Concept Paper

The Rise of Donald Trump Right-Wing Populism in the United States: Middle American Radicalism and Anti-Immigration Discourse

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Abstract: Populism has been an inherent phenomenon in the history of the United States since the beginning of the republic to the present, but it is only in 2016 that a populist leader, Donald Trump, has won the presidential election. The article considers Trump's victory as part of the history of USA populism, taking into consideration the demand and the support for it in specific groups of radicalized, mainly white American citizens, who, since the late 1960s, felt abandoned or even betrayed by the mainstream political leadership through times of economic restructuring, cultural changes, and demographic transitions. This broad overview shows how USA populism, far from being the product of lunatic leaders, is deeply rooted in long-term processes concerning millions of people. The United States are a nation that has been built by immigration and wracked by debates about each successive wave of it: however, the forms debates on immigration have taken vary according to the generations. This paper makes the attempt to analyze the specificities of the present debate. The major changes introduced in migration policies in 1965 have slowly produced demographic changes in the ethnic components of the nation. The transformational demographic change- the majority ethnic group-non-Hispanic white people becoming one of multiple minorities- has been exploited by right-wing populists, such as Pat Buchanan, since the Nineties. Donald Trump's speech on immigration is connected with different ideological positions—conservatism, paleo-conservatism, nativism, white suprematism—that form the puzzle of Trumpism, which has become a reference for international populists. Furthermore, opposition to immigration means delimiting the borders of the nation: this is an evident symbol of the rejection of the globalist idea of a borderless world that an elite pursues and that is repudiated by Trumpism. With his open contempt for "globalism" (as the idea that economic and foreign policy should be planned in an international way) and for the liberal–cosmopolitan elites who have provided ideological cover for it, Donald Trump has rallied many Americans and gained supporters in different parts of the world.

Keywords: United States; populism; right-wing; speech; Donald Trump; migratory crisis

1. Introduction: Theoretical Premises

Populism is undoubtedly a controversial concept, difficult to define, not only because of its nuances in the field of political theory, but also because of the variety of regional, national, historical, and cultural experiences that are labeled as populist in Latin America, the USA, and Europe. They include multiple political practices nourished by different ideological trends—nationalism, socialism, liberalism; a few charismatic leaders, expressing their own political style; complex systems of interclass alliances justified by anti-elitist discourses; contradictory economic measures sometimes opposing the capitalist liberal logic, in name of protectionism and state interventionism, sometimes following the neo-liberal doxa.

Thought as a multiform and flexible container, populism "is an ideology, i.e., a world-view, but it is thin-centered, meaning it addresses only part of the political agenda—for example, it has no opinion on what the best economic or political system is." [1] [1].

The populist worldview divides society into two separated groups—the people and the elite—arguing that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people [2,3], but this "thin ideology" needs another guiding ideology—normally some forms of nationalism on the right and some forms of socialism on the left." [1] [2]. In absence of a strong ideological narrative capable to mobilize the masses (as conservatism, liberalism and socialism have been), the success of populism is largely based on the communication style of the leaders [4] [3]. In his book on American populism, *The Populist Persuasion*, the historian Michael Kazin describes populism as "*a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilise the former against the latter*." [5] (p. 1).

The complex relationship between populism and democracy is at the core of the debate in the field. Greatly simplifying the theoretical frame, we can say that scholars are divided between those who argue that populism, as a form of authoritarianism, is a threat to (undermines) democracy and those who see it as a promise of democratic renewal, bringing new actors and policies into the political system. The first approach has been developed by Gino Germani [6], who studied Peronism in Argentina, by Torcuato Di Tella [7], who analyzed Latin American authoritarian populisms, and, more recently, by Ludolfo Paramio [8], Sussane Gratius [9], Flavia Freidenberg [10], and Roger Bartra [11]. Among the European scholars, we can mention Ruth Wodak [12,13], who studied the discourses and practices of national populists as the Austrian FPO, and Nadia Urbinati [14] who argues that populist governments, even if elected in democratic frames, represent a disfigured democracy.

Exploring the historical experiences, most scholars following the first approach focus on the indispensable and, to a certain extent, Machiavellian presence of a charismatic leader who bases his political aspirations on speaking on behalf of the people and characterizing the opposition as "the elite" and "the others". Carlos Moscoso [15] considers populism as an ideology projected in the leader's discourse that appears as an easy way to solve economic and representation problems. In most populist experiences, the economic measures-protectionist and redistributive policies-, aren't cautiously planned and cannot achieve a viable economic and social balance [16].

The second approach considers populism as part of democracy [17–21] and argues that it might play a democratizing role in different contexts, while not ruling out the possibility of authoritarian versions [22–24]. The role of populism in giving some form of representation to popular classes is recognized by Torcuato Di Tella, who is, by the way, extremely critical in front of Latin American populism, described as the consequence of continent social tensions: "*The paradox of populism is that due to its authoritarian and occasionally violent traits it has been for decades a foe for liberal democracy; but it has held in his hands one essential component of any modern democratic regime the representation of the popular classes.*" [7].

According to Laclau and Mouffe [25], populism may even represent an option of radical democracy when the "many", opposing against the "few", redefine the political contest through a strategy at the borders of liberalism [19]. In other terms, "*the core elements of populism, putting the people in moral battle against elites, often benefit democracy by taking democratic politics back to its normative roots in the wants and needs of ordinary citizens and challenging, on egalitarian and justice grounds, elite political, economic, and cultural domination.*" [26] (p. 60).

Being both right-wing and left-wing, populism is an empty container that can be filled by extremely different narratives. The increasing electoral success of the European national populist right (French National Front- now Rassemblement National-, Austrian Freedom's Party, Italian League, among others) over the past few decades is associated with the adoption of nationalist and anti-immigrants' rhetoric [3,27,28]. While it is central

to national populist discourse, immigration does not occupy the same place in left-wing populist narratives: on the contrary, left-wing populists—Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, La France Insoumise in France—take political positions based on left traditional values of solidarity and internationalism. Furthermore, they are very critical of EU border security policy: "No migrant is illegal", one of Syriza's slogan, would be widely shared among the parties mentioned.

While the populist parties of the left remain faithful to the values of solidarity with migrants, their traditional electoral basis—working class, blue collar, lower educated voters—seem to struggle to follow the same positions. As evidenced by various research, these categories are now overrepresented among the voters of national populist parties and leaders. The same research shows that anxiety about an immigration that seems uncontrolled is one of the main causes of this passage of the popular vote from left to right: solidarity is not convincing, as immigrants are perceived as exploited competitors for jobs and public benefits, and are accused to provoke wage reduction, tax increases, and excessive burden on welfare [29].

The shift of the popular vote from mainstream left to right-wing populist parties or leaders\is one of the contributing causes of two events that marked the "breakthrough" *of populism in the West: Brexit referendum in the UK and Donald Trump's election in 2016. Opposition to immigration has arguably been central to both events. Just think the fact, that Donald Trump made* immigration, especially arrivals from the southern border, *one of the main themes of his 2016 electoral campaign.*

In a special issue dedicated to populism and immigration, at least one of the breakthroughs of populism in the Western world, Trump's election, deserves an in-depth analysis in order to understand the complex causes behind this event. Searching the complexity means to abandon the dichotomous good–evil, democracy–fascism approach. To this end, we have chosen the lens of history, placing Trump and Trumpism in a path of continuity with USA populism and in response to the upheavals of American society in the last sixty years. With our modest work, we have tried to follow the lesson of the great French historian Marc Bloch, synthesized in these two sentences: "*L'ignorance du passé ne se borne pas à nuire à la connaissance du présent, elle compromet, dans le présent, l'action.*" [30] (p. 27)—"*Ignorance of the past is not limited to harming the knowledge of the present: it compromises, in the present, the very action.*"[4] and "*L'incompréhension du présent nait fatalement de l'ignorance du passé. Mais il n'est peut-être pas moins vain de s'épuiser à comprendre le passé, si l'on ne sait rien du présent.*" [30], (p. 47)—"*Misunderstanding of the present is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of the past. But a man may wear himself out just as fruitlessly in seeking to understand the past, if he is totally ignorant of the present* ... "[5] The article's first section focuses USA populism as a permanent historical phenomenon and identifies the passage from left to right as a main trend in the second half of the twentieth century, albeit minor manifestations of left populism (as Occupy Wall Street or Bernie Sanders' campaigns) have regularly appeared over the years. The history of the United States offers interesting examples both of the democratizing elements in populism as of the rise of right-wing populism exploiting nationalist and racist narratives, by feeding on or borrowing parts of structured ideologies as conservatism and nativism.

The historical analysis shows that the articulations between left-wing populism and right-wing populism are linked to different political responses to real problems, in periods of economic restructuring, crisis in party democracy, multiple societal rifts, and complex interactions between class and race conflicts. Immigration is Immigration is, or at least is perceived, as a key factor in the structuring of the labor market and is part of the complex configurations of class, racial status, and local environment. As Nagel argues [31], instead of expressing simplistic moral judgments on populism, what is needed is an honest discussion on the historical role that immigration has played in the segmentation of the labor force, the reproduction of labor market inequalities, and the concentration of power and wealth in the US [32].

