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# Making America Grate Again: The “Italianization” of American Politics and the Future of Transatlantic Relations in the Era of Donald J. Trump

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*For decades the Republican Party has embraced America’s open, future-oriented nationalism. But when you nominate a Silvio Berlusconi you give up a piece of that.<sup>1</sup>*

LATE ON THE NIGHT of Tuesday, 8 November 2016, when pundits on America’s many television networks were suddenly beginning to grasp that the all-but-guaranteed election of Hillary Clinton as the 45th president of the United States was not going to occur, a member of the team covering the day’s events for PBS offered what, in our view, was

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<sup>1</sup>David Brooks, commenting on the nomination of Donald J. Trump as Republican candidate for president, in “Democrats Win the Summer,” *New York Times*, 29 July 2016.

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a most intriguing clue for comprehending what had happened: the American voters, remarked Jeff Greenfield, had just elected Silvio Berlusconi.<sup>2</sup> Now, this was hardly the first time that the Republican candidate had been compared with an Italian political figure, nor would it be the last. Our purpose in this article is to reflect systematically upon this “Italianization” of American domestic politics, so curiously on display during the most recent campaign—for it is not every day, to put it mildly, that one finds such frequent appeal being made to Italian “objective correlatives” in a bid to explicate American ones.

As interesting, on the face of things, as this might be to Italian scholars and their readers, we posit our Italianization thesis because it speaks to two important questions surrounding the future of *American* domestic and foreign policies. The first question is this: which of the two leading Italian analogies so often bruted about during the election campaign, Benito Mussolini or Silvio Berlusconi, makes the most sense (to the extent that either makes any sense), and with what implications for American *domestic* politics? The second question is a derivative one and concerns the potential “lesson” that our Italian tutorial might have for the quality of America’s future relations with its transatlantic allies.

Of course, it was not just with Italian political figures that Donald J. Trump was being compared throughout the long and, at times, somewhat surreal campaign of 2016.<sup>3</sup> At various moments, one could hear or read accounts that Trump resembled no one so much as he did any of a gamut of former and current personages, usually assembled from a rogues’ gallery, given that few, if any, of the analogy wielders could be deemed to be partisans of the Republican nominee and, therefore, likely to want to suggest admirable analogues. Comparisons extended all the way from the ridiculous (Adolf Hitler) to the absurd (Nigel Farage),<sup>4</sup> with a few observers even invoking midrange nonentities such as Hugo Chávez. Sometimes, however, purely homegrown comparisons seemed to be the only ones that counted, for instance, Trump

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<sup>2</sup>Accessed at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/pressrelease/pbs-newshour-announces-election-night-2016-special-coverage-plans/>, 19 May 2017.

<sup>3</sup>For the flavor of that electoral season, see Maureen Dowd, *The Year of Voting Dangerously: The Derangement of American Politics* (New York: Twelve, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>In the immediate aftermath of the Brexit vote in June 2016, the lead editorial published in Canada’s national newspaper somewhat bizarrely interpreted the British tally as a victory for Donald Trump. “Who ever imagined,” harrumphed the editorialist(s), in drawing a parallel with Nigel Farage, “that Britain—rational, modern, sophisticated Britain—would turn out to be the wind beneath Mr. Trump’s wings?” See “Bloody Old England,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 25 June 2016.

as Huey Long, or as Father Charles Coughlin, or as Joseph McCarthy—and even, to some rare analogists not spooked by the prospect of a Trump presidency, as Andrew Jackson.<sup>5</sup> One commentator, *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen, insisted that when all was said and done, Trump *had* to be considered *sui generis*, beyond the range of commensurability with political figures from other places or other times, because he was “only and absolutely of America” in the early twenty-first century. Yet in so declaring, even Cohen could not resist the Italian tutorial, detecting as he did very disturbing similarities between Trump and Mussolini.<sup>6</sup>

Nor was Cohen alone in highlighting Il Duce as a potentially useful trope for understanding the stakes of the American election. Many observers will tell you that there is a likelihood of fascism coming to America, for some of the very same reasons that it arrived in Italy following the First World War.<sup>7</sup> This fear (or hope, if you are a follower of America’s “alt-right”) seems rather far-fetched to us, for a variety of reasons upon which we elaborate in the following section. Nevertheless, we do consider there to be merit—possibly even a bit of perverse psychic comfort—to be had from that *other* Italian symbol, Berlusconi. Michael Walzer once so elegantly wrote, of symbols, that they “tell us more than we can easily repeat.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, they do; our purpose in these pages is to reflect upon the claim made by quite a few commentators that Trump *is* Berlusconi and to ask what the implications of such a pairing might be.<sup>9</sup> Again, the implications are of two sorts—those that will find their greatest salience in the domestic political arena in the United States and those whose importance will bear most heavily upon the quality of America’s transatlantic relationships.

