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The Image of Trump in Foreign Policies: A Hero for Withdrawal

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Abstract. With the decisions of withdrawing from international organizations and strengthening economic barriers between both western and non-western countries, the White House is illustrating Donald Trump as a hero that rescues the United States from deplomatic failure during the Biden administration. Traditionally, these decisions contradict the core values of American culture, featuring promoting democracy and expanding global influences. However, the withdrawal policies of the Trump Administration succeeded in gaining some support from the voters, with the critical illustration of Trump as a hero for withdrawal. This paper aims to describe the cultural causes of the foreign policies that signal the withdrawal from the international community, which is currently attempting to deal with global challenges, such as climate change and humanitarian crisis in under-developing countries, together through governmental international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization. The conclusion is that the heroic illustration of Trump's contractionary foreign policy is significantly caused by the right-wing populist movement in the United States in which Trump acts as a leader against the elite class. Consequently, Trump's withdrawing foreign policies are supported for the fight against all values of the elite class, which benefits from globalization. This paper underscores the complicated causes of the seemingly unreasonable radical actions of the White House in international affairs, possibly shining a spotlight on the directions of American diplomacy in the near future.

Keywords: US diplomacy, ideology, party politics, liberalism

1. Introduction

Featuring the bold foreign policies of withdrawling from international organizations and raising tariffs, Trumpism came back with increased advocates in the 2024 presidential election, and continued to rock the political landscape of the international community. Previous scholars [1,2] have attributed the prevalence of Trumpism to structural changes in the United States' society, arguing that the declining working classes would inevitably support Trumpism, because the anti-globalization essence of Trumpism meets their demand for regaining industrial advantage, especially in the Rust Belt.

However, from the perspective of culture, people need to pay more attention to the successful narrative of Trump as a social movement leader and the effects of it. Beyond the economic

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foundation, this paper hereby emphasizes and explain an aspect of the prevalence of Trumpism that has long been ignored-the populism aspect [3]. In this aspect, the broad advocation for Trump and Trumpism is understood as a populist movement guided by the charismatic narration of Donald Trump.

Unlike previous articles focusing on the economic and social backgrounds of Trump's advocates, this study has more interest in the strategic narrative of Trump as a populist movement's leader, and the way it motivates the silent majority- the majority of people who have been marginalized in political life-to broadly devote efforts into supporting Trump and Trumpism [4]. Through popular class-based analysis for the cause of the populist movement that supports Trump, this paper provides interpretation from the perspective of the illustration of Trump's image along with the American political cultural background entailing this illustration. Therefore, this paper explains why it is merely wishful thinking that we unite all the less privileged "working class" people in order to fight against irrational moves of Trump, and that it is an inevitable trend that the right-wing populist movement following Trump will continue to prevail in the US and only in the US.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section describes the narrative of Trump as a social movement leader. The second section criticizes the class-based analysis of the populist movement support in Trumpism, and analyzes how the right-wing "Trumpism" movement is carried out as an opposition movement to the domination of the elite class in international and domestic affairs, resulting in the foreign policies contradicting the core values of mainstream American culture. The third section draws the conclusions.

2. The anti-hero narrative of Trump

2.1. Trump as an amateur politician against the elites

Throughout Trump's career as a politician, he acts in a manner that makes him look like an amateur politician [5]. In his 2016 campaign, he released the signal that he did not intend to gain political capital, but demanded to "make America great again" as a businessman, which has been explained enough in previous articles.

After his last term as president, it is widely believed that Trump would use the experiences as an advantage in the 2024 presidential campaign. which would make him more a professional politician than an amateur businessman. Indeed, Trump emphasized his contributions in his first term in the 2024 presidential campaign.

However, it is the realization of promises to the voters that Trump emphasized, rather than expertise as a professional politician. Moreover, Trump continued to separate his activities from the official and traditional political approaches in the White House, since he insisted on directly communicating with supporters via social media platforms, using plain language and short sentences rarely seen in any politician's speeches. In this way, Trump voluntarily distanced himself from the circle of elite politicians in Washington, at least in the eyes of voters, which provided the foundation of the narrative of an untraditional anti-hero standing out against the so-called "corrupt bureaucratic system".