The article does not just analyze USA populist narratives, speeches, and messages, but also takes into consideration the demand and the support for it. This broad overview shows how USA populism is not the product of lunatic leaders but is deeply rooted in long-term processes concerning millions of people.

As Schain (2021) argues: "*Populist radical-right parties are often viewed as a kind of political pathology. Yet these are not "flash parties" that suddenly appear and disappear—rather, they are likely to continue to endure, since, like other political parties, they have voters who identify with them and networks and organizations that have solidified their support.*" [33].

The second and the third sections of the article look at the formation, over the years, of a solid "populist basis" among specific groups of radicalized citizens, mainly white, first described by the sociologist David Warren as the MARS- Middle American radicals [34]. Since the late 1960s, this group American citizens felt abandoned or even betrayed by the mainstream political leadership through times of economic restructuring, great cultural changes, and demographic transitions.

In the second and third sections, the article highlights the fact that, while immigration has been a long-term issue in the United States—a nation that has been built by immigration and wracked by debates about each successive wave of it—it has become a main topic for populist movements only in the last thirty years, following two facts: first, the impact on demography produced by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (more commonly known as the Hart–Celler Act, after its main sponsors), which abolished the National Origins Formula—the basis of U.S. immigration policy since the 1920s, and, second, the growing number of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Furthermore, the "liberal" approach to immigration inaugurated by the 1965 Reform, eliminating race, religion, and place of origin as a basis for entry [31] was matched with a new vision of the American society and the ethnic factor: the melting pot model was superseded by a multicultural society; the racist and eugenic approach that was behind the immigration acts implemented in the first half of the 20th century, was fully rejected; diversity became a value. While the anti-discrimination approach and the proposal of a multicultural society are a welcome outcome for a society born from a Revolution and built by immigrants, the new migratory policy, which opens the borders to qualified non-European immigrants, presents a clear-cut contradiction: the 1965 Act did not create a way for lower-skilled workers to enter the country and legally work. Consequently, the number of undocumented immigrants coming through the southern border grew over the years, illegal immigration becoming a main issue in the political debate. The peak of 12,200,000 undocumented migrants was reached in 2007, just before the elections of Barack Obama.

The fourth and the fifth sections analyze the political impact produced by the American society radicalization at the right (Tea Party) and at the left (Occupy Wall Street) in the post 2008–2009 crisis time, with the arrival of "outsiders"—Obama and Trump—in the presidential race. In the context of the economic crisis, the basis that can be mobilized by populists has become larger, including the "losers of the globalization"- the lower middle class and the low-skilled workers of the USA and the other rich countries-, who might represent a new version of the MARS, the middle American radicals described by David Warren in the Seventies.

The sixth section gives an overview of Donald Trump's speech on immigration and of the policies that he introduced. The seventh section tries to place the anti-immigration narrative of Donald Trump in the frame of the present "migratory crisis" resulting from the massive movements from Central America and Mexico towards the USA. Section eight explores the connections with the different ideologies that construct Trumpism: conservatism, paleo-conservatism, nativism, and white suprematism. Furthermore, opposition to immigration and defense of the borders are a strong metaphor of the rejection of the globalist culture promoted by cosmopolite elite, to which Trumpism is hostile. The rejection of "globalism" links together the elite and the migrants—the top and the bottom of

the social pyramid—in the frame of the populist dichotomic narrative opposing them to the "patriots".

1.1. USA Populism: Shifting from the Left to the Right

Populism, in different political forms and expressions, has been an integral part of the history of the United States. According to Michael Kazin, the conflict between a "powerful elite ", the establishment, and "the people" has run through American history since the first years of the Republic, across the full political spectrum [5]. John Judis identifies the roots of American populism in the American Revolution and Andrew Jackson's fight against the Bank of the United States in the 1830s, but it is at the end of the 19th century that the "People's Party", a "grassroots" organization, essentially agrarian, including farmers, mostly southerners, played a major role in the national politics pushing toward democratic outcomes [35].

The People's Party demands, namely in the 1892 elections where it had the opportunity to compete, were all directed against corruption, monopolies, laissez faire capitalism, and in favor of greater democratization of all orders of society [36–38]. In fact, the People's Party advocated the recovery of the status quo that had been lost because of the transition from an agricultural country, with pre-monopoly capitalism, to an industrial nation in the heyday of imperialism and with extra-continental projection [36–38], but, at the same time, they foreshadowed a more just industrial society.

The populists were the first to call for government to regulate and even nationalize industries that were integral to the economy, such as the railroads. They wanted government to reduce the economic inequality that capitalism, when left to its own devices, was creating, and (they wanted) to reduce the power of business in determining the outcome of elections. Their ideas were partly taken by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when he introduced the New Deal in the Thirties, following the Great Depression of 1929.

As Bugaric (2019) writes: *"There are historical examples of different forms of populism, like the New Deal in the US, which did not degenerate into authoritarianism and which actually helped the American democracy to survive the Big Depression of the 1930s. Looking at the current populist map, we can also find examples of such democratic populists, which seek to protect and defend democracy by making it more responsive, equitable and inclusive (Sanders, Warren, Podemos, Syriza)."* [39].

Because of the historical events, the meaning that the term populism has acquired in North America is not especially negative: it refers largely to the greater participation of the people in the decisions of the State, that is, the transfer of government decisions to social strata of the population [40,41].

The People's Party, defined as "populist" [37], could not easily be framed in the categories left–right used at the time, as socialism that sought the class conflict and the abolition of capitalism represented "the left". The People's Party was far from these instances: even if populists saw themselves representing the "people", including farmers and blue-collar workers, against the "money power" or "plutocracy", they never questioned the legitimacy of capitalism as economic system. However, both the critics of laissez faire capitalism and the demands of democratization brought the People's Party closer to the left than to the right.

In the 20th century, various political experiences have been branded as populists, both at the left and at the right. Among the first ones, we can mention Louisiana governor Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth" movement, which emerged in the wake of Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 and pressured the President to address economic inequality. As mentioned, Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself in the 1930s and 1940s incorporated much of the People's Party agenda into the outlook of New Deal liberalism. Eventually, these movements established the framework that Bernie Sanders, who described himself both as a democratic socialist and as a progressive, would adopt during his 2016 campaign. Besides Bernie Sanders, movements without a personalized leadership, such as "Occupy Wall Street", are also part of the USA left-wing populism), as we have briefly mentioned [42–44].

In the 1930s, in a political landscape dominated by left-wing populism, the first major instances of right-wing populism would come from Charles Coughlin, a Canadian-born Catholic priest, who pretended to express "the language of the man of the street" in a successful radio show, *The Golden Hour of the Little Flower*. Initially in favor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for whose election he campaigned in 1932, Father Coughlin became an opposer to the New Deal, founding his own political group and publishing a weekly magazine, *Social Justice*, where he spread messages of isolationism, anti-Semitism, and anti-communism.

Charles Coughlin inaugurated a long series of right-wing populist leaders in the history of the United States. Over the years, the role of populism in the democratization processes was lessened; indeed, populism became the amplifier of ideological positions of the right (conservatism, paleo-conservatism, nationalism, nativism), even offering, in the case of George Wallace, an edge to racism.

In the post-war years, the main character of American right-wing populism was the democratic governor of Alabama, George Wallace [45]. His case is especially interesting as an example of how American populism shifted from the left to the right. Wallace was not originally a conservative. He was, on the contrary, a "New Deal Democrat", in favor of spending on welfare, education, and public investments, and hostile to big business, the Rockefellers, the Fords, the Carnegies . . . but the "left" side of his political message was combined with a fierce opposition to racial integration. Wallace's support for the segregationist policies toward black people was framed as a defense of the average (white) American against the tyranny of Washington bureaucrats: "big government" was accused to impose its will on the people. Running for President in the 1968 presidential election for the American Independent Party, Wallace received almost ten million votes—13.53% of votes cast nationally—mainly in the southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi [46].

1.2. The Discovery of the MARS—Middle American Radicals—The Formation of a Populist Basis Immigration as a Main Issue in Populist Narrative

Who were Wallace's ten million voters? Why did they vote for him, abandoning the mainstream Democratic and Republican parties? Were they all racist Southerners? The answer came a few years later by a sociological study.

In the early Seventies, sociologist Donald Warren, exploring the political attitudes and social values of working-class Americans through extensive surveys, identified a distinct political group that was neither left nor right, liberal nor conservative—defying stereotypes. They were mostly white and resented the colored minorities, who they felt were excessively supported by the system. Warren used the term "radicalism", which is referred to parties and movements at the borders of mainstream politics (conservative Republicans against liberal Democrats), to define them: these "radicals" saw themselves as middle class, even if they were, and many were blue collars (mainly skilled labor).

Their radicalism was nourished by the fact that they felt that the middle class had been seriously neglected by a government that favored simultaneously the very rich and poor [35]. The identification with the middle class by most Americans, including blue collar, was an outcome of the massive level of economic growth in the post-World War Two years combined with great optimism. The [47] in his book, *The American Dream; the United States since 1945*, describes the years between 1945 and 1965 as "The golden age of middle class:", representing a true "American Dream" for millions of people whose quality of life improved in a spectacular way.

