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An Approach to Donald Trump's  
Foreign Policy: Towards a New  
Perspective

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## *An Approach to Donald Trump's Foreign Policy: Towards a New Perspective*

### *Abstract:*

*One of the most complex factors in human relationships is to get an idea of how the other thinks, the cause of their behaviour, a factor that in relations between states becomes momentous, because the effectiveness of our response to the environment relies in a valid analysis of the intentions of others. This paper is an attempt to analyse Donald Trump's foreign policy avoiding stereotypes to focus on its review through the different approaches to foreign policy analysis. The aim is to be able to draw relevant conclusions that will help us to deal with the best possible way with the challenge posed by the Trump Administration to the existing international order, and especially to the transatlantic relationship.*

### *Keywords:*

*Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Post-structuralism, Unilateralism, NATO.*

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## Introduction

In this year's first issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Eliot A. Cohen, former State Department adviser in the George W. Bush Administration, described in an article Donald Trump's foreign policy as a misguided vision “that is distrustful of U.S. allies, scornful of international institutions, and indifferent, if not downright hostile, to the liberal international order that the United States has sustained for nearly eight decades”<sup>1</sup>, although he recognized immediately that “the real tragedy, however, is not that the president has brought this flawed vision to the fore; it is that his is merely one mangled interpretation of what is rapidly emerging as a new consensus on the left and the right: that the United States should accept a more modest role in world affairs”<sup>2</sup>.

The main purpose of this paper is to describe why the foreign policy deployed by Donald Trump is assuming such a departure from American strategy since the end of World War II, and secondly, explain the cause of the tragedy pointed out by Cohen, from which “Trump is both a symptom and a cause”<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the level of analysis will be that of individual actor, in this case the President of the United States, and the type of analysis will end in a cognitive/psychological degree. Assuming that opting for such a limited approach offers only a small part of the American political process, by disregarding group and state levels (with such important actors as political advisers, various Secretaries of State or security agencies and the Pentagon, not to mention agents outside the Administration such as the media), and by adhering to the study of the figure of Donald Trump you gain the advantage of focusing the analysis on its most powerful authority, allowing us to achieve a sharper focus, not forgetting that the image obtained is only a fraction of the entire picture.

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<sup>1</sup> COHEN, Eliot A., “America’s Long Goodbye”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 98, January/February 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## The assault on the liberal order

To understand the challenge posed by Trump's foreign policy, it is important to clarify what exactly is this liberal order which is supposedly being called into question. As Doyle notes<sup>4</sup>, liberal countries have been trying for two centuries to create a peaceful environment between them, based on two key principles:

- Liberal democracies are natural allies: instead of escalating tensions, they tend to negotiate with each other respecting and accommodating their respective interests;
- A tendency to preserve and expand the liberal zone of peace: what is currently known as *Pax Americana*, and which in the political order has its main translation at the United Nations, in the security level at the Atlantic Alliance and in the economic space at the WTO and IMF.

Both principles are common to the three main varieties of liberalism:

- Lockean: which identifies as the distinctive element of liberal democracies their commitment to mutual respect under the law, hence the development of international law and institutions such as the International Court of Justice or the most recent International Criminal Court;
- Commercial: which states that the conjunction of the capitalist market and majority democracy can turn into pacifism the competitiveness arising from individual material selfishness, where globalization could be understood as the culmination of that happy union between economic and political freedoms;
- Kantian: which sets out three conditions for achieving systemic peace between States, namely: the responsibility of the government to its citizens through a republican and representative political system, a commitment to peace based on respect for non-discriminatory rights and the possibility of social and economic interdependence.

Considering liberal principles and schools, we can say that a genuine liberal foreign policy will seek and promote the following objectives:

- Protect personal and civil rights,
- Promote democratic governance,

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<sup>4</sup> SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia y DUNNE, Tim (Eds.), "Foreign Policy. Theories, Actors and Cases", Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. 54-77.

- Expand the scope and effectiveness of the global market economy while meeting the basic needs of a dignified life<sup>5</sup>.

All this by trying to adapt the objectives to the available resources, while minimizing threats and reinforcing allies, with the double safeguard of not betraying liberal principles nor causing the bankruptcy of liberal states.

The paradox of the Trump Administration's current attack on the liberal order described above is that its greatest promoter has been the United States itself, serving not only as a replicated image of its principles and values, but also serving to its vital interests. Since the struggle for independence at the end of the 18th century, the United States has been a revisionist nation at an international level, trying to adjust the external plane to its internal order, an endeavour it partially achieved in 1945, after the failure of 1921<sup>6</sup>.

