



Foreign Policy in the Trump Era: Populist Rhetoric and the United States Membership in NATO

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Article Info

Article history:

Received June 30, 2020

Revised July 21, 2020

Accepted August 4, 2020

Available online September 18, 2020

Cite:

Rahajeng, Laretna Pranadian. (2020). Foreign Policy in the Trump Era: Populist Rhetoric and the United States Membership in NATO. *Global-Local Interaction: Journal of International Relations*, 1(1).

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the impact of President Donald Trump's populist rhetoric on the United States foreign policy towards NATO. Issues regarding the United States membership in NATO surfaced through allegations made by Trump's presidential campaign that criticized and questioned the relevance of NATO for American interests. In the past, NATO was considered to be one of the most crucial alliances for the United States as its membership had constantly become an agenda for the United States foreign policy. Nonetheless, Trump's hostile attitude against NATO shown a significant departure from previous administrations. The results of this research have shown that the populist rhetoric was used as a powerful campaign strategy to gain votes in the presidential election. Specifically, this strategy exploited the public unrest among American people regarding the United States involvement in the international level. Additionally, the results also showed that the populist rhetoric was also used to advance the United States' interest to encouraged an institutional change within NATO in which other member countries must increase their contribution to the alliance.

Keywords: NATO, Populism, Trump, United States Foreign Policy

Introduction

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election marked the start of a new era in U.S. politics and government. For the first time in history, America was led by a president with no political or military background and no experience in government or the international political sphere. The controversy about Trump's nomination was greatly influenced by the populist rhetoric campaign in which he echoed, such as the jargon "Make America Great Again" and "America First". On the one hand, this narrative represents the inquietude of the Americans who are still trying to revive from the economic crisis and are getting fed up with America's long-term involvement in other countries' high-cost war. However, on the other hand, the spirit of the Trump campaign can also be understood as an indication of a significant change in the direction of American foreign policy, from being previously heavily involved in international affairs to become isolationist.

This populist rhetoric can be seen from one of Trump's criticisms towards NATO during the campaign period. Trump frames the relationship between America and NATO as a form of international cooperation, which is detrimental to the country and is suspected as one of the causes of the decline of America's glory in the international world. It was because the U.S. is claimed to provide too much security protection to NATO without receiving worthy material compensation. Furthermore, in various statements in the public and mass media, Trump seems to imply his readiness to withdraw America from its membership in NATO during his period if this alliance is proven to burden the interests of the country. The impact of this populism in American foreign policy will be the main issue for further study as a focus in this research.

Departing from the background that has been explained before, this research will subsequently be directed to answer the research question, which is: Why does Trump criticize NATO as part of populist rhetoric in his political campaign? This is important to be further investigated because the impact of populism in the dimension of foreign politics is still a less-explored phenomenon. Besides, Trump's rhetoric that questions the relevance of NATO brought contradictory approach from its predecessors, which the deviation needs to be investigating more deeply. From here, it is expected to be a more comprehensive picture of the correlation between populism and American foreign policy and Trump's interest that will be obtained from this way.

Populism

Populism is one of the critical dimensions in political science. The concept of populism can be interpreted in various ways. On the one hand, populists are often seen as defenders of the general public interest. However, on the other hand, populists are also often condemned as instigators of civil society. Populism can be defined as a political ideology that divides people into two opposing groups, namely "*the pure people*" who are often harmed by "*the corrupt elite*" (Mudde dan Kaltwasser, 2017). Departing from this division, the main agenda developed by populism is to realize a political and governmental system that is run according to the will of the people. The emergence of populism departs from the people unrest feeling over economic and social inequality, which is suspected to occur due to the negligence of the political elite. In line with this, the populist narratives tend to be following the spirit of community resistance against the elite to achieve equality and justice.

Fukuyama (2017) identified three distinctive characteristics that are often associated with the concept of populism. First, populism is in line with efforts to realize a set of public policies that cannot be continued in the long term. The intended policy generally including social policies such as price subsidies, significant pension funds, and free medical treatment policies. Promising policies that favour the welfare of the people are usually effective at gaining support from the community. However, generally, it will be challenging to implement continuously.