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<sup>5</sup>Not surprisingly, Trump supporters such as Rudolph Giuliani, Newt Gingrich, and Stephen Bannon have found much to commend in the Trump-as-Jackson analogy; see Jonah Engel Bromwich, “The Wild Inauguration of Andrew Jackson, the Original American Populist,” *New York Times*, 21 January 2017.

<sup>6</sup>Roger Cohen, “Trump’s Il Duce Routine,” *New York Times*, 1 March 2016.

<sup>7</sup>See Fedja Buric, “Trump’s Not Hitler, He’s Mussolini: How GOP Anti-Intellectualism Created a Modern Fascist Movement in America,” *Salon*, 11 March 2016, accessed at [http://www.salon.com/2016/03/11/trumps\\_not\\_hitler\\_hes\\_mussolini](http://www.salon.com/2016/03/11/trumps_not_hitler_hes_mussolini), 19 May 2017; Peter Baker, “Rise of Donald Trump Tracks Growing Debate over Global Fascism,” *New York Times*, 29 May 2016; and Justin E.H. Smith, “No, He’s Not Hitler: And Yet . . .,” *International New York Times*, 8 June 2016, 8.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Walzer, “On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought,” *Political Science Quarterly* 82 (June 1967): 191–204, at 196.

<sup>9</sup>James B. Stewart, “Berlusconi a Precedent for Trump,” *New York Times*, 2 December 2016; “Battle Lines,” *The Economist*, 5 March 2016; and Valentina Pasquali, “Americans, Brace Yourselves for the Bunga Bunga,” *Foreign Policy*, 2 March 2016, accessed at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/02/americans-brace-yourselves-for-the-bunga-bunga-berlusconi-donald-trump/>, 19 May 2017.

Our argument is developed in several stages. Immediately following, we show why it is that the comparisons to Mussolini really do constitute such a big analytical stretch—far too big for us to endorse. After that, our next section concentrates on the Italian comparison that we think is of greater relevance, the one with Berlusconi. Our penultimate section is comparative in a different way, for in it we look “diachronically” at two eras in the recent record of U.S. transatlantic diplomacy, the Bill Clinton/George W. Bush years and the present. We pose the question of whether Donald Trump can be counted upon to “make America grate again” with the allies, and if so, why, and how the Berlusconi trope could be of relevance to this discussion. Our conclusion provides our answers to these questions.

### NOT ANOTHER “MAN OF PROVIDENCE”: THE LIMITS OF THE TRUMP-MUSSOLINI ANALOGY

For anyone familiar with Benito Mussolini’s image and peculiar manner of gesturing, Donald Trump does present striking similarities. For starters, his facial expressions in public speeches, in particular the way he juts out the jaw, resemble those of Il Duce, at times (for example, during the second debate with Hillary Clinton on 9 October 2016) uncannily so. Other common characteristics, assiduously assembled by Trump’s many critics, include the following: shared aphorisms, a demonstrable “alpha-male” attitude, and frequent references to violence.<sup>10</sup> In a nutshell, or so the argument went during the campaign, a Trump victory in November would expose America’s political system to the menace of an authoritarian system reproducing some of the most nefarious traits of the Italian system between the late 1920s and 1945.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, there are many who reject the Mussolini analogy, and they do so not because they think Trump instead is really Hitler but because they find

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<sup>10</sup>An example is the apothegm about it being “better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep,” a quote widely attributed to Mussolini, which Trump happily retweeted to his followers on 28 February 2016. “Machismo” is both explicit (as when Trump alluded to the size of his own genitals or grabbing those of women) and implicit, particularly through references to women, the disabled, and anyone who might be labeled a “loser.” See Nancy LeTourneau, “Donald Trump’s Narcissistic Delusion,” *Washington Monthly*, 28 April 2016, accessed at [http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/political-animal-a/2016\\_04/donald\\_trumps\\_narcissistic\\_del060402.php](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/political-animal-a/2016_04/donald_trumps_narcissistic_del060402.php), 19 May 2017. Violence has been suggested with differing degrees of intensity against protesters needing a punch in the face, terrorists deserving to be tortured, and illegal immigrants requiring forceful deportation, along with their families. See, among many others raising this point, Jonathan Freedland, “Welcome to the Age of Trump,” *The Guardian*, 19 May 2016.

