# The Populist Potential of the US and its Fragile Grip on the International System

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Since the end of the Cold War, the position of the United States (US) as the existing hegemon in the international order and its relations with other hegemonic actors and rising challengers have been popular topics of debate among scholars of global politics. Various theories – i.e., hegemonic stability (Webb and Krasner, 1989; Keohane, 1980), sharing hegemony (Schweiss, 2003), and declining hegemony (Boswell, 2004; Lake, 2000) – have been developed, and their proponents have provided answers located between cooperation and conflict with respect to the US's relations with other hegemonic actors and rising challengers (i.e., China). As a contribution to this literature, this chapter discusses the US and its would-be ability to 'share hegemony' in the case of Donald Trump's populist presidency even though his administration had never shown this intention. Such a debate has become important in American politics because, at the time of this writing, Trump is the leading candidate in the Republican Party primaries for the 2024 presidential election (ABC News, 2023). Sharing hegemony might have worked better among Transatlantic powers under non-populist administrations until the mid-2010s, mainly due to common liberal values, such as democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and respect for the rule of law. However, we must also admit the political and cultural differences between countries on both sides of the Atlantic, including different ideologies on how to run a national economy (while the US has a free-market capitalism blended with pro-corporate government interventions, the European countries have a social welfare capitalism with egalitarian principles) and how to contribute positively to the environment and sustainable development as well as different understandings of human rights (such as the differences in the legality of the death penalty both in the US and EU). But, such political and cultural differences did not necessarily deteriorate the Transatlantic partnership. Rather, they could motivate these powers to share the burden of global security (Schweiss, 2003). This could occur through a division of labor, especially in combating terrorism, where the US is more likely to use hard tools of military, security, and intelligence while Europeans are more likely to focus on the "motivating causes" of terrorism (Singer, 2003) and combine military and non-military tools for peacebuilding (Richmond et al., 2011).

Assessing the would-be ability of the Trump administration to 'share hegemony' requires diving into the literature on how populists make foreign policy. Although the literature on populism in comparative politics has grown in recent decades, it is hard to say the same thing for the literature on populism and *foreign policy*. Several approaches to the study of populism have been developed – i.e., ideational (Mudde, 2004), discursive (Laclau, 2005a; 2005b), stylistic (Moffitt, 2017), and political-strategic approaches (Weyland, 2017) – but no one of them sufficiently captures the impact of populism on foreign policy. Therefore, following Destradi, Cadier, and Plagemann (2021), I employ a pluralistic approach in which all the above-mentioned approaches complement each other to explain the relationship between populism and foreign policy. This approach helps me describe common themes of populist foreign policymaking, which were apparent in the case of Trump, a populist president in the US.

Trump, like any populist president, was (and would be if re-elected) less likely to 'share hegemony' not just with other hegemons (i.e., European powers) but also with rising challengers like China because they make foreign policy like a

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bull in a china shop. Their rise to power comes along with (and is induced by) a rise in nationalism, excessive emphasis on sovereignty, and even "abrasive, narcissistic, provocative, and offensive personalities" (Nai et al., 2019, 609), which bring more instability and uncertainty into national security debates and foreign policymaking processes and creates difficulties in the division of labor necessary for sharing hegemony. Mostly because of the fact, populists are less likely to compromise (Wojczewski, 2020), engage in multilateralism over bilateralism (Biegon, 2019), diversify their foreign relations (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019), and decentralize and depersonalize their foreign policymaking (Drezner, 2019; Müller, 2016). This, in turn, leads countries (including great powers) to follow more isolationist foreign policies (i.e., Trump's America First policy) and personalized bilateral relations, and results in a general weakening of international diplomacy. Thus, 'sharing hegemony' will become an almost impossible task under populist leaders.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. First, I explain the concept of sharing hegemony. Second, I discuss different approaches to populism and explain why I pick a pluralistic approach to study populism and foreign policy. Third, I describe common themes in populist leaders' foreign policymaking that are exemplified by the Trump administration, which suggest that 'sharing hegemony' is impossible for them.

