

US foreign policy in the years of the Trump presidency (2016 to 2020) as a manifestation of regionalising world politics

By

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Abstract

Trump's coming to power in the US has brought about quite serious changes in the country's domestic and foreign policy and, moreover, in global politics and the economy. These changes are not accidental because they have been supported by many political forces and a large part of the US population. Trump's policy reflects the deep crisis of the globalisation policy pursued by the Western elite of MNCs and international financial capital. At the same time, Trump offered the US a way out of the current systemic crisis by reorienting the economy to revive domestic production, and to bilateral relations in foreign policy while refusing to support global political and economic organisations at the expense of the US. In this context, the foreign policy challenges that were critical to this policy were to limit China's economic

influence and to withdraw the US from globalist economic projects. In its entirety, Trump's performance in terms of achieving his stated objectives can be said to have been satisfactorily successful. But the short time span of his presidency (4 years), and the opposition of the US globalist elite prevented the continuation of this foreign policy course and led to its winding down.

Keywords: Foreign policy, US, Trump, Trumpism, globalisation, China, EU, WTO, geopolitics

Introduction

By 2016, the globalists had failed to win the wars they had waged. Their resources for wars were being depleted too quickly. The inflated financial bubble of the stock market was demanding real rewards at the same time as the costs of the wars. Victory began to drift away from them, first in their failure in Ukraine, and then in Syria. Hence, their particular dislike of Russia to the point of hatred has been arisen: in both cases, the globalists were blocked by Russia. But the reasons for their defeat go deeper than that. The globalists underestimated the power of nation states.

What Trump has done in changing US domestic and foreign policy could be called an attempt at an intra-imperialist revolution. In other words, the US president interrupted a policy of globalisation that had been pursued for years by US establishment and business. Globalisation refers to the policy led by MNCs and big banks to establish direct power over the countries the globalists want. Since a large part of the economic-political elites in the West supported this policy, it can rightly be called Western globalisation. Trump has ended this policy by seeking to concentrate monetary and material resources on US territory. The media show events in the US as a struggle between Trump and the 'Democrats'. But both Trump and the US Democratic Party (DP) express the interests of large groups of North American and global business.

Materials and methods

The paper uses a socio-economic approach to examine Trump's foreign policy as it deals with the economic underpinnings of his policies and the countering to the globalist project at the international level. The problematic method is used to explore the contradictions in the vision of foreign policy strategy between Trump and the Trumpists on the one hand, and the globalists on the other. Analytically, the method has been used in examining foreign policy directions, namely in relation to terrorist organisations, to waging trade wars, and in understanding national interests. Statistical materials were also used.

Results

So what did Trump offer on the international agenda that helped make him president? He declared the need to bring industry back to the USA, to stop the flow of illegal migration, to stop costly and useless wars, and to limit China's influence in the world economy. In essence, Trump has attempted to recreate the nation-state in the US that was largely lost in Western globalisation, to give back to national capital and parts of the people the lost rights to their state. His domestic agenda proved to be inseparable from his foreign agenda. The return of production to the US has also become a major foreign policy issue, as it has resulted in a confrontation with China.

Rather, the globalists came to the conclusion that they were losing the US as the main instrument of their policy. Senator Lindsey Graham, a supporter of the globalist policy, noted that "Pentagon officials ... reminded the President about oil to convince him to send troops back to Syria" [12]. Jerrod Lauber, in his article for The Hill, justified this view by saying that "the Washington establishment does not want to leave Syria, and it has nothing to do with oil. The American elite do not want to live in a world in which the US does not even try to run the show" [12, Trump must free himself from prejudice]. Nevertheless, being true to his promises, Trump has withdrawn some US troops from Syria, which the globalists have put him at fault [22].