The golden age of the middle class was by no way a paradise. "*That confident, prosperous nation was also tarred by segregation, nuclear nightmares and a "feminine mystique" based on the subjugation of half its population.*" [47]. When the contradictions exploded with the civil rights movement, the changes that intervened—equality of rights for minorities and for women, anti-discrimination and affirmative action, and multiculturalism—were not accepted unanimously, especially when these changes were seen as partly responsible

for a loss of income, status, or privileges. The reaction came from "the middle American radicals"[6].

As John Judis points out [35], they expressed apparently contradictory instances: *"they favored government guaranteeing jobs to everyone; and they supported price controls, Medicare, some kind of national health insurance, federal aid to education, and Social Security. On the other hand, they held very conservative positions on poverty and race."* They wanted the welfare, but reserved to working people paying taxes; they asked for state interventions in everyday life, invoking to grant police a "heavier hand" to "control crime", but rejected state intervention to promote racial intervention as racial busing[7]. They were suspicious of big government and Washington bureaucrats, but they were in favor of strong leadership in Washington.

According to John Judis, *"Warren's MARS of the 1970s are the Donald Trump supporters of today. Since at least the late 1960s, these voters have periodically coalesced to become a force in presidential politics, just as they did this past summer. In 1968 and 1972, they were at the heart of George Wallace's presidential campaigns; in 1992 and 1996, many of them backed H. Ross Perot or Pat Buchanan"* [35]. John Judis makes an in-depth analysis of the MARS worldview, whose issues have been represented by different populist leaders, such as Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, while since 2015, they are represented by Donald Trump. *"Over the years, some of their issues have changed illegal immigration has replaced explicitly racist appeals and many of these voters now have junior college degrees and are as likely to hold white-collar as blue-collar jobs. But the basic MARS world view that Warren outlined has remained surprisingly intact from the 1970s through the present."* [35]. The observation of John Judis—illegal immigration has replaced explicitly racist appeals—is an important clue to understand at least some reasons for Donald Trump's electoral triumph. During the fifty years between Wallace and Donald Trump, huge changes had occurred in the political, social, and cultural life as in the economic structure. The periods that have followed have been defined by H.W. Brands [47] as the "twilight of liberalism" (1965–1986), followed by "silicon schemes and global connections" (1987–2010). As for the "twilight of liberalism" Brands points out the significance of the immigration reforms of the 1960s, which gradually transformed the American society and mentions the economic reforms, as abandoning the gold standard in 1971, which enabled both globalization and the 2008–2009 financial crisis. The two sets of reforms -immigration and neo-liberal economics-shaped the new America that a part of the citizens didn't feel to belong to. Let's begin to analyze the impact of immigration reforms.

A new version of *West Side Story* directed by Steven Spielberg has recently been re-released in cinemas. This Leonard Bernstein musical dates back to 1957: the difficult integration of Puerto Ricans into New York City is mainly hampered by second generations of European immigrants (Poles, Italians, Jews), who have not managed to rise from poverty and move to the suburbs. While the American dream is a strong engine for the life of new immigrants (symbolized by the—I want to be in America- sang by Anita and the Puerto Rican women), for the Jets- second or third generations of -white- immigrants- the dream has failed. They have become "white trash". Conflictual relations -between ethnic groups- accompanied by mutual racism seem the norm of the time.

A few years later, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, amidst concerns about America's moral leadership in the world on issues of racial discrimination, the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (more commonly known as the Hart–Celler Act, after its main sponsors), abolished the National Origins Formula, which had been the basis of U.S. immigration policy since the 1920s. The act removed de facto discrimination against Southern and Eastern Europeans, Asians, and other non-Western and Northern European ethnic groups from American immigration policy. The Act also created new priority categories based on skill and family relationships and ensured that the immediate relatives of legal immigrants would not be subject to any numerical restrictions [31]. The "liberal" approach to immigration inaugurated by the 1965 Reform, eliminating race, religion, and place of origin as a basis for entry [31], was matched with a new vision of the American society and the ethnic factor: the melting pot model was superseded by a multicultural society, where diversity became a value, fully rejecting the racist and eugenic approach that

was behind the immigration acts that had been implemented during the first half of the 20th century.

Following the new legislation, immigration increased steadily through the 1970s and the 1980s: "*Between 1966 and 1980, the average annual number of immigrants increased by roughly 150,000, compared to the yearly averages between 1952 and 1965. By 1980, 6.2 percent of the 226 million U.S. population was foreign-born, and 524,295 immigrants entered legally that year*." [48]. However, the 1965 act did not create a way for lower-skilled workers to enter the country and legally work: the number of illegal immigrants (coming through the southern border) also grew. Since then, illegal immigration has become a main issue in the political debate, as the reforms introduced to increase skilled migration through the Immigration Act of 1990 and the Diversity Visa Program did not have any impact to reduce flows of illegal workers along the border with Mexico [48]. In fact, despite the 1990 act, the illegal immigrant population increased from about 3.5 million in 1990 to 5.7 million in 1995.

In front of this phenomenon, a "restrictionist" approach, shared by a part of the public opinion and the politics—most on the Republican side—argued "*that immigrants had negative economic effects, failed to assimilate culturally, used an abundance of welfare, and amplified the perceptions of lawlessness and social chaos along the border with Mexico caused by illegal immigration*." [48].

The 1965 Reform of immigration gave birth to an increasingly more multicultural society, challenging the predominance of the white majority. Illegal immigration represented a further threat in front of the white hegemony. These changes were exploited by new populist leaders during the Nineties. That was the case of Republican Pat Buchanan, unsatisfied of the positions of his own party on various topics as migration, started the movement of the "paleo-conservatives".

This is not the place to enter the details concerning the rift in the conservative movement and the Republican Party between "paleo-conservatives" and neo-conservatives. For the purpose of the article, however, it is important to remind that the first ones are opposed to the globalist, interventionist, and open borders ideology that the neo-conservatives would support. Pat Buchanan, the leader of the paleo-conservative component of the Republican Party, opposed to the neo-conservatives, who became predominant and were very influential during the George Bush administration. Pat Buchanan was the first populist leader who placed immigration reduction and opposition to multiculturalism at the core of his platform, denouncing the "ethnic mix" produced by the Immigration Reform of 1965: "*The U.S. government began deliberately to change the country's ethnic mix in 1964. For the previous half century, immigration policy was skewed in favor of further European immigration. From 1964 on America's legal immigrants have been 80 percent Asian and Latin American. The illegal immigration flow has also been heavily non-European.*"[8].

Besides immigration and multiculturalism, Buchanan opposed abortion and gay rights, two themes of social conservatism, but he also supported non-interventionism in foreign affairs and rejected the outsourcing of manufacturing from free trade. Buchanan opposed, in fact, the globalization process that was taking place during those years, with growing outsourcing of manufacturing work toward China and other non-Western countries.

Having failed to win the Republican nomination in 1992 and 1996, he received only one-half million votes in the 2000 presidential elections, when he ran with his own Reform Party[9].

Despite the strong rhetoric of Pat Buchanan's advisor, Sam Francis, far-right thinker, journalist of the Washington Times and of other conservative media, the mobilization of the descendants of the MARS failed. We think it is really worth to present a long quotation of Sam Francis' description of middle Americans, because it evokes the speech that Donald Trump will use in 2016: "*these Americans find that their jobs are insecure, their savings stripped of value, their neighborhoods and schools and homes unsafe, their elected leaders indifferent and often crooked, their moral beliefs and religious professions and social codes under perpetual attack even from their own government, their children taught to despise what they believe, their very identity and heritage as a people threatened, and their future—political, economic, cultural, racial,*

national, and personal—uncertain. (. . .) Although they do the labor that sustains the managerial system, pay the taxes that support it, fight the wars its leaders devise, raise the families and try to pass on the beliefs and habits that enable the regime and the country to exist and survive, what they receive from the regime is never commensurate with what they give it . . . . They are at once the real victims of the regime and the core or nucleus of American civilization, the Real America, the American Nation." [49] [10].

The term "managerial system" is used by Sam Francis in a very negative sense: *"Inspired particularly by James Burnham's 1941 book The Managerial Revolution,*[11] *Francis drew attention to the "organizational revolution" that transformed the political life of industrialized societies from the late 19th century, and to the emergence and continuous expansion of a transnational "New Class" elite that supplanted the old bourgeois elites that had become incapable of running the mass world they created."* [50].

The transnational "New Class" of which Sam Francis spoke, corresponds in fact to "the globalists" that Donald Trump and various European and world populist leaders claim to oppose. The term "globalists" refer to the political leaders, economic actors, and intellectuals, a sort of world elite, who consider that globalization is a positive historical process that generates new forms of global economy, global politics, and global culture. This process is, on the contrary, considered in negative terms by most populist political leaders, but also by the anti-capitalist left.