<sup>11</sup>So far, prominent proponents of the Mussolini analogy include pundits such as Fedja Buric and Robert Kagan, as well as journalists such as Peter Baker, Roger Cohen, and Adam Gopnik. See Buric, “Trump’s Not Hitler, He’s Mussolini”; Robert Kagan, “This Is How Fascism Comes to America,” *Washington Post*, 18 May 2016; Baker, “Rise of Donald Trump”; Cohen, “Trump’s Il Duce Routine”; and Adam Gopnik, “Going There with Donald Trump,” *The New Yorker*, 11 May 2016.

the comparison with Il Duce more misleading than enlightening.<sup>12</sup> The problem with analogies is well known: they often prevent us from better understanding current events because they can lead us to miss seeing what is novel in our quest to glimpse something familiar.<sup>13</sup> That said, we intend to resort to analogy, and in so doing we employ this logical resource in accordance with the advice tendered by Jeffrey Herf, as a means of “sketch[ing] out the domains in which a comparison might make sense.”<sup>14</sup> We think that there are two such domains that have been neglected by the Trump-as-Mussolini camp: the socioeconomic context surrounding Trump/Mussolini’s fortunes and the role of institutional actors in supporting/hampering the rise of Trump/fascism. Neither sustains the case that Trump resembles Mussolini, save in the most superficial sense.

In short, we are not primarily interested here in the rhetorical and communicative aspects that have characterized Trump’s rise up to now; these we take to be epiphenomenal. Nor are we concerned with the nationalistic stamp apparent in both leaders’ rhetoric—an “agenda item” that Trump indisputably shares with the Italian dictator. Instead, our critique of the Trump-Mussolini analogy is that its exclusive focus on the person (and his acts) misses one all-important consideration, neglecting as it does the critical role played by contextual factors. It is the latter that could (or would) eventually determine whether and how the towheaded tycoon might follow in the footsteps of the Italian dictator. A brief look at the origins of fascism—or better, at the way through which Mussolini came to power—suffices to highlight the obvious, namely, that 2017 America is not, and never can be, 1922 Italy. And this, we think, makes all the difference in the world.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>For more nuanced views on the Trump-Mussolini analogy, see Isaac Chotiner, “Is Donald Trump a Fascist? Yes and No,” *Slate*, 10 February 2016, accessed at [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/interrogation/2016/02/](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/interrogation/2016/02/), 19 May 2017; and Holger Stark, “An Exhausted Democracy: Donald Trump and the New American Nationalism,” *Der Spiegel*, 17 May 2016, accessed at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/essay-donald-trump-and-the-new-american-nationalism-a-1092548.html>, 13 June 2017; and Sheri Berman, “Donald Trump Isn’t a Fascist,” *Vox*, 3 January 2017, accessed at <http://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/1/3/14154300/fascist-populist-trump-democracy>, 19 May 2017.

<sup>13</sup>On the pitfalls of analogical reasoning, see Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup>Jeffrey Herf, “Is Donald Trump a Fascist?,” *The American Interest*, 7 March 2016, accessed at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/03/07/is-donald-trump-a-fascist/>, 19 May 2017. Unlike our own, Herf’s domains of choice included “attitudes toward democracy, political violence, press freedoms, and the role of the state within society and culture.”

<sup>15</sup>For a different view, one that insists “[i]t takes willful blindness not to see the parallels between the rise of fascism and our current political nightmare,” cf. Paul Krugman, “How Republics End,” *New York Times*, 19 December 2016.

Accordingly, our initial domain of comparison is provided by the socio-economic context, which can, in turn, be broken down into two parts. The first relates to the main fractures dividing American and Italian societies, today and in the past. The second concerns the nature of America's current (purported) crisis when it is contrasted with the catastrophic state of the Italian economy after the First World War. We start with societal fractures. Italy in the first decades of the twentieth century was undergoing a painful process of modernization, marked by the mushrooming of its industrial sector and the consequent expansion of its working class. However, agriculture remained the primary source of wealth for the majority of the population and the main generator of employment. As a result, two principal cleavages ran through Italian society. The first of these, situated almost exclusively in Italy's big (and northern) cities, was between the entrepreneurial and the working class. The second, spread out in rural areas all over the country, was between large landowners and farmers.<sup>16</sup> Initially a heterogeneous gathering of anarchists, revolutionary unionists, student associations, and cultural vanguards, fascism quickly changed colors and ended up supporting rather than opposing the wealthiest entrepreneurial families in the cities, along with the aristocratic landowners. Through the systematic employment of violence, fascist squads suffocated both the peasantry's demands for land and blue-collar labor's quest for better working conditions.<sup>17</sup>

