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Keywords: *USA, Trump, nationalism and populism.*

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Trump, A Nationalist and a Populist Leader

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I. Introduction

Before becoming the 45th President of the USA Donald Trump had no political experience, but he was already well-known, mainly thanks to his business activity and regular presence in the media. As Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher (2016, p. 15) reported[1], more than three decades before participating in the presidential race, he was already included in Gallup list as one of the ten most admired personalities by Americans.

Michael Wolff (2018) wrote that "Donald Trump didn't want to be President". He only wanted to become "the most famous man in the world" and he was sure that he "would come out of this campaign [...] with a far more powerful brand and untold opportunities"[2]. It is a controversial statement despite several examples presented by Wolff and not accepted as true by Trump. A process that seems it is going to last.

Some months ago, Trump collaborated with an enormous team chosen by *The Washington Post*, appointed to investigate his life and for the writing of his biography, but he refused to read Kranish and Fisher's book. Nevertheless he read *Let Trump be Trump,* the book written by his former campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, and deputy campaign manager, David Bossie, and he praised the authors despite having replaced Lewandowski for Paul Manafort.

These two books are important to explain who Trump really is and how he conquered power. The list must also include a book written by Trump himself: *Crippled America: how to make America great again* (2015) and his 100-day action plan to make America great again, that is to say, his contract with the American voters.

Besides, some others of Trump's books could deserve mention as they unequivocally prove his way of thinking and acting without any shame of an undisguised narcissism[3].

Throughout the books that have been mentioned we discover not only the proud entrepreneur but also someone who is able to take advantage of the media power to convince the voters. Someone who used – and keeps using - nationalism and populism as his weapons.

Donald Trump, a member of the American economic elite, began to show not a patriotic but a national face. In fact, rivalry was always present in his discourse when he claimed that it was necessary to make America great again. At this point, even if he could be seen as someone who placed national interest first, nobody could say that his words revealed affection. He was just an American refusing external superiority and a citizen worried with the presence of immigrants considering the fact that they were not only stealing jobs from American unemployed people but also destroying American identity.

Adriano Moreira (2005, p. 367) affirms that "if nation, when it changes into a political value, becomes linked to a certain attitude of exclusion towards different groups, it does not impose necessarily an aggressive nationalism". Trump has a different perspective. For him, nationalism needs to be aggressive to be respected. He makes an intentional confusion between

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[1] In the book titled *Trump revealed. An American Journey of Ambition, Ego, Money, and Power.*

[2] *New York,* 3rd of January 2018.

[3] Trump's *bibliography is extensive: The art of the deal* (1987)*, Surviving at the top* (1990)*, The art of the comeback (1997), The America we deserve* (2000), *How to get rich* (2004), *The way to the top: the best business advice I ever received* (2004), *Think like a billionaire: everything you need to know about success, real Estate, and life* (2004), *The best golf advice I ever received* (2005), *Why we want you to be rich: two men, one message* (2006), *How to build a fortune: your plan for success from the world's most famous businessman* (2006), *The best real estate advice I ever received: 100 top experts share their strategies* (2006)*, Trump 101: the way to success* (2006), *Think big and kick ass* (2007), *Never give up: how I turned my biggest challenges into success(2008), Think like a champion: an informal education in business and life* (2009), *Time to get tough: making America #1 Again* (2011)*, Midas touch: why some entrepreneurs get rich — and why most don't* (2011)*, Trump tower* (2011)*, Crippled America: how to make America great again* (2015).

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respect and fear or between patriotism and nationalism because probably he has never heard De Gaulle's words: "Patriotism is when love for our own people comes first; nationalism is when hate for other people comes first". It is an aggressive nationalism because, as Gellner (1994, p. 126) affirms, only our group matters.

In this point, MacWilliams (2016) argues that Trump represents "the most recent expression of a long-standing theme in American political life". A model based "on ascribing to any relatively disempowered group (whether defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, or other identifying category) a certain set of qualities that justify discriminatory treatment", those whom Trump considers «bad guys» or a threat for American way of living.