Even if in the Nineties and early 2000s, Buchanan's paleo-conservative ideas did not become hegemonic or mainstream, they represent a sort of "bridge" between the years of Wallace and the ones of the Tea Party and Donald Trump. Furthermore, while Pat Buchanan did not succeed in imposing to the Republican Party his agenda on immigration, there were many signs that the issue clearly concerned many Americans. Just to give an example: *"In 1994 voters in California overwhelmingly approved "Proposition 187," the referendum that would deny nearly all public benefits, including schooling and many forms of medical care, to illegal immigrants. In 1995, a bipartisan national commission on immigration reform endorsed much tougher measures to detect and deport illegal immigrants."*[12] In front of these signs, The Democratic government's answer were new restrictive measures: *"At the federal level, the Clinton administration attempted to reduce illegal immigration administratively via border operations such as Operation Hold the Line in 1993 and Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. In the same vein, Congress passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act in 1996. These bills increased the penalties for illegal entry, created mandatory detention for many classes of noncitizens, and expedited deportation procedures for certain cases."* [48].

A 1997 Joe Dante movie, the *Second American Civil War*, ironically shows the potential explosive issues for American society: immigration, political polarization, outsourcing, and terrorism, with politics openly reduced to a matter of catering to various ethnic groups for their votes.

As a matter of fact, already at the end of the Nineties, the American society was split between those who saw their country being strengthened by cultural diversity, technological change, and commitments to equality, minority rights and nondiscrimination. Others, in contrast, saw their values denigrated, their status eroding, and their opportunities vanishing [31]. The paleo-conservatives expressed their concerns.

1.3. The Return of the Middle American Radicalism and the Tea Party

In the second decade of the 21st century, during the presidencies of Bill Clinton (1993–2001) and George Bush (2001–2009), the political–ideological confrontation between Democrats and Republicans, the two American "mainstream" parties, sharpened considerably. American society found itself more divided and polarized than in the eighties during the Ronald Reagan's years: nevertheless, this polarization still took place within the parameters of the historically predominant conservatism–liberalism dialectics. As we have seen, the Pat Buchanan experience remained marginal. The end of the Cold War and the

economic prosperity during the years of Bill Clinton brought a wave of optimism in the USA, in spite of the shadows of terrorism.

The good economic situation had an impact on migration policies. The years of George Bush were opened by a relatively pro-Mexican-immigrants policy: "*In 2000, Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush appealed to Hispanic voters by supporting expanded legal immigration and legalization for illegal immigrants, a lesson he learned after winning two gubernatorial elections in Texas.*" [48] However, the events of the 11th of September changed completely the context and provoked the introduction of restrictive migratory policies, in name of the security and the war on terrorism. In fact, "*estimating the number of illegal immigrants deported in 2001 and 2002, based on those deported during the 2003–2006 period, shows that Bush's administration would have deported 1,000,653 illegal immigrants from the interior of the United States, with an annual average of 125,082.*" [48].

Baxter and Nowrasteh make the comparison with the deportations under Trump's presidency: only 325,660 people were removed from the interior of the United States during Trump's entire term in office [48]. On average, Trump removed an average of 81,415 illegal immigrants per year.

The years of George Bush were marked by the collective trauma of the 11th of September and by the following war against terrorism that saw the USA intervene in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the condition of a country at war imposed a certain unity in the country, the motivations of the war in Iraq inaugurated an era of unprecedented official lies: the most spectacular was state secretary Colin Powell's 2003 presentation to the UN Security Council laying out USA evidence for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which turned out not to exist. Powell's speech undermined USA credibility on the world stage, but it undermined the trust in government of Americans as well. The 2007–2009 crisis provoked originally by the bursting of a housing bubble and the growth of mortgage defaults, particularly those involving subprime mortgages that had been extended in growing numbers at the height of the bubble to less creditworthy borrowers, provoked a loss of confidence in the system, given the fact that the regulatory authorities had failed to address the dangers that had been built in the financial system.

From 2009 onward, the USA experienced a rise of political positions and proposals that, although they did not question the basic foundations of the system, did move away to a certain extent from the more moderate "mainstream" options that had prevailed until then. With the further increase in polarization, radicalism of all kinds spread on the right as well as on the left [45]. Moreover, the dissatisfaction with the major parties opened a space for third parties and movements. On the right, in fact within the Republican Party, the most important movement was represented by the Tea Party[13], active between 2009 and 2011: it opposed federal taxes and regulations, supported small-government principles, and strongly supported the Second Amendment (the right to keep and bear arms), in the name of individualism and suspicion against the government, following the belief that ordinary people are wiser than the experts. Given the small-government approach, the costly use of government funds and services by illegal immigrants was among the concerns of the Tea Party.

Concerning immigration, the Tea Party had a great influence on the Republican Party, as Nagel writes: "*Since the early 2000s, when the Tea Party burst onto the scene, a hard-line anti-immigration stance has become an article of faith among conservative Republicans, who have tightened their grip on state legislatures, governorships and Congress through electoral redistricting.*" [31].

The Tea Party movement has been defined as "populist" or "conservative populist", and has been compared with the "middle American radicals" of the 1970s, as supporters of both movements have been dissatisfied with the standing of the country on moral and cultural issues, combined with a sense that the politicians in power were neglecting them [51].

John Judis writes that bursts of Middle American Radicalism occur at certain moments, under certain conditions, one of which is a widespread sense of national decline -economic,

political... *"That was certainly the case in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the United States was mired in Vietnam; in the early 1990s, when the United States faced a protracted economic slowdown; and again from 2008 to the present. When the sense of doom has lifted, as it did when the Clinton boom began in the spring of 1996, the MARS voting bloc has gradually weakened."* [35]. The years of Bill Clinton Presidency were characterized by an optimistic idea of globalization as opportunity for all, growing prosperity, and American renewal. The same President Clinton expressed himself in this direction. In the years that followed the Clinton's presidency, the early 2000, optimism faded. Even if most economists consider globalization as overall beneficial to countries that enjoy the free trade, they also recognize that in each country, there are "winners" and "losers". Globalization has been prepared by neo-liberal reforms, eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers. The social costs of this transformation of USA capitalism are well described by the filmmaker, author and political activist Michael Moore in the movie *Capitalism*, a love story released after the economic crisis of 2007–2009. The filmmaker has been criticized, some of his arguments concerning the troubled relations between capitalism and democracy being superficial. Nevertheless, the thesis that rapacious capitalism has horrific social consequences is well illustrated: what Michael Moore shows is a new American capitalist system where the richest one percent has more than the bottom 95% combined, where wages for most American workers have stagnated and their life conditions are far worse than the ones when Moore was a child in the Sixties and Seventies. Moreover, as French and Simon Miraudo remark, Capitalism, a love story is really about the fall of the American Dream [52,53]. The decline of the nation is generally blamed on the elites whose credibility is questioned. Middle American Radicalism shows a lack of confidence in the elites that would have betrayed the middle class, the true core of the United States fabric [54].

In a political context when the rift (fracture) between the people and the traditional political class is growing, the need for a "change", perhaps indeterminate in its essence and evidently interpreted differently by the various groups that made up the general population and the elites of the country, with their own specific interests, favors politicians, who do not belong to the core of the traditional political class [45].

1.4. Two "Outsiders" at the White House

The three presidential elections held between 2008 and 2016 had as winners two candidates who, despite being very different from each other for origin, professional activities, social engagement, and even personal life choices, Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Donald Trump, had a common denominator: they reached the White House being considered "outsiders", with respect to mainstream politics in front of the establishment both of the Democratic and the Republican parties.

Obama was distinguished by his ethnic relevance, the son of a Kenyan and a woman of Irish descent, born in Hawaii, who lived for several years with his mother in South Asia. In spite of a modest background and a single-mother family, his academic curriculum was brilliant: undergraduate studies at Columbia University and law studies at Harvard Law School, that is, at elite universities. Because of his peculiar life trajectory, Barack Obama might embody the interests and the hopes of a vast and diverse set of social sectors: ethnic minorities of course, but also young people, to whom he promised to cut college tuition and fees in half, scholars, teachers, journalists, the traditionally Democratic intelligentsia, and also blue collars, trying to cope with the impact of a long recovery after the economic crisis. President Obama represented the multicultural, anti-racist America, who opposed the wars done for economic interests of few, aimed to the hegemony for the American progressive values, not for the military force. Still, after two mandates, the Peace Nobel Prize Barack Obama had failed to end the war in Afghanistan, to pacify the Middle East, or even to close the Guantanamo Detention Center, where 41 prisoners remained when he left office the 20th of January 2017.

While he did well to solve the economic crisis, Obama failed to fulfill some of the promises that would have been important for the blue collars—namely, a new tax credit for

companies that brought jobs to the United States from overseas; the creation of one million new manufacturing jobs by the end of 2016; and the increase in taxes for millionaires.[14] Concerning migration, Barack Obama proposed a regularization process for undocumented immigrants that was not successful because of the opposition of the Republicans and the Supreme Court.[15] After Obama's victory, in 2009 Congress reintroduced the DREAM Act to legalize many illegal immigrants who entered the country as children, but it ultimately failed in the Senate after passing in the House of Representatives. While he did not succeed to promote a comprehensive immigration reform allowing undocumented migrants to become legal, Obama was very successful in deportation. *"Obama's administration removed more illegal immigrants than any other administration, earning him the nickname "Deporter-in-Chief." Obama removed 1,242,486 illegal immigrants from the interior of the United States during his full eight years, averaging 155,311 removals per year."* [48], almost the double deportations than the ones that took place under Donald Trump.