Secondly, Fukuyama (2017) considers that populism is also related to the definition of "*the people*", whose interests are claimed by the populists. Generally, populism only targets specific groups of people that claimed to be the real people. This group is generally exclusive according to the profession, economic strata, or specific racial backgrounds. Support from this mass-based subsequently became the basis for the political legitimacy of the populists.

Thirdly, populism can also be seen in the context of leadership style. According to Fukuyama (2017), populist leaders generally tend to form their fanaticism sentiments by presenting themselves as charismatic and independent authority figures, apart from certain institutions or political parties. Populist leaders will build a direct and close relationship with "*the people*" they claim to be represented by identifying themselves as representatives of the group.

As for the last few decades, populism has been seen to evolve as a new dimension in international politics that has contributed to creating new challenges for the international liberal order. According to Fukuyama (2017), this phenomenon was influenced by three factors, namely economic, political, and cultural. From the economic side, the populism movement is increasing because of economic globalization and free trade. Apart from the various positive impacts that are predicted to emerge from a country's participation in the international economic system, free trade also has its own negative impacts, particularly for the middle class who have difficulty in mobilizing the economic strata.

From the political side, Fukuyama (2017) saw that populism emerged as a critique of a liberal democratic system that often made governance more complex. Check and balance systems, although intended for something positive, often lead to stagnation in government, obstruct the approval of policies and regulations, and open up opportunities for the ruling minority to ratify policies that harm the lives of the majority. In other words, a liberal democratic system often produces ineffective and dysfunctional government.

From the cultural side, populism is influenced by identity construction. According to Fukuyama (2017), in a community system, the most vulnerable class is the middle class, which tends to feel not represented by the political system and cornered by the economic system. The lower-middle-class and the elite are often used as scapegoats that lose their status and identity in this society. By populism, middle-class anxiety over issues such as economic injustice, their fear of immigrants who could seize employment, and their anger at politicians who do not represent the interests of the vulnerable people are exploited through narration to take back the state from the hands of monopolizing opportunity and power.

Development of Populism in U.S. Politics

In American history, populism is not a new phenomenon. According to Kazin (2016), long before the emergence of Trump and his campaign's rhetoric, two populist traditions were developed in America. The first populist tradition emerged from those who showed their anger and criticism towards the corporate elite as well as their supporters in the government, which claimed to betray the interests and mandates of the people. These populists adopt the concept of "*the people*" based on class and tend to avoid associating themselves with particular ethnic or religious groups. Their rhetoric is based on the development of the concept of "*civic nationalism*" or the belief that all human beings are equal,

have the same right to live and obtain happiness, and believe in the importance of democratic governance and legitimized by the will of the people. In the 1890s, this tradition was represented by the People's Party movement, a third party that articulated the resistance of the general public to the dominance of money and group interests in the political system. This promoted-populism is aimed to defend industrial workers and professionals such as farmers and teachers whom claimed to be superior and constantly oppressed by elite interests.

Furthermore, according to Kazin (2016), the second populist tradition places white citizens as "the real Americans" and sees that both the upper-middle-elite and the lower-middle-black work together to suppress and threaten their interests. In other words, this tradition places the majority of white groups as victims in their relationship with the elite and minority groups. This race-based exclusive populism can be represented in the political party such as Workingmen's Party in the 1880s. Using the xenophobia approach, this populism tradition argued that the owners of capital from the elite class had been conspiring with politicians to bring in cheap wage workers from the East who would take the land of white middle-class people. This group subsequently urged Congress to ban the entry of immigrants from China and Japan, which was furthermore realized in the ratification of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

According to Kazin (2016), similar populist rhetoric was re-emerged in Trump's political stance. The same reasoning used by Trump in justifying hostility towards immigrants is considered not only to seize jobs from Americans but also seen as a cause of rampant crime in a safe and orderly America. In addition, Trump's populist rhetoric also carries a narrative about an international conspiracy that wants to rule the world and destroy America, and that American involvement in the international world will weaken the country's capacity to meet the interests of its citizens.