The problem has come precisely from the apparent triumph of the liberal order after the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1991. As Stephens acknowledges, "Americans expected too much from winning the Cold War [...] We believed that the collapse of the Soviet Union put to rest the only serious ideological challenge to liberal democracy and permanently settled the core of political philosophy"<sup>7</sup>. But since then, the United States has suffered numerous failures to consolidate and expand the liberal order, and in some cases, such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the recklessness of an extremist and universalist absolutism has led the nation not only to exhaust its own resources, but also, and more seriously, to betray key liberal values in the eyes of all, allies and rivals.

If we link the hangover from the stormy occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan with the 2008 economic crisis, which caused the biggest recession since the crash in 1929, we get the perfect cocktail to understanding how Donald Trump was able to reach the presidency of the United States under the promise to outwardly disassociate his nation from liberal principles and institutions. For that reason, as Nye points out, "the most important

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.: p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed study of U.S. foreign policy in the interwar period see JOSA, Pedro F. R., "La gran revolución americana. Las raíces ideológicas de la política exterior de Estados Unidos", Ediciones Encuentro, Madrid, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> STEPHENS, Bret, "America in Retreat. The New Isolationism and the Coming Global Disorder", Sentinel, 2014, p. 47.

challenge to the provision of world order in the twenty-first century comes not from without but from within”<sup>8</sup>.

As we will see below, the Trump Administration's foreign policy challenges each of the liberal principles and schools, and therefore we will have to look at other approaches and theories in order to understand it in its fair measure, since far from responding exclusively to the ephemeral whim of an irresponsible representative, is rather the expression of a heightened national sentiment.

### Defining Trumpism

From a person as chaotic in appearance as Donald Trump it could be almost implausible to discern a political agenda, let alone from someone who boasts of not belonging to the political caste. But thanks to its unstoppable verbiage we can highlight the following points as the most prominent of its political philosophy:

- Defence of American identity: the Americanism defended by Trump surpasses simple patriotism and can actually be seen as an American version of nationalism, becoming the main vector of the Republican Party after its victory in the primaries, and that his campaign slogan summarized perfectly: Make America great again. In his acceptance speech for the Republican nomination, Trump confirmed that "Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo"<sup>9</sup> for "the most important difference between our plan and that of our opponents, is that our plan will put America First"<sup>10</sup>. And that plan firstly entails the preservation of the America's cultural, moral, and patriotic values by defending its borders, culture, and Judeo-Christian heritage that informed the construction of American identity. An identity that Trump supporters perceive primarily threatened by the rise of the illegal immigration, and whose anxiety the new President has tried to calm down with the construction of his famous wall and a new immigration system "that respects, and even strengthens, our culture, our tradition, and our

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<sup>8</sup> NYE, Joseph S., "Will the Liberal Order Survive? The History of an Idea", *Foreign Affairs*, 96, n° 1, pp. 10-16.

<sup>9</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention", July 21, 2016, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-cleveland>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

values”<sup>11</sup>. Which means for Trump, in addition to defending borders, that, being proud to be a Christian, “as President I will not allow Christianity to be consistently attacked and weakened”<sup>12</sup>, either from within through a relativistic multiculturalism sponsored by the most progressive sectors of American society and politics, whether from the outside through the Islamic State or Al Qaeda. That external dimension in the defence of American identity is what is discussed below.

- Nationalist Unilateralism: The American First principle has an undoubted impact on the Trump Administration's relations with the rest of the world, as it not only shapes its vision of international relations but also determines its definition of America's vital interests. The liberal internationalism that modulated the foreign policy of so many White House tenants since the end of World War II has left its place to a new nationalist unilateralism, whose meaning to Trump is that “in every foreign policy decision, we are making clear that we will always put the safety and security of our citizens first”<sup>13</sup>, so “no longer are we using our military to build democracies. Instead, we're forming a coalition of nations that share the aim of stamping out extremism, defeating terrorism, and pursuing stability, prosperity, and peace”<sup>14</sup>. Which in practice has involved not only a sensitive renunciation of many of the responsibilities that as a hegemonic power the United States had been exercising since the end of the Cold War, that is, the abdication to be the world policeman, but also a fierce critique of post-war institutional architecture, from the United Nations to the Atlantic Alliance. For Trump “the United States cannot continue to be the policeman of the world”<sup>15</sup>, not only because he considered it ridiculous but detrimental to national interests, because “we don't want to be taken advantage anymore by countries that use us and use our

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<sup>11</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., “Remarks on Changes to the U.S. Immigration System”, May 16, 2019, from <https://factba.se/search#American%2BCulture>