Carlos de la Torre (2017) affirms that Trump used "ethnic criteria to differentiate the people from three out groups – Mexicans, Muslims, and African-American militant organisations". In fact, Trump's statements against these groups are abundant. For instance, Mexicans were accused of being "rapists" or "criminals" and Trump retweeted three anti-Muslim videos from the deputy leader of Britain First, Jayda Fransen, not to mention that he recovered George W. Bush's axis of evil. That is why he banned entrance, initially for 120 days, from seven majority-Muslim countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – or suspended both the entire US refugee admissions system for 120 days and the Syrian refugee program indefinitely.[4]

In this crusade he blamed the political elite. He accused Washington politicians to drive the country into the abyss. A clear populist behaviour.

Trump intentionally mixed the concepts of nationalism and populism since the announcement of his candidacy when he presented his "us-versus-them narrative", a narrative in which he denounced that "«the other» is attacking us from without and weakening us from within as our leaders stand by clueless and ineffectual" (Mac Williams, 2016, p. 1).

Trump believed that "insecurity encourages an authoritarian xenophobic reaction in which people close ranks behind strong leaders, with strong in-group solidarity, rejection of outsiders" (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 443).

This essay reflects on his strategy to achieve power and to conduct policy and it proves that, in both circumstances, we find ourselves faced with a fusion of nationalism and populism. Two concepts that need clarification.

a) Nationalism and Populism: Two Conceptual Realities

Nationalism and populism represent different concepts even considering the fact that they seem elusive and allow many interpretations, a commonplace in Human and Social Sciences. Indeed, it is not an easy task to clarify the meaning of both the concepts because the words that are in their origin – Nation and People – are far from a consensual definition.

In fact, nation is more than the Renan's metaphor – a everyday plebiscite – or Malraux's idea – a community of dreams – and Pinto (2017, p. 330) remembers that Adriano Moreira defends that the expression «people» is used "at times to convey compassion and at other times to endow political dignity to the communities of citizens or voters".

According to Anthony Smith (2003, p. 1), nationalism is a red line that "traverses the history of the modern world from the fall of the Bastille to the fall of the Berlin Wall". A long life because social scientists consider that "nationalism is a modern movement and ideology, which emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Western Europe and America". It is a movement that started to be inclusive, then became exaggerated and reached its apogee "in two world wars" and, with globalisation, started "to decline and give way to global forces which transcend the boundaries of nation-states".

In this sense we can say that globalisation was responsible for the decline of nationalism because the world became a village, a place where almost everybody is constantly on line, and the culture changes to a new global model. However, this transformation is not well-accepted by those who are proud of their culture and refuse any modification. That is the reason for the emergence of nationalist parties and movements. It is a phenomenon easier to be explained in the countries that import the model than in the country – USA – that exports its way of living.

In what concerns populism, it appeared in the 19th century and, according to Frank Venturi, Herzen was its originator. Populism is a controversial concept. Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012, p. 2) affirmed that it was necessary "to separate populism from features that might regularly occur together with it, but are not part of it", such as nativism and authoritarianism.

Populism can be seen as "an ideology (Laclau 1977; Mudde 2004)[5], style of politics (Knight 1998), specific discourse (Hawkins 2009) or the political strategy (Weyland 2001)" (Pappas, 2014, pp. 2-3). A list that can be augmented because, as Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikovski (2004. p.1) affirm in a literature review, populism "has been defined based on political, economic, social, and discursive features (Weyland 2001, p.1) and analyzed from myriad theoretical

[4] Some months later Trump changed his initial measures and so Iraq was removed from the list and Syrian refugees were no automatically forbidden to enter into the country.

[5] Indeed, Mudde (2004) affirmed that "Populism constitutes an ideology, even a 'thin' one".

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perspectives[6] [...] and a variety of methodological approaches, such as archival research, discourse analysis, and formal modeling (Acemoglu et al. 2011, Ionescu and Gellner 1969, Canovan 2002, Hawkins 2009, Goodliffe 2012, Postel 2007)".

In this essay I define populism not as an ideology or a thin-ideology. In fact, when we analyse the populist parties' programs we can find a mix of elements from the left and the right.