Trump's Populist Rhetoric and Criticism of NATO

In contemporary America, discussions on populism re-emerged along with current socio-political developments. Trump's emergence as a presidential candidate has reawakened nationalist and partisan sentiments in the American public. Besides being a controversial figure, Trump's campaign rhetoric is frankly bringing populist sentiment, referring to Fukuyama's (2017) explanation of populism that has been presented before. It can be seen that Trump's rhetoric, more or less, represents these three characteristics. During his political campaign, Trump positioned himself as someone who brought answers to the Americans' problems. He criticized government policies that did not favour the real Americans, or "the people". Trump also emphasized economic populism, including criticizing various American economic cooperation, which was considered detrimental to the country's economy. Besides, in terms of cultural populism, although not openly expressing support for particular ethnic movements, Trump in his rhetoric campaign often attacks African-Americans, Latin-Americans, and other minorities, and being inclusive of his white supremacists and Neo-Nazis sympathizers.

One of Trump's criticized and promoted issues in his rhetoric campaign was American membership in NATO. In various statements in the mass media and social media, Trump highlights how American membership in this alliance is another form of international cooperation that harms the American state and people. Generally, three main elements are representing the outline of Trump's criticism of NATO during the campaign period. The first element, Trump, claims that NATO is an alliance that has worn out (Benitez, 2019, 183). This statement was made during Trump's interview with ABC News in March 2016, where Trump stated that "*NATO is obsolete*" and believes that America does not need NATO "... *in its current form.*" NATO is considered obsolete because this alliance was formed and established as an instrument to overcome threats coming from the Soviet Union. However, as the Soviet Union is no longer exists, it can be said that NATO is no longer relevant (Benitez, 2019, 183). Therefore, Trump considers America's withdrawal from NATO and form new security alliances that are more relevant to the existing security threats.

The second element, Trump's criticized the burden-sharing polemic within NATO (Benitez, 2019, 184). Trump stated that NATO had burdened America financially because other member countries did not fulfil their obligations to participate in funding NATO activities. Trump claims that "... *Many NATO nations are not making payments, are not making what they're supposed to make*". Furthermore, Trump argued that America made too much financial contribution to NATO. Trump claims the high cost incurred by America due to the burden borne to cover the difference in the NATO budget because of the negligence of other members in paying budget contributions. In other words, Trump said that the high cost incurred by America to NATO was to cover the debts of other member states that were irresponsible in paying their obligations. From this, Trump subsequently issued a claim that NATO member countries had behaved unethically by exploiting and binding the United States in an



unjust pattern of cooperation. As a candidate for the presidential election, Trump stated his commitment to encouraging NATO member countries to be responsible for financing NATO's funding activity.

The third element, Trump, indicates that his government will be ready to withdraw America from membership in NATO (Benitez, 2019, 185). Reflecting on Trump's previous populist rhetoric, which claims that membership in NATO has burdened America financially, Trump promised that if he was elected president, America could possibly withdraw from NATO if membership proved to be harming the American economy. In a statement to the New York Times in July 2016, Trump claimed that *"if we cannot be properly reimbursed for the tremendous cost of our military protecting other countries... then yes, I would be absolutely prepared to tell those countries, 'Congratulations, you will be defending yourself.'"*

After Trump was elected to be president of the United States, it can be seen that the government's attitude towards NATO changed from the populist rhetoric carried by Trump during the campaign period. Indications that America will leave NATO are fading as the Trump administration's increasingly being traditional and in line with its predecessor's policies (Benitez, 2019, 186). In a press conference following his meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, Trump stated that *"I said it [NATO] was obsolete; it is no longer obsolete,"* and directly annulled his statement during the campaign period. This is reinforced by the government's release in 2018 related to the National Security Strategy. The United States reaffirmed NATO's position as one of the advantages that America has in its efforts to tackle competitors in the international world, and that governments under President Trump will continue to honour this commitment (White House, 2018, 2). However, Trump's criticism related to the issue of burden-sharing continues and strengthens. In a press conference after the release of NSS, Trump likens NATO member countries as delinquent. Trump stated that *"I would not allow member states to be delinquent in the payment while we guarantee their safety and are willing to fight wars for them. We have made clear that countries that are immensely wealthy should reimburse the United States for the cost of defending them"* (Hendry, 2017). From this, it can be seen that efforts to encourage NATO member countries to pay appropriate compensation continue to be maintained after Trump was elected to be president.

