

The Connection Between Neoliberal Globalisation and Authoritarian Populism in the US

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Abstract: This study delves into the growth trajectory of authoritarian populism in the United States, focusing on its surge during the Trump administration. By dissecting the phenomenon from three different perspectives - political, economic and cultural - the paper provides a holistic understanding of its overall impact on the American landscape. The paper not only highlights the impact of this wave of populism, but also explores possible future strategies and measures that the US government may adopt in response. Furthermore, this study extends its utility beyond the borders of the United States. The insights and recommendations presented in this paper can serve as an important blueprint in an era where populist sentiments are becoming increasingly prevalent across the globe. Countries around the world can develop strategies to mitigate potential threats and challenges as they grapple with similar populist tendencies. In essence, this study can serve as both a diagnostic tool for understanding the extent of the rise of authoritarian populism in the United States and as a guide for countries around the world aiming to navigate and respond to such political currents.

Keywords: Authoritarian populism, United States, Trump administration, Political impact, Economic impact, Cultural impact, Future coping strategies, Global traction.

1. Introduction

A definition of authoritarian populism can be described as a political ideology whose beliefs include cynicism about human rights, hostility to the state, opposition to immigration, and a passion for strong defence and foreign policy. (Dictionary, 2016) And indeed, the discussion of authoritarian populism never ceases, because the definition between populism and democracy is very close. Indeed, when a country is allowed a degree of competition, but is restricted in terms of political freedom, then the probability is that the country will follow the path of populism. (Liu,2020) However, this conclusion is not entirely correct, even though there are countries that restrict a certain amount of political freedom and still do not have populism, such as Russia and China, whereas in the United States, which is currently multi-party and politically very liberal, populism has emerged. Therefore, the birth of populism cannot be attributed entirely to politics, but also to economic reasons. As the world enters a global economy, especially in developed countries and regions, more and more jobs require more specialised knowledge or lower labour costs. This has undoubtedly had the greatest impact on ordinary people with lower qualifications, and as more and more jobs for ordinary people have been taken by the elite or by immigrants who require less labour, there has been a great resistance to the elite and to immigrants.(Judis, 2016) And when the general population reaches a certain level of hatred towards the elite and foreign immigrants, the emergence of a leader whose political aspirations are anti-elite and anti-immigrant creates a frenzy of admiration, which is authoritarian populism. The irony is that populism emerges as a hatred of the elite, but authoritarian populism instead promotes an elite as a leader. This has also made authoritarian populism seen by many as a tool to consolidate the position of the rulers. When the majority of the population supports authoritarian populism, a leader who makes a relevant statement of support, or a corresponding policy, will enjoy the

dividends of popular support, despite being an elite himself, or despite his total disagreement with the views propagated by populism. In today's world, this phenomenon is particularly prominent in American society, where populism has gradually taken shape since the financial crisis and economic globalisation in 2008, as the impact of the financial crisis and the US policy of absorbing large numbers of immigrants, coupled with the globalisation of the economy, has led to the exodus of manufacturing industries from the US, leaving a large number of former American nationals unemployed or with reduced incomes. In this political and economic context, populism in the US has grown rapidly. A large number of Americans have become supporters of populism, seeking what is called true democracy: "the will of the people". During Donald Trump's campaign for the US presidency, he expressed this concept casually, declaring, "The only thing that matters is the unity of the people, because nobody else means anything." This statement is a perfect illustration of populism, which cares only about the people, and only the people, and by the people they do not include everyone, excluding the "enemies of the people", who may be specified in various ways: foreigners, the media, minorities, financiers, etc. (Palmer, 2019) And Donald Trump was also surprisingly elected President of the United States. This is undoubtedly enjoying the dividends of populism, as the businessman by birth is not even a purely political figure, but because of his rhetoric, the American public, which is deeply influenced by populism, is undoubtedly more convinced that Trump is the leader who can lead them out of their hard lives. And following his success, the authoritarian populist movement in the United States reached its peak in American history and was even able to influence the political and economic shape of the country. This paper will analyse the connection between neoliberal globalisation and authoritarian populism, and discuss the reasons why authoritarian populism has been able to grow and develop rapidly in the United States. First, the paper will discuss the political, economic and

