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Rise of American Populism and its Role in Reviving the Jacksonian Tradition in Trump's Foreign PolicyAli Ammar¹¹Independent Researcher, International Relations, Islamabad Pakistan.Email: alliammar@outlook.com

Abstract

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential elections firmly established the fact that populism was the new reality of American politics. This research explores the basic factors that drove this populist tide, and which led to the election of Trump as American president. It was not only the increasing economic inequality and lack of employment opportunities which resulted in strengthening the populist tide, but also the perceived lack of status by the American middle class and their fear of becoming a minority in their own country which drove them to Trump's campaign. Trump also fully exploited the public's discontent with the elite and promised them that he was their best chance of restoring America's dignity and breaking it free from the 'disastrous' economic deals that his predecessors had signed which were supposedly the primary cause of the country's economic woes. This research shows that most of Trump's foreign policy decisions were in line with his populist rhetoric and the Jacksonian tradition of American foreign policy. This research takes a deeper look into some of Trump's populist foreign policy decisions in the light of Jacksonianism.

Keywords: Donald Trump, USA, populism, foreign policy, Andrew Jackson, globalism.

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1. Introduction

Ever since the economic crisis of 2008, American politics has been gripped by a new wave of populism. This was driven by multiple factors such as a failing economy, rising unemployment, income inequality, unchecked immigration, etc. Starting from the populist Tea Party movement during President Obama's first tenure, this wave of Populism reached its peak during the 2016 presidential elections campaign in which candidates from both the Republican and Democratic Party ran their presidential campaigns on Populist platforms, most notably, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. Donald Trump ended up winning the elections, which marked a great victory for populism in the West.

Many political analysts were quick to express their disbelief at Trump's extraordinary victory over Hilary Clinton. However, Trump's win was not merely a fluke or an accident. Nor was it the first of its kind, for that matter. This was only the most recent development in the longstanding struggle between the metropolitan liberal-internationalist elites and the middle and working classes, mostly residing in the

rural mid-west who longed for the return of the Jacksonian tradition in American politics and its foreign policy (Mead, 2016). They saw Trump as the populist Jacksonian prince in shining armor who would liberate the country from its corrupt liberal elite and restore the dignity of the United States at home and abroad by reverting the American foreign policy to its Jacksonian roots. Even Trump's speeches on the campaign trail echoed these Jacksonian desires. He consistently echoed the need for an isolationist and protectionist approach to America's foreign policy (Holland & Ben, 2021).

These Jacksonians have always been extremely skeptical of the globalist Washington elite, whom they believe to be responsible for most of America's problems in the present day. They believe that these liberal institutionalist elites in urban areas try to exploit the white working class who mostly live in rural areas and want to take away their cultural and national identities (white and Christian) from them in favor of globalism and cosmopolitanism. They have an almost equal distrust of both the Democratic and Republican leadership alike (Mead, 1999). They have a deep disregard for the international liberal institutions and consider them an obstacle in America pursuing purely its interest. Hence, it is understandable why one of the first acts of Donald Trump as the President was to withdraw the United States from various multilateral treaties and agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement. Trump's foreign policy largely adhered to the fundamentals of the Jacksonian tradition (Hall, 2021).

This research is aimed at discovering the root causes behind the sudden rise of populism in the United States which peaked during the 2016 elections and the role it played in reviving the Jacksonian numtradition of American foreign policy under the newly elected populist president, Donald Trump.

1.1 Problem Statement

Various socioeconomic and political factors led to the rise of populism in America, which ultimately led to the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. This rise in populism was also reflected in Trump's key foreign policy decisions which signaled the revival of Jacksonian Tradition in American foreign policy.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What are the driving factors behind the recent rise of populism in the United States?
- ii. How did this rise in populism, and particularly Trump's populist rhetoric, translate into his foreign policy?
- iii. What is the connection between Populism and Jacksonianism, and how can Trump's foreign policy be seen as a resurgence of the Jacksonian tradition?