The Relevance of United States Membership in NATO

Trump's populist rhetoric that attacks NATO is significant if it is linked to the history of American membership in NATO. Formed in the Cold War era in 1949, currently, NATO is still one of the strongest security alliances in international history. This causes all American presidents from time to time, regardless of their political background from Democrats or Republicans, declare their commitment to maintaining the existence of the alliance (Benitez, 2019, 181). NATO is seen as one of the most critical elements in the history of American foreign policy. In the Cold War era, NATO became a framework for America and Europe to overcome threats from the Soviet Union and maintain peace stability between member states in order to prevent divisions such as in the era of World War II (Belkin, 2019, 2). Entering the 1990s, the role of NATO in international security has increased. Besides adding new member countries, NATO area of operation has also expanded outside each country's territory. This NATO intervention is justified as an effort to tackle new security threats such as terrorism, ethnic conflict, human rights violations, political instability, as well as the issue of nuclear and biological weapons (Belkin, 2019, 3). In other words, in this era, NATO began to adopt the role of world police and gave the authority to interfere in various security issues outside its jurisdiction. As in the 2000s, particularly after the September 11 terrorist attacks, this role was further strengthened by the support of NATO countries in the American war on terror policy in Afghanistan (Belkin, 2019, 4). In its development, the support of member states to America has more or less confirmed the relevance of NATO in American foreign policy. Not only does it provide benefits in terms of support for resources and military personnel, NATO's involvement also indirectly legitimizes American unilateral action in the eyes of the international world.

Polemic of Burden-Sharing Inequality in NATO

In Trump's populist rhetoric, the main issue in NATO is about financing NATO's military and security activities. Trump claims that America did not receive worthy compensation compared to the efforts made to maintain the security of European countries. In other words, Trump, in his rhetoric campaign, seems to place America as the primary source of NATO's budget. Trump's statement emerged from his misperception about financial schemes within NATO. As an international security

cooperation institution, NATO is run based on the principle of collective defence (Kottasova, 2017). It means that an attack on one or more NATO members will be perceived as an attack on all NATO members collectively. To be able to deal with threats like this, each NATO member country is required to build the country's military strength so that it is ready to face conflicts that come at any time. To ensure the readiness of the member states, NATO imposes a target for each country's military budget that at least reaches 2% of GDP. This is soft and recommended target with no sanctions for countries that do not achieve the target. NATO has a specific and operational budget that is collected through membership fees from member countries, but the amount far less compared to the military budget of each country. Furthermore, according to Kottasova (2017), NATO's operational budget in 2017 stands at \$ 1.4 billion, which a small amount compared to the total expenditure of member countries in the military sector that reaches \$ 921 billion each. In other words, Trump's claim that America's responsibility in NATO's financial burden cannot be fully justified because NATO's financial scheme does not seem like what Trump has perceived.

However, it is undeniable that in NATO, there is an unbalanced burden-sharing scheme, and the rhetoric of Trump's populism has more or less contributed to re-highlighting this polemic. The burden-sharing issue here refers to conditions where majority member countries do not meet the minimum target of 2% for their military budget. This is a problem when it is associated with the collective defence system adopted by NATO. In order for this system to run effectively and efficiently, each member country ideally fulfils its respective role by developing the country's military capabilities so that it can contribute maximally to the joint defence and security efforts at NATO. Nevertheless, an inequality occurs, where the military capabilities of certain countries are rapidly developed, while other countries are left behind.

This imbalance can be seen in the annual military budget report released by NATO in 2017. In this report, only six out of 28 NATO member countries have achieved the 2% of GDP military budget targeted, namely the United States, Britain, Greece, Poland, Romania, and Estonia (NATO, 2017, 3). Among the six countries, there is a significant gap in terms of the budget spent by other member states compared to the United States, which allocates more than 3.5% of GDP for military assistance. In comparison, Germany, as the country with the highest GDP in Europe, only allocates 1.2% of GDP to the military budget, far lower than America and under the NATO target (NATO, 2017, 3). This situation has led to an imbalance burden between member countries within NATO. Inequality here does not refer to the number of financial contributions paid by NATO member countries as perceived by Trump, but rather to the imbalance of the military capabilities of each member countries in dealing with security threats, which was unequal.