No doubt, some of Trump's earliest moves after his election do suggest analogies with the Italian dictator. In particular, just as Mussolini proved eager to evolve his base of support from what had been a geographically and socially limited fraction of Italy's public opinion to larger swathes of the population, so Trump, too, quickly sought to enlarge his own base from the discontented "white guys" of the Rust Belt and grumpy outliers elsewhere in the country to include a coterie of reasonably cosseted Wall Street elites against whom he had campaigned so fervently just a short while before.<sup>18</sup> Both leaders could legitimately be said to have practiced the politics of "bait and switch," but there is a major difference between the results they obtained. It has to be said that Mussolini showed himself to

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<sup>16</sup>Paul Corner, "State and Society, 1901–1922," in Adrian Lyttleton, ed., *Liberal and Fascist Italy: 1900–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 37–43.

<sup>17</sup>Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, eds., *In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), chaps. 1 and 2.

<sup>18</sup>Maureen Dowd, "Trump, Working-Class Zero," *New York Times*, 19 March 2017. See also Zaid Jilani, "Donald Trump's Economic Policy Team Is Stacked with Lobbyists and Conflicts of Interest," *The Intercept*, 28 February 2017, accessed at <https://theintercept.com/2017/02/28/donald-trumps-economic-policy-team-is-stacked-with-lobbyists-and-conflicts-of-interest/>, 19 May 2017.

be much more capable, at least for a time, in generating favorable levels of public support than Trump has been. Nor did the early Mussolini years feature anything like the degree of administrative mishap and chaos that so far has attended the Trump administration, which as we write this has just suffered the huge indignity of being unable to get enshrined into legislation what has been for seven years the signature item on the Republicans' wish list of reforms, namely, the repeal of "Obamacare"—and this notwithstanding that the Trump presidency presumably could avail itself of the luxury of having a Republican Congress in both houses (what some refer to, not necessarily in jest, as "unified government").<sup>19</sup> If Trump is indeed Mussolini and thus, by extension, a fascist, as his most hyperbolic critics insist, he is so in a most Pickwickian manner.

To say again, the reason for the inapplicability of the Mussolini analogy has everything to do with context. America is hardly a problem-free place (where *is* such a place?), but according to many analysts, its political dilemma of the moment is represented by the increasing resentment of an impoverished (and white) middle class, squeezed, on the one hand, by the disproportionate wealth of the richest 10 percent of the population and, on the other, by the improving conditions of lower classes (represented most vividly by Hispanics and African Americans).<sup>20</sup> On top of this, the country's society and its institutions have become more liberal in the past 20 or so years, thus challenging the status of traditionalist and conservative voters, increasing their sense of relative deprivation.<sup>21</sup> It is this portion of the population—the so-called angry white man (and also woman)—that found Trump's message so appealing in the recent campaign.<sup>22</sup>

As for the nature of the economic crisis, the differences are so striking between the two countries as to compel rejecting, tout court, the Trump-as-Mussolini analogy. Italy following the First World War was in many respects a failing state, notwithstanding its having been on the winning side during that conflict. Apart from the war's toll of destruction, in terms

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Pear, Thomas Kaplan, and Maggie Haberman, "G.O.P. Revolt Sinks Bid to Void Health Law," *New York Times*, 25 March 2017.

<sup>20</sup>Alison Burke, "Working Class White Americans Are Now Dying in Middle Age at Faster Rates than Minority Groups," 23 March 2017, accessed at [https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/03/23/working-class-white-americans-are-now-dying-in-middle-age-at-faster-rates-than-minority-groups/?utm\\_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=48909925](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/03/23/working-class-white-americans-are-now-dying-in-middle-age-at-faster-rates-than-minority-groups/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=48909925), 19 May 2017. See also Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century" (Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, BPEA Conference Drafts, 23–24 March 2017), accessed at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/6\\_casedeaton.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/6_casedeaton.pdf), 19 May 2017.

<sup>21</sup>Freedland, "Welcome to the Age of Trump."

<sup>22</sup>Loren Collingwood, "The County-by-County Data on Trump Voters Shows Why He Won," *Washington Post*, 19 November 2016.

of both infrastructure<sup>23</sup> and casualties,<sup>24</sup> there loomed a series of problems that eventually eroded the legitimacy of the regime. These included the lasting effects of the catastrophic defeat at Caporetto in 1917, which gravely undermined the prestige and authority of the army's higher echelons; the conversion from a wartime to a peacetime economy—raising as it did the important question of how to provide employment for the almost three million veterans, many of them farmers; and finally, postwar inflation, stemming from a severe lack of primary commodities and igniting a widespread feeling of frustration and rage against the political system.