2. Literature Review

Populism is a very hotly debated idea and thus extremely hard to accurately define. It has previously been associated with a large degree of ambiguity that made it a "notoriously vague term", which contains in itself a certain "conceptual slipperiness" to a large extent (Paul & Taggart, 2000). Therefore, many populism's definitions are automatically regarded as incomplete (Taggart, 2004). The term populism is presently largely used to describe the rhetoric various leaders or politicians build-up to defend and promote the interests of the masses against those of the powerful elites. By using the rise to power of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela as a case study, Hawkins explains populism as a charismatic source of connection or link between voters and their leaders, and political discourse that is subservient to the idea of the will of the people and their struggle against the rich elites (Hawkins, 2003). Mueller sees populism as the shadow of democracy, by which he means that it is representative democratic politics (Mueller, 2019). Nadia (2019) argues that this rise in populism can be an opportunity for the revival of democracy in the West. The origins of modern populism can be found in the aftermath of the American Civil War with the formation of the Farmer's Alliance, which started as an economic movement with the primary objective of improving the farmers' working conditions in the 1870s. After it failed to achieve its main objective, the Farmer's Alliance evolved into the People's Party in 1891. Since it promoted radical agrarian reforms and anti-elitism, Hicks termed it the first modern populist movement (Hicks, 1931). The traction that has been gained by both right-wing and left-wing populist movements has dramatically increased especially in Europe and the U.S. since the 2008 financial crisis. The rise in Tea Party's popular

appeal and Donald Trump's surprise win in the 2016 Presidential Elections in the U.S, Brexit in the UK, the steady rise in the electoral performances of populist parties in Europe, such as Marine Le Penn's National Front in France and the Austrian Freedom Party; and, in Poland, Hungary and Ukraine, right-wing parties coming to power are a few prominent examples of this phenomenon (Moffit, 2020). The modern debate on populism has grown beyond previous and classical debates regarding the roots of populism being either urban or agrarian (Ghița, & Gellner, 1969). In the United States, especially in recent years, political leaders such as Donald J. Trump, Ted Cruz, and Senator Bernard Sanders were seen as driving agents of populism, particularly during the 2016 elections (Michael, 2017). Oliver and Wendy (2016) conducted a survey and from the data he collected, he discovered that out of every other candidate, it was Trump whose campaign speeches were most in line with the populist ideas. Trump's utilization of populist rhetoric for political mobilization during the 2016 elections is highlighted by the way he resorted to anti-elite rhetoric and used hyper-nationalist sentiment to his political advantage. Almost 90% of American citizens between 1980 and 2012 saw no rise in their incomes while dividends from an increasing GDP rate increased significantly for those in the top 10% (Economic Policy Institute, 2014). Welfare services have been cut, public developmental projects have been curtailed and the tax dollars being shifted to private schools has worsened public education. The rise of largely right-wing populist movements within the Republican stronghold states like in the Midwest, and other Rocky Mountain States during the late 70s and early 90s draw upon two farm economy collapses. Also, the consequent uncertainty and anxiety within the already struggling working-class communities. Various sociologists such as McVeigh, Cunningham, and Farrell have suggested that right-wing populist movements tend to grow more when authority and prestige are perceived to be under threat in socio-political and economic arenas. Mudde and Cristobal (2012) tell us to remain extra vigilant about not just right-wing movements in America's streets, but also the continuous attacks on human liberties, civil rights, and democracy from within the federal government as well as Trump's victory in the 2016 Presidential elections signaled the return of populism to the center stage of American politics. This also correlated with the revival of the Jacksonian tradition when it came to American foreign policy. Trump's seemingly unique brand of American populism was rooted in Jacksonianism, which was also reflected in many of his policies, particularly his foreign policy. Lofflmann (2019) believes that Trump's presidency had many indications of the effect of populism on Trump's key foreign policy decisions. For instance, Trump routinely attacked international liberal institutions, the concept of multilateralism, other international organizations, free trade, and globalism, etc. His America First policy was another key feature of his populist foreign policy (Cha, 2016). It wasn't purely a coincidence, rather it was rooted in the historical struggles between the metropolitan political elite and the American commoners in rural areas who always identified more with the Jacksonian principles than the liberal institutionalist or globalist ones. Fukuyama has also contributed significantly to the discourse on populism. He believes there are three fundamental reasons behind the rise of populism in America: economic, cultural, and political. He also blames the policy failures of both the Washington and European elite for catalyzing this populist tide (Francis, 2018).