**Sharing Hegemony**

Schweiss (2003) offers the concept of 'sharing hegemony' to rethink the responsibilities of the US and European powers in maintaining global security. Schweiss (2003, 211) aims to use the concept to improve transatlantic relations by altering perceptions on how to maintain long-term security in the US foreign policy establishment and encouraging concrete action in the European Union (EU) in terms of defeating terrorist actors and rendering them dysfunctional. In its war on terror after September 11, 2001 attacks, the US acted as a unipolar power using, as an excuse to do so, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) limited decision-making powers, stemming from the 1999 war in Kosovo. Acting as a unipolar power, the US executed the initial phases of the war in Afghanistan not as a NATO operation but under a US-led coalition (Schweiss, 2003, 213). However, Waltz (1979) argues, unipolarity is temporary, and when a sole hegemonic power starts to act impulsively, the remaining actors in the system will balance against them. Relatedly, Gilpin (1988) and Kennedy (1989) argue that a hegemon acting as a unipolar power will finally be unable to maintain the system it has formed because trying to maintain global responsibilities inevitably overstretches its capabilities. Furthermore, in contrast to what most Americans believe, Europeans did more to provide global security during the war in Afghanistan in terms of soft and hard power, according to Daalder and Gordon (2002). European soft and hard power (i.e., French aircrafts and British soldiers) fought against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, supported cave-hunting efforts in Afghanistan, and funded and coordinated necessary reconstruction and humanitarian aid.

Moreover, the EU itself has acted as a global security actor and carried out assignments under the 'Petersburg Tasks,' which include "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks involving combat forces in crisis management" (*Shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy*, 2016). The 'Petersburg Tasks' were obviously aimed at proactive missions or, in other words, for conflict prevention. It is considered as a distinctively European style of foreign policymaking because of its preemptive character, especially in trying to prevent the emergence and adherence of terrorist ideologies and cells "through early crisis intervention and peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and state-building activities" in regions with widespread poverty (Schweiss, 2003, 214-215). The significance of the 'Petersburg Tasks' can be understood better if one looks at the 2022 US National Security Strategy, which states: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones" (Bush, 2002).

Although the US and Europe share certain values, including respect for "democracy, individual freedom, human rights and the Rule of Law" (Aznar et al., 2003), Schweiss (2003) points out important differences in the cultural perspectives of both powers. For instance, both powers enjoy different variants of capitalism (while Americans experience free market capitalism with more pro-corporate state interventionism, Europeans are mostly in favor of welfare capitalism with more egalitarian principles); they have apparent differences on the debate over the environment and sustainable development; they hold contrasting ideas about human rights – i.e., EU has abolished the death penalty while the US has not (Zamfir, 2019); and they uphold essentially conflicting views on what tools are

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acceptable for maintaining security and achieving peace and freedom in the world (Schweiss, 2003). In security matters, many Europeans proudly emphasize their soft power, especially their experience in peacekeeping, the crisis prevention and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the Balkans, and their large aid budgets. In one interview, a senior EU official said the world needs 'smart development aid' not just smart bombs (*Special Report: Facing Responsibility – Europe in the World*, 2002). However, Schweiss (2003) argues that the world needs both, and both sides need to acknowledge the necessity of hard and soft power for protecting and maintaining global security. This argument becomes more plausible when one thinks that "the general U.S. concept of how to defeat terrorism has focused on the hard tools of the military and increased security and intelligence, while Europeans have tended to want to look at the motivating causes" (Singer, 2003). Therefore, for Schweiss (2003), these cultural differences could pave the way for a novel, productive forms of cooperation in which the US and European powers share the burden of global security. This division of labor is necessary because it already fits the goals of both powers and helps overcome their respective disadvantages especially in the war on terror (Schweiss, 2003).

In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss whether the 'sharing hegemony' theory and the division of labor it requires aligns with Trump's populist foreign policymaking approach. I examine this question with respect to US relations both with other hegemonic powers in the case of the EU and rising challengers in the case of China.