<sup>12</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., “Statement in Response to the Pope”, February 18, 2016, available in <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-donald-j-trump-response-the-pope>

<sup>13</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., “Remarks at the American Legion National Convention”, August 23, 2017, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-american-legion-national-convention-reno-nevada-0>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., “Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters During a Military Briefing at Al Asad Air Base”, December 26, 2018, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-and-exchange-with-reporters-during-military-briefing-al-asad-air-base-al-anbar>

incredible military to protect them. They don't pay for it, and they're going to have to"<sup>16</sup>. That refusal to continue paying the cost of the *Pax Americana* is the cause of its criticism of the United Nations, something traditional in American conservative politics, and of the allies of the Atlantic Alliance, which without being a novelty it has surprised by the extent of its virulence. Trump described his administration's new approach at the United Nations as a realism of principles not subject to "old dogmas, discredited ideologies, and so-called experts who have been proven wrong over the years, time and time again"<sup>17</sup>, warning that "the United States will not be taken advantage of any longer"<sup>18</sup>. As can be seen, for Trump foreign policy is closely related to the economic plane, where nationalist unilateralism translates into the "we must replace the present policy of globalism – which has moved so many jobs and so much wealth out of our country – and replace it with a new policy of Americanism"<sup>19</sup>, whose most eloquent manifestations have been the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the rejection of the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement, or the trade war unleashed with China. So, as Patrick points out, "in foreign policy and economics, he has made clear that the pursuit of narrow national advantage will guide politics – apparently regardless of the impact on the liberal world order that the United States has championed since 1945"<sup>20</sup>.

Once described the guiding principles of what can be called Trumpism, it is time to analyse them for a more comprehensive understanding of the Trump Administration's foreign policy.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly", September 25, 2018, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-city-14>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., "Remarks to the Economic Club of New York", September 15, 2016, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-economic-club-new-york-the-waldorf-astoria-new-york-city>

<sup>20</sup> PATRICK, Stewart M., "Trump and World Order. The Return of Self-Help", *Foreign Affairs*, 96, 2, pp. 52-57.



## Analysing Trumpism

A first approximation can be made from a realistic approach, not for nothing has Trump himself defined his strategy as a proposal based on a realism of principles. Realism starts from the assumption of the anarchic nature of the international environment, which encourages states to seek their own interest in order to survive. Thus, for the realists, the main interest of States is its national security (the four basic components of the State being their physical bases and ideology, their institutions and their sovereignty). To check if Trump's foreign policy conforms to the parameters set by realism, we need to briefly describe them. Wohlforth enumerate them as follows<sup>21</sup>:

- Groupism: in order to survive, human beings need to be integrated into groups drawn together by bonds of solidarity, which, in their future, surely have to face other groups, groups that currently have as their main configuration the nation-states, whose essential source of cohesion is nationalism.
- Selfishness: political behaviour is determined by selfishness, which in most cases, and especially in human beings, surpasses altruism as a driving force of our actions.
- Power-centrism: power is the fundamental feature of politics, which determines the inequalities between the different actors, which in the case of nation-states are based on social control and available resources.

From these three axes, a foreign policy based on realism will be characterized by a orientation towards the most powerful groups, a skepticism towards foreign policy objectives other than the interest of the State, a tendency to doubt about the ability of other states to transcend power policies and an inclination to interpret political rhetoric through the realities of power which for realists always underlie all politics. Under these premises, the realists have developed theories such as the balance of power, the security dilemma, the offensive-defensive balance, the hegemonic stability or the transition of power<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> WOHLFORTH, William C., "Realism and Foreign Policy", en SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia y DUNNE, Tim (Eds.), op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 37 y 41.



Although, as in the case of liberalism, realism also has its own schools based on their particular interpretation of the principles and theories outlined above, although only those that show a particular view of the international environment are noted below, leaving aside those dedicated to the analysis of politics:

- Defensive realists: they argue that despite the anarchy in the world system, the causes of war can be tempered by conditions such as balance of power or technological development, prompting states to ensure their security without the need to threaten that of other actors, consequently, they advocate for an appropriate and relative accumulation of power;
- Offensive realists: guided by a distrust of other people's intentions, they see in the lack of a global authority to enforce the pacts the incentive for other actors to seek to increase their power, which in turn constantly forces to strengthen themselves not to be in disadvantage in a highly competitive environment, which drives the States to try to become the most powerful player as national security depends on the power<sup>23</sup>.