3. Theoretical Framework

The history of American foreign policy is generally divided into certain policy patterns which have been termed as the American foreign policy traditions (Kissinger, 2018). Over the past, many historians and scholars of international relations have put forth their categorizations of these traditions. At the same time, Bradford Pickens believed that America's foreign policy was guided by the four Principles i.e. Republicanism, individualism, popular sovereignty, and material self-interest (Baily, 1964). Henry Kissinger identified recurring dualities between America's pursuit of idealism and pragmatic power politics, and similarly globalism and isolationism in the conduct of its foreign policy (Henry, 1994). Edward Weisbrand explained US foreign policy as being driven by a staunch

‘us-vs-them’ attitude towards the rest of the world, the belief that war must be the last resort and is only justified in self-defense, and, lastly, the principle of self-determination (Barry, 1973). Michael (2009) was of the view that three core principles shaped America’s foreign policy: its belief in a strong racial hierarchy, the quest for liberty and national greatness, and suspicions of revolutions, despite America’s revolutionary past.

3.1 McDougall’s Eight Traditions of US Foreign Policy:

McDougall outlined his eight traditions in his book *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*. He divided those traditions into two categories, Old Testament and New Testament.

3.2 Liberty, or Exceptionalism (so-called)

It is a common assumption that America’s founding fathers genuinely believed that the United States was not only meant to be a unique and ‘exceptional’ state, but it was also always destined for greatness. It was believed to be better than any other state or nation in the world. This is what historians allude to when they highlight its self-proclaimed sense of mission and responsibility, idealism, and American messianism. This has more popularly been described as ‘American exceptionalism’ in foreign policy literature, a term popularized by American journalist, Max Lerner (Max, 1957).

Varg (1964) argues that everything in the American foreign policy’s history and its interactions with the rest of world nations that can be considered ‘good’ can be traced back to this very fundamental idealism of the States. In the same manner, everything that can be considered bad can largely be put down to the hypocrisy and arrogance that underlies America’s self-righteousness and sanctimonious demeanor.

3.3 Unilateralism, or Isolationism (so-called)

The second important tradition of the foreign policy of the United States is what is often termed as ‘isolationism’. While it is generally believed that the concept of isolationism was conceived in the 1930s, there are many references to the term that can be found in earlier literature. It was largely popularized in the late 19th century by famous novelist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who used the term to describe his critics. Therefore, at the culmination of the Spanish-American War, the Washington Post declared that isolationism and the policy of isolation were dead and buried (Patterson, 1983). McDougall (1993) says that even the supposed ‘isolationists’ of the 1930s didn’t go by the name of isolationists, rather, they preferred the term nationalists or neutralists. Furthermore, he says that the term ‘isolationism’ has rarely been used officially, or academically, to describe any American foreign policy agenda. Therefore, the term ‘unilateralism’ is a better choice to appropriately describe this tradition of American foreign policy. He believes unilateralism was only the natural corollary of American Exceptionalism. Because while Exceptionalism meant having liberty and freedom at home, unilateralism meant being able to draw up a foreign policy that was independent of the lofty ambitions of European powers. It only meant for America to avoid unnecessarily forging entangling alliances, or making permanent friends or enemies, and most importantly, maintain neutrality when it came to European conflicts, especially when it could put liberty at home at risk (McDougall, 1993). Paine and Jefferson (2008) also mentioned in *Common Sense* that it would be in the best interest of the new republic to steer clear of European affairs.

3.4 Monroe Doctrine (so-called)

American president James Monroe in December 1823 in his address to Congress, presented his foreign policy which soon came to be popularized as Monroe doctrine. In it, he and John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of States, drew upon the basic tenets of America’s earlier foreign policy and emphasized the need to disentangle the States from the affairs of conflict-ridden Europe. The three basic points of the doctrine were non-interventionism, no colonization, and a complete separation

between the spheres of influence for Europe and Latin and North America. Monroe Doctrine or, as McDougall called it, the American System, befittingly came after the first two traditions i.e. Exceptionalism and Utilitarianism (McDougall, 1993). Thomas Paterson, a historian, pointed out that the conventional understanding of the Monroe Doctrine was that it was an affirmation of the United States' interests and characterized a defense of core American values, economy, and security. While at the same time, others see it as an extension or a corollary of the expansionist tradition of the United States. They point out that while the doctrine issued a 'hands-off' warning to the European powers, in essence, it implied a 'hands-on' permission for America (Merrill & Paterson, 2009).