## Populist Foreign Policy

Although populism studies have developed tremendously in the field of comparative politics in recent decades, this literature focuses mostly on domestic politics. Consequently, scholarship on the relationship between populism and foreign policy is still in its infancy. Various ideational, discursive, stylistic, and political-strategic approaches have been developed, which conceptualize populism as a thin-centered ideology, logic of political articulation, political style or repertoire of performance, or political strategy (Aytekin, 2021). However, none of these approaches, by itself, can comprehend the implications of populism on foreign policy entirely. For this reason, following Destradi, Cadier, and Plagemann (2021), the relationship between populism and foreign policy can be best understood through a pluralistic approach since the above-mentioned approaches complement each other to explain diverse ways in which populism impact foreign policy. However, considering that the relationship between populism and foreign policy is nascent and under-studied, this pluralistic approach does not provide an inflexible, monolithic, or comprehensive set of claims that would apply in all cases around the globe without exception (Destradi et al., 2021).

The ideational approach considers populism as a "thin-centered ideology." Mudde (2004, 543) defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." Accordingly, anti-elitism and anti-pluralism are two fundamental ideological dimensions of populism (Mudde, 2004; Müller, 2016). Anti-elitism is fundamental in the sense that populist leaders claim to speak on behalf of a "morally pure and fully unified" people (Müller, 2016) against a "predatory class" of elites (Destradi et al., 2021). Who these predatory elites are often differs remarkably in accordance with populists' other ideological commitments and the political context. For instance, Trump defined the 'elite' in terms of the Washington establishment, hence his slogan 'drain the swamp' (Destradi et al., 2021). Anti-pluralism, on the other hand, is apparent in populists' assertion that "they, and they alone, represent the people" (Müller, 2016). Who constitutes the people again differs case by case, but populists often remain intentionally vague to render 'the people' open to different interpretations and, therefore, maximize its popular appeal. Moreover, they emphasize certain "moral distinctions between groups" (Bonikowski, 2016) and the exclusion of particular segments of society, such as ethnic and religious minorities and their political rivals. This anti-elitist attitude shows up in populists' contempt toward both checks and balances and minority rights (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). They despise political institutions like independent legislatures, courts, the media, and civil society organizations and depict them as tools used by the elite to control and abuse the people (Destradi et al., 2021).

In contrast to the ideational approach, Laclau (2005b, 44) and Mouffe (2018) put forth a discursive approach that considers populism a "logic of political articulation" rather than a cluster of ideas actually dealing with politics. For them, populism relies on forming a chain of equivalence among groups with unmet social demands and building an internal frontier dividing society into two factions, the powerful and the underdogs (Laclau, 2005b). After this chain of

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equivalence is formed, populists obscure the specific content of demands, which allows them to rest their political claims upon 'empty signifiers' (especially the people) that are constantly "open to contestation and redefinition" (Laclau, 2005b). Therefore, populists' discursive practices define the people as a coherent totality of underdogs in opposition to the powerful, which, in turn, leads to "the very *constitution* of popular subjectivity and to the construction of the identity of the people" (Destradi et al., 2021, 667). By giving meaning to these empty signifiers, or upholding particular representations of Self and Other, "the populist discursive practice contributes to shape the structure of signification in which politics is debated and policies are formulated" (Destradi et al., 2021, 668). Trump again offers an example of populist discursive practices to the extent that his political rhetoric antagonistically constructs an 'us vs. them,' or 'people vs. the establishment,' debate with implications for foreign policy (Homolar and Scholz, 2019; Destradi et al., 2021).

The stylistic approach pioneered by Moffitt (2017, 46) defines populism as a political style, or a "repertoire of embodied, symbolically mediated performance… used to create and navigate the fields of power." In his empirical study on populist parties and leaders around the world, Moffitt (2017) offers a list of qualities that comprise the populist style. The list includes appealing to 'the people' as the audience rather than 'the elite,' utilizing 'bad manners' and vulgar political rhetoric, and stylizing political events through the lens of "crisis, breakdown, and threat" (Moffitt, 2017). Alongside ideational and discursive approaches, the stylistic approach helps explain the behavior or many ideologically diverse populists. Furthermore, it captures the characteristics of political communication employed by populist leaders, which have significant implications for foreign policymaking. Their eagerness to use undiplomatic language goes along with their disgust toward diplomatic jargon, their increasing use of social media for foreign policy communications, and the importance they place on personal relations between world leaders (Destradi et al., 2021).