Populism is a way of articulation of the discourse aiming at fighting for hegemony. A fight between two entities – people and elite – considered as homogenous. A conflict that can never be solved through negotiations. An antagonism that does not accept intermediaries, because "the populist leader considers only himself in conditions to decipher the will of the people" (Pinto, 2017, p. 53). It is a fight based on the change from the differential logic to the equivalentional one[7]. The internal elite is always made responsible for the social problems.

These concepts became two of the most striking features of the 20th and 21st centuries. Indeed, The First World War cannot be explained without nationalism and the causes of the Second World War must be found both in a nationalistic perspective and in populist regimes, such as Nazism, Fascism and Sovietism. Orwell said that nationalism was the worst enemy of peace. Populism can be placed in the same camp.

Despite their differences, nationalism and populism share some common elements as they are often associated with conflicts conducted under national pride. However, the red line is drawn differently. In nationalism, the line separates «we» and «they» but the line coincides with the border of the country. «We» stay inside the frontier: Nation is conceived as the own world, a community. Outside this frontier there is another world where «they» must stay. The others usually seen as a threat for our nation.

On the other hand, populism draws the line inside the country and it separates the citizens in two opposite fields: people and elite. This division shows that the place of birth does not automatically mean the right of belonging to the people. That is the reason why some populist parties consider themselves as the true people. In 2002 elections, after being defeated, Víktor Orbán, FIDESZ's leader, said that "we, here in this square, cannot and will not be in opposition, because the nation cannot be in opposition" (Bozóki, 2015, p. 19).

The next point will prove that Trump used nationalism and populism during his campaign to the presidency.

b) Running for the Spotlight: Assessing Trump´s Campaign

As Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher (2016) show, Donald Trump is a "global brand" and he decided to use this successful characteristic, but not his money[8], to become President of the USA. A decision that came up public on June 16, 2015, and made laugh many American politicians and political and social analysts who thought to be in presence of Trump´s attempt to get visibility once again. That was the position, for example, of Jeffrey Toobin or Clarence Page. Not to mention that *Politico* "called Trump's announcement «one of the more bizarre spectacles of the 2016 political season thus far»" (Mac Williams, 2016, p. 2).

He was sure that the campaign would be long – in the USA law does not stipulate the number of days to promote the candidature - and the presidential election "the most controversial and polarizing election in modern American history". He was prepared for it as his promises proved. The continuous presence on television and the knowledge of the business affairs as a school of life of a self-made man who knew that he would count on "a responsive chord" (Schwartz, 1973). A large number of American citizens and not only those who were said to be the usual suspects "working class, white, dispossessed males" (MacWilliams, 2016, p. 3).

It is worthwhile to record that his support came from several sources. For example, six years ago, when interviewed by Fox News, Trump said: "I think the people of the Tea Party like me because I represent a lot of the ingredients of the Tea Party". A proof of nationalism which attracted financial support. In an article published by *New York,* Wolff (2018) mentions that "the right-wing billionaire Robert Mercer, a Ted Cruz backer whom Trump barely knew, offered him an infusion of $5 million" and Robert and his daughter Rebekah convinced Trump about the plan "to take over the campaign and install their lieutenants, Steve Bannon and Conway".

Trump was lucky since Hilary Clinton won Democratic Party nomination. Indeed, as Hawkin, Dudley & Wen (2016, p. 93) affirm, Bernie Saunders would be a "similar contender" because "commentators have noted the strong ideological and stylistic similarities between these candidates and the radical populists of the left [in Sander´s case] and right [in Trump's case] in Latin America and Europe".

[6] Including structuralism, post-structuralism, modernization theory, social movement theory, party politics, political psychology, political economy, and democratic theory.

[7] This change of logic was first presented by Ernesto Laclau. According to Pinto (2017, p. 54), this modification occurs when "the Government does not respond to the demands of its citizens, and one of those demands succeeds in mobilizing and initiating change from a differentialist logic - one that recognizes Government authority - to the equivalential logic".

[8] According to Wolff, Trump only loaned the campaign "$10 million, provided he got it back as soon as they could raise other money".

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As Hillary became the nominee of Democrats, Trump could successfully follow his populist fight against Washington swamp.