Donald Trump came to the 2016 presidential campaign as a billionaire businessman specializing in real estate, hotels, and golf courses, with celebrity statuettes, especially for his participation in various television shows, particularly reality TV, with the program *The Apprentice*, and the *Miss Universe Pageant* [45]. Since the primaries, he presented himself as an outsider candidate, opposed to the "establishment", including both the long-course USA politicians and the "globalist" elites.

Sharing the fact of being outsiders, the contrast between the public images of Barack Obama and Donald Trump could not be more spectacular. On one side, the first Afro-American president, a sophisticated politician of high intellectual caliber, who made his stay and that of his family in the White House an example of sobriety and absence of scandals, and who seemed to be the expression of forces favorable to progress, moderation, and modernity [45]. On the other, a highly mediatic, egotistical, and theatrical personality, deploying a political campaign outside the traditional canons, through scandals, continuous changes of discourse, contradictions with the traditional Republican platform, and unrealistic promises, as to force the Mexican government to pay for the wall at the border in the aim to end illegal immigration: *"We will build a great wall along the southern border. And Mexico will pay for the wall"*. This was one of the most spectacular announcements on the issue of immigration: in a speech on 22 October 2016, Trump said that, if elected, he would work with Congress to pass the "End Illegal Immigration Act," which he said *"fully-funds the construction of 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"*. The promise of the wall was present during the whole campaign: at a town hall event in Austin, Texas, on August 23, 2016, Trump insisted on the plans to build a wall along the US–Mexico border, saying, *"It's going to happen, 100 percent"* [55].

All these behaviors, in other circumstances, would have sunk a presidential candidate, but in a time when unprecedented official lies had already been exposed, as it was the case during the Bush's presidency, and the economic crisis had revealed the existence of crony capitalism,[16] the corporate corruption described by Michael Moore, Donald Trump's potential lies were not shocking the public.

For many political analysts, using traditional analytical frameworks, Trump's victory at the Republican primary and the presidential elections was a genuine surprise[17], but an in-depth analysis of the context (post 2009-crisis, Tea Party, distrust in politicians after years of wars, lies, among others) and the Trump's policy positions on employment, protectionism, and migration would have perhaps given the clue why, since his entry in the campaign, the tycoon's chances to win the elections were not so insignificant. What is at stake, in the swing toward right-wing populism by large parts of the population, is the rejection of an order—enshrined in globalization and *"characterized by intense marketisation, economic integration and relatively high levels of capital and labour mobility"*. [31] Moreover, according to Trump, commitments to free trade and multilateralism have brought about America's decline by undermining American workers and by entangling the U.S. in expensive wars.

"Trump has promised an 'America First' agenda that places national interests above the interests of allies, trade partners and international institutions." [31].

1.5. Donald Trump, the "Silent Majority", and the "Losers of Globalization"

In the midst of the growing polarization, which produced two monolithic blocs separating, almost without reconciliation, the agendas of the Democrats and the Republicans, Donald Trump's performance, conveniently shown and magnified with the use of Fox News as an information platform par excellence, showed a unique style, not without charisma and ability to violate the culture of "political correctness" [56]. Trump's personality certainly contributed to his political success. However, it would be a mistake to assume that his supporters were drawn to him simply because of his personality or because he was a political outsider. Understanding the key to success in the exercise of power that both candidates—Trump and Obama—demonstrated, necessarily leads to understanding the resources of power that they exploited, and how both processes are articulated in a cause–consequence logic that makes them part of the continuity of the same process. If Obama extensively developed *Smart Power* and the tactic of winning over the minds and hearts of the people, Donald Trump exploited the resentments hidden in the minds of a part of the American citizens, the "silent majority" that he was going to defend against the "special interests" and the "establishment" of both Republican and Democratic parties. *The silent majority stands with Trump. "The silent majority is back, and it's not silent. It's aggressive."* he declared. Who were the "silent majority" to whom Trump referred? According to Nagel [31], Trump's *"denigration of liberal social norms and the reassertion of narrower, racialized conceptions of America's national character, has played well among older whites who have seen their social status diminish rapidly since the 1970s"*. In fact, as Nagel points out, the majority of older white males voted for Trump. His electorate is, nevertheless, quite mixed: *"support for Trump was especially pronounced in counties with relatively few college graduates and rising levels of deprivation and illness"*. [31].

An interesting analysis to understand Trump's voters comes from the work *Strangers in Their Own Land* by Arlie Hochschild, who had spent the five years preceding 2016 immersed in the community around Lake Charles, Louisiana, a Tea Party stronghold. Trump's voters, as Hochschild, observes, "see a parade of undeserving minority groups" cutting in line' ahead of them and gaming the system at the expense of "real" Americans" [57] (p. 683). Hochshield's work reveals a gulf between these" strangers in their own land" and a new elite.

Noam Chomsky, referring to the Republican primaries, noted that "leaving aside racist, ultra-nationalist, and religious fundamentalist elements (which are not minor), Trump supporters are mostly lower-middle class, working class and less educated whites, people who have been forgotten during the liberal years." [58]. The silent majority's resentment and aggression were fueled by the declining material conditions experienced by the white industrial working class, former workers, and farmers, traditionally identified as the "red collars", the so-called "losers of globalization", due to the process of tertiarization of the economy and relocation [45]. This coincides with the vision shared by Enzo Traverso and Marco Revelli when they point out that Trump voters constitute "a rebellion of the included who were marginalized" [59] (p. 4). These groups are the basis of the new Middle American radicals, who have strong reasons for grievances because of the economic policy that has been implemented by their government with the globalization processes, as manufacturing jobs moved toward China and South East Asia, and in front of the subprime crisis (just to give an example, between 2000 and 2010, six million factory jobs were lost in the USA, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics) [60].

In spite of his unrealistic and sometimes contradictory arguments, Donald Trump's policy positions reflected the ones of the middle American radicals: for example, he opposed the crony capitalism that led to the bailout of the banks and auto industry and supported raising taxes on hedge fund managers. He opposed cuts to Social Security and Medicare to make them solvent. He attacked Obamacare, which, according to Trump, was sold as a

solution to middle class anxieties when it primarily benefits the poor while raising health care costs for middle class workers. Trump defended nationalist policies by wanting to renegotiate trade deals and punish China for currency manipulation in order to protect blue-collar jobs. Even the continuous attacks to immigrants and the building of the wall to stop new arrivals was justified as aimed to reduce cheap labor that drives down the wages of middle-class workers. All of these proposals were part of a narrative that opposes globalization both for its economic consequences and for its "culture" (immigration, liberal social values) and support the return of the nation states and their borders: "*The future does not belong to the globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The free world must embrace its national foundations . . . The true good of the nation can only be pursued by those who love it, by citizens who are rooted in its history . . . Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first*". [61]. It would, however, be wrong to argue that Trump may represent a class-based politics committed to the redistribution of wealth. Trump's economic program follows a traditional Republican agenda of tax cuts, deregulation, and reductions in public services. The overwhelming majority of Trump voters were, in fact, middle- or upper-income people [62].

Mutz's theory is especially interesting [62]: according to him, statistical studies do not support an interpretation of the election based on "pocketbook economic concerns". On the contrary, "*the possibility that status threat felt by the dwindling proportion of tradition-ally high-status Americans (i.e., whites, Christians, and men) as well as by those who perceive America's global dominance as threatened combined to increase support for the candidate who emphasized reestablishing status hierarchies of the past. (. . .). Candidate preferences in 2016 reflected increasing anxiety among high-status groups rather than complaints about past treatment among low-status groups*". In fact, both growing domestic racial diversity and globalization contributed to a sense that white Americans are under siege by these engines of change. This would explain the success of Trump's anti-globalization narrative.

Nevertheless, the group that makes the difference between victory and defeat in a polarized country where the two political parties each represent around 50% of the population are the MARS—the middle American radicals who are especially sensible to the populist narrative. The problem with this type of radicalism is that it can be easily pushed toward the search for a scapegoat that can be identified not only at the top—the elites—but also at the bottom of the hierarchy, the black people in the Seventies, the eleven million undocumented immigrants, accused as representing a burden for the government budget and to steal jobs and reduce salaries.

One of the most troubling aspects of Trump's narrative concerns the way ideas on migration, presented in Pat Buchanan's and the Tea Party speeches, have been re-proposed with extremely violent rhetoric, hate speech, us/them dichotomy, and impossible promises, such as: "*Reform legal immigration to serve the best interests of America and its workers the forgotten people. Workers. We're going to take care of our workers*". [63].

In light of this, it should be noted that ethnic and racial inequality (52%) and immi-gration (52%) were the issues that most interested the American electorate, according to the Pew Research Center when analyzing the discourse used by Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential elections [64].

1.6. Migration at the Core of Donald Trump Discourse and Political Agenda[18]

Since 2015, Donald Trump made immigration one of the dominant issues, if not the dominant issue of his campaign. Trump set the tone on immigration, dismissing many Mexican border-crossers as "murderers" and rapists in the 16 June 2015 news conference announcing his candidacy, when he stated immigrants from Mexico are "*people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.*" The last sentence, partly contradicting the previous one, as if he wanted not to alienate all the Mexicans—some of whom may be voters—is also quite typical of Donald Trump rhetoric. In the same speech, he insisted on building the wall, which became an obsession during his presidential

campaign and his presidency: "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, *I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall*" [63].