2.2. Trump as a leader prosecuted by the elites

What distinguishes Trump's 2024 presidential election from the 2016 election crucially includes the illustration of Trump as a prosecuted savior. One of the most evident confirmations is the effects of the shooting event on July 13th, targeting Trump, who narrowly dodged it. At that time, the

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supporting rate exhibited that Trump and Biden were in a tight race, while the supporting rate of Trump dramatically increased immediately after the event took place. Prominently, photos of Trump's real-time reaction were asserted on almost all social media, with comments stressing the firm leadership exhibited by Trump, which united people to overcome crisis. Notably, the blaming of the Biden administration rapidly rose on social media platforms, with plenty of people assuming the shooter was an assassin funded by Wall Street, according to the polls.

Actually, the illustration of Trump as a persecuted savior began to rise when the "riots" took the Hill of Congress after the 2020 presidential election [6], where a large proportion of Trump's supporters believed that the election had been controlled by the Democratic Party, and thus denied Trump's defeat and participated in disorganized protests. Since then, the prosecution narrative has been a key motivation to activate the voters, resulting in the increase of political participation in various forms, such as speeches on social media and parades on the streets.

2.3. Trump as a protector against globalization

The narrative of Trump as a protector against international society provides a direct explanation for Trump's foreign policies [7], which seem unreasonable but are broadly supported in the US by a number of people that can't be ignored. Yet this narrative is built on the foundation of the illustration of Trump, presented in Section 2.1 and 2.2, as an amatuer politician and a prosecuted hero.

In the field of foreign policy, following the traditional trade protectionism, Trump regarded himself as the only protector for American people against globalization. In his narrative, the only reason why the elites continue to promote globalization is that globalization benefits elites at the price of hurting most American people.

Understanding the narrative of Trump is a key to interpreting and predicting Trump's foreign policies. The essence of Trump's foreign policies is their usage as a tool for shaping the protector image of him. In other words, the major driving factor of Trump's foreign policies is not relationships of interests that are relatively stable, but the trajectory of Trump's personal image's development that shifts erratically along with untraceable factors such as Trump's moods, scandals and body conditions.

3. Political cultural motivations and limitations of the prevalence of Trumpism in American foreign policies

3.1. The class-based analysis needs to be supplemented by political cultural analysis

The class-based analysis about the broad support for Trump's foreign policies has been one of the most popular explanations in recent years; however, this analysis exhibits flaws that need to be supplemented.

According to the class-based analysis, the broad support of Trump's foreign policies comes from the working class, because the interests of the working class have been harmed in the process of globalization since the 1970s. The global distribution of labor led to the outflow of American manufacturing industries, and thus reduced the income of the majority of working-class people relying on manufacturing industries. On the contrary, the capitalists gained a grand number of profits through the global flow of financial capital. As a result, the support for Trump's foreign policies is essentially the misguided fighting against capitalists. Therefore, the class-based analysis proposes that all of the working-class people unite together and fight against capitalism, including the disguised capitalism in Trumpism. It seems that the economic factors emphasized by the class-based

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analysis properly correspond with the hostility to the international community and economic globalization among the Rust Belt, several particular regions where the prosperity from robust manufacturing industries has gone during the globalization process.

However, the class-based analysis does not successfully explain the reason why only Trump's foreign policies have gained wide support for both the policies themselves and Trump's leadership, and why a large proportion of support for Trump's policies comes not from the working-class people but from the elites who have actually benefited from globalization [8]. It is under the particular political cultural background in the United States that the broad support for Trump's foreign policies from people with various economic backgrounds could be thoroughly explained.

3.2. The conflict of populist movements in contemporary American culture

Regarding the support from elites, one of the most prominent reasons is taking sides in the conflict between left-wing and right-wing populism in contemporary American culture. The narrative of Trump as a prosecuted hero who speaks for the American hero and fights against elites should not be understood separately from the illustration of Trump as a leader of the right-wing populist movement; otherwise, there is not sufficient reason for plenty of elites, such as Elon Musk, to support Trump.