Trump was not the first to raise the issue of imbalance burden-sharing to the public sphere. In the era of the previous president, America also had several times expressed its objections to the burden-sharing scheme, which was considered unbalanced. In the Bush and Obama era, for example, the two presidents had also submitted arguments to encourage member states in NATO. At NATO conferences in 2006 and 2008, Bush stated his commitment to encouraging European countries to increase their security and defence investments (Wilkie, 2018). Later in Obama's period, this sentiment was reaffirmed. Obama even expressed his objections to the "free riders" and encouraged allied countries in Europe to increase its contribution in security and defence (Goldberg, 2016).

From this, it can be seen that America's objections towards burden-sharing polemic are a long-standing issue. What distinguishes Trump from his predecessors is his attitude, which tends to be more open and loud in criticizing this issue. During Bush and Obama's period, America tended to show bipartisan support for NATO membership, despite the burden-sharing polemic. However, in the Trump era, the burden-sharing polemic was very prominent and was associated with American perceptions about the relevance of NATO and the continuity of American membership in this alliance. It could be seen above that during the campaign, Trump indicated his readiness to withdraw from NATO if this alliance proved detrimental to the American economy. Although in its development Trump's attitude regarding the relevance of NATO has gradually moved in a more traditional direction and is in line with its predecessors, proven by the withstand of American membership in NATO, Trump's criticism of the burden-sharing scheme has also strengthened. After serving as president, U.S. foreign policy under Trump increasingly emphasized the agenda to urge NATO member countries to increase their military budget in line with NATO targets.

Populism as a New Dimension in U.S. Foreign Policy

In the history of American development, populism often emerges and becomes a political strategy at the domestic level. America is a nation that consists of various racial, religious, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Each of these groups interacts with each other, which prone to the high tension between them. This situation subsequently brought the narrative of populism in America to develop and gained masses, and also be used for obtaining votes. As for the current period, populism in America seems to be developed. Nowadays, populism can be seen not only as having a correlation with domestic politics but also relevantly can be seen as a new dimension in foreign policy. As the world becomes increasingly internationalized and connected after globalization, the identity of American society as a community facing identity challenges as a global world community. This situation, although on the one hand, has the potential to unfold new opportunities, also potentially raise its concerns, particularly those related to stability and economic interests and the construction of identity in the country.

At the same time, the intensity of American participation in international issues has also increased in this modern era. The status and purpose of the American nation to become the world leader, more or less, encouraged America to get involved in various realms and international issues. One of the most significant in terms of both intensity and impact is American involvement in war and military aggression in other countries. Apart from the pragmatic interests that are suspected to underlie American involvement in various armed conflicts, the main reason often used by the government to justify American participation in the spread of democracy and liberalization.

Throughout its development, this step was not apart from the negative impacts. War and military aggression are high-cost activities. American people, as taxpayers who contributed financially to these government activities, started to fed-up as their hard work was used by the government to interfere other countries' internal conflict. On the other hand, its domestic sector requires serious handling after the economic crisis and recession that affect the American economy. This condition is also exacerbated by the emergence of American middle-class unrest towards the influx of immigrants who potentially take over employment opportunities, which has declined in line with pressures in the economic sector. The government's negligence in overcoming instability in the country is seen as government failure in making policies, which subsequently brought a significant negative impact on the general public. As a result, public confidence in the political elite has declined, and people's criticism and anger towards the government has increased. The American public is demanding change and improvement of domestic problems, but the policies of the previous government, which tended to be internationalist and very active in the international world, caused ignorance of the American public. This can be seen for instance in a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2016, where the majority of Americans wanted the government to focus more on domestic issues rather than foreign policy issues, and 57% agreed that America should prioritize domestic problems rather than trying to interfere other countries' domestic problem (Drake dan Doherty, 2016).