In contrast, today's "crisis" in the United States is small beer. It may be (although even this is debated) that the country is "declining" relative to certain "risers," China foremost among them.<sup>25</sup> Still, economic indicators reveal an enviable performance of the American economy: low unemployment, high productivity, and even multiyear gross domestic product (GDP) growth—all of which, when set against the recent performance of most European countries (to say nothing of the so-called BRICs such as Brazil and Russia), look and *are* distinctly robust.<sup>26</sup> Recent American data indicate that median income has been rising over the past three years (except among white baby boomers), not only suggesting that the nature of the crisis is more a function of unmet expectations than it is of real stagnation but also highlighting how redistributive policies might affect, one way or the other, Trump's political allure.<sup>27</sup>

For sure, what counts in politics is not necessarily what "objectively" *may be* the case. What counts is what people *think* is the case, and there can be no doubt that Trump during the campaign succeeded in framing a much different discourse, one that was based on somber visions of inexorably rising unemployment, hordes of ferocious immigrants flooding

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<sup>23</sup>It is worth remembering that some regions, such as Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia, had been occupied by Austrian and German forces. As late as the war's final year, there were still 800,000 enemy soldiers in Veneto, who forced some 600,000 civilians to flee the region. See Patrizia Dogliani, *Il Fascismo degli Italiani*, 2nd ed. (Turin: UTET, 2008), 19.

<sup>24</sup>Official data are not considered reliable. However, in a landmark study, Italian demographer Giorgio Mortara ventured the very educated guess of some 651,000 Italian military deaths. Giorgio Mortara, *La Salute pubblica in Italia durante e dopo la Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1925).

<sup>25</sup>For skepticism regarding the declinist thesis, see Josef Joffe, *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014); and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "The Once and Future Superpower: Why China Won't Overtake the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 95 (May/June 2016): 91–104.

<sup>26</sup>Patricia Cohen, "President Obama Is Handing a Strong Economy to His Successor," *New York Times*, 2 December 2016.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Shapiro, "Whatever Some Candidates Tell You, the Incomes of Most Americans Have Been Rising," *Brookings Blog*, 27 April 2016, accessed at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/04/27/whatever-some-candidates-tell-you-the-incomes-of-most-americans-have-been-rising/>, 19 May 2017.

uncontrolled over the U.S. border, and record-high crime rates. All of these represented alternative facts that nevertheless served him well with a certain segment of the electorate, as became evident on 8 November. Still, there is a tremendous difference between the conditions—objective as well as subjective—with which the agricultural and war-torn Italian economic system was confronted in the 1920s and those facing today’s America. Mussolini sought and found fertile ground for the establishment of his rule in deep societal cleavages and in the demonstrably evident failure of the previous liberal regime; it will scarcely be possible for Trump to have the same results exploiting “crisis.”

As concerns the role of institutional actors, two stand out as critical elements for the successful rise of fascism in the Italian case: the army and the monarchy. In brief, historians agree that one of Mussolini’s main achievements in 1920–1922 was to prevent any serious opposition from the military and the king. In fact, with reference to the former, it is worth stressing how the March on Rome (and Squadrist violence before that) would hardly have been possible without the substantial complicity (or lack of capacity) of the armed forces. Mussolini understood that by having the army and navy on his side, he would reap several benefits—most importantly, reassuring the conservatives and monarchists on the right, keeping a free hand in his fight against the socialists and communists, and using the military career as a means of strengthening consensus. It is for this reason that as early as the immediate aftermath of the March on Rome, the newly appointed Mussolini government reserved two ministerial seats, one for General Armando Diaz and one for Admiral Paolo Camillo Thaon di Revel. Even later, *Il Duce* set aside for the upper spheres of the armed forces substantial organizational and budgetary autonomy.<sup>28</sup> Humiliated at Caporetto and deeply resentful of the civilian “interference” that had been a characteristic of the liberal (prewar) order, the military unsurprisingly accepted with no hesitation Mussolini’s offer to collaborate.