3.5 Expansionism, or Manifest Destiny (so-called)

The term 'Manifest Destiny' was popularized by an American journalist and the editor of the *Democratic Review*, John L. O'Sullivan in the 19th century. In 1823, he wrote that American citizens, having originated from various nations, and the Declaration of Independence, which practically served as the constitution of the US, being largely based on the noble principle of the equality of mankind; set the American nation apart from any other nation in the world. However, McDougall (1993), does not buy into the hype and believes that O'Sullivan gets far more credit than he deserves. He argues that American expansionism and all its various kinds long predated the popularization of O'Sullivan's notion of 'manifest destiny' and still prevailed long after that concept died out or became irrelevant.

3.6 Progressive Imperialism

During the American presidential campaign of 1900, Senator Beveridge delivered a speech that became famous for remarkably offering a justification for the American annexation of Hawaii, Guam, the Philippine Islands, and Puerto Rico, which was done during or after the 1898 Spanish- American war, by invoking the "line of precedent" since Washington's days. In his speech, he reminded the American citizens that the Almighty had granted them land whose coastlines "enclosed half of Europe" and which was supposed to be a greater England, but with a more noble future and destiny. He asked if God had granted them all this land without any purpose or mission accompanying it. He claimed that President William McKinley was only following in the footsteps of his noble predecessors; Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Monroe, Seward, Ulysses S. Grant, and Benjamin Harrison; when he also heard and obeyed the divine call of planting the American flag over the "islands of seas", "citadels of security" and "outposts of economic trade" (Little, 1972). At the same time, the outside world was also changing which prompted Americans to also reevaluate their foreign policy traditions. Starting from the late 1870s, most of the European colonial states started riding on a new imperialist wave. They had partitioned a major chunk of Asia, Oceania, and nearly all the African continents into protectorate states and colonies. Russia, France, and Germany spent a lot on modern steel navies after 1897 and started vying for the British Empire's hegemony. The innovative engineering of the European powers reshaped the planet's geopolitics by designing the Suez Canal (1869) and the colonial British trans-Indian railroad (1870). All the while, telegraphs, machine guns, steamships, and other ever-innovating technologies had made imperialism less expensive and convenient (McDogall, 1993).

3.7 Wilsonianism, or Liberal Internationalism (so-called)

On 27 May 1916, then-President Woodrow delivered a speech in front of thousands gathered in Washington's New Willard Hotel. In his speech, he touched upon the World War and said that he did not care about the causes that brought it forth, or its objectives, but only that it paved the way for a long-lasting peace. This led to rapturous applause from the audience and the American liberal press hyped up the address to be as significant as the Gettysburg Address or the Declaration of Independence. It was largely believed that Wilson spoke with the voice of a large majority of American citizens (Knock, 2019).

Wilson (2019) had led the United States of America into the war, by styling it as a crusade to

secure the planet for democratic ideals. Then another crop of historians and academics emerged in the 1960s who refuted this thesis, suggesting that Wilson was not merely a naïve starry-eyed fool but a shrewd and ruthless politician who was more than capable of implementing grand political schemes in the most pragmatic of ways. And that his imaginative policies represented a sort of “higher” or “sublime realism” (Lippmann, 1943).

3.8 Containment

Containment is largely associated with George F. Kennan, who informed Americans, in his ‘X’ article of 1946-47 and ‘Long Telegram’, about the conduct of the Soviet Union and what made them tick, and ultimately called for seriously consider containing the threat posed by the Soviets. However, Kennan himself immediately came to regret what followed, i.e. the escalation of what came to be known as the Cold War. McDougall claims that the seeds of Containment had already been sown in the previous decade. The decade of the 1930s was the first period of economic recession of such a protracted length in the history of the US. This was also the first time in the nation’s history that neither an open world nor an open frontier provided a safety net (McDougall, 1993).

McDougall argues that America’s policy of Containment did not die with the fall of the Soviet Union. This policy was so successful, albeit unloved and costly, that it transcended beyond the Cold War. Amidst all his rhetoric of a new world order, President George Bush also pursued a strategy of Containment during the Gulf War, and even after it. Many political experts called for Japan’s Containment in the 1980s, and later, of Islamic fundamentalists and China. McDougall says that whenever the United States perceives or detects new threats to its objectives and national interest, they instinctively tend to go into Containment mode.