Trump's strategy in foreign policy can be defined as a strategy of assured domination. In practice, it manifests itself as a situational response, i.e. "when a real threat from a region arises, only then should the US think about responding. This does not necessarily involve sending ground troops. U.S. intelligence capabilities allow Washington to monitor the situation from a distance and strike from a safe distance if it possesses an appropriate legal authority. [12]. The use of "one-off special operations" such as eliminating the ISIS ringleader, eliminating Iranian General Suleimani, and bombing Syria reflect this strategy [12]. The Trump administration has not proposed anything qualitatively new in terms of the use of military force. But the singularity of U.S. strategy lies therein in the current geopolitical environment. At the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, Trump is repeating military and political strategies of a century and half a century ago. Its essence remains the same: achieving domination. It should be understood that domination is the ability of one of the opposing sides to achieve its goal at any time, despite the efforts of another side to counter it, for example, "domination of the sea", "domination of the air", etc. As Trump himself put it, they can always come back and "strike a decisive blow" [8].

In other words, Trump was striking at a key part of globalist policy - the waging of local wars. Various statements by Trump have appeared in the media that he intends to stop waging wars abroad and feeding the MIC [11; 13]. On the other hand, he signs a huge military budget. Experts speak of a policy of war "by proxy" [15]. But it is an old strategy implemented back in the Great Britain when it showed its effectiveness with the use of the latest weapons at those times. It was known as "gunboat diplomacy" in the 19th century and has been tested repeatedly in Latin America and other states in the 20th century, but under different names. In the field of geopolitics, A. Mahan also founded the strategy of maritime domination as the basis of world domination (5). He has also underlined that the US needs a navy to dominate the world. By the end of the nineteenth century, the world was divided among the colonial empires of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Spain. For the United States, according to Mahan, the way to gain supremacy in the oceanic trade routes remained in this world, and the way had been followed up. After the Second World War, the foreign policy strategy became neo-Atlanticism, i.e. the same policy of world domination.

But after the collapse of the USSR, most analysts assure readers that most of the Western elite had developed a sense of victory and had shifted from a policy of domination to one of asserting direct power in the world. This trend in geopolitics was dubbed 'globalization' and its proponents came to be known as 'globalists'. Following the current political order, Fukuyama justified the victory of liberalism in his concept of the End of History [14]. The destruction of Yugoslavia showed the globalists that there is no more power in the world capable of stopping them even in the most blatant aggressions. "A new order was established in the world with one superpower on the scene," BBC journalist N. Bryant wrote on the

occasion, "The speed with which the US and its allies won the first Gulf War in 1991 helped to banish the ghosts of Vietnam" [1]. In the US, medals were handed out for winning the Cold War. As a result, "by December 31, 1999, the claim that the twentieth century was the century of America, sounded like an axiom" [1]. And all this played into the hands of the globalist elite. After the last and no longer unconditional victory in Libya, the globalists "stumbled" in Syria and Ukraine. Their objectives were not achieved and all attempts to reverse the status quo were unsuccessful. As fate would have it, Russia stood in the way of the globalists on both occasions. But it was logical, because Russia continued to be the only military obstacle to their world domination, and therefore one of the targets for the globalists. It seems that the globalists realised the limitations of their forces, and sought to solve several important problems as quickly as possible in order to further secure resources for themselves. Time was playing against them. Time was taking up resources because the globalists were wasting their energies on achieving power over the world without properly replenishing them. Only full power like creating a world government could save their project. But the national states stood in their way, with Russia at the forefront.

Discussion

By the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century it had become apparent that the industries taken out of the US and Europe by the globalist elite were developing China, the US military support was providing a quiet life for Europeans in the EU and the US themselves were de-industrialising and impoverishing their population. Bryant wrote that "the Bush administration's 'war on terrorism', i.e. the endless armed conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, has sucked the country dry of blood and resources". [1] But the globalists demanded from their North American metropolis to push a little harder to invest in a few more wars, and then to rest on their laurels of victory, when the citizens of the USA would get their share of the power obtained by the globalists in the form of "world government" and "humanitarian interventions". This strategy was clearly seen in the policies of B. Clinton, D. Bush, especially B. Obama, and in H. Clinton's election campaign. Trump's emergence was therefore a natural consequence of the impoverishment of the US. Whether Trump would have won if he had been less defiant and brash (as his opponents believe) is a secondary question. Most importantly, Trump reflected the expressed and implicit sentiments of a large section of the North American people and all of national business. "The rebellion of the industrial Midwest ... brought Trump to the White House", Bryant wrote on the subject [1]. It is also an endorsement of parts of the interior and southern states [6, ...The states have been identified]. Supporters of Trump's policies defend the correctness of the US president's decisions, and push him to continue his policies. Nevertheless, Trump has not abandoned the usual way in which US foreign policy deals with issues by force. Analysts credit him with defeating ISIS [22].