Referring to this domestic situation, Trump's populist narrative is subsequently directed to exploit people's unrest towards American involvement in the international world. Jargon such as "America First" and "Make America Great Again" targeted discrepancy of public opinion towards American international activities, while reviving the spirit of rejection of globalization, immigration, and the spirit of anti-elite among the middle class (Löffmann, 2019, 119). This step not only had an impact on the domestic level with Trump's victory in the presidential election but also impacted American foreign policy. The author sees that Trump's populist narrative of NATO can be seen as a real representation of the dimension of populism in foreign policy. First, Trump framed membership in NATO as a form of failure of the political system. The previous government claimed to be negligent in letting allied countries use America. America is left trapped in harmful and high-cost international cooperation, while within the country, the American public still has to face the negative effects of the economic crisis. This shows how membership in NATO is framed as a political and economic issue to shape public opinion. America is perceived to be experiencing a setback caused by political elites who do not stand by the state and international actors and cooperation that harms America. Second, identifying NATO member states as threats also confirms the identification between "the people" and "the other" which are perceived as threats. By placing allies in NATO as enemies, Trump managed to revive protectionist and nationalist sentiments from the American middle class, while presenting himself as a figure who represented the interests of the American people (Wojczewski, 2020).

The American membership in NATO is a complex foreign policy commitment. This is because membership in NATO involves various strategic advantages that America can obtain from its

affiliations with member countries. However, by Trump's populist rhetoric, the authors see that this complex issue is reduced to a transactional relationship. Membership in NATO is seen as detrimental because America does not receive financial compensation from its involvement. This reduction, though not quite right, actually becomes very effective in selling Trump narratives to the public who do not understand the complexity of foreign political relations. By framing American membership in NATO as an economic threat, Trump managed to target the primary concern of the American community towards the involvement of the state in the international world, namely the loss for the domestic economy. NATO, like America's involvement in the Middle East war, is claimed to be spending state finance that could have been used to carry out domestic development, prosper the people, open up job opportunities, and overcome the negative effects of the economic crisis in previous years.

If Trump's criticism of NATO is examined and compared with the facts, it can be seen that certain aspects of the populist narrative tend to be misleading, manipulative, and ignore the various strategic benefits that America has gained from membership in NATO. Most of Trump's statements are groundless claims based on Trump's lack of understanding of the mechanism of cooperation within NATO. Moreover, Trump tends to override the strategic benefits obtained by America through its membership in NATO, both related to its function as deterrence and guarantor of legitimacy for American foreign policy in its efforts to achieve security objectives. Through the institutionalized cooperation in a series of agreements, twenty-eight NATO member countries are the countries with the most robust military capabilities in the world that will undoubtedly support U.S. military measures on international security issues (Belkin, 2019, 13). In addition, American membership in NATO also allows America to access military bases in strategic locations to enable easier and more efficient access to essential areas such as Africa and the Middle East (Belkin, 2019, 13). Generally, America's membership in NATO provided its strategic advantages for American political and security interests at the international level, and this was ignored in Trump's populist narratives during the campaign. These factors can then be assumed as factors of considerations affecting the changing direction of American foreign policy from Trump's rhetoric campaign. In his campaign, Trump showed indications that he would withdraw America out of NATO membership. However, after being elected as a president, his campaign promise met the international situation and NATO's significance on the continuation of American hegemony. Leaving NATO is not as easy as Trump voiced in the campaign, because apart from the burden-sharing issue, NATO still provides its benefits for America.

However, maintaining the demands on burden-sharing under the Trump period as president shows that this is a real issue that America is trying to realize. This inequality, if left unchecked, can not only harm America but also reduce NATO's efficiency as an institution of international cooperation. Sequaciously, if there is a threat to NATO, the burden-sharing scheme will allow each member country to make an equal contribution to overcome the threat. However, because of the inequality, the country with the highest military capability - in this case, America - will automatically contribute more in tackling the threat, because its ability to handle threats is far greater. This makes NATO's military defense capability indirectly relying on a single dominant force, which is not an ideal situation and creates its weak point in the constellation of NATO defense and security.