3.9 Global Meliorism

It is the political, cultural, and socio-economic representation of the age-old US mission to make the planet a better and safer place. McDougall sets America’s Global Meliorism apart from Wilsonianism and Containment by arguing that while Meliorism did manage to garner the bipartisan and broad national support that it did because of its role in fighting Soviet communism, its idea was conceived before the Cold War. And while the idea of Meliorism and Wilsonian did intersect with each other heavily, there were still some key differences. Most significant of these differences was that while Wilsonians wanted to make the world safe for democracy, the proponents of Meliorism dreamt of making the world itself democratic.

McDougall traces the origins of Meliorism way back to the 19th century. However, it became a cornerstone of American foreign policy under Wilson, amidst his Democratization program. It moved to the forefront of United States policy during and after the Second World War after the World Bank, IMF, and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration were largely founded by America. While American defeat in Vietnam did deal a crushing blow to its Meliorism as well, it did not completely kill. It still prevails till the present day, from American adventures in Iraq to Afghanistan, albeit to varying degrees of success.

4. Methodology

There are seven basic research designs: experimental studies, field surveys, secondary data analysis, case research, focus group research, action research, and ethnography. Field surveys are non-experimental research designs that are not meant to manipulate independent variables, rather, they measure them and examine their effects by utilizing statistical instruments. Secondary data analysis involves the analysis of data that has already been collected and processed by other sources. This could include official data from state institutions data made publicly available by third- parties, or even data collected by other scholars. Case research is a thorough inquiry of a problem under study in one or more than one real-world context, which spreads over a large amount of time. Data for case research could be collected via various interviews, personal observations, and/or a multitude of documents. This research follows a combination of both the case study research design and secondary

data analysis. It relies on the data already collected by other sources, and the official data available on official websites. Furthermore, it follows the case study of Donald Trump's presidential campaign and his time in office.

5. Findings and Analysis

This section explores the data collected in relevance to the rise of populism in America and the Trump phenomenon. It is first important to understand what the term populism means.

5.1 Populism

One of the most popular approaches to defining populism is termed the ideational approach. This highlights the idea that populism needs to be defined based on specific ideas underlying it, instead of various leadership styles or socio-economic agendas which populist leaders might exhibit. According to this 'ideational' definition, the term populism is used to identify various people or political groups who appeal to 'the people' or the masses and then aim to pit this group against another group, i.e. 'the elite' (Hawkins & Cristóbal, 2018).

Albertazzi and McDonnell, adopting the same approach, define populism as an ideology that creates a clear divide between the righteous and homogeneous group of 'people', and a set of manipulative elites and exploitative 'others', and pits the former against the latter. These elites and 'others' are collectively portrayed as trying to rob the sovereign and 'true' people of their voice, rights, welfare, values, and identity. Carlos (2017) another political scholar, views populism as 'a Manichean discourse' which views society and politics as being divided in the struggle between two competing and incompatible groups i.e. 'the people' and the 'the power bloc'. Rovira Kaltwasser and Case Mudde argue that populism, in under this approach, always constitutes some form of condemnation of the elite or the establishment and a glorified view of the common folk.

5.2 Populism in Contemporary U.S. Politics

Populism played a key role leading up to the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections, where Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders emerged as the leading populist figures in both their respective parties. Both Bernie and Trump framed their campaign rhetoric to address the ever-increasing voter discontent and disillusionment with the political establishment and the powerful elite. According to a survey conducted by Oliver (2016), it was obvious that among all other presidential candidates during the 2016 elections, Trump's rhetoric and campaign agenda were most in line with the populist ideals. Trump's speeches heavily featured right-wing populist themes such as calls for the closing of the borders, economic nationalism, stopping the free flow of immigrants, protectionism and nationalism, etc. This overwhelming presence of populist themes in Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric was not simply a coincidence. Rather it was a carefully planned strategy for appointment to a top position in President Trump's White House cabinet that was heralded as a major milestone for the proponents of right-wing populism or the 'alt-right'.

Despite its dramatic and surprising emergence in the 2016 presidential elections, the populist wave in the United States gradually started getting weaker after it was dealt a major blow in the shape of the loss of populist conservative candidate Roy Moore who was personally endorsed by Jason and Bannon, in the 2018 Senate race for the vacant seat of Alabama. This shocking defeat also led to the downfall of Bannon in American politics, who had now set his eyes on supporting all populist movements across Europe's a global populist alliance. Trump's defeat in the 2020 American Presidential Elections also led to speculation that it would be the final nail in the coffin of populism. However, that argument is still contested by many, who think that populism remains 'popular' in America (Serhan, 2020). The second mode comprises much more radical people on the far-right who trust none of the two major political parties in America, i.e. the Democrats and the Republicans. They are convinced that both the Republicans and the Democrats are part and parcel of the establishment. People in this group generally tend to vote strategically, i.e. either to a third-party candidate or otherwise some of the most extremist far-right politicians within the Republican Party (Lyons, 2018).