Having briefly explained foreign policy realism, let's see if Trumpism fully fits its conception of international relations. It seems that Trump shares with realism his untouched view of reality:

- An anarchic environment without a central authority that prevents widespread disorder,
- The centrality of the State as the main actor and the defence of national security as almost the exclusive interest to defend,
- Relationships with other actors are taken as a zero-sum game, where the profits of others are the result of its own losses, and vice versa.

Therefore, it could be said that Trump is a realist who recovers key elements of Nixon-era realpolitik and Reagan's peace through strength<sup>24</sup>, but in reality, its foreign policy is not a reaction to the international environment, but that same foreign policy is shaping

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Trump describes it as follows: "*Our military is bigger and better and stronger (...)The stronger it gets, the less likely it is that we'll ever have to use it, because that's the way the world Works*", "Remarks at a 'Make America Great Again' Rally", October 27, 2018, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-make-america-great-again-rally-murphresboro-illinois>

the environment, creating the basic conditions for its interpretation from a realistic perspective.

First, if the environment is perceived more anarchic now than in 1991 it is primarily due to the American renunciation and inability to assume the responsibilities inherent of being the hegemonic power. From the unipolar order that could be founded in the 1990s we have moved to today's multipolar world, where there is no centre of power capable of reducing the prevailing disorder. So, there is a new world order, but it is far from the one desired by George Bush Sr. and Anthony Baker, which was based on the liberal premises of cooperation and expansion of the liberal zone of peace. On the contrary, our reality more closely resembles the Hobbesian image of a struggle of all against all, where might makes law.

Second, not only has the United States refused to be the world leader any longer, but its political leaders' growing distrust of international institutions has prevented them from becoming a potential replacement. In this way, nation-states have returned to the front of a scene they never abandoned, and with it, the defence of national interest has risen again over cooperative dreams.

Finally, it is the interpretation of the environment, not the environment itself, that drives the Trump Administration to see everything as a zero-sum game, where the United States would be being plundered by allies and rivals, thus, his mission is to end such embezzlement with a unilateralist nationalist policy that puts the interests of Americans before those of a chimerical global society.

But it is not only Donald Trump's foreign policy that is encouraging the formation of that anarchic environment, but President Trump himself and his policies call into question one of the basic assumptions of the realistic school, namely the rational actor theory.

As Herrero de Castro points out<sup>25</sup>, rational decision theory is based on four basic assumptions:

- Acting for the sake of self-interest,
- With adequate and enough information,
- Considering all available alternatives,

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<sup>25</sup> HERRERO de CASTRO, Rubén, "La realidad inventada. Percepciones y proceso de toma de decisiones en Política Exterior", Plaza y Valdés, 2008, p. 41.

- In order to maximize the result.

From these assumptions a rational decision-making must proceed in a logical and orderly manner, being open to arguments and evidence, free of prejudice, and always considering the possible consequences of the different options, hence it must be a good estimator of probabilities<sup>26</sup>.

So far, the theory. In practice it is very rare for human beings, if not impossible, to meet the expectations of the rational model, by both the difficulty of making inferences and the limitations of our minds. Cognitive psychology holds that our rational ability is constrained by four basic attributes:

- **Simplicity:** we all tend to reduce the complexity that surrounds us through simplifications, ignoring the nuances, subtleties and context in the difficulties we face, and we resort to strategies such as analogue reasoning, simplifying the definition of the problem and over limiting the options available to solve it;
- **Consistency:** human beings do not tolerate dissonant information very well, one that questions our beliefs, and we raise against it defensive cognitions to preserve our dogmatic core, and when change occurs, it does so slowly and incrementally, that is, from the most peripheral sphere to the most central one;
- **Poor estimates:** if we add our inability to accept the inevitability of error to our natural determinism, we obtain as a result a very low estimation potential, also weakened by our aversion to uncertainty, generally overcome through cognitive biases and a false sense of order and control;
- **Loss aversion:** people are not risk neutral, we prefer a small immediate gain to risk a greater long-term gain, by overestimating loss over potential profit, although in critical situations we tend to risk more and to better accept losses<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, outside our minds, it is virtually implausible that the decision-making process can meet the requirements of rational theory, because information, far from being true and understandable, is rather distorted and incomplete; because the national interest is not clearly defined, as it depends on personal motivations and organisational interests;

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<sup>26</sup> GROSS, Janice, "Decision Making: Rational, Psychological, and Neurological Models", en SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia y DUNNE, Tim (Eds.), op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

because in reality we choose from a small cast of options, without any of them being well analysed; and because the chosen course of action, far from being the most capable of producing the desired outcome, is rather the result of political negotiations and commitments<sup>28</sup>.

