to supporters of the other candidates in the presidential primaries, for holding a distinct combination of anti-elitist, anti-intellectual, and pronationalist

attitudes (Oliver and Rahn 2016). The Trumpian discourse managed to unite different social groups and interests in an electoral coalition by constructing a common enemy – the elite and foreign Others – thereby cancelling out the differences among the members of the in-group, for instance between working-class Trump supporters and pro-business libertarians.

Trump's 'Americanism' versus Clinton's 'Corrupt Globalism'

The Trumpian discourse promises to reestablish American identity by projecting its lack onto various Others which seemingly prevent the Self from achieving this sense of wholeness. At the same time, the discourse foretold the story of an impending disaster which will prevail if Donald Trump is not elected US president and the Others are not overcome. The ‘disaster’ storyline of the fantasy confronted the voter with a stark choice: either you vote for Trump and his “Americanism” or you face peril in the form of Hillary Clinton’s “corrupt globalism” (Trump 2016o).

This storyline reinforces the sense that the US is currently experiencing a phase of existential crises and dangers. It triggers feelings such as fear, anxiety, and impotence: “Hillary’s vision is a borderless world where working people have no power, no jobs, no safety” (Trump 2016p); “her dream is for total open trade. There go your jobs; and open borders – there goes your country. Simple as that” (Trump 2016a). “Hillary Clinton”, as Trump claimed, “has put forward the most radical immigration platform in the history of the United States”, including “mass amnesty” for illegal immigrants and “a radical 550% increase in Syrian refugees coming into the United States” (Trump 2016c). While Clinton’s immigration policy will lead to “total chaos and lawlessness” within the US (Trump 2016e), as Trump warned, her “reckless, interventionist globalism” will also produce “massive global disorder” (Trump 2016h): “Hillary wants to invade foreign countries. That's what she does and look at the mess” (Trump

2016k). “Now, she wants to start a shooting war in Syria and conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia that could very well lead to World War III” (Trump 2016g).

While the discursive construction of an antagonistic divide between ‘the people’ and ‘the establishment’ that colludes with threatening foreign Others allows Trump to place himself alongside the ‘besieged’ people, he also must establish himself as their legitimate representative and convince voters that he is the only person who can restore popular sovereignty and ‘Make America Great Again’. Although Trump is as billionaire and owner of a big business conglomerate part of the establishment, he managed to present himself as the “voice” of the “forgotten men and women of our country” (Trump 2016j) by turning his wealth, business success, and status into his main selling point and claiming that he is the only candidate who cannot be controlled and corrupted “by the lobbyists, by the donors, and by the special interests” (Trump 2015a).

Projecting an image of himself as “a very successful entrepreneur” (Trump 2016f) and political “Lone Ranger” (Trump 2016l), Trump could not only claim that his “business acumen” enables him to fix America’s numerous problems and restore its “greatness” (Trump 2015b, xi), but also that he is a reluctant politician: “I have made billions of dollars in business making deals – now I’m going to make our country rich again” (Trump 2016j). Trump – the alleged self-made businessman who has built a real-estate empire – becomes the symbol of the (perceived-to-be-lost) American dream and projection screen for the hopes and desires of his supporters. He presents himself as “a real leader” and “tough negotiator”, who will deal from a position of strength with America’s enemies and partners and use his supposedly outstanding deal-making skills to renegotiate America’s relations with the rest of the world (Trump 2015b, 32/78).

The Trump Presidency and US Foreign Policy

After Trump's election to the presidency, he is in the position to put his 'Americanism' into action and avert the doomsday scenario that his presidential campaign depicted. Assuming government responsibility poses a challenge to populists, since 'the people' they claim to represent is a discursive construct that only comes into being by placing different frustrated social demands into a common opposition to 'the establishment'. With the establishment disempowered, populists in government must try to sustain the antagonistic frontier between 'the people' and 'the establishment' by accusing the latter of preventing the restoration of popular sovereignty. Compared to more sedimented identities such as nationalism, the populist notion of the-people-as-underdogs is a more instable and terminable identity that requires permanent antagonistic Othering.