Next, Trump has set about limiting the dominance of the global organisations WTO and IMF. And the IMF has already started counting the losses: "Trump has launched trade wars with all the key US partners since he came to power: our neighbours in North America, the European Union and China had felt it. Those wars have already cost \$700 billion for the world..." [3].

Trump's next step was to move to a bilateral relationship. And, it must be said, it is a win-win solution. Bilateral relations form the basis of all international relations. Trump is getting rid of all the interfering superstructures in the form of globalist organisations, and is embarking on a new system of economic relations. "Trump prefers bilateral agreements and

the language of sanctions and duties," an article on the global trade crisis argues [2.] On 24 September, the US and South Korea signed a new free trade agreement, repealing the 2012 agreement; in January 2020, the US and China signed the first part of a bilateral trade agreement; in December 2019, a bilateral trade pact was concluded with Japan. According to Vietnamese researchers, Trump followed the same strategy in diplomacy towards Vietnam, which was recognized as a "significant force in the region" and the importance of US-Vietnam ties "in the field of defence and security" had been proven [7, P. 7]. Also, Vietnam was singled out as the centre of power within ASEAN, as "Vietnam, along with ASEAN, is assigned a "central" role in the US strategy at this stage" [7 P. 6]. In this case, the U.S. desire to limit China's influence in the region is obvious.

Globalists are worried that "the rules by which the world has traded for the last 25 years are no longer valid" [3]. And they lament that since December 2019, "the US has deprived the World Trade Organisation (WTO) of its primary function as an arbiter of trade disputes" [2]. In Europe, Cecilia Malmström, EU trade commissioner since 2014, expressed similar regrets and explained the EU's vision of the situation that "the law of the jungle, and the law of the strongest, will reign. We do not want to live in such a world" [2]. The globalists were forced to retreat on this issue as well. The losers are the "poorest countries", the author declares [2]. But they have never benefited from any system of world trade. The beneficiaries have always been the creators of the next system.

"Everything is ready for chaos in world trade in goods and services, which exceeds \$25 trillion a year," A.Kalmykov goes on to say in his article "In World Trade" [2]. It is really about changing the rules of world trade [21]. Claims that Trump is destroying world trade are groundless. Only after World War II, the US systematically destroyed it twice by creating the Bretton Woods system and then abandoning it by creating the stock market system. Trump was only changing the rules of the game on the right of the strongest. In this regard, the president has shifted US policy "towards a more nationally oriented trade policy built on the aggressive use of tariffs and harsh criticism of China, the European Union, and the WTO" [20].

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, a supporter of a trade war with China, said that "we should all wonder why so many WTO member countries believe that playing by the rules hurts economic growth". [2] This is typical protectionism. With all the power of the US state, Trump is protecting the US market. Trump's tax cuts and increased military spending are traditional for conservative Republicans.

Thus Trump has shown himself to be a genuine North American imperialist, for whom the US comes first and he sees the greatness of his country in the development of national business. Conservatives following Trump were convinced that the success of this policy would return the US to the forefront of industrial, scientific and technological development. For the world, the end of globalisation meant the end of some wars, but trends began to develop, not of globalisation, but of regionalisation. This is exemplified by the course taken by Turkish President Erdogan towards Syria and Libya, or the contradictions between European states over Libya. Overall, Trump's policies have shown that a unipolar world is unattainable and that the world has continued to slide towards a multipolar world. And it can be assumed that, in Trump's mind, the US was to take the lead in this new world.