All these ambiguities inherent in our decision-making capacity have been confirmed by the latest advances in neuroscience. Scientists dedicated to the study of our brain have come to two surprising conclusions about how it works:

- Many of our decisions seem to be determined by pre-conscious neurological processes, and only a small part by deliberative mental processes;
- Many decisions seem to be the result of strong emotional responses<sup>29</sup>.

The cause of such behaviour on the part of our brain is that emotions are fast and automatic, and not only play a decisive role in our behaviour, because of our brain's small ability to consciously process all the information it receives, but they also do so in its function. That is, we feel before we think, and consequently we also act generally before thinking. Therefore, the choice is the product of the constant compromise between emotion and calculation, which reflect two fields integrated into our brain, whose main characteristics can be seen in the following table:

EMOTIONAL DOMAIN	DELIBERATIVE DOMAIN
PRECONSCIOUS	CONSCIOUS
AUTOMÁTIC	PROCESSED
FAST	SLOW
EFFORTLESS	EFFORTFUL
ASSOCIATIVE	RULE-GOVERNED
UNREFLECTIVE	REFLECTIVE
SLOW TO CHANGE	FLEXIBLE

**Table 1: Emotional domain vs. deliberative domain.**

Source: elaboración propia a partir de GROSS, p. 141.

<sup>28</sup> KEGLEY, Charles W., "World Politics. Trend and Transformation", Wardsworth Publishing, 2006, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> GROSS: op. cit., p. 139.

Moreover, to the preponderance of the first field we must add the difficulty that the second has to educate him. Not in vain, as Simón points out, “despite the complexity and sophistication of human cerebral cortex activity, the result of all his considerations ends up having to go through the approval or disapproval of the amygdala or structures that perform equivalent functions in the limbic system”<sup>30</sup>, who are responsible for the developing of the emotional information in our brains. Therefore, the study of emotions has changed our understanding of the relationship between thought and the affective world of the human being, as a new perspective opens up: “one that considers emotions, far from being an obstacle to proper decision-making, as has been considered in the context of rationalist thinking, are an essential requirement for rationalist thinking”<sup>31</sup>.

As Kahneman notes, what is disputed by all these findings is the dogmatic assumption that the human mind is rational and logical, for in reality “we think associatively, think metaphorically and think causally easily, but to do so statistically requires thinking about many things at once, something for which System 1 (the emotional one) is not designed”<sup>32</sup>. In addition, impressions and feelings generated by the emotional field are the sources from which explicit beliefs and choices calculated by the deliberative field are nurtured, so both areas of our reasoning are constantly in communication, because “most of the things we think and do (our System 2 [or deliberative]) originate in System 1 (or emotional), but System 2 takes the reins when those things get tough, and it's usually he who has the last word”<sup>33</sup>.

Given all these limitations in our rational capacity, we may be able to better understand the apparent lack of coherence in Trump's foreign policy decisions. Moreover, many of them seem even to go against the national interest of the United States, for it should not be forgotten that by dismantling the liberal architecture erected by its predecessors from World War II, Donald Trump is ending the world order that provided America with a favourable stability framework from which to reap its highest rates of economic-social development and unparalleled outside influence in its short history. With the resurgence

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<sup>30</sup> Simón, Vicente, “La participación de las emociones en la toma de decisiones”, *Psicothema*, vol. 9, 2, 1997, pp.365-376.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>32</sup> KAHNEMAN, Daniel, “Pensar rápido, pensar despacio”, Debolsillo, 2015, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of unilateralism on its political scene, the United States is losing influence in all world regions, thus favouring other powers such as Russia or China, at the expenses of its national interests.

Therefore, if the liberal theory is inadequate to understand the foreign policy of the Trump Administration, because one of its objectives is precisely to disassociate the United States from the post-war liberal order, and the realistic approach is insufficient to capture its true essence, where can we find the right theoretical support for a valid interpretation of Trumpism?

The answer can be found in the constructivist theory of foreign policy analysis. Constructivism starts from the idea that the world, far from determining us, is our work, since we act toward objects, including people, depending on their meaning to us.<sup>34</sup> The four basic propositions of constructivism are:

- The social construction of reality and the importance of social facts: reality is a project in constant construction, that does not nullify the existence of raw facts, but being their interpretation totally ours and particular, we assign them different meanings involving different responses to the same fact; in this way, for constructivism, social facts in foreign policy only make sense by the meaning and practices associated with them through the time spent in social relations, creating rules and routine practices that make them something objective;
- The focus on the ideational and material structures together with the importance of rules of action: to understand the structure not only the material constraints are required, it is also necessary to take into account the ideas, because what they transmit is knowledge shared about those same material factors, and on rules, symbols and language, to the point of shaping our interpretation of the world and the actions of others; in addition, structures are generally codified in norms, understood as structures of relevance that reflect our collective understanding, so influential in our behaviour, which leads constructivists to affirm that structural change can be driven by an alteration in the rules of action of actors;

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<sup>34</sup> FLOCKHART, Trine, "Constructivism and Foreign Policy", en SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia y DUNNE, Tim (Eds.), op. cit., p. 81.