As previously explained, the demands of the American government related to burden-sharing have expressed since the era of President Bush and Obama. Nevertheless, the effort of the previous president cannot run effectively because of international political manners. In the Trump era, this obstacle was more or less successfully run through its populist rhetoric that positioned other member countries as a wolf in sheep's clothing towards America, which caused losses and setbacks of America (Wojczewski, 2020). In the context of NATO, this is done by framing the burden-sharing issue through populist narratives in order to revive people's unrest and anger towards NATO and its member countries. Trump's perspective on membership in NATO was then generally accepted as true, despite the inaccuracy that dominated his rhetoric campaign. From here, support from the American public then creates legitimacy for the American government to take a firmer attitude towards NATO members. Demands member states to increase their military budgets can continue to be put forward and prioritized in the American foreign policy agenda by arguing for the needs of the people in the country.

At the same time, Trump's rhetoric populism also creates an uncertain climate at the international level. Trump's attitude, which tends to be temperamental, makes his political steps often changeable and unpredictable. Therefore, Trump's statement of the U.S withdrawal from NATO if this alliance did not increase their contribution to the burden-sharing issue raised concerns among members (Kaufman, 2017:264). This is also supported by Trump's attitude, which openly withdraws America



from involvement in international cooperation such as the NAFTA, TPP, and the Paris Climate Agreement, which is claimed to harm American interests. Trump's extreme attitude in realizing the spirit of America First is more or less showing his commitment to abandon international agreements that are considered detrimental to America (Löfflmann, 2019, 121). Trump's step is also proof, and reminder for NATO member states that America in Trump's time has a serious commitment to realize the rhetoric of its campaign. In other words, Trump's populist rhetoric can also be understood as a strategic step taken by the American government to encourage the realization of institutional changes within NATO, namely a more equitable burden-sharing scheme.

In its development, it can be seen that the burden-sharing issue is starting to get more serious attention among member countries. A change in terms of the contribution of member states to NATO's military capabilities started to begin. In President Trump's administration, NATO has affirmed its commitment and declared new targets for member states to make its military budget more than 2% of GDP by 2024 - a movement that has been implemented efficiently because 16 of the 29 member states are predicted to meet the target by 2024 (Maza, 2019). However, whether this positive transformation can then be identified as a direct impact of Trump's populist rhetoric should be further investigated. Nonetheless, apart from that, this development has complimented Trump's populist narrative by placing him as a figure who has contributed to triggering positive changes in NATO. This is because Trump's populist rhetoric cannot be ignored and has contributed to highlighting the burden-sharing imbalance as a critical issue that obtained attention from the American public and the international world.

Conclusion

Trump's populist rhetoric shows an interesting development in American foreign policy today. The narrative of populism, which initially tended to be limited to the domestic sphere, has now developed to affect the realm of foreign policy. In his narrative of the political campaign, Trump often voiced criticism towards NATO, which he claimed was an obsolete alliance. Trump also claims that American membership in NATO was detrimental to the country. This related to the imbalance burden-sharing, where member countries do not contribute equally in NATO compared to what America did. Trump subsequently indicated his readiness to withdraw America from this alliance membership.

Trump's populist rhetoric successfully brought a significant impact as it was able to revive the unrest of the American people towards state involvement at the international level. The American public wants the government to prioritize domestic affairs and overcome domestic problems such as the economic crisis rather than involved in other countries' foreign affairs. American involvement in this detriment collaboration was perceived as a failure of the government in making people-centred policies, which not only weakened the trust to the ruling government but also increased support for Trump. In addition, the framing of other NATO member countries as a threat to America reaffirmed the definition of public identity as "the people" and aroused American nationalist and isolationist public sentiment. At the same time, this situation also had an impact on the emergence of an uncertain climate at the international level, particularly for NATO member countries, regarding the continuation of the U.S membership in the alliance.

The nationalist sentiment and the uncertainty climate that arises along with Trump's populist rhetoric subsequently be used for pushing other NATO member countries to be more cooperative according to American desires, which to increase their military budget to achieve equal and distributed burden-sharing scheme within NATO. This is the primary purpose of the U.S and Trump in criticizing NATO. By exploiting public unrest through populist rhetoric, Trump opened up opportunities while legitimizing governmental steps to take a firmer action compared to the previous administrations in encouraging more contributions from NATO member countries. It concludes that populist rhetoric can be understood as a new dimension that has an impact on a country's foreign policy.

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