5.3 Driving Factors of Populism in America

The rise of populism in America can be attributed to a multitude of factors, which also often overlap with each other. These factors can be broadly classified into three categories: Political factors, economic factors, and socio-cultural factors.

5.4 Political Factors

When it comes to America, the rise of populism has a direct correlation with the decline of trust in political institutions and the federal government. Furthermore, the failure of lawmakers to fulfill their constituents' demands and communicate their expressed policy preferences; and the ever-increasing ideological and political polarization have also contributed to the emergence of the populist phenomenon.

The declining trust in the federal government can be traced way back to the mid-1960s. Till 1964 almost 77% of the American public trusted the government. That figure has dropped to a shocking 17% by 2019. This pattern of decline continued even during the Trump presidency. A similar decline in trust can be seen in some other segments of American society as well, for example, media, clergy, educational institutions, and corporations. This shows that the decline of political trust is not necessarily an isolated phenomenon (Pew Research Center, 2021). This decline in public trust also highlights the common perception that liberal democratic politics is no longer truly representative of the public's interest. A study by Gilens and Benjamin (2020), two political scientists, has revealed that average citizens of the US have either very minimal or no influence whatsoever over shaping the country's public policy. It also showed that when a large majority of American citizens, i.e. 70 to 80 percent of the people, demand policy changes, it's only less than half the time that they manage to get it.

While nearly 70% of the 'Baby Boomer' generation (people born between 1946 and 1964) and over 60% of Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1980) voted in the 2016 presidential election, less than half of Millennials (people born between 1981 and 1996) cast their vote (Pew Research Center, 2017). The voter turnout rates amongst low-income citizens have also decreased, which again indicates a lack of fair representation. During the 2016 elections, the gap between lower-income and higher-income Americans' voter registration rates was as large as 20 points. These gaps also persist when it comes to voting. In the 2012 elections, only about 47% of the American citizens making less than \$10,000 turned out to vote. Whereas over 80% of the people making more than \$150,000 voted (Sean, 2015).

This influence and power of wealth in American politics also concentrates the benefits among the rich but puts the burden of the costs of policies on the rest of the American public, and especially already marginalized communities. This only contributes to the further decline of trust in mainstream politics and government (Olson, 1965). The decline of the public's trust in the government may also be a byproduct of the public's unrealistic expectations about politics' ability to solve economic and social issues. A study, for example, by Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and John Hibbing reveals that in the public's imagination, politicians' inability to 'get things done' is generally caused by petty partisan politics. It's only a natural outcome of such a perception that the public might want a nonpartisan outsider.

5.5 Economic Factors

The rising economic inequality, and generally a disastrous economic performance overall also explains the rise of populism in America. While it is true that the family incomes of the U.S. citizens in the bottom two-thirds of income distribution grew to more than double in the period between 1947 and 1979. There is state-level data available that indicates a connection between income inequality, the Gini coefficient, and Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential elections (Darvas & Efstathiou, 2016). Following the economic recession, in 2008-09, various emergency measures and bailout packages to support the crumbling banking sector in America in 2008 and 2009 by the government gave rise to the conservative Tea Party movement and the progressive Occupy movement, both largely populist. For many of American citizens, these emergency decisions taken to help the economy only managed to

reward a select wealthy few, whereas ordinary tax-paying Americans were made to bear the costs of these expensive packages. This proved to them that the entire economic system was rigged against the common folk (Rohac et al., 2016). By 2016, working women in America were typically paid only 80% of men's income. The wage gap for non-white women remains even more significant (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