In 2016, Trump presented a political program on migration, which was all oriented toward repressive measures: to triple the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers (*We're going to triple the number of ICE deportation officers. We're also going to hire 5,000 more Border Patrol agents*) [65]; to process the "*mandatory return of all criminal aliens*", ("*I'm gonna get rid of the bad ones fast, and I'm gonna send them back. We're not going to be putting them in prisons here and pay for them for the next 40 years.*") [66]; to detain undocumented immigrants and only release them to their country of origin ("*We are going to end catch and release. Under my administration, anyone who illegally crosses the border will be detained until they are removed out of our country and back to the country from which they came.*") [66]; to enhance penalties for overstaying a visa; to end birthright citizenship; to require companies to hire American workers first and apply stricter standards for refugee status [63] https://ballotpedia.org/Donald_Trump_presidential_campaign,_2016/Immig ration-cite_note-23 (accessed on 20 May 2022).

These announced measures concerned essentially the border issues and the Hispanic community, of which the Mexicans are the most important group, but Trump's program on migration targets other groups of migrants and refugees, namely Muslims. During an interview on with NBC host Chuck Todd on 24 July 2016, Trump discussed his plan to "*immediately suspend immigration from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism until such time it's proven that vetting mechanisms have been put in place.*" He said, "*People were so upset when I used the word Muslim. Oh, you can't use the word Muslim. Remember this. And I'm okay with that, because I'm talking territory instead of Muslim.*" Trump added that he would release a list of places from which to cut off immigration: "*We have nations and we'll come out—I'm going to be coming out over the next few weeks with a number of the places. there are specific problems in Germany and we have problems with France. . . . Here is what I want. Extreme vetting. Tough word. Extreme vetting . . . we're going to have tough standards.*" [63] https://ballotpedia.org/Donald_Trump_presidential_campaign,_2016/I mmigration-cite_note-12 (accessed on 20 May 2022).

Trump's discourse on migration was not just a rhetoric exercise. Once elected as President, the promised measures were implemented. In the first weeks of his presidency, the 25th of January 2017, the newly elected Donald Trump signed an executive order on border security, entitled "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements", which expanded the use of detention of illegal migrants, limited access to asylum, enhanced enforcement along the USA–Mexico border, and set up the construction of a 2000-mile border wall. Two days after, the 27th of January 2017, President Trump signed an executive order entitled, "Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Attacks by Foreign Nationals", banning people from six Muslim-majority countries from entering the USA (including four countries that had Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations: Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Sudan), suspending entry to the country by all Syrian refugees indefinitely, and prohibiting any other refugees from coming into the country for 120 days. This executive order is also called the "Muslim Ban" and was struck down by federal judges who said it amounted to religious discrimination against Muslims. A third amended version of the "Muslim Ban" was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018.

Donald Trump had not only targeted illegal immigration or banned the entrance of migrants, refugees, or even visitors from Muslim countries, with the pretext of security reasons. The Trump administration embraced the Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy (RAISE) Act in August 2017. The RAISE Act seeks to reduce levels of legal immigration to the United States by 50% by halving the number of green cards issued.

In fact, the legal immigration in general has been cut in half: "*By 2021, Donald Trump will have reduced legal immigration by 49% since becoming president—without any change in U.S. immigration law, according to a National Foundation for American Policy analysis. An April*

presidential proclamation blocked the entry of legal immigrants to the United States in almost all categories." [67].

The consequences of Trump's policy on migration in the USA have had a dramatic impact on the lives of millions of people: "*Over the course of four years, the Trump administration set an unprecedented pace for executive action on immigration, enacting 472 administrative changes that dismantled and reconstructed many elements of the U.S. immigration system. Humanitarian protections were severely diminished. The U.S.-Mexico border became more closed off. Immigration enforcement appeared more random. And legal immigration became out of reach for many. All of this was accomplished nearly exclusively by the executive branch, with sweeping presidential proclamations and executive orders, departmental policy guidance, and hundreds of small, technical adjustments.*" [68].

1.7. Between Identity and Security: An Exhausted Liberal Ideology and the American Migratory Crisis

In her analysis on Trump's populism and migration, Nagel writes: "*while anti-immigrant sentiment has been a salient feature of American politics for the past 50 years, current immigration politics reflect a meaningful change in the post-War liberal order*".

She argues that: "*today's immigration debates, (. . .), more closely align with debates of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when anti-immigrant voices prevailed upon Congress to enact national-origins quotas over the objections of U.S. industrial employers. At that time, restrictionist sentiment was motivated primarily by fears among political and intellectual elites of racial pollution and the weakening of America's Anglo-Teutonic stock.*" According to Nigel, strong ideological ideas may prevail over economic interests: racism and eugenics were the ideological and, unfortunately, "scientific" basis for these policies, medical science being then (we might comment, as it is currently) in the service of power. Is Trumpism such a strong new ideology?

While Donald Trump has placed the issue of migration in anti-globalization and patriotic discourses, we can wonder how this ideological frame may legitimize such a violent anti-immigrant discourse—with strong racist tones—in a country of immigrants, as Obama stressed in his inaugural address in 2008. Did the promotion of multiculturalism as mainstream idea, mirrored and idealized in so many success Hollywood movies, fail? In the attempt of giving an answer to the question, we should probably turn toward the contradictions of a "liberal" ideology that has appeared as incapable to deliver the social justice that it promises.

In fact, the idealized representations of multiculturalism have always had the downside: the incorporation of the immigrants, the minorities or, in post-modern language, the "others" has been done at the price of extreme violence. Over the years, the political and social models to manage "diversity" proved to be inadequate: the melting pot was replaced by "salad bowl", or kaleidoscope, then by multiculturalism. In this process, the "otherness" ceased progressively to concern some previously discriminated groups that were not included in the original concept of "being American", such as Catholics, Jews, Irish, Italians, Russians, Poles, Swedes, and others [69,70]. However, while for some "white" groups, immigrant origin ceased to be a source of discrimination, this has not been the case for immigrants of non-European origin. We have seen that the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, opening to non-European migration, had raised worries in the white population. Furthermore, the issue of integration of non-Europeans had been raised by a few scholars, who cannot be considered as supporters of populist ideas, but fully part of the "mainstream".

For example, what Donald Trump said about Mexicans finds an echo, certainly in different terms and with different arguments, in the work of the conservative political scientist Samuel P. Huntington [71], known worldwide because of the theory of the "clash of civilization" between the Western democratic society and Islam. In his book *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, which was published in 2004, Huntington makes a distinction between the *settlers* and the *immigrants*. Settlers preceded immigrants and made their immigration possible. The culture of those mostly English-speaking, predominantly Anglo-Protestant settlers defined American culture. According to Huntington,

throughout American history, people who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have become Americans by adopting America's Anglo-Protestant culture and political values. This is no longer the case: the growing presence of Spanish speakers, mostly Latin American immigrants, represents a threat to national identity and traditional American culture, of Anglo-Saxon origin. Huntington is very critical in front of multiculturalism that he considers an anti-Western ideology. Similar ideas have been developed by the Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori, who spent most of his academic life in the USA [72].

As a response to Huntington, it could be argued that white Hispanics, especially those with certain shares of economic and political power at the state level, including those of Cuban and Venezuelan origin in Florida, followed, in more recent decades, the same path of the Italians, the Irish, and the Jews. As a matter of fact, the "challenges to identity" appear to be linked not only to the non-European origins and the color of the skin, but also, or mainly, to the class.

However, the main challenge to a liberal approach to migration and multiculturalism was represented by the new worldview that was introduced with the "war on terrorism" after the attack on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. Just prior to September 11, 2001, former U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexico President Vicente Fox were engaged in negotiations for an immigration agreement facilitating the entrance and the stay of migrants, which The New York Times called "*one of the biggest changes in immigration policy in the past quarter-century*" [73]. September 11 brought a halt to this. On the contrary, the US policy on immigration containment was strengthened in the name of national security.[19]

As Peter Andreas wrote in 2003: "Border controls are being re-tooled and redesigned as part of a new and expanding 'war on terrorism'." The immediate U.S. response to the terrorist attacks included a dramatic tightening of border inspections and a toughening of the policy discourse about borders and cross-border flows. The political scramble to "do something" about leaky borders has slowed and complicated North American economic integration. Traditional border issues such as trade and migration are now inescapably evaluated through a "security lens". An example of the security approach to migration is a program called the National Security Entry–Exit Registration System (NSEERs), launched by the government in 2002. The NSEERs system posed a number of challenges for travelers from North Korea and the Muslim-majority countries that appeared on the list. Travelers could only enter and exit the United States from a list of designated airports, rather than choosing the airport most convenient for their destination. A 2012 report by the Office of the Inspector General of DHS concluded that NSEERs was largely ineffective, recommending that the Department should focus scrutiny based on specific information about individual security threats, rather than conducting broad interrogations based on national origin. Trump could easily find inspiration in politics that had been implemented before his Presidency. Furthermore, the security approach to migration after September 11th was shared by all the political forces, which is also a sign of the limits of the "liberal" approach to migration.