Mussolini’s handling of the military might suggest some similarity with Trump’s administration, given the prominent role accorded to former and current generals (James Mattis at the Department of Defense, H.R. McMaster at the National Security Council, and John Kelly at the Department of Homeland Security), to say nothing of the overall support the president has signaled for the armed forces, whose budget he proposed

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<sup>28</sup>Marco Mondini, *La politica delle armi: Il ruolo dell’esercito nell’avvento del fascismo* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2006).

to increase by 10 percent, or \$54 billion.<sup>29</sup> However, some considerations suggest we refrain from drawing any hasty inferences. To begin with, the stature of Diaz and Thaon di Revel was not at all comparable with that of Mattis, McMaster, or Kelly. Trump evinces a genuine esteem for his military colleagues, and most observers (not excluding some of the president's critics) would agree that the generals are among the most competent members of the Trump team—if, indeed, they are not *the* most competent. By contrast, Mussolini had a much less lofty regard for both Diaz and Thaon di Revel, his ministers of war and the navy, respectively; their value to him was indirect, inhering to no small degree in their closeness to the king. Mussolini neither relied on their counsel nor showed himself to be restrained in any significant way by their preferences. Indeed, both were led to resign, and to withdraw from public life, after just a few short years in Mussolini's cabinet, Diaz departing at the end of April 1924 and Thaon di Revel in May 1925.

Trump's case is otherwise. His choice of the two ex-generals and the one serving general (McMaster) was hardly needed to curry favor with an American military establishment that tended to be supportive of him from the outset; instead, his choice was a function of an inexperienced president's desire to fulfill his promise to "hire the best and brightest." Admittedly, it remains far too early to conclude that the generals have definitively counterbalanced the ostensible influence of some of Trump's other members of the inner circle (first and foremost Stephen K. Bannon).<sup>30</sup> Regardless of the actual power wielded by Trump's military advisers, there is a world of difference from the Italian experience. While the Italian army readily surrendered to the fascist leader, no one doubts that the American armed forces remain zealous to preserve their independent role, all the while, of course, rendering constitutional homage to the country's long-standing tradition by which the military defers to civilian political leadership.

There is nothing remotely analogous with the Italian experience when it comes to that other institution, the monarchy, America having resolved its relationship with kings (and queens) a long time ago. In Italy, the monarchy managed to retain an autonomous capacity and, differently from other state institutions, even to preserve a substantial degree of authority for a

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<sup>29</sup>Alan Rappaport and Glenn Thrush, "Trump Budget Seeks Big Tilt To the Military," *New York Times*, 16 March 2017.

<sup>30</sup>Fred Kaplan, "The Grown-Ups Are Locked Out. Trump Is Depriving Tillerson, Mattis, and McMaster of Any Real Influence or Support," *Slate*, 15 March 2017, accessed at [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/war\\_stories/2017/03/the\\_powerlessness\\_of\\_mattis\\_mcmaster\\_and\\_tillerson.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2017/03/the_powerlessness_of_mattis_mcmaster_and_tillerson.html), 19 May 2017.

short time after the war. It is worth remembering that Mussolini himself made a U-turn from his wartime—and highly vocal—republicanism to a monarchism that may have been watered-down and reluctantly embraced but was not without its utility to him. According to Patrizia Dogliani, sticking to the king helped fascism garner support from the southern aristocracy, convinced as it was that Giovanni Giolitti’s liberal project had simply been a usurpation of power by the northern (mostly Piedmontese) elite. And although it is true that the consolidation of the regime quickly eroded the effective power of the king, the monarchy formally remained an autonomous center of power throughout the *ventennio* (that is, the two-decade period of fascist rule).<sup>31</sup>

Mussolini played his cards very skillfully, in the process effectively neutralizing institutional counterweights. Trump, on the other hand, seems to have no clear ideas on how to counter the opposition that his rise to power has already begun to generate in Washington.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, he has not had to bother appeasing any monarchs, but the checks and balances of the American political system do feature actors as powerful as the Congress, especially the Senate, whose Republican majority can look a bit deceptive, given that at least a half dozen GOP senators cannot be taken to be guaranteed allies of the president.<sup>33</sup> Nor, as the difficulty in repealing Obamacare illustrates, can the president even count on commanding the loyalty of the House. Then there is the judiciary, to say nothing of the bureaucracy of the executive branch itself, which cannot at all be assumed to be ready to follow where a President Trump would desire to lead it; in fact, some have suggested that, like Abraham Lincoln, Donald Trump has deliberately amassed a cabinet of “rivals” (not necessarily of his, but of their fellow cabinet members), so as to constitute a further balance, and perhaps even a check.<sup>34</sup>

To sum up, while there may be a few features of Trump’s campaign that echoed tenets and forms of fascism, it is unlikely that the real estate tycoon augurs, as some seem to fear, the second coming of Mussolini. But can we say the same about the Trump-as-Berlusconi trope?