cultural characteristics of the United States and analyse how the emergence and development of neoliberal globalisation has affected the American political economy and the authoritarian populism that has emerged nowadays. The second focuses on some US political policies on anti-immigration and economic policies against globalisation under Trump, how these policies have contributed significantly to the development of authoritarian populism in the US, and analyses how these policies are related to neoliberal globalisation. Finally, how the US should respond to the effects of authoritarian populism. This paper also argues that while populism is not entirely harmful, and that it guarantees a degree of political freedom, but authoritarian populism can have a negative impact on a country, not only by limiting political freedom, but also by exacerbating racial and class tensions.

2. Literature Overview

2.1. How neoliberal globalisation affects the US political, economy and authoritarian populism

The emergence of neoliberal theory dates back to the 1930s during the Great Depression, but at the time some argued that the state should step in to intervene in the market, while others argued for keeping the classical liberal market completely free. After World War II, when the global economy needed to recover, the latter theory became more generalised as neoliberalism. Marxist economic geographer David Harvey argues that the rise of neoliberal policies in the US occurred during the energy crisis of the 1970s. In the aftermath of the energy crisis, there was greater support in American society for the development of market liberalisation and opposition to interference by state forces. The post-Cold War period saw the advent of a period of neoliberal globalisation in which US policy makers hoped that neoliberal globalisation would accelerate the consolidation of US world dominance after the loss of Soviet checks and balances. The core economic structure of this period was deindustrialisation, strengthening the financial sector and the power of capital to direct US companies to move industry and manufacturing into other countries, and to direct US capital in for control. (Gills, 2000) The core political structure of the US in the period of neoliberal globalisation, on the other hand, was the opening of borders and the active integration of all races and the use of low-barrier immigration policies to attract talent. (Gerstle, 2021) Neoliberal globalisation promotes self-help, the ability to solve one's own problems and the ability of markets to regulate themselves without human or state intervention. While on the international market, US assets have grown exponentially, on US , the increasing maturity of the globalisation process has led to the de-industrialisation of the US and the completion of manufacturing, which has led to a massive increase in the cost of living for the American population, but wage increases are falling. The first key trend since 1979 has been the historically slow growth in real wages. In 2017, middle-income workers earned just 16.8% more than their counterparts almost 40 years ago. This equates to an inflation-adjusted annualised growth rate of just 0.4% over 38 years. Real wage growth was even slower for lower-paid workers (10th percentile): 8.9 per cent over 38 years, an annualised growth rate of 0.2 per cent. (Schmitt, Gould, Bivens, 2018) This had no impact on the financial elite of Wall Street. The political context of national integration and open

immigration policies created a large number of unemployed, but the impact of neoliberal globalisation on welfare policies prevented the unemployed from receiving the economic benefits they had previously received, resulting in a significant number of homeless people and a destabilising effect on the social order (Leblang and Peters, 2022). According to statistics, the foreign-born population in the United States reached a record 44.8 million in 2018. Immigrants now make up 13.7% of the US population, almost three times as many as in 1970 (4.8%) (Budiman, 2020). And culture shock also contributed to the social unrest in the US due to the wide cultural differences between races. And against these backdrops, populism in the United States was becoming more vocal among the general public and was supported by a growing number of American citizens. US political and economic policy under Trump in relation to authoritarian populism and neoliberal globalisation. Trump, as a representative of the right-wing faction in the United States, has strongly expressed his resistance to globalisation during his campaign, and Trump and his team believe that those living in depressed industrial areas have lost their jobs because of globalisation. Globalisation has proved to be hugely destructive and has left workers in industrial areas in a precarious situation (Kellner, 2017). In the pre-campaign period, the politically correct rhetoric of American society was about respecting minorities and valuing women. Trump, on the other hand, labelled himself as a racist as well as a sexist, which gave him an anti-political correctness persona, while there was great resistance in the minds of the general public in the United States to these political ideas arising from neoliberal globalisation, as polls before the 2016 election showed that the majority of voters in the United States were very hostile to political correctness. Fairleigh A Dickinson University poll in October 2015 found that 68% of Americans considered political correctness a 'big problem' in society, while a Quinnipiac University poll found that 51% of respondents considered political correctness to be a bigger problem than prejudice. In contrast to the beginnings of globalisation 40 years ago, the current public is not satisfied with the idea of greater racial integration. Following Trump's election, while his emphasis on deregulation and privatisation is certainly in line with neoliberal ideology, his critical stance on immigration and so-called free trade agreements also contrasts with the neoliberal tendency towards anti-protectionism, open borders and unfettered competition. Trump has abandoned neoliberal free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership in an effort to "renegotiate" the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in a way that might protect American workers. This format is summed up by the term 'America First'. Not surprisingly, millions of Americans have embraced this position. Indeed, Trump has been hailed by his supporters as a patriot who challenges globalist (neoliberal) elites that threaten American sovereignty and the interests of the American people. For example, in June 2016, Trump said that the problems facing American workers were "the result of a leadership that worships globalism over Americanism Our politicians have denied people the means to earn a living and provide for their families", when in reality, ironically, his economic policy-making in terms of lowering taxes and reducing welfare spending has undoubtedly benefited the elite. (Finley , Esposito, 2019) In fact, the anti-globalisation policies enacted during the Trump years, such as raising tariffs on Chinese goods, revising NAFTA and lowering corporate taxes and