This does not mean that Democrats and Republicans had exactly the same agenda concerning migration. A simplified view might even identify two opposite perspectives: on the one hand, are strictive policy that criminalizes undocumented migration, promoted by the most conservative sectors of the Republican Party; on the other hand, a policy of openness to the regularization of migrants through a comprehensive reform, promoted by the liberal sectors of the Democratic Party. The popular narrative on this issue is based, on the one hand, on considering as a rule that when a Democrat becomes president there will be policies more supportive of migrants. It is, in fact, more complex: for example, the reforms that would have facilitated the regularization of undocumented migrants were proposed both by Republicans (as George Bush) and Democrats (as Barak Obama), and if they failed, it was because of lack of consensus not only in the Congress and Senate, but also in the American society. As far as the management of the border is concerned, we have already mentioned that under the Obama administration, there were more deportations than under the Bush administration (and the Trump mandate). For many years, the United

States has been experiencing a "migration crisis" at the border with Mexico and a presence of millions of overexploited undocumented workers: the "liberal ideology" is not capable to bring any answer to it.

However, suggesting that Trump is nothing more than an heir to the" deportation machinery" built by Bush and Obama, which he would strengthen, in continuity with the immigration policy of exclusion and segregation, ignores the specificity of his discourse that is embedded in the ideology of conservatism, extreme nationalism, and white suprematism.

1.8. Conservatism, Extreme Nationalism, Nativism, White Supremacy, and Opposition to Globalist Elite

Quoting Ernesto Domínguez López: "*Populism is a complex political phenomenon with a dual nature: on the one hand, it is a form of critical political action of the established political order and that breaks with the formal and informal institutions that articulate it, and that has a typical discursive framework used by actors that can be of a diverse nature, depending on the specific context—parties, leaders, movements—on the other, a limited ideological core that establishes the conceptual lines that govern populist discourse and praxis: the people as the repository of essential values, opposed to an elite that illegitimately appropriates the benefits of the prevailing order, and popular sovereignty as the basis of legitimate order*". [38] (p. 20).

In the case of Donald Trump, the ideological core that establishes the opposition between the people and the elite has been filled with elements drawn on American tradition of conservatism, nationalism, nativism and white supremacy.

These days, conservatism in the United States is deeply divided among paleo-conservatives, neo-conservatists, cultural traditionalists, and the religious right. Core aspects of conservatism, transversal to the different trends, include the recovery of values, customs, and the original notion of "being American", defined as the WASP that for several centuries were the majority group, which had better conditions than the others. For this reason, the psychological key to understanding right-wing populism in the US is the resentment of white sectors [44], when they have perceived some loss of the status quo, or its real or imagined threat.

Contemporary American conservatism constitutes the political–social tendency, which professes free market economics, the absence of government regulation of any area of social and state life, coupled with a strong nationalism and defense of social values of a religious type [74]. Overall, conservatism had been present in the Republican presidency of George Bush and characterizes large parts of the Republican Party. Donald Trump did not hesitate to incorporate it into his own discourse, allowing him to capture the sympathies of a traditional Republican Party stronghold.

Given the growing polarization of American society, conservatism usually defends certain guidelines of the political agenda, with whom voters and politicians have been identifying, strongly differing from liberal and leftist tendencies, as defense of the death penalty, the traditional family, possession of weapons, demand for an industrial economy, a foreign policy tending to unilateralism and American supremacy, the open rejection of immigration, abortion, euthanasia and more recently, the use of vaccines and protection measures against COVID-19. Conservatism is strongly opposed to any "socialist" ideal—Trump's discourse bordered on ridicule, when attacking the Democrats through comparisons with unwanted socialism in the United States, like that of Cuba or Venezuela, as if the American Democrats had something in common with the Cuban and the Bolivarian revolutions [75].

In Trump's political narrative, conservatism is combined with extreme nationalism, expressed by the slogan "America First". Trump's nationalism has a twofold agenda: on one side restoring the USA as the hegemonic world power without international rivals and opposing globalization; on the other, restoring the well-being among the American citizens. Here, migration is again a crucial issue, becoming part of the "axis of all evils" among America's enemies. In Trump's narrative, to assure jobs to the Americans, it is necessary to put a halt to immigration [56,63].

As for America's enemies, the core of Trump's discourse was blaming countries such as China for the loss of American manufacturing jobs, and suggesting that a crucial solution would be to bring American auto companies back. Simplifying systemic complexity

through aggressive messages and blaming the adversary, be it China or the traditional politicians who supported the globalizing process in a way that supposedly harmed the United States. Trump's narrative is definitely anti-globalist: "*The future does not belong to the globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The free world must embrace its national foundations . . . The true good of the nation can only be pursued by those who love it, by citizens who are rooted in its history . . . Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first.*" [61].

In Trump's rhetoric, postulates of greater warmongering and aggressiveness have been handled on all fronts. Thus, force or its projection abroad was presented as the ideal instrument to rescue respect and rebuild America so that it becomes great again. In the "*war against the coronavirus*", Donald Trump has taken a political approach to the issue, identifying the pandemic as "China's virus", feeding the stigmatization of specific communities (namely the Asians). Likewise, the coronavirus crisis reinforced the anti-immigration and anti-immigrants' discourse (closing of the borders, blaming immigrants for bringing the virus) [64].

With the slogan "Let's Make America Great Again", Donald Trump seeks to shape a strong identity in the population, chasing the feeling of vulnerability in the face of the threats to national security represented by migrants coming from the Mexican border or from Muslim countries. Considering that most immigrants now do not come from Europe (i.e., are not white), it is not by chance that the most radical component of his supporters publicly include the phrase "Make America White Again" with the other.

The fact that this slogan was used by extreme right activists does not necessarily indicate a structural alliance between Donald Trump and white supremacists. Nevertheless, during the Trump's presidency, violent groups of white supremacists such as The Order, Militias, Vigilante Movement, Aryan Nations, Christian Identity Movement, have been gaining ground[20].

Extreme nationalism and white suprematism defend some forms of nativism: despite being a country of traditional immigration, its emergence or construction as a nation was given by a highly homogeneous colonization, carrier of a liberal ideology as opposed to the excessive authoritarianism of European monarchies, and an enjoyment of more civil and political freedoms, but at the same time, a strong and rooted evangelical faith. This homogeneity was the historical basis of intolerance, and of the "dictatorship emanating from social consensus".

As the cases of leaders, political figures and movements throughout the history of the nation show, and as Guia points out: "nativism takes shape in a series of eclectic politics and has the objective of redefining who is the real people of a given political unit and who, therefore, should have more rights and power to decide the characteristics of that society compared to a group considered exogenous and incapable of assimilating the essential characteristics of the original group" [76]. (p.111)

Nativism appears in some Trump's speeches at the United Nations, where migration is presented as a threat of "replacement of the natives: "*In 2019 address* (to the United Nations), *Trump echoed the rhetoric of far-right nativist groups who argue that citizens with long family history in a country have a more profound grasp of national interests than recent arrivals, and that the established population should be on its guard against forces aimed at its "replacement"* (Guardian, "*The free world must embrace its national foundations. It must not attempt to erase them, or replace them. The true good of the nation, can only be pursued by those who love it, by citizens who are rooted in its history, who are nourished by its culture, committed to its values, attached to his people*".[21]

These statements are part of a strong opposition to globalism and any new global order. In a 2018 speech at the United Nations, Trump explicitly condemned Globalism. Here are his sentences: "*The future does not belong to the globalists. The future belongs to patriots,*" "*Looking around and all over this large, magnificent planet, the truth is plain to see. If you want freedom, take pride in your country. If you want democracy, hold on to your sovereignty. And if you want peace, love your nation. Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first.*" "*Patriots see a nation and its destiny in ways no one else can. Liberty is only preserved, sovereignty is only secure, democracy is only sustained, greatness is only realized*

by the will and devotion of patriots." *"We reject globalism and embrace the doctrine of patriotism."* Declaring supremacy of sovereignty and the rejecting the idea of global governance, Trump added: *"The U.S. will always choose independence and cooperation over global governance, control and domination,"*[22]. As a consequence of his worldview, he defended his administration's retreat from U.N. organizations such as the International Criminal Court, Human Rights Council, and a global compact on migration.

2. Conclusions

A simplified analysis of the USA's present context considers that Donald Trump represents traditional conservatism with respect to moral values (family, abortion, etc.) and the grievances of the popular classes that have been the "losers of globalization", exploiting a racist and almost fascist discourse, while the Democrats represent the urban upper and middle class values and interests, while defending a certain radicalism with respect to ethical and societal issues (LGBT, racism, immigration, etc.). As we have tried to demonstrate, this is an oversimplification that does not reflect the complexity of a society that has been deeply fractured over the years and where populism has been a constant presence in politics.

There is no doubt that Donald Trump's candidacy made it possible to articulate a set of latent ideas and emotions, which seemed marginal and in retreat after Obama's triumphs, and revealed the accumulated resentment against a government headed by a black president, the rejection of the possibility a woman succeeded him in office, the growing loss of legitimacy suffered by traditional politicians (such as Hillary Clinton) and the fracture of consensus around the definition of more inclusive agendas, vis-à-vis, the various minorities (blacks, migrants, but also the LGBT community). The resentment was there and was rooted in a part of the population that cannot easily be classified as "deplorables", as Hillary Clinton said during the campaign. In the article, we have tried to show the ancient origin of the Middle American Radicals, nostalgic of a past season of the American Dream and how this group still does exist in different forms.