Finally, the political-strategic approach, popularized by Weyland (2001, 14; 2017), defines populism "as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers." It emphasizes populists' personalistic style of politics whose endurance depends on the mobilization of mass support. Due to the personalistic character of power and the heterogeneity of mass publics, the connection between the leader and the people exists in the absence of institutionalization and relies on the feeling of direct contact. Therefore, populism builds a well-organized political strategy, composed of various methods to grasp and maintain political power. Like other approaches, the political-strategic approach can also explain various populist movements and their opportunistic and usually inconsistent political positions (Weyland, 2017). Although Weyland (2017) has developed this approach through case studies in Latin America, it is important to apply the political-strategic understanding of populism to other parts of the world and to better understand how populists make foreign policy (Destradi et al., 2021).

Recent, scholars have started researching the impact of the rise of populism on specific foreign policy matters, including international organizations and multilateralism, as well as their handling of global crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Verbeek and Zaslove (2017) outline systematic expectations regarding the foreign policy choices of populist leaders based on their positions on international politics, global finance and trade, transborder migration, and regional integration. They argue that populist actors do not necessarily adopt the same foreign policy positions because these choices are usually the result of their 'thick' ideologies (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2017, 392). Therefore, right-wing populists have different preferences compared to left-wing populists, especially on the issues of immigration and cosmopolitanism. In that sense, the ideational approach usually attempts to explain the foreign policy preferences not as a result of populism itself but of populists' thick ideologies. For example, Wehner and Thies (2021) analyze the foreign policies of Menem's Argentina and Chavez's Venezuela, concluding that these two populist leaders caused significant changes in their countries' international role with respect to their understanding of dependency or autonomy but that those changes owe their thick ideologies, not their populism. That is to say, populism can provide a rhetoric or narrative of 'the people vs. the elite' and the general will to justify foreign policy choices, but that does not necessarily mean that populist leaders make identical foreign policies (Wehner and Thies, 2021).

On the contrary, Chryssogelos's (2017) comparative approach to the study of populist foreign policy examines the components that "are themselves a function of traits of populist ideology tout court" instead of the thick ideologies of

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populist leaders. He emphasizes that populists are more inclined to see the world through a dichotomy between the people and the elite, which can explain their repugnance toward international elites, such as the US. They often embrace anti-Western attitudes their suspicion toward the dominant political and institutional arrangements of international politics because they claim to represent the people. Sometimes, they even define the people beyond the national borders to reach broader constituencies, such Latin American generally or people in the Muslim world (Chryssogelos, 2017).

In their work on India, Plagemann and Destradi (2019) propose a set of hypotheses related to populist foreign policy and argue that their concept of populism is more powerful in explaining the procedural aspects and communication of foreign policymaking rather than its objectives or substance. In contrast to their expectations, the case of India neither provides concrete evidence of populists' proclivity for bilateralism over multilateralism nor of their hesitation to invest in global public goods (Plagemann and Destradi, 2019, 283). In other work, Destradi and Plagemann (2019) analyze the foreign policies of four populist governments from the Global South, namely Venezuela, India, Turkey, and the Philippines. They argue that certain factors can have a mitigating effect on the influence of populism on foreign policy, including thick ideologies, status-seeking in the international system, and the embeddedness of international institutions. However, all populist governments in these cases show a tendency to centralize foreign policy decision-making, reinforce existing trends, and diversify international partnerships (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019, 711).

Furthermore, Wojczewski (2020) integrates a discursive approach with post-structuralist IR perspectives and Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine how foreign policy and populist forms of identity construction are interrelated. His work conceptualizes populism and foreign policy as separate discourses that lead to the formation of collective identities through relating Self and Other. Therefore, he argues that populist figures like Trump are inclined to using foreign policy as a platform to construct and reproduce a populist-nationalist electoral coalition, which, in turn, helps satisfy constituents' desire for a complete and secure identity (Wojczewski, 2020, 292). Moreover, such a discourse leads to certain foreign policy outcomes over others when populist leaders and parties are in power. In the US, "the populist elements in the Trumpian foreign policy manifest themselves first and foremost in the contestation of the bipartisan consensus on America's national interest and the personalization, simplification, and emotionalization of foreign policy–making" (Wojczewski, 2020, 308).