The Trumpian discourse uses US foreign policy as a site for the reproduction of this popular identity and Trump's self-image as omnipotent deal-maker and strong leader who will put 'the American people first'. For sustaining the close connection between Trump and 'his' people, it must retell the fantasy narrative of a fullness-to-come and create the impression that this state of wholeness in the form of a sovereign, harmonious, and secure people is, thanks to President Trump, getting closer, while simultaneously naming and shaming Others that still block or threaten this wholeness. As the Trumpian discourse combines populist and nationalist logics and thus constructed alongside the people/elite antagonism an antagonistic divide between the US and the rest of the world – "we seem to get ripped off by everybody" (Trump 2016l) – it has constructed a range of foreign Others that can be accused of depriving the American people of their sovereignty, identity, jobs, security etc. and thus serve as common negation for sustaining Trump's electoral coalition.

The continuing appeal of the Trumpian discourse rests on the skilful combination of these two practices of Othering. When members of the US establishment criticize Trump's foreign

policy, the discourse can reproduce the populist elite/people antagonism by accusing the ‘corrupt’ establishment of subverting Trump’s presidency and undermining ‘the will of the people’. Trump, for instance, rants regularly against “the Fake News Media” and brands them as “enemy of the people” (Trump 2018a) and side-lined the State Department in US foreign policy-making. By bypassing and delegitimizing intermediary institutions, Trump sustains the antagonistic dichotomization of the political space and preserves the close link to his supporter base. This, in turn, has made US foreign policy more unpredictable and erratic.

The Trumpian discourse reinforces this populist people/elite antagonism and combines it with nationalism’s inside/outside antagonism by claiming that Trump’s foreign policy would protect the American people from “the rule of corrupt power-hungry globalists” (Trump 2018j) and “against threats to sovereignty [...] from global governance” and other “forms of coercion and domination” (Trump 2018k). The nationalist moment of the discourse comes to the fore in Trump’s claim that “sovereign and independent nations” are the “foundations” of freedom, democracy, and societal well-being (ibid.). This representation of the nation-state is only possible by relating it the international system as a space of difference, threats, and dangers and was reproduced in various foreign policy practices such as the Trump administration’s decision to impose a travel ban on eight Muslim-majority countries or to mobilize the US armed forces at the border to stop illegal immigration from Latin America.

Through this politics of fear and symbolic acts, provocations, and bombastic rhetoric, Trump, like other populists, tries to maintain a state of semi-constant political mobilization and set the political agenda. He simulates governance and foreign policy-making by appealing to the emotions of his supporters and giving them the feeling that he is standing up for the American people on the world stage and restoring American greatness. In short, the *feeling* that “America is WINNING AGAIN” (Trump 2018b) and that “All will be Great!” (Trump 2018c) is more important than the actual substance of his initiatives or negotiations. As

Trump acts as a kind of gatekeeper for his followers who distinguishes the ‘real’ from the ‘fake’ news of the ‘corrupt’ establishment, the Trumpian discourse has created an alternative truth regime in which conventional standards of contesting and verifying information are not applicable anymore. This also allows Trump to stage himself as a tough-as-nails leader and deal-maker who can ‘fix’ every international problem.

This has resulted in a foreign policy that often oscillates between a very hawkish and confrontational rhetoric and a willingness to accommodate America’s rivals and enemies through direct dialogue. Not only Trump’s approach to North Korea has followed this pattern, but also his Russia policy. Promising that he “will negotiate with Russia from a position of strength” during the election (Trump 2016h), Trump agreed on a summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin to reset US-Russian relations that had reached a new low after allegations of Russian meddling in the US presidential election. Ironically, Trump who had accused the political establishment of conspiring with the foreign Other now faced the charge that his own election campaign team colluded with representatives of the Russian government. Instead of condemning Russian interferences into the election, Trump presented the summit as “a great success” (Trump 2018d) and gave the impression that he agreed with Putin that there was no Russian meddling. While Trump was heavily rebuked by the US political establishment for what was perceived as “surrender to Putin” (Guardian 2018), he accused the “Fake News Media” (Trump 2018d) and other elements in the US establishment of misrepresenting the summit and seeking a confrontation with Russia.