- The focus on the role of identity and the importance of logics of action: identity is the reflection in constant construction of how we understand ourselves, the place we occupy in the social world and our relations with the environment , and is important to constructivists because of the implicit burden of interests and preferences it attaches to the decision-making process, that is, we act not only after a reading of our interests or by a mere cost/benefit calculation, as the realists and liberals would argue, but we also do so according to our identities;
- The belief in the mutual constitution of agents and structure and the focus on practice and action: despite the difficulty of change, agents can transform the structure, even when they reproduce its constraints, hence we can see the foreign policy as practice (when it does not alter the structure) or as action (when it causes the possibility of change)<sup>35</sup>.

As can be seen, the constructivist approach is best suited to understanding the foreign policy of the Trump Administration, for after deciding that the cognitive tone inherited from its predecessors made no sense for the new open era with its choice as President of the United States, Trump has rejected the old norms and rules as a guide of behaviour, and as constructivist theorists indicate “in such a situation new structures of knowledge and identity can be adopted, which in turn can open up a window of opportunity for international policy change through the adoption of new rules followed by changes in practice, identity formations, and the reconstitution of shared knowledge”<sup>36</sup>.

The changes in practice are more than noticeable in Donald Trump's foreign policy, as we have seen in the first part of the work, to his rough manner is added an unilateralistic reorientation opposed to the dominating globalism since the end of the Cold War. A new foreign policy that is guided by a reconstruction of reality based on two axes: the feeling of grievance and a besieged identity.

Finally, to complete our study of the Trump Administration's foreign policy, along with constructivism, we can turn to post-structuralism and its analysis of the discourse. Post-structuralists share with the realists their concern for power and states, but unlike them,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-88.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 89.



they argue that not only interests and selfishness cause the search for power of states, but it also does so in the same way the need to project and maintain an image of themselves through discourse, hence the desirability of analysing language as one more component of political power. As a result, foreign policy becomes a representation of identity.

For post-structuralists “foreign policy plays a central role in producing not just the boundary between inside and outside, but the ‘we’ who enact foreign policy”<sup>37</sup>, which leads them to a new conception of the selfishness described by the realists, not as a natural thing but as a performative one, aimed at producing and maintaining identity.

In summary, what the post-structuring approach allows us is to analyse Donald Trump's constant outbursts on foreign policy as the expression and reaffirmation of an American identity that he considers besieged from all sides. In the words of the President himself, after his triumph “we are witnessing the great reawakening of the American spirit and of American might. We have rediscovered our identity, regained our stride, and we are proud again”<sup>38</sup>.

### Conclusions. After Trump

As Fukuyama points out in his latest work on identity as a political factor, “the shift in the agenda of the left and the right towards a greater protection of increasingly specific group identities, ultimately threatens the possibility of communication and collective action”<sup>39</sup>. Where “the right is redefined as patriots seeking to protect traditional national identity, an identity that is often explicitly related to race, ethnicity or religion”<sup>40</sup>. Fukuyama talks about what is happening in American political life, but it is a valid description both domestically and internationally, as “identity problems (...) are harder to reconcile: either you recognize

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<sup>37</sup> HANSEN, Lene, “Discourse Analysis, Post-Structuralism, and Foreign Policy”, en SMITH, Steve, HADFIELD, Amelia y DUNNE, Tim (Eds.), op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., “Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy”, May 25, 2018, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/commencement-address-the-united-states-naval-academy-annapolis-maryland-4>

<sup>39</sup> FUKUYAMA, Francis, “Identidad. La demanda de dignidad y las políticas de resentimiento”, Deusto, 2019, p. 138.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibíd.*, p. 23.

me or you don't (...) the struggle for identity distracts us from the policies that could solve those problems"<sup>41</sup>.