## Common Themes in Populist Foreign Policy

To define common themes in different cases of populist foreign policy, it is helpful to compare populist governments with their non-populist predecessors. However, it is not realistic to expect populism to be the only motive behind populists' foreign policy preferences. Rather, it functions closely with other factors. More specifically, "the various contributions identify factors that have mitigated, overridden or amplified the influence of populism on foreign policy, such as external structural conditions and geopolitical pressures, domestic institutional and constitutional architectures, and the thick ideologies" to which populist leaders adhere (Destradi et al., 2021, 671-672). However, we can still talk about common characteristics: showing less compromising attitudes (Wojczewski, 2020), refraining from multilateral cooperation while limiting themselves to bilateral agreements (Biegon, 2019), diversifying foreign relations (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019), and adopting certain foreign policymaking attitudes, such as centralization, personalization, and communication (Drezner, 2019; Müller, 2016). In the following section, I describe how Trump exemplifies these common themes to argue that any populist president in the US is not compatible with the goal of 'sharing hegemony' with other powers or rising challengers.

### Showing Less Compromising Attitudes

Scholars and commentators commonly assume that populist figures and parties show less compromising attitudes compared to their non-populist counterparts, which is supported by anecdotal evidence. Similarly, various approaches to populism suggest that populists are more likely to adopt confrontational foreign policy positions. The ideational approach explains this by emphasizing populists' Manichean worldview, which portrays the world in black-and-white moral terms (Mudde, 2004, 544). Additionally, populists claim to be the only representative and genuine defender of 'the people,' which renders them less flexible in terms of making compromises in international

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controversies (Müller, 2016, 3). The stylistic approach also emphasizes populists' tendency to create or review crises (Moffitt, 2017), which renders them more confrontational and less consensus-driven international actors. In parallel, the discursive approach argues that the populist logic of articulation relies on the continuous construction of the discourse of an 'Other' or 'enemy,' expressed in antagonistic and confrontational rhetoric in international politics. Finally, the political-strategic approach emphasizes that populists are supposed to continuously mobilize support around themselves to stay in power, and international crises provide them a great opportunity to produce domestic support. Even though they become a part of the governing elite after being elected, populists still need to work on creating new enemies (Destradi et al., 2021, 672-673).

In Trump's case, his less compromising attitude shows itself most conspicuously in his direct attacks on the bipartisan consensus on American internationalism that has been the leading foreign policy approach in the US since the World War II. By criticizing the liberal-internationalist foreign policy and charging the establishment with prioritizing their 'special interests' over the interests of the people, Trump implies that there is a lack of connection between the people and the establishment that only he can fix since only he represents the people. His nationalist logic, which also includes his racism and xenophobia, as well as his anti-globalism considers the nation-state the bedrock of societal harmony, which can protect the people against outside threats (Wojczewski, 2020, 308).

In addition to his domestic policy, Trump's less compromising attitude is also apparent in his foreign policy. Steve Bannon once mentioned that Trump's agenda is built on three significant pillars, which are the 'deconstruction of the administrative state,' economic nationalism, and national security and sovereignty (Beckwith, 2017). To pursue this agenda, the first budget proposal of his administration aimed to decrease State Department funds by around 30%. The proposal also suggested reducing funding for the World Bank and other development banks. However, the same proposal includes unprecedented increases in Department of Defense and Homeland Security spending. Trump's budget director at that time, Mick Mulvaney, mentioned that "this is a hard-power budget, and that was done intentionally. The president very clearly wants to send a message to our allies and to our potential adversaries that this is a strong-power administration" (Berman, 2017). Such an adjustment of the state budget prioritizes coercive force over other types of power, consistent with the administration's less compromising attitude.