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<sup>31</sup>Dogliani, *Il Fascismo degli Italiani*, 52.

<sup>32</sup>Editorial Board, “Donald Trump, Bureaucracy Apprentice,” *New York Times*, 2 January 2017.

<sup>33</sup>One thinks in this regard of both Arizona senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake, to say nothing of South Carolina’s Lindsey Graham, Maine’s Susan Collins, Alaska’s Lisa Murkowski, Tennessee’s Lamar Alexander, Nebraska’s Ben Sasse, and Kentucky’s Rand Paul. See Carl Hulse, “Trump’s Next Battle: Keeping These Republicans Happy,” *New York Times*, 27 November 2016.

<sup>34</sup>See Thomas Wright, “Trump’s Team of Rivals, Riven by Distrust,” *Foreign Policy*, 14 December 2016, accessed at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/12/14/trumps-team-of-rivals-riven-by-distrust/>, 13 June 2017.

## IF THE SHOE FITS: ANALOGIZING BETWEEN TRUMP AND BERLUSCONI

As Donald Trump was defying all the odds and continuing his most improbable ascent throughout the 2016 GOP primary campaign, there was a rising chorus of concern in Europe (as elsewhere). This concern was not surprising, for to many on the Old Continent, Trump seemed all too familiar a politician. He reminded them of Silvio Berlusconi, a contemporary Italian political figure not universally cherished in European (including Italian) public memory. Right off the bat, and for this reason alone, we can see a much greater degree of “fit” between Trump and Berlusconi than we detected between the former and Mussolini. Comparisons between Trump and Berlusconi can provide both a logical and a narrative shortcut for political analysis, as well as for normative assessment.<sup>35</sup> For if Silvio Berlusconi had been earlier deemed “unfit to lead Italy,”<sup>36</sup> as well as “unfit to lead Europe,”<sup>37</sup> then how, wondered many, could it be that his American doppelgänger, Donald Trump, could be thought capable of leading the world’s remaining superpower, the United States of America? (Of course, more than a few Italian voters had decided that Berlusconi, after all, *was* fit to rule their country, three times, in fact, from 1994 to 2011.) Now, none of us are deluded enough to believe that American voters this past November were taking cues from recent Italian political developments—not even for a nanosecond. Nonetheless, the comparison with Berlusconi is suggestive, for the similarities between the former Italian leader and the American one are numerous and various, ranging as they do from the significant, for example, a common appreciation of the virtues of Russia’s Vladimir Putin, to the trivial, for instance, a close scrutiny of hairstyles (their own). For the sake of simplicity, we group in this section the most relevant of these commonalities around three axes, highlighting personality, policies, and politics.

Regarding personalities, it has to be said that Berlusconi and Trump share some individual traits in abundance. Both are successful entrepreneurs whose core business is a mixture of real estate and entertainment, the

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<sup>35</sup>See Beppe Severgnini, “What Italy Can Teach America about Donald Trump,” *New York Times*, 18 September 2015; Rula Jebreal, “Donald Trump Is America’s Silvio Berlusconi,” *Washington Post*, 21 September 2015; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Is Trump the New Silvio Berlusconi?,” CNN, 3 March 2016, accessed at <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/03/opinions/trump-the-new-silvio-berlusconi-opinion-benghiat/>, 19 May 2017; Luigi Zingales, “Donald Trump, Crony Capitalist,” *New York Times*, 23 February 2016; and Robert Tracinsky, “Donald Trump Is America’s Berlusconi, Whose Drama Trumped His Agenda,” *Federalist*, 15 February 2016, accessed at <http://thefederalist.com/2016/02/15/donald-trump-is-americas-berlusconi-whose-rhetoric-won-his-country-nothing/>, 19 May 2017.

<sup>36</sup>“Why Silvio Berlusconi Is Unfit to Lead Italy,” *The Economist*, 26 April 2001.

<sup>37</sup>“Unfit to Lead Europe,” *The Economist*, 28 May 2003.

latter including sports for the Italian tycoon, once owner of a world-renowned soccer team, A.C. Milan. Both have been rich enough to finance their own political activities without depending on established political parties.<sup>38</sup> Both are successful communicators who hook up with people reasonably effectively. Both deliberately disregard social conventions and rules of etiquette in order to command attention and attraction. Both have egos that, to put it mildly, hardly suffer from psychological malnutrition.