reducing health care spending, have allowed the American people's wages to increase faster than inflation during the Trump administration. After adjusting for inflation, the average weekly earnings of all workers increased by 8.7%. The international trade deficit, which Trump promised to reduce, rose. 2020 saw the highest US trade deficit in goods and services since 2008, up 40.5% from 2016. Corporate after-tax profits rose and the stock market hit new highs. The S&P 500 index rises 67.8%. However, the unemployment rate rose by 1.6 percentage points to 6.3%. The number of people lacking health insurance rose by 3 million. (Kiely et al., 2021) And his political policies against neoliberal globalisation, such as the Muslim ban and raising the immigration threshold, have had great success in reducing legal immigration. By November 2020, the Trump administration had reduced the number of green cards issued to people abroad by at least 418,453 and the number of non-immigrant visas by at least 11,178,668 between his first term and November 2020. (Nowrasteh, 2021) And the Muslim ban (also known as Executive Order 13769) reduced the number of refugees admitted to the US to 50,000 in 2017, with over 700 travellers detained and as many as 60,000 visas "temporarily revoked".

2.2. Respond to the effects of authoritarian populism

To curb the growth of authoritarian populism in the United States, it is politically necessary first to avoid popular distrust of government, where fifty years ago nearly three quarters of Americans trusted the federal government; this figure has fallen to less than 25%. In the first year of the Trump administration, this decline continues. The second thing to avoid is a government that makes policy decisions without considering the will of its citizens, which will cause more young people to quit voting. While approximately 70 percent of the Silent and Baby Boomer generations and a little over 60 percent of Generation X voted in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, just under 50 percent of Millennials voted. (Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, 2018) Economically, to reduce the disparity in wealth and income between people, a study of CEO pay at the top 350 US companies found that such pay had increased by 997% since 1978; the average CEO was paid \$16.3 million, 303 times the annual pay of the average employee, which rose from 20 to 1 in 1965 to 87 to 1 in the mid-1990s. The share of pre-tax income going to the richest Americans exceeded the income inequality of the post-1910 Gilded Age and matched the peak of inequality in the late 1920s. (Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, 2018) But Trump has not actually done this; instead he has lowered corporate tax rates and reduced spending on Medicare, which has exacerbated the wealth gap. As Trump's promotion of "white supremacy" has deepened racial tensions in the United States, it is culturally important to promote racial equality and to increase awareness of the multiracial nature of the United States, where most minorities have lived since birth, in order to combat authoritarian populism. (Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, 2018)