*Refraining from Multilateralism while Supporting Bilateralism*

Secondly, populism impacts foreign policy commonly when leaders refrain from multilateral cooperation. Opposition to the EU among right-wing populist parties in Europe, Brexit, and Trump's decisions to withdraw from international organizations and global multilateral regimes, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council, World Health Organization, and Paris Climate Agreement, are among recent examples. The ideational approach explains this as related to populists' repugnance toward domestic political institutions, which they often indict for obstructing their so-called connection to 'the people' (Chryssogelos, 2020). In parallel, the discursive and stylistic approaches explain this as a result of populist attempts to articulate a contrasting identity vis-a-vis international organizations (especially the EU) as technocratic 'establishment' institutions. Finally, the political-strategic approach, which argues that populists aim to expand their domestic electoral support, explains populists' contempt toward multilateralism as a function of their efforts to take advantage of constituents' suspicion of international elites. Therefore, the rise of populists can have damaging effects on multilateralism (Destradi et al., 2021, 674).

However, previous studies, including the work of Verbeek and Zaslove (2017), have argued that the influence of populism on foreign policy is sometimes unclear and shallow. Some populists are in favor of European integration due to their market liberalist positions. In addition, Hungary and Poland have never significantly questioned their countries' membership in the EU despite their Eurosceptic political discourse (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2017, 392-394). In multiple cases from the Global South, Destradi and Plagemann (2019) show that populists' thick ideologies and their efforts to earn international status might interestingly contribute to their eagerness to be involved in international and regional organizations. For instance, Chávez developed his own brand of regionalism in South America through being the founder of the Alianza Bolivariana para América, ALBA, in 2006 alongside with Fidel Castro and involving in initiatives such as PetroAmérica (although it is for counterbalancing another regional organization, the Organization of American States dominated by the US) while Modi was no less supportive of regional multilateralism than his non-populist predecessors in India (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019, 722-723). Such examples show the

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significance of differentiating between superficial criticism of multilateral organizations at the rhetorical level and more concrete policy changes (Destradi et al., 2021, 674).

Trump obviously refrained from multilateralism and international institutions and sometimes engaged in bilateralism with certain countries. During his 2020 campaign, he attacked American internationalism, a guiding principle of US foreign policy in the post-World War II period. He called NATO 'obsolete' and blamed US allies for free-riding and taking advantage of the US through 'bad deals' in trade and defense burden-sharing. He argued that the liberal international order does not serve American interests (Ikenberry, 2017). During his presidency, he went even further and withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran and other states, and increased tariffs that negatively impact the US's multilateral trade relations (Biegon, 2019, 527). He also called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) 'bad deals' because he believed that US interests had been harmed by them. Therefore, he claimed that withdrawing from these agreements would "stop foreign countries from stealing contracts from American companies and, essentially, from American workers" (Trump, 2017a).

In Trump's discourse, the US foreign policy establishment favors 'globalism' at the expense of the people. In a significant foreign policy speech in April 2016, he mentioned that "we will no longer surrender this country or its people to the false song of globalism. I am skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down. And under my administration, we will never enter America into any agreement that reduces our ability to control our own affairs" (Hattem, 2016, pr. 2-3). His discourse basically implies that 'globalism' is a disease, for which his 'America first' foreign policy is the cure (Biegon, 2019, 529).

*Diversifying Foreign Relations*

Thirdly, populist leaders tend to diversify foreign relations and international alliances. For instance, Italy's populist coalition was the first significant Western European administration to officially join China's Belt and Road Initiative in March 2019 (Bindi, 2019) despite withdrawing later on December 6, 2023 (Mazzocco & Palazzi, 2023). Furthermore, populist governments in Hungary and Poland have attempted to curb the impact of EU institutions, tried to establish closer relations with Russia, and engage in alternative regional structures (Varga and Buzogány, 2021). Other examples from the Global South – Duterte's softening relations with China, Erdoğan's departure from the EU, and Chávez's return to other Latin American countries as well as Russia and China – also show that populists tend to minimize their dependence on a single alliance and to diversify their transnational partnerships, which, in turn, provides more space to maneuver (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019, 728).