His controversial feature was well-known. He refused to behave like a politician even when he copied the politicians' techniques like the use of the teleprompter. He did not care about his hard words and opted intentionally for an incendiary discourse. That is the reason for many of his statements becoming headlines. Sentences that the mass media broadcasted improving Trump's impact on the audience. Mass media that Trump considered as enemies even when he defended that he appreciated many journalists, mainly belonging to the financial area[9], his favourite subject. A populist because populism looks at media and parties as responsible for the bad functioning of representative democracy.

Another populist characteristic is polarisation. That was the reason for presenting Hillary Clinton as representing the political elite, an elite that forgot the people, while Trump promised that the weaker regions and citizens would not be left lagging behind.

Trump presented himself as the voice of the forgotten people and accused Hillary of being the voice of the established interests.

The reading of his manifesto allows identifying many populist and nationalist evidences, implying a plan of "restoring honesty, accountability and change to Washington". So, he proposed "a lifetime ban on White House officials lobbying on behalf of a foreign government" and "a complete ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections". Besides, with the collaboration of Congress, he would enact "new ethics reforms to Drain the Swamp and reduce the corrupting influence of special interests in our politics".

All these proposals were populist because they were against those who influenced the political decisions. However, the word «foreign» points to nationalism as well. Nationalism was also visible when Trump promised to "begin removing the more than 2 million criminal illegal immigrants from the country and cancel visas to foreign countries that won't take them back". Besides, these measures would be accompanied by suspending "immigration from terror-prone regions where vetting cannot safely occur". It was a clear intention to «clean» the USA from those whom Trump considered a threat for the national security.

It is a decision that could be seen as xenophobic in opposition to the previous administrations which viewed legal immigration as desirable economically and acceptable culturally. A charge rejected by Trump because he defended that he was not persecuting legal immigrants but illegal ones. Or, as many of these «bad guys» came from Mexico, Trump promised to work "with Congress", aiming at introducing legislative measures to construct "a wall on our southern border with the full understanding that the country Mexico will be reimbursing the United States for the full cost of such wall". In what concerns the reimbursing model, Trump did not present a real proposal.

Trump promised to establish "a 2-year mandatory minimum federal prison sentence for [those] illegally re-entering the U.S. after a previous deportation". For discouraging the repeaters, he suggested a higher punishment: "a 5-year mandatory minimum" for those illegally re-entering "with felony convictions, multiple misdemeanour convictions or two or more prior deportations".

Trump's immigration policy was not only against illegals. He promised to reform "visa rules to enhance penalties for overstaying and to ensure open jobs are offered to American workers first". A convincing promise mainly in the areas where many Americans had been left behind when the factories were relocated despite American economy recovering since June 2009.

When we analyse the data collected by Jon Huang, Samuel Jacoby, Michael Strickland and K. Rebecca[10], we understand the effect of Trump's nationalism and populism on the voters. So, according to race, only 8% of Black, 29% of Hispanic/Latino and 29% of Asian voted for Trump.

Besides, 84% of Trump's voters considered that most illegal immigrants working in the U.S.A should be deported and 86% supported Trump's idea of building a wall along the entire U.S. border with Mexico.

Trump's voters really appreciate their candidate: 94% considered him honest and trustworthy and that he had the temperament to serve effectively as president. The populist discourse had been successful. It was a confirmation that Trump really dominated the American reality.

Some politicians complain about the people they govern. Trump believed that «his» people really loved him. An unquestionable truth or a dogma for all populist leaders. Charisma as a blessing allowing them to understand people's will without needing any intermediary bodies.

II. A Populist in the White House

The role of individuals is an endless discussion. Indeed, while structural realism defends that individual policymakers are less important than the system structural features, classical and neoclassical realism and constructivism hold that individuals exert a strong influence. In this case, the question could be placed in this way: would Trump keep his discourse and change

[9] In *Great Again: How to Fix Our Crippled America*. The cover of the book shows a worried and angry Trump. He explained the option for that photo as a way of showing the awful situation of his country.

[10] Available in https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html

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the system or, on the contrary, would the system oblige him to change his discourse?

Many analysts believed that Trump's discourse would change when he entered into the Oval Room as many examples could be found both in Latin America and in the European Union. Indeed, everybody knows the difference between Syriza's promises and the measures that it was forced to adopt once in power.