3. Discussions

3.1. How neoliberal globalisation affects the US political, economy and authoritarian populism

As mentioned above, neoliberal globalisation promotes self-help, the ability to solve one's own problems and the

ability of the market to regulate itself without human or state intervention. But this is undoubtedly a blow to the ordinary people, because in the self-regulation of the market there are inevitable imbalances and excessive disparities in the distribution of wealth, and while the elite with their original accumulation can cope with the impact of the crisis on the market with the help of capital, the ordinary people are not so comfortable in coping with some financial crisis, and if at this moment the state still chooses not to intervene and lets the market regulate itself. If the state chose not to intervene and let the market regulate itself, it would undoubtedly lead to a large number of people going bankrupt or even becoming homeless. And for the inhabitants of America's industrial areas, the process of globalisation has cost them their jobs. This was a good place for authoritarian populism to start and develop. Therefore, although neoliberal globalisation has to a certain extent strengthened the position of the US as the world's economic hegemon, and has even helped many developing countries, the government still needs to improve the excessive pursuit of market freedom, anti-intervention and the excessive speed of globalisation, such as intervening in the market in response to the crisis, and regulating the speed of globalisation to slow down some industries and manufacturing outflows. This is a way of modifying the neoliberal philosophy while ensuring globalisation, and also responding to the development of authoritarian populism. And although the process of globalisation has reduced the annual income growth rate of workers, it will raise the awareness of the American public of the importance of education and increase the education rate of the next generation, as the exodus of traditional industry and manufacturing, the rapid growth of the US financial sector and the technology sector, will provide the US with more professionals in high-end industries when the American public places a high value on the education of future generations. According to surveys, in 2020, approximately 37.9% of the US population aged 25 and over will have graduated from a university or other institution of higher education. This is a significant increase from 1960, when only 7.7% of the US population graduated from college. (Duffin, 2018)

3.2. US political and economic policy under Trump in relation to authoritarian populism and neoliberal globalisation

It is undeniable that Trump's economic policies as a businessman have been integral to energising the US economy. But in reality the series of economic bills he has enacted are more beneficial to the American elite, and although his followers see him as a saviour, in reality it is the wealthy that Trump continues to help after donning the mantle of a populist supporter. In terms of economic policy, the tax relief enacted immediately after he took office, which, among other things, reduced the corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21%. But this policy is completely at odds with his campaign speeches, claiming that "the people come first" but in fact abandoning the middle and working classes. And he also reduced spending on national health care, which caused the unemployment rate, which he had previously reduced during the covid-19 period, to skyrocket, as Thorbecke put it: "In the final year of the Trump presidency, unemployment reached a 50-year low of 3.5% in February. The coronavirus pandemic soon hit the economy hard, forcing businesses to close across the country, and unemployment shot up to 14.7

per cent in April. By last month, it had fallen back to 6.7 per cent, but was still higher than the 4.8 per cent level when Trump took office in 2016. " And the international trade war with China over tariffs also ended in a defeat for the US, with a 2019 report by Moody's Analytics estimating that the trade war has cost the US economy around 300,000 jobs. A study released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in May 2020 found that the trade war reduced US investment growth by 0.3 percentage points by the end of 2019, with a further 1.6 percentage point reduction in investment growth expected by the end of 2020. In addition, the study said that US companies lost about US\$1.7 trillion in equity value as a result of the trade war with China. (Thorbecke, 2021) These figures show that while Trump is doing as much as he can to fulfil his promise to oppose neoliberal globalisation, in reality when he actually starts to resist it, the public realises that all is not well and that the losses from counter-globalisation far outweigh the losses from going along with it. But Trump doesn't actually care about these effects, it just needs to enact these bills to cement his image in the minds of the population as a supporter of authoritarian populism. For neither the trade wars waged against globalisation nor the reduction in government spending on health care will have any effect on himself or the wealthy as a whole, but only on the middle and working classes, which ironically are almost all of his supporters. On the political front, the Trump administration has insisted on deporting illegal immigrants and lowering the number of legal immigrants, the Trump administration has done the latter but not the former. Due to partisanship and bureaucratic corruption, the cooperation between the states and the federal government is not as close as it was under the Obama administration, which has led to the Trump administration being able to deport illegal immigrants at the border who have not yet entered the country, but not to arrest and deport those who are already in the country, which has led to the number of illegal immigrants deported in 2020 reaching a record low in recent years. (Nowrasteh, 2018) And following the Trump administration's Muslim ban, it was not only refugees who were deported and denied entry that were harmed, but also Muslims who live in the United States or are already U.S. citizens, with primary care visits and stress diagnoses among individuals from Muslim-majority countries on the rise prior to the ban, according to researchers. However, in the year following the ban, there were approximately 101 missed primary care appointments, which exceeded the expectations of people from Muslim-majority countries not mentioned in the ban. Individuals from countries targeted by the ban also made approximately 232 more emergency department visits than expected. (Greenwood, 2021) But these policies, like economic policies, do not affect the elite led by Trump, who has kept his promise to reduce foreign ethnicity, but he has ignored those minorities who have been living in the US for many years and who are also the American masses, and the racial tensions inspired by these policies have made American society more and more volatile, with various shootings in recent years, and between whites and other racial groups. The conflict between whites and other racial groups has become deeper and deeper, and even a number of whites have been threatened with death, and these same people will only arise among the middle and working classes. But Trump's supporters are as supportive of authoritarian populism as ever and support Trump. All these phenomena can show that the pursuit of opposition to economic globalisation and resistance to minorities and