The fact that Trump is defending an identity policy has several implications to consider for those affected by their decisions at the international level:

- His foreign policy will continue to be seemingly impulsive and unpredictable, a product more of the emotional field than the deliberative one, as his constant messages show through social networks, a direct means of communication with followers and rivals which circumvents any system of control and evaluation proper to traditional diplomacy, and that reflects the personal way of conducting public affairs that characterizes Trump;
- His foreign policy will be guided at all times by the defence of the American, hence that nationalist unilateralism implies that "Americanism, not globalism, will be our creed. It's going to be America First from now on,"<sup>42</sup>, that is, rejection of the liberal order, withdrawal of being the world policeman and return to economic protectionism;
- Loyalty to old alliances will no longer be maintained based on shared values or common threats, but will depend on the perception of the cost to the United States to maintain them, as Trump himself made clear to his European allies "Europe has to pay their fair share for Military Protection. The European Union, for many years, has taken advantage of us on Trade, and then they don't live up to their Military commitment through NATO. Things must change fast!"<sup>43</sup>;
- Trump is just the expression of a widespread sentiment in America that will remain regardless of whether he remains or leaves the White House, as Cohen notes, "the push for a U.S. retreat from the world did not begin with the president and will not end with his exit. The crisis of the United States' post-Cold War foreign policy has been a long time in the making, and it will last beyond Trump"<sup>44</sup>. Donald Trump will leave, but those who will not disappear are the millions of Americans who see no benefit in his

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibíd.*, p. 194.

<sup>42</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., "Remarks at Luedecke Arena in Austin, Texas", August 23, 2016, from <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-luedecke-arena-austin-texas>

<sup>43</sup> TRUMP, Donald J., November 25, 2018 Tweet, from <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1066790517944606721>

<sup>44</sup> COHEN: *Ibíd.*

country's intervention in world affairs, and who are clamouring for a nationalist policy that be blind to whatever occurs beyond its borders.

The three basic consequences of all this are:

- The United States is in retreat: not being something new, for it actually responds to a process that has suffered its highs and lows since the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, maybe someone could be surprised by the tenacity with which the Trump Administration is carrying it out; but in any case it should be noted that Trump's nationalist unilateralism is only returning the United States to its more genuine and long-standing foreign policy tradition, the isolationist unilateralism, designed in John Adams's Treaty Model, the Farewell Speech by George Washington and the Monroe Doctrine, with "three basic assumptions:
  - Ensuring the freedom of action,
  - Strengthening the American pre-eminence in the America Continent, and
  - Exercise of neutrality, especially with regard to European affairs"<sup>45</sup>.

Isolationist unilateralism began to be questioned as the most appropriate strategy for the United States in the late 19th century, when the nation achieved world power status, but was not dethroned by internationalism until the Allied victory in the World War II, when it had become the most powerful country in the world and began its rivalry with the Soviet Union, thus developing a foreign policy that united its destiny with that of other democratic nations, understanding that the expansion of the liberal sphere of peace was the best option to ensure its national security<sup>46</sup>. The end of the Cold War caused a strategic vacuum in the United States as its policymakers were unable to create a viable alternative to contention, moreover, the constant swings in foreign and security policy have neither facilitated a domestic consensus nor the outside conformity to its plans, which has led the nation to embrace the unilateralist mantra again as a reaction to a world that does not understand and considers that it does not appreciate America enough.

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<sup>45</sup> JOSA, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>46</sup> "With its liberal Internationalism, the Truman Administration accepted the burden of democratic command, bequeathing to the nation the strategic framework for the rest of the 20th century", JOSA, op. cit., p. 163.

- The Western democratic community will no longer be the prevalent one on the world stage, and its survival is not even guaranteed: China's rise and Russia's activism, added to the United States retreat, had put to an end the liberal world architecture emerged from World War II, facing a new global order in gestation where the democratic and liberal principles, predominant until now, will have to relinquish space and share prominence with alternative visions that are neither democratic nor liberal, as Chinese or Russian models attest; the main cause of the end of the liberal consensus is the Western failure to expand the zone of peace and democracy beyond its traditional regions, for if containment greatly controlled communist expansion, the end of the Cold War did not entail the ultimate triumph of the liberal-democratic model, as China, the second most powerful country in the world, has effectively resisted attempts at external interference, judging by its levels of development and internal control exercised by the Communist Party, while Russia has gradually moved away from this same order as its elites increased the doses of nationalism and authoritarianism into their political system, something akin to what is happening in Turkey, which no longer dreams of being part of Europe, but of being again the leather of the Umma, that is, neither in Asia nor in the Muslim world have Western values been able to become dominant, thus losing the opportunity to create a stable and lasting order friendly to its principles; in addition, this Western failure to create a world order in its image and likeness has brought to light the internal divisions that exist within it, exacerbated by the nationalist wave that plagues many of its members, and which threaten to untie the Atlantic knot that joins America with Europe since the end of World War II. In any case, even if a disastrous transatlantic divorce does not materialize, what Europeans must have clear about the United States, as Pontijas Calderón points out, is that America "will also not be the altruistic power that allowed the golden age of European growth to the detriment of defence budgets,"<sup>47</sup>, forcing us to redefine "the transatlantic relationship in more equitable terms showing Washington at the same time the value to have its European allies in its external action"<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> PONTIJAS CALDERÓN, José Luis, "¿Está Estados Unidos abandonando Europa?", Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, June 19, 2019, from