Hence the next point of confrontation between Trump and the globalists is the change of the world trade system in favour of the US state. Speaking on behalf of national capital,

Trump stopped US involvement in global economic transoceanic projects, and set about the promised task of limiting China's economic power. "The Financial Times published maps showing that 2018 was the peak of China's influence in the world, when US dominance was limited to Central America, Colombia, Ecuador (as well as Guyana, Guiana and Suriname); and to Switzerland and the UK in Europe. But already in 2019, France and two African countries have fallen out of China's orbit [16].

The anti-Chinese policy has paid off. According to a Bloomberg analysis, by 2020, none of the Democrats "had even begun to talk about eliminating duties on Chinese goods, if they won" [3]. Ending the theft of intellectual property has become the most important demand from the US to China, regardless of the partisan and tactical preferences of US elites. However, the Chinese leadership refused to implement the kind of "structural reforms" that Trump was blamed for. And this obviously went beyond a trade war, and is more of a political demand to limit sovereignty. On economic issues, Trump has started pressuring China with economic threats, thereby raising the level of confrontation [19]. In the end, the parties came to some agreement. On 15 January 2020, the first phase of the US-China trade agreement was signed. The US State Department "called the signing of the first phase of the trade deal with China a great victory for the US", which "assumes that Beijing will increase imports from the US by at least \$200 billion over two years ... in exchange, the US will slightly reduce some duties, and will not impose additional measures on China" [9]. It appears that the US has not sacrificed anything but gained, true to its tactic in diplomacy of demanding concessions in exchange for a promise not to infringe on the other side's rights anymore. According to economic analysts, "Trump's massive increase in duties was a dramatic departure from the economic practices that the US has followed since World War II in its policy of reducing global trade barriers" [10]. As part of Trump's strategy, the economic restrictions he imposed on China had, in addition to shifting production to the US, a security aspect. In this regard, the "almost total ban on the government's use of Chinese drones", which, in addition to protecting its own market, was justified by fears of espionage, is illustrative. [20].

The globalists' policy is covered by the statement voiced by D. Bolton on the US strategy towards China which "for more than four decades was based on two main provisions": growth of domestic consumption, investments, policies subordinated to a "free" market, "deeper and deeper interconnections with global markets" and "broader recognition of international economic norms", which meant subordinating the Chinese economy to the requirements of a "Western-style" globalization in the interests, primarily, of US TNCs. And "the apotheosis of this assessment was China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001". [18].

Trump's successes in foreign policy are noted as highly visible, albeit incomplete. According to the article by M. Dimock and D. Gremlitsch, Trump "introduced in the international arena new and tough immigration restrictions, withdrew from several multilateral agreements, established closer ties with Israel and started a tit-for-tat trade dispute with China as part of "addressing the imbalance in America's economic relations with other countries" [17].

The fact that, "with the advent of Trump, the U.S. has moved to the rails of economic nationalism," as V. Vasiliev wrote about it, did not mean a change in the globalist American strategy [4]. But what is important is that nationalism, whether economic or political, is behind the nation-states themselves, and it is significant that in the stronghold of globalism, the US, the support of nation-state supporters has brought Trump to power. The globalists themselves have not changed anything in their own concept of neo-liberal globalisation in four years, nor

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have they proposed any projects or new ideas that could attract new supporters in the US and the EU.

Conclusions

Thus the confrontation between globalists and nationalists (as supporters of nation-states), which has spread around the world, has reached the shores of the USA. Claims that the era of nation-states is a thing of the past have no basis in fact. The contradictions between transnational and national capital in the US, previously an unshakable stronghold of globalist politics, have reached the political level [23]. On the whole, Trump's policies show that the trend of regionalisation has also manifested itself in the US, confirming the crisis of globalism as a policy and as a concept. Regionalism can manifest itself in different ways. For the most part, the proponents of this trend have focused on the concept of a multipolar world, and Trumpism in US foreign policy has been quite consistent with this international movement. In geopolitical terms, this means that the development of the world through the development of nation states is by no means a thing of the past, but is becoming increasingly clear as an alternative policy to globalism.

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