Trump also aimed to diversify foreign relations, but this is less apparent than other common themes of populist foreign policy. He followed different strategies of establishing bilateral relations than did his predecessors. For instance, he attempted to realize his campaign promise to "unite the whole civilized world in the fight against Islamic terrorism" (Trump, 2016) by making deals with Saudi Arabia. At the Riyadh Summit, he argued that terrorism in the Middle East could be overcome through not American military power, but rather by regional efforts to reject terrorist influence (Trump, 2017b). In the same visit, he introduced both the 'Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology' and the 'Terrorist Financing Targeting Centre' to the tune of a $400 billion investment agreement between the US and Saudi Arabia (Hall, 2021, 54-55). Other examples include his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and unexpected suggestion to readmit Russia to G7 in 2018. These examples suggest that Trump's foreign policy approach consists of unilateralism, selfish appeals toward bilateralism, and prioritization of coercive power, which serve a narrow perspective of US interests (Biegon, 2019, 527).

*Adopting Certain Foreign Policymaking Attitudes*

Finally, in addition to certain foreign policy results, it is also important to discuss continuity and transformation in the processes and exercises of foreign policymaking under populist leaders. One of the most significant long-term impacts of populism on foreign policy lies in the populists' adoption of certain foreign policy making attitudes, including centralization, personalization, and communication. The ideational emphasis on anti-elitism makes it plausible to expect that populists will be troubled by traditional foreign policymaking approaches, used mostly by an

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elitist group of unelected bureaucrats and think-tankers, senior diplomats, and scholars. In parallel, the stylistic approach emphasizes the 'bad manners' typically displayed by populist leaders like Trump, Salvini, and Duterte, who often denigrate diplomatic traditions and procedures cherished by foreign policy elites (Destradi et al., 2021, 675). Especially considering populists' repugnance of pluralism and their construal of an unmediated link with 'the people,' it becomes more predictable that they will not want to consult civil society representatives or foreign policy experts. Centralization efforts unsurprisingly go along with the personalization of foreign policy as populist leaders assert that they embody the 'popular will' and are the only genuine representatives of the 'true people' (Destradi and Plagemann, 2019, 724).

Again, Trump serves as a good example of this theme. It would not be unexpected for a leader with Trump's brand of populism to weaken the bureaucracy or other state institutions that show contempt for any limitation on executive power (Mudde, 2004; Müller, 2016). Considering that populist leaders demand to rule in accordance with the general will with no limitations, and that institutionalization is supposed to limit political action, it would not be a surprise for populist leaders like Trump to disdain institutionalization and prefer centralization and personalization of foreign policymaking as a result (Drezner, 2019, 728). During a television interview in November 2017, Donald Trump was asked about the significant number of unfilled State Department roles, replying, "Let me tell you, the one that matters is me. I'm the only one that matters, because when it comes to it, that's what the policy is going to be" (Hannon, 2017). In another incident at a rally in Fort Dodge, Iowa, he avoided revealing his 'secret plan' on how to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), saying that he did not "want the enemy to know" that he knew "more about ISIS than the generals do" (Tan, 2017). These examples capture his attempts to personalize and centralize foreign policy in keeping with his populist tendencies (Wojczewski, 2020, 302).

## Conclusion

Even though the relationship between populism and foreign policy is understudied, there are fledgling examples of scholarship on this question. Prominent approaches to the study of populism (ideational, discursive, stylistic, and political-strategic) fail to fully comprehend the influence of populism on foreign policy. Thus, I follow the pluralistic approach of Destradi, Cadier, and Plagemann (2021) in which all above-mentioned approaches complement each other. This approach helps describe common themes of populist foreign policymaking, which are apparent in the case of Donald Trump in the US. Trump has shown a less compromising attitude, refrained from multilateralism while supporting bilateralism, diversified his foreign relations, and adopted certain foreign policymaking attitudes, such as centralization and personalization. He would have likely destroyed any chance of 'sharing hegemony' with China by bringing more instability and uncertainty into the US's foreign policy and global politics.

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