The ability of Donald Trump was to offer a justification to these ideas and sentiments through a patchwork narrative, built on elements of conservatism, paleo-conservatism, nationalism, patriotism, nativism, and fight against the globalist order and culture, imposing "political correctness" as a new ideology.

The Trump phenomenon, and his "populist" way of doing politics, presents both elements of continuity with the historical American populism at the right-wing and elements of novelty. In continuity with American populism, Trump's discourse constructs the people from anti-system positions in opposition to the elites, following Wallace's vindication of whites and pursues the rescue of a more direct democracy through the leader—people relationship. This represents continuity with the American populism that from its origins revives democracy while denying it.

While the issue of migration was not important in Wallace's time, it has become increasingly more crucial in populist platforms after the Immigration Reform of 1965 that has opened the country to non-European and nonwhite immigration, changing the ethnic structure, whites slowly becoming a minority. Pat Buchanan and the Tea Party had already placed migration of the core of their proposal. Donald Trump places himself in the continuity with them.

What is relatively new in Trump's populism is the exacerbation of the "us–them" division between Americans and migrants. In Trump's discourse, the creation of the "necessary enemy" in populist narratives has resulted in the establishment of more than one dividing axis. The first axis is the elite vs. the people—the traditional populist division, while the second axis is the national vs. the migrant [77] (p. 55). The second axis—the national vs. the immigrant—has been particularly exacerbated: excluding migrants from the idea of people that is paradoxical in a country of immigrants, such as the USA, Trump operates a selection based on racist and cultural matrices, which if in the past excluded a minority (for example the Black Americans, the Afro-descendants, as in the case of

Wallace), today implies discrimination against growing minorities and the supremacy of an increasingly less majority racial group in percentage terms.

The aim of anti-immigrant discourse is not, however, just to create a scapegoat: the issue of immigration is so crucial in Trump's political discourse, as part of a broader narrative that aims to re-establish nationalist patriotic values and targets globalization, with open borders to migrants being a component of this globalist culture. This article has tried to demonstrate that opposing migration is at the crossroads of the different ideological elements that fill the empty container of Trump's populist rhetoric and compose the "puzzle" of Trump's narrative, namely nationalism, conservatism, white suprematism, and nativism, to end with his anti-globalist agenda [3]. There is a clear link between the opposition to uncontrolled immigration and the harsh critique of the globalization processes, simplified in outsourcing manufacturing because of free trade, with the consequent loss of employment for national workers, while promoting open borders to immigrants ready to accept low salaries.

Owing to the opposition to the globalists, represented by the transnational organizations such as the World Economic Forum or by the finance tycoon George Soros, Trumpism has become a sort of new ideology that different populist and right-wing movements embrace, in Europe and elsewhere.

The issue of migration reveals as well the impossibility of the liberal ideology to give satisfactory political answers—pressure on the southern borders by migrants coming from impoverished Central American states, the overexploitation of undocumented workers, the difficulties the newcomers meet to find a place in a divided American society—represents a challenge that cannot be solved with discourses of "liberal" ideology. This is what the Biden administration failure has shown.

The migratory crisis, represented by massive arrivals from the southern border, is far from being over. Joe Biden's arrival in the White House promised that US immigration policy would have taken a turn. According to the Biden–Harris pledge, "inhumane and fear-based" programs would be left in the past, and would focus on promoting "laws that reflect the values of a nation of immigrants." However, this discourse has moved away from reality. In practice, after a year of the new administration, there are no substantial changes, as it is possible to identify a continuity in policies where the migration issue continues to serve as the articulating axis of hate speech, and although more moderate, it is equally a carrier of a nationalist and supremacist charge.

The tragedy of the present moment is the confrontation between an exhausted liberal ideology and an aggressive populism that has broken with the more moderate parts of the conservatives in a nation divided on various issues that directly affect the ordinary citizen and that have been evolving and accumulating in the political agenda of the country, such as employment, economic restructuring, immigrants, citizen security, violence, and racial discrimination. We are very far from, after all, the optimistic vision of immigration that Anita sang in the West Side Story musical of 1957: "Oh, I want to be in America. Everything is free in America".

Notes

1   https://amc.sas.upenn.edu/cas-mudde-populism-twenty-first-century (accessed on 20 May 2022).

2   Cas Mudde is one of the most influential scholars in the field of populism and extremism versus democracy. He is also a Guardian US columnist.

3   Populist leaders generally have the ability to connect with people on a deep level, thanks to communication skills, persuasiveness and charm.

4   Marc Bloch's sentence has been largely used and quoted in discourses by politicians and intellectuals. https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en /Nous-connaitre/Decouvrir-le-ministere/Histoire-du-ministere/Ressources-documentaires/Discours-de-ministres/Discours-de-mini stres-depuis-1998/Frederic-Mitterrand-2009-2012/Discours-2009-2012/Discours-de-Frederic-Mitterrand-ministre-de-la-Culture-et-d e-la-Communication-prononce-a-l-occasion-de-l-installation-du-Comite-d-orientation-sci (accessed on 20 May 2022).

5   Source: https://quotepark.com/quotes/1800639-marc-bloch-misunderstanding-of-the-present-is-the-inevitable/ (accessed on 20 May 2022).

6   The discovery of this "radical center" gave the name to Warren's book: "The Radical Center: Middle Americans and the Politics of Alienation".

7   Busing: also called desegregation busing: in the United States, the practice of transporting students to schools within or outside their local school districts as a means of rectifying racial segregation (Britannica).

8   https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/politics/decision/migrate2.htm (accessed on 20 May 2022).

9   For his positions on non-interventionism and globalization, he received the support of anti-war and socialist activist Brian Moore.

10   Quoted by Drolet and Williams (2019). https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0020702019834716 (accessed on 20 May 2022).

11   https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/politics/decision/migrate2.htm (accessed on 20 May 2022).

12   The name "Tea Party" is a reference to the Boston Tea Party, a protest in 1773 by colonists who objected to British taxation without representation, and demonstrated by dumping British tea taken from docked ships into the harbor. The event was one of the first in a series that led to the United States Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution that gave birth to American independence (Lepore, 2010). Some commentators have referred to the Tea in "Tea Party" as the backronym "Taxed Enough Already", though this did not appear until months after the first nationwide protests (Schroeder, 2009).

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14   https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/obameter/?ruling=true (accessed on 20 May 2022).

15   https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/jun/23/supreme-court-blocks-obama-immigration-plan (accessed on 20 May 2022).

16   Crony capitalism: an economic system in which individuals and businesses with political connections and influence are favored (as through tax breaks, grants, and other forms of government assistance) in ways seen as suppressing open competition in a free market. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crony%20capitalism (accessed on 20 May 2022).

17   According to Rob Garver, on Sunday, though, Trump himself gave one of the clearest examples yet of why his candidacy is doomed to fail, and why, if handled properly, the debate stage could be his Waterloo.

18   When the candidate Trump and President Trump's tweets are analyzed with respect to migration, between the end of 2015 and the time when the USA federal government was closed in 2019, two very clearly defined thematic axes stand out (Hall, 2020; González Martín, 2021): 1. Border security, open borders, illegal migration (immigrants): 594 in the same period of time distributed as follows: 82 between November 2015 and November 2016; 66 between January and December 2017, and 446 from January 2018 until the government shut down in 2019. 2. ISIS, Islam, terrorism: 284 tweets distributed as follows: 164 between November 2015 and November 2016; 68 between January and December 2017 and 52 from January 2018 until the government shut down in 2019.

19   September 11th revealed significant flaws in the US immigration and visa system. All 19 9/11 hijackers arrived in the United States on tourist, business, or student visas; 4 had overstayed their visas and several had presented false passports or made detectable false statements on their visa application. The fact that those responsible for 9/11 had entered the United States without detection caused the American public to distrust whether the government was adequately vetting potential visitors and immigrants to the country.

20   Since 2015, the Alt-right movement emerges, groups inspired by the neo-Nazi book, Siege, by James Mason, motivated by a variety of white supremacist ideologies. It is possible to find in this context propaganda websites such as Teespring, Marcha of Hierro, founded in 2011. This has played an important role in shaping the American extremist movement by creating international connections. The Fascist Forge and The Daily Stormer are influential far-right spaces that spurred the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017. These forums have developed a violent fascist culture reflected in The Rise Above Movement, founded in 2017, a practicing martial arts group to attack left-wing protesters, and Siege-inspired neo-Nazi groups such as the Atomwaffen Division founded in 2015, supposedly dissolved in March 2020 and then renamed the National Socialist Order in July 2020, The Base (founded in 2018), and Feuerkrieg Division (founded in 2018, supposedly dissolved in 2020).

21. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/donald-trump-un-address-denounces-globalism (accessed on 20 May 2022).

22. https://time.com/5406130/we-reject-globalism-president-trump-took-america-first-to-the-united-nations/ (accessed on 20 May 2022).

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