While this episode indicates Trump’s difficulties in sustaining his self-image as grand deal-maker, it also shows that the Trumpian discourse moderates its practices of Othering by proffering the possibility that, due to Trump’s allegedly brilliant negotiation and leadership skills, a solution to America’s disputes with its enemies and partners is impending. Though the discourse conjures up threats to the American people from all sides, it simultaneously suggests

that it is not hard to address them. For example, having dished out against NATO and EU members “that rip us off on Trade” and “should pay much more for Military” (Trump 2018i), Trump claimed at the NATO summit in July 2018 that he “has helped the NATO Alliance greatly by increasing defense contributions from our NATO Allies by over \$44 billion” (Trump 2018f). Shortly afterwards, he also announced an alleged “breakthrough [...] that nobody thought possible” in the trade negotiations with the EU (Trump 2018h).

Similarly, Trump holds out the prospect of restructuring US-Sino economic relations and eliminating the US trade imbalances with China through a trade war with the People’s Republic. By placing tariffs on \$250 billion of imports from China and threatening with an extension of tariffs on all imports, the Trump administration tries to force the Chinese leadership into changing its currency, industrial, trade, and intellectual property rights policies (Trump 2018l). Though China and the EU signaled a partial willingness to accommodate some of the US concerns, the proposed adjustments will hardly bring about a significant reduction of the trade deficits or a return of the US manufacturing base as promised by Trump. China, in particular, follows with its ‘Made in China 2025’ initiative an economic strategy that bears some resemblance with Trump’s economic-nationalist ‘America first’ policy (Nordlin and Weissmann 2018).

These examples point to the difficulties of the Trumpian discourse in maintaining a link between a popular identity and foreign policy. As the popular identity is (re)constructed through the very policy practices in whose name it operates, the differentiation between Trump’s foreign policy and the establishment’s foreign policy is a precondition for sustaining Trump’s political project. The personalization, simplification, emotionalization, and acts of transgression as populist markers of Trump’s foreign policy are articulated in opposition to ‘conventional’ foreign policy and diplomacy with its greater emphasis on formal procedures, institutions, and often lengthy, incremental, and expert-driven politics of deliberation and negotia-

tion. When the Trumpian discourse is confronted with events that exceed discursive representation, revealing for example the complexity of international politics and Trump's inability to 'fix' international problems, it runs the risk of becoming dislocated and losing its 'grip' over its subjects, since the differential relationship between Self and Other – necessary for the reproduction of meaning and identity – is disrupted. Though Trump has delivered on several of his election campaign promises – for example, withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and Iran nuclear deal, renegotiation of NAFTA, getting tough with China and US allies by raising or threatening to raise trade barriers, or reduction of illegal immigration – these policies have so far hardly set the US on the path back to its perceived-to-be-lost greatness or made US allies and rivals fall obediently into line. This points to the deeply contradictory nature of Trump's fantasy narrative 'Make America Great Again' which represents the American people as underdogs and a country in rapid decline, while simultaneously suggesting that the United States will under Trump reemerge as an omnipotent superpower which imposes its will on others and redefines the rules of international relations.