However, an important element must be taken into account. Syriza is a left populist party ruling a poor country. Trump belongs to the right wing and he heads a rich country, even if he considers its present situation as ruinous. Syriza's populism comes from the bottom. Trump's populism is an elite populism. It comes from the top.

These specificities explain the composition of Trump´s cabinet. An affluent cabinet in the image of the leader. As Stephen Mihm (2016) wrote, Trump assembled "an administration made up of the sorts of people whom sociologist C. Wright Mills famously called the power elite"[11].

A long time ago, Mills (1956, p. 75) defended that "within American society, major national power" resided "in the economic, the political, and the military domains". However, still according to Mills (1958, p.32), "as each has assumed its modern shape, its effects upon the other two have become greater, and the traffic between the three has increased".

As it was already said, Trump belongs to the economic elite and he pretends to fight against the political elite. However, the composition of his cabinet proves that there is a gap between the words and reality.

American political system is presidential and the system of checks and balances ensures that executive, legislative and judicial powers are independent and control mutually.

Trump understood that he could blame the political elite but he could not lead against it. He needed its support to implement his promises.

Andy Smarick and Kelsey Hamilton (2017)[12] compared "the combined government experience of President Donald Trump's initial domestic policy cabinet appointees to that of the first confirmed officials of the previous three administrations" and they concluded that they had "fewer years of experience in government service than the previous administrations analyzed". They noticed that six of Trump's appointees had "no government experience".

This element could support Trump's idea on the political elite. However, Smarick and Hamilton also related that Trump's choices were "conventional regarding experience in congressional positions, state-level elected office, and senior federal appointed positions".

Hence, we can admit that Trump had "little faith in those who have served in governmental institutions" and might "rely less on those with public-sector experience". A criterion also obeying personal confidence.

Kirk Hawkins, Rebecca Dudley and Wen Jie (Fred) Tan (2016, p. 103) think that "even as Trump carries out his promises to rescind or modify key policies – and some of the changes may be serious – he is unlikely to target core institutions of US democracy or eliminate liberal capitalism". This statement takes into account that Trump is the President of a country with a well-functioning system.

Therefore, despite all the marks of nationalism and populism, the 2016 US presidential campaign was "similar to previous populist moments, reflecting a temporary disconnect between traditional parties and their constituents, rather than widespread outrage at a political system that has routinely failed to satisfy basic standards of governance".

That disconnect was the reason for the emergence of populist waves both in Europe and in Latin America as a temporary answer, not a sustainable solution. Populism rises as an illusion before it falls as a disappointment.

In the USA, the predominance of the Democratic and Republican parties does not grant space to the appearance of a strong alternative party. The electoral competition will go on being only between two forces. Two different forms of conceiving the country without compromising the Founders' heritage.

In what concerns foreign policy, Trump believes that his personality and business acumen will be enough to renegotiate better agreements and he never worries if his personality and business experience will be enough to convince the other countries and organizations. It is the populist rule. A situation susceptible of provoking a difficult relationship between the President and the Congress even with Republicans in control of Congress and the White House. An internal fight into the Republican Party due to the gap between President's will and the reality. Jon Johnson (2017) grasped this potential conflict when writing *The art of breaking the deal: what President Trump can and can't do about NAFTA.*

The same happens in domestic life. Trump wanted to replace Obamacare which he considered a disaster but, after several fruitless attempts, the process has not yet finished. And the same is happening concerning Mexico wall. After announcing the end of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Trump presented 70 principles for a new immigration policy but he did not give up the idea of building the wall. In fact, according to Democrats' point of view, he wanted a

[11] Available in http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11767303.

[12] Available in http://www.aei.org/publication/government-experience-and-president-trumps-domestic-policy-cabinet/

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deal, that is to say, offering legal protection to under 16 immigrants who had illegally arrived in USA and who were not older than 31 in June 2012,obtaining in exchange financial support to build the wall. Trump's obsession never ends. So he threatened to paralyze the Government if the Congress does not approve financing the building of the wall.