5.6 Socio-Cultural and Racial Factors

While important, economic factors alone are not responsible for the rise of populism in America. Mutz (2016) at the University of Pennsylvania conducted a study that showed that the fear of losing status was a bigger factor for white Trump supporters than economic insecurity in their decision to vote for Trump in the presidential elections. The distinction between a corrupt set of powerful elites and the group of supposedly righteous, common people lies at the core of any exclusionist populist narrative. This distinction might not always be based on ethnic grounds, but often. Over 13% of the American population is African American. This population is predominantly descended from the Africans who were brought to the continent by force and were then enslaved. These African Americans had to face institutional and legal discrimination in various states until the 1960s, and to this day, the systematic inequality persists. African Americans still record systematically worse social, economic, and health-based indicators are infamously treated poorly by law enforcement agencies, and are imprisoned at much disproportionate rates. Trump's support base, and the Republican Party's base, happens to be overwhelmingly white. Trump's campaign thus took great advantage of white America's fears around race, Islam, and immigration, while also playing with white identity politics invoking blatantly racist tropes (Halpin & Teixeira, 2016). According to a study by the Public Religion Research Institute, 68% of white working-class voters believed that foreign influence threatened the American way of living which needed to be protected, and nearly 50% expressed their agreement with the statement: 'Things have changed so much that I feel like a stranger in my own country.' 79% of these white working-class voters who expressed these fears had voted for Donald Trump (Mann et al., 2016).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Jacksonianism and Populism

American politics has traditionally involved culture and identity politics as its key components. Same was the case in the 2016 elections. Jacksonians felt their identity and culture were being threatened, with their values under attack. Jacksonians are easily galvanized by some events or situations, even if that mobilization lasts for a brief period. War is one such event. When the country is attacked by an enemy or is under threat, Jacksonians are quick to jump to its defense. These Jacksonians are particularly concerned with politicians or the elite using the government to oppress the American public instead of offering them protection. Many Jacksonians had been feeling the same way about the country's political elite, namely the leadership of both mainstream parties in the United States. They felt that the establishment of both these parties was unified against them. Most of them even felt that these politicians were no longer trustworthy as they had become 'unpatriotic'.

Jacksonian America's skepticism of the elite's patriotism has also been exacerbated by America's selective embrace of identity politics over the past few decades. The present-day American culture is rife with social, political, and academic movements aimed at glorifying and celebrating different racial, religious, and gender identities. Traditionally, white Americans who identify themselves with their particular European ethnic origins could do so without any restriction or pushback. For instance, Irish and Italian Americans have fabled and longstanding traditions and status amongst identity groups within the United States. However, these older ethnic identities have increasingly been fizzling out. It has become somewhat of a taboo lately to take pride in a white or European ethnic identity.

The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and anti-police protests, which have sometimes turned violent, over the recent years has further exacerbated the sense of cultural alienation within the

Jacksonian and not just because of the racial factor. Just as these Jacksonians instinctively support the U.S. military, they also instinctively support the law enforcement agencies, particularly the police. Hence, Jacksonians believe, it would be not only unfair but also immoral to ask policemen to risk their lives while facing dangerous situations, only to have their split-second decisions doubted by some ‘snowflake liberals’ and ‘armchair critics’. When it comes to America’s engagement with the outside world, Jacksonians are pessimistic about their country’s policy of building and leading liberal order across the globe. However, rather than having a clear desire for an alternate foreign policy vision, their skepticism is rooted in a complete lack of trust in the political elite responsible for shaping America’s foreign policy. Most Jacksonians are no experts in foreign affairs; however, they consider leadership to be a matter of trust. If they trust a leader or a movement, they are more than willing to accept their policies even if they appear counterproductive or impractical.

6.2 Trump’s Foreign Policy in Light of Jacksonianism

The emergence of the Tea Party movement after the 2008 economic crash and, ultimately, Trump in 2016 signaled the beginning of the end for the post-WWII liberal consensus in American politics, and more importantly, the emphatic resurgence of Jacksonianism in its foreign policy.¹⁸¹ Average white working-class voters rallied to Trump’s support to express their anger and frustration with the failed national vision of the establishment. Thus, Mead argues, the Trump phenomenon was rooted in the Jacksonian populist movement and its anti-elite sentiments. He argued that Trump simply served as a ‘blank screen’ for the Jacksonian populists on which they could project their hopes and aspirations for their country’s political leadership (Boot, 2017).

Trump routinely voiced his strong distrust of the American foreign-policy establishment, which was also in line with the Jacksonian anti-establishment narrative. In his foreign policy speech, he said that the supposed foreign policy experts responsible for formulating America’s foreign policy were responsible for the United States’ ‘continued failures at war’ and a history of failed policies and mistakes that had come at a great cost to ordinary Americans (Trump, 2016). Trump’s international theory, in essence, highlighted the revival of Jacksonianism in the discourse of American diplomacy. In his first foreign policy speech, he presented his understanding of international politics as a reflection of an anarchic Hobbesian world, hinting at his seemingly realist worldview regarding world politics.