foreigners will not make people's lives better, but will instead be used by elites such as the Trump-dominated ones for their own greater benefit.

3.3. Respond to the effects of authoritarian populism

As stated above, the political response to the effects of authoritarian populism is to reduce the public's distrust of government and the government's approach to decreeing without taking into account the wishes of citizens, but in practice this is not enough to counter the effects, as the current American political system has gradually moved in a polarised direction. Whereas in the past, a common complaint about American democracy was that there was little difference in the policy positions of the leading candidates, suggesting a lack of firm principles among the political parties, there is now an increasing convergence in their respective policy positions, and the differences between the two parties' positions on major policy issues are expanding. And the reasons behind this are not just different interest-driven, but also extreme gerrymandering and unlimited spending of election funds. (Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, 2018) In response to this situation, it is important to ensure a level playing field where voters can express their views on various political issues such as race and gender issues without any interest at stake. With fewer constituencies and less funding for elections, it is possible to get more people to vote in elections and slowly restore trust in government. As stated above, the political response to the effects of authoritarian populism is to reduce the public's distrust of government and the government's approach to decreeing without taking into account the wishes of citizens, but in practice this is not enough to counter the effects, as the current American political system has gradually moved in a polarised direction. Whereas in the past, a common complaint about American democracy was that there was little difference in the policy positions of the leading candidates, suggesting a lack of firm principles among the political parties, there is now an increasing convergence in their respective policy positions, and the differences between the two parties' positions on major policy issues are expanding. And the reasons behind this are not just different interest-driven, but also extreme gerrymandering and unlimited spending of election funds. (Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, 2018) In response to this situation, it is important to ensure a level playing field where voters can express their views on various political issues such as race and gender issues without any interest at stake. With fewer constituencies and less funding for elections it is possible to get more people to vote in elections and slowly restore trust in government. Economically, the most direct way to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor is to raise taxes on the rich and adjust the maximum and minimum wage, and to establish a comprehensive welfare system, including housing, education and health care, in order to deal with authoritarian populism to some extent in the economic system. Culturally, the concept of national integration and equality for all should be introduced into the primary education system so that the next generation has a sense of equality in their minds from an early age. And to encourage minority elites to speak out in society so that minorities are not hostile to all white Americans.

4. Conclusion

Neoliberal theory in today's definition is not entirely positive, and neoliberal globalization is not a very correct direction of the globalization process, and this article in the analysis of the current social situation environment in the United States, combined with the political and economic system of the United States to come up with in line with the trend of globalization development, as far as possible to reduce the impact of neoliberal theory, in the market crisis moment the state to intervene, not to let the market The state should intervene in times of market crises to prevent the market from developing completely freely. When dealing with the influence of authoritarian populism, it is important to adjust the economic gap between the rich and the poor and to improve the welfare system. Politically, it is important to provide an equal and free electoral environment, to increase the enthusiasm of the people to vote and to restore their trust in the government. Culturally, it is important to encourage the integration of multiple races on an equal and voluntary basis, and to reduce hatred between races. And for the people themselves, strengthen their concrete knowledge of globalisation, stop rejecting the process of globalisation of the world in its entirety, and likewise maintain a sceptical mindset towards the electorate, rather than just promoting it.

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