However, it is fair to recognize that the other half of the USA that does not agree with Trump's nationalism and populism is almost always against his decisions and looks forward to his impeachment. It is a continuous attempt as we read the headlines of some important newspapers or watch several television channels. Therefore, Trump considers that some internal institutions are interested in his impeachment. A further reason for his political discourse getting worse. For instance, in what concerns FBI investigation on Russian role in USA presidential election, Trump tweeted that FBI used "crooked Hillary pile of garbage". Besides, his legal team – Harder Mirell & Abrams – demanded that Steve Rubin, the publisher of Michael Wolff's new book, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House*, which is critical of Trump's administration, "immediately cease and desist from any further publication, release or dissemination of the Book". It was a fruitless attempt despite being based on several claims: defamation by libel, defamation by libel *per se*, false light invasion of privacy, tortuous interference and contractual relations, and inducement of breach of contract.

Out of USA borders, Trump cannot impose his decisions all over the world even disposing of Congress support. When he recognized Jerusalem as capital of Israel, 128 countries of the United Nations voted against that decision.

However, in this case, Trump cannot be accused of disrespecting the Congress or of giving in to Jewish lobby, an influent element of the American policy. Indeed Hillary Clinton won 71% of Jewish votes while Trump only received 24%. So, rather than trying to please American Jews it is probable that this Trump's decision represents a challenge to American worldwide competitors. A way of occupying its own space. A further mark of nationalism.

In what concerns Iran nuclear sanctions, Trump said that "he was waiving the nuclear sanctions for the last time in order to give Congress and European allies 120 days to improve the agreement or face U.S. abandonment of the pact"[13]. However, the European allies made clear that they wanted to support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Is it time to remind that, two centuries ago, Lord Palmerston said that his country had neither eternal allies nor perpetual enemies?

Nationalism at its best. Populism will follow.

[13]Available in https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2018/iran-180112-voa01.htm?_m=3n%2e002a%2e2201%2eal0ao0clup %2e20y4

III. Conclusion

Populism and nationalism were present in Trump´s campaign as this essay proved. On the inauguration day Trump's discourse was a little softer than during the electoral race. Indeed, after having threatened to jail Hillary Clinton, he thanked her. However, it was short-lived, as his continuous tweets prove.

Trump is a populist and a nationalist. His discourse is similar to that of Marine Le Pen, not just because they have become regular features on prime time television and front pages. Trump intends to build a wall. Marine wants to take control of France's frontiers. Both of them wish that their citizens have precedence over immigrants with respect to jobs. None of them has a positive view of an intercultural relationship. Both consider that enemies are inside and outside their borders. In what concerns education, Trump was mainly supported in his campaign by white people without a college degree – 67%. In French presidential election only 8% and 9% of Marine's supporters had a college degree.

The education level is important because those who have a college degree are less prone to accept without questioning. They do not agree that "economic gains have gone almost entirely to those at the top" (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 443) and they usually identify and distrust populism.

Trump's way of acting has already provoked a difficult relationship with the other organs of power and even inside his team, as the endless list of resignations has proved, despite Mike Pence's commendations. Indeed, at a Cabinet meeting, Pence decided to praise Trump for the entire team during over nearly three minutes before he offered fourteen separate commendations for Trump.

Besides, his foreign policy is worrying traditional allies and challenging USA enemies and competitors even if Pence considers that Trump has "restored American credibility on the world stage"[14].

A substantial part of American citizens, mainly those who vote for Democrats, does not approve his decisions, but Trump knows that the other part agrees with him, because he says and does what they really want.

Trump is not the first American populist leader and he will not be the last one. In the past, the establishment worked. It accepted occasional political changes but not an outright of the system. Trump intends to go beyond. Check and balances system will not let him. Representative democracy can heave a sigh of relief.

[14] Available in https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/12/20/in-cabinet-meeting-pence-praises-trump-once-every-12-seconds-for-3-minutes-straight/?utm_term=.5be0c04e7e21.

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Some decades ago, Mills (1956, p. 74) told us that "behind such men and behind the events of history, linking the two, are the major institutions of modern society". After all, in the USA the presidential term is short and, despite several amendments, the Constitution is still the one elaborated by the Founding Fathers and a country is not a business.

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