Trump stated that no nation that didn’t prioritize its interests had ever managed to prosper and that America should start doing that too. He said that his administration would never enter into any deal or agreement that might jeopardize America’s sovereignty or its authority over making its own decisions that best suited its interests, adding he would never surrender Americans to the ‘false song of globalism’. Maintaining this line, Trump consistently attacked global multilateral institutions such as the U.N. and NATO, along with America’s traditional allies such as the European Union, decrying how America had often ceded its interests in favor of those of its allies and globalist aspirations in the past. He even went as far as suggesting that NATO had become ‘obsolete’ and that unless its member states recompensed the United States for its decades of sponsorship or committed more of the funding and their additional troops to the security alliance, the United States could withdraw its commitments. Trump’s argument was based on his claim that NATO had not been economically fair to the United States and that America was paying them a ‘disproportionate’ amount of money. He reiterated that under his leadership, the United States would no longer be ripped off or taken advantage of. He also expressed similar views about America’s traditional allies in Asia and the Middle East, including South Korea, Japan, and Saudi Arabia, even implying that they should build their nuclear bombs and fend for themselves. Trump’s rhetorical position here was in line with the Jacksonian populism insofar as he offered a militaristic conception of international security, while at the same time offering to re-define international agreements fundamentally and hinting at a potential withdrawal from international agreements if they did not fulfill American interests (Lacatus, 2021). This anti-globalist approach by Trump was also in line with popular public opinion, which he managed to exploit well while framing his ‘America First’ foreign policy. A widely-circulated 2013 Pew Research Center survey revealed that around 52% of

U.S. citizens believed that America should mind its own business and keep its interference to a minimum, internationally. This percentage marked the highest level of public support in nearly half a century for what the media and foreign affairs expert ominously referred to as ‘isolationism’. While this percentage dropped to 43% in 2016, around 57% of Americans polled still believed that America ought to solve its issues and let other states deal with their issues as they like, and almost 70% demanded that America’s domestic problems should be prioritized over its foreign policy.

He claimed that the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, was simply ‘one of the worst deals ever signed’ that consistently favored the economies of other countries by taking away jobs from the marginalized industrial regions of the U.S. Midwest, he did follow up on his promise when his administration entered into a new trade deal with Mexico and Canada, called the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. This agreement effectively replaced NAFTA and came into effect on July 01, 2020. Similarly, Trump also condemned China previously being allowed entrance into the World Trade Organization and called it one of President Bill Clinton’s biggest mistakes as it paved the way for China’s intellectual property theft and its policy of currency manipulation, which came at an immense economic cost to the United States. Trump’s solution for these was to raise tariffs on goods imported from China, leading to a ‘trade war’ with Beijing, and withdrawing the United States from the TPP agreement altogether.

These measures by Trump offer a throwback to the protectionism and ‘tariff wall’ deployed by the U.S. policymakers of the nineteenth century, which are also in line with the Jacksonian thought. As Mead points out, Jacksonians have traditionally never supported any international economic agreements or infrastructures that might restrict America’s ability to implement loose credit policies domestically. Trump’s entire foreign policy rhetoric, which combined populist anti-elitism with anti- globalist nationalism, revolved around continuously attacking the liberal international order and the role of the United States in spearheading it. Once Trump was in office, was his decision to pull the United States out from some of the key multilateral agreements and treaties signed by President Obama under his collaborative approach toward American foreign policy. In addition to TPP, these also included the Paris Agreement on climate change and most importantly, the Iran nuclear deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Also, it was widely reported that Trump also asked one of his foreign policy advisors, repeatedly, why he couldn’t use nuclear weapons to solve some of America’s most complicated issues, such as ISIS. The Jacksonian ethos does not place any moral limits on the United States’ response to its barbaric enemies and justifies the deployment of all means necessary to destroy any adversary that poses a direct threat to American security. In short, Trump was able to smartly navigate the preexisting gap between the popular opinion and foreign policy establishment on the extent of American global interference, by packaging his anti-elitist and anti-globalist rhetoric as a populist and nationalist foreign policy program and calling it ‘America First’.

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