Trump's foreign policy also grapples with reproducing the antagonistic divide between 'Americanism and 'globalism'. While Trump's election campaign, for example, highlighted the negative implications of this 'corrupt' globalism for American workers, his policies are not directed against neoliberal globalization per se; rather, Trump stands for a "reactionary neoliberalism" (Fraser 2017) that seeks to retain free trade (but with better conditions for the US), free financial flows, and deregulation, but restrict the free flow of people. Trump's backtracking on the populist distributive policies, investments in big, job-creating public infrastructure projects and notion of 'America come home' that his presidential campaign had promised can disrupt Trump's heterogenous election coalition, since the Trumpian discourse claimed that it is this very 'corrupt' globalism which has prevented the US establishment from caring about the needs of 'ordinary' Americans. As the discourse's affective force de-

depends on sustaining the desire for a complete identity by blaming and promising to overcome the Other that is allegedly blocking this whole and secure sense of Self, it thus runs the risk of confronting the Self with its own ontological lack: the absence of an extradiscursive foundation on which its identity could be grounded and the resulting impossibility of defining and implementing a homogenous popular will.

Conclusion

Drawing on a discourse-theoretical conception of populism and combining it with insights from poststructuralist IR and Lacan's psychoanalysis, this article examined how the Trumpian discourse used foreign policy as a platform for the (re)production of a collective identity of the people and Trump as its representative by placing heterogenous social demands into a common opposition to two principal Others: a 'globalist' establishment and a series of foreign Others. Compared to the prevalent conceptualization of populism as 'thin' ideology, a formal discursive approach to foreign policy and populism has the advantage that it shifts the focus from the circular and often fruitless pursuit of identifying the content of a populist foreign policy to how these contents are articulated via distinct discourses; or, in other words, how the sociopolitical categories which populists claim to represent are (re)produced by relating Self and Other. This makes it possible to make general arguments about the relationship between populism and foreign policy by identifying different discursive strategies through which the basic populist logic – the people/elite antagonism – can be (re)constructed through foreign policy and to examine how these discursive strategies play out in different populist projects.

Instead of matching a populist ideology with specific foreign policies, a discursive approach renders problematic the very distinction on which such an analysis is based by showing how political identities and foreign policy are both the product of specific discourses and co-

constituted insofar as policy practices are informed by representations of identity but also play an important role in constituting and reproducing this very identity. Thus, the state practice of foreign policy, as conventionally understood in FPA, becomes possible through modes of Othering and differentiation which mark particular actors and phenomena as foreign and thereby simultaneously inscribe the state's borders and identity. When populists draw on the discourse of foreign policy, then the state's foreign policy itself becomes a site for the (re)production of a popular identity. This, in turn, can often necessitate contradicting foreign policies, given the ultimately unresolvable tensions between the demands of a political identity and the practices that constitute it.

Examining how populist and nationalist notions of the people can be (re)produced through and merged within the discourse of foreign policy, the article argued that the populist elements in the Trumpian foreign policy manifest themselves first and foremost in the contestation of the bipartisan consensus on America's national interest and the personalization, simplification, and emotionalization of foreign policy-making. By questioning whether a liberal-internationalist foreign policy benefits the American people and accusing the establishment of putting 'special interests' over the interests of the people, the Trumpian discourse suggests a disconnect between 'the people' and 'the establishment' and can place Donald Trump alongside the-people-as-underdog as the only leader who points to this alienation and is able to 'fix it'. Trump's racism, xenophobia, or chauvinism, by contrast, are not directly linked to his populism but rather follow a nationalist logic which regards the nation-state as foundation of societal harmony by relating it to a threatening outside. The anti-globalism articulated in the Trumpian discourse is informed by both nationalist and populist logics.

Finally, the shift to discourse in analyzing populism allows for a reconceptualization of the ideological dimension of populism, focusing on how it unfolds its affective force in foreign policy and mobilizes 'the people'. The ideological element of the Trumpian discourse lies in

the construction of a distinct fantasy, consisting of two interconnected narrative scenarios, through which the discourse conceals the purely discursive constitution of ‘the people’ Trump claims to represent and promises that the identification with the Trumpian political project will lead to a complete and secure identity. This desire is captured by Trump’s campaign slogan ‘Make America Great Again!’ which symbolizes this fantasy narrative.

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