The core of Trump's leadership in the right-wing populist movement is that Trump covers and softens the conflict of interests between elites and less-privileged people with the conflict between left-wing and right-wing ideologies. According to Trump, all the American people should vote for him, not because he stands for the working class, but because he fights against the "evil part of the elites" [9]. Throughout Trump's 2024 presidential campaign, he never seriously stated support for the working class against capitalist, but repetitively linked "Wall Street elites" with the left-wing populist movements where people "want to turn boys into girls" and fiercely spoke against this artificial fusion of certain groups of elites and liberalism. Correspondingly, the reason why some elites support Trump is that they are against left-wing populism movement to such an extent that they support Trump even if Trump's trade protectionism foreign policies are not good for their economic interests.

3.3. The status of prominent leaders against external threats in traditional American culture

Though conflict between left-wing and right-wing populist movements widely occurs in the Western world, it is only in the US [10] that a prominent leader with evident anti-globalization foreign policies gained wide advocation and successfully stayed in office. In contrary, the complain of left-wing populism on the topics of sexuality and immigrants has failed to form influential political movements in the UK and Canada, though the positions of left wings in these countries are not less radical than that in the US, if not more radical.

This study attributes this phenomenon to the historic tradition of prominent leaders in social movements in the US. Compared with other western countries, the revolutions in the US most often feature the prominent leaders, such as Washington and Lincoln. In particular, there was always a leader that unites all the people, when the United States was under economic depression or urgent external threats, from Rosevelt in the 1929 depression and WWII to Readon in the 1970 depression and the Cold War. Culturally, the US is a country that believes in superheroes. This unique cultural background of the US provides crucial background for the prevalence of Trump, especially in the field of foreign policy. When people are facing both post-pandemic economic slowdown and

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external threats from the rise of China and regional conflicts, they crave a leader; Trump caters to their demand with the distinct narrative of an anti-hero.

4. Conclusion

Featuring anti-globalization with bold actions such as raising tariffs, Trump's foreign policies have gained broad support in America. In reality, the essence of Trump's foreign policies is not irrationality but shrewd consideration around the narrative of Trump as an anti-hero who speaks for people's interests. There are people of various economic backgrounds who root for Trump, because Trump sets particular groups of liberal elites in left-wing populist movements as targets and thus unites more people on his side. Moreover, this alliance of people is only feasible under the particular political cultural background of the US, where people demand and accept prominent leaders in eras of depression and insecurity.

The perspective of cultural movements in the American society cannot be ignored when we analyze the foreign policy of Trump Administration. In the core values of American culture, cultural expansion and global influence are valued and encouraged, while the foreign policies to withdraw from international organizations and world trade have received more support than radical opposition movements in American society.

Instead of analyzing the international affairs separately, this paper examines the foreign policies of the Trump Administration in a larger cultural background, where Trump acts as a leader of the right-populism movement that opposes the whole elite class, which has benefited from and is actively promoting globalization. As a result, the close interaction with the global community is targeted in the populism movement as a critical part of the elites' dominance. Trump, as an amateur leader that openly opposes traditional elite politicians, keeps the image of a protector for less-privileged American people. The tendency of American working-class people to disconnect with the traditional political direction, which is advocated by elite politicians, shapes Trump's image into a hero whose meaning of existence is to fight against the elite-featured globalization.

Some scholars have attributed the right-wing populism movement against globalization to the inequality in the American economic structure. However, this explanation ignored the facts that economically Trump is part of the elite class, and that the support for Trump and his foreign policies is not limited to the working class.

This paper has elaborated on the more comprehensive cultural cause from the traditional role of leaders in the long history of American social movements. The elite class people, opposed by the people who advocate for anti-globalization, are particularly the elite politicians who traditionally promote globalization, and Trump serves as a dramatically prominent leader and an amateur politician detached from elite politicians in the populist movement.

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