[http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2019/DIEEEA19\\_2019JOSPON\\_EEUU.pdf](http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2019/DIEEEA19_2019JOSPON_EEUU.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

- Growing claim of American exceptionalism: in this regard it is worth not forgetting that isolationist unilateralism was largely erected to prevent an absolutist contagion in the newly created United States, that is, it was a way of defending and enhancing an exceptionalism understood as the essence of the American identity, an identity that now seeks to defend itself by appealing again to that exceptionality that now is faced with an old Europe that would seek to reduce America's national sovereignty through a diffuse globalizing cosmopolitanism<sup>49</sup>. As Stephens asserts, “exceptionalism is a call for introspection, not action; for apartness, not engagement: it offers at least as strong case for isolationism as it does for internationalism or interventionism”<sup>50</sup>. And as the United States feel less identified with its allies and its influence in the international order declines, exceptionalism will offer the comfort that once produced the internationalist illusion, now rejected by broad sectors both conservative and progressive. As a result, exceptionalism would only accentuate the previous two points, serving as a pretext for the American withdrawal from the world pre-eminence and at the same time as a refuge for a democratic identity considered unique in the world<sup>51</sup>.

As can be seen, Trumpism, far from being the passing product of an occasional representative, is rather the expression of a complex and enduring process, where our rational limitations are mixed with our emotions and our surroundings, so evasive to every kind of control. I'm sure it's easier to assess Trump's foreign policy based on personal predilections, but by proceeding like this, judging based on affections and antipathy, we will act just as much as we criticize in him, offering a partial and mystical interpretation of reality. If we put aside our emotions and prejudices, and allow it to be the deliberative field that guides us, we may be able to better understand the change that Trump has brought to the United States, and thus we be able to respond in the most appropriate way

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<sup>49</sup> A vision that Trump took advantage of to attack the supporters of interventionism in the United States, noting that “*Today, Americans are looking for a leader who will give them a voice in their government and a sense of pride in their country (...) If the leadership of the country cannot take pride in the nation, how is it expected that others will recognize and embrace American exceptionalism?*”, USA Today, January 12, 2016, from <https://factba.se/transcript/donald-trump-op-ed-usa-today-20160112>

<sup>50</sup> STEPHENS, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> As Lipset points out, “The United States remains qualitatively different (...) exceptionalism is a two-edged phenomenon: it doesn't mean better. This country is on the sidelines. It is the country most religious, optimistic, patriotic, individualistic and oriented towards its rights”, LIPSET, Seymour M., “El excepcionalismo norteamericano. Una espada de dos filos”, Fondo de Cultura Económico, 2000, p. 26.

to the challenge it entails for the rest of the world at large, and specifically for their allies. I think it's a task that deserves our time and effort, because there's a lot at stake when it comes to correctly interpreting the intentions of our most powerful ally. Self-indulgent rejection of their policies is not the smartest answer on our part, we must go further, transcend our emotions and try to understand how Trump and his supporters perceive the world, and why they do so.

In short, America's disengagement from the liberal order devised and promoted throughout the 20th century by itself does not mean a return to isolationism, but to unilateralism whose nature will vary depending on the Administration in power. In the case of Donald Trump, nationalist bias is transmitted in every area of action, giving American foreign policy a rudeness that neither allies nor rivals anticipated. Either way, it is appropriate not to take the American turn as the accidental product of a extravagant transitional presidency, after which international life will return to normalcy. Trump is the symptom of a nation that has said enough to lead a world that is reluctant to follow America, and in turn, boosting his foreign agenda, Trump is both the cause of that shift in course towards a unilateralism that is trying for many years to replace internationalism as the guide of foreign policy. Therefore, Trump has not started anything new in foreign policy, he has only given a strong impetus to unilateralism through a nationalism that is claiming American identity, with more emotional than rational responses to external challenges, using American exceptionalism to justify the American disengagement from the liberal international order. In fact, America's national interests have not changed, what has changed with Trump is the perception of the environment and thus the way to secure those same interests, ultimately deepening the crisis of the Western dominance at the international arena.

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