Second, insofar as it makes sense to compare the program of a leader who had nearly a decade's experience as prime minister to that of a president who has not yet (as we write these words in late March 2017) served more than two months in any elective office, we could note that some keywords crop up in the agenda of each. In the economic domain, these include low taxes, competition, shrinking government and state agencies, a pro-market approach (yet one easily compromised by crony capitalism at home, of which both are champions),<sup>39</sup> and hostility toward globalization. As to the political domain, the core keyword seems to be the country itself, invariably needing to be strengthened and defended against existential threats. Berlusconi's list of dangers included communists, judges, the free media, and immigrants.<sup>40</sup> Up to now, Muslims and Mexicans have scored very highly on Trump's list of miscreants, although judges have also been making inroads, along with the media. It comes as a surprise to no one that this stance of theirs spreads and entrenches divisions at both the domestic and international level, and coalesces nicely with their expressed preference for bilateral over multilateral frameworks in foreign policy.<sup>41</sup> As to policymaking, both politicians support the idea that good government requires, above all, managerial skills, even more than it does an ability to build consensus.

Eventually, the focus on politics brings us around to the basal similarity between the two men: their populism.<sup>42</sup> Both evince an antagonistic attitude toward professional politicians and established parties. They nurture a narrative within which they are self-made men who defend and represent the "true" interests of the "people" directly. Berlusconi's

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<sup>38</sup>Forza Italia, the political party built from scratch by Berlusconi in a few months, has been termed "an ideal type of personal party." See Mauro Calise, "The Personal Party: An Analytical Framework," *Italian Political Science Review* 45 (November 2015): 301–315, at 306.

<sup>39</sup>In this regard, see Zingales's distinction between pro-business and pro-market platforms, in "Donald Trump, Crony Capitalist."

<sup>40</sup>It is worth recalling, however, that as a leader, Berlusconi did not adopt a particularly tough stance against immigrants; nevertheless, his coalition did, and in 2002 the Berlusconi government supported the Bossi-Fini Bill that criminalized irregular migrants.

<sup>41</sup>Transcript: Donald Trump Expounds on His Foreign Policy Views, *New York Times*, 26 March 2016.

<sup>42</sup>Berman, "Donald Trump Isn't a Fascist."

antiestablishment stance was magnificently exemplified at the 2010 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe summit in Paris, when he quoted Mussolini's lament about being "powerless because the power is held and exerted by party officials"—a lament that the prime minister offered as a means of illustrating how he saw himself, namely, as a common man willing to confront the establishment, even if the latter included members of his own party.<sup>43</sup> The personal legitimacy that direct relationship with the people gives the leader figures generally in populism, but it takes on a special flavor in Berlusconi's and Trump's cases because of the influence they can exert on the public, thanks to the media they either controlled (Berlusconi) or whose attention they unfailingly command (Trump). In this regard, Ilvo Diamanti has noted that the concept of the people is a variable one, in Berlusconi's usage: it can mean the voters, who express their preferences and interests in the ballot box at regular intervals, or it can mean public opinion, which can be constantly marketed and surveyed in order to legitimate the decisions of the leader.<sup>44</sup>

In brief, Berlusconi and Trump attest to the attractiveness, among certain voters, of the personalization of politics—an attractiveness that, these days, is scarcely limited to Italy and the United States, we hasten to add.<sup>45</sup> Their personal characteristics are relevant to the political product they offer. Their personal resources allow them to play an antiestablishment role and to influence the people, whose steady support they need to sustain their personal political legitimacy. Their unconventional styles of political communication are remarkably similar, so much so that we can imagine the two political figures as near-perfect mirror images of each other.

If Berlusconi and Trump are outstanding personifications of populism in modern democracies, should we expect to see similar outcomes stemming from similar political styles? More particularly, although we have already argued why Trump can hardly be compared with Mussolini, how should we assess Trump's and Berlusconi's apprehended (to many observers) "authoritarian" turns?

According to Sheri Berman, today's populists—Trump, Marine Le Pen, and a growing list of others in Europe and elsewhere—"certainly share

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<sup>43</sup>"Berlusconi cita Mussolini all'OSCE. 'Io non ho nessun potere,'" *La Repubblica*, 27 May 2010.

<sup>44</sup>"Publitalia, the advertising arm of Berlusconi's company Fininvest" contributed mightily to the creation and leadership of Forza Italia; see Ilvo Diamanti, "The Italian Centre-Right and Centre-Left: Between Parties and 'The Party,'" *West European Politics* 30 (September 2007): 733–762.

<sup>45</sup>See Fareed Zakaria, "Populism on the March: Why the West Is in Trouble," *Foreign Affairs* 95 (November/December 2016): 9–15; and Rick Lyman, "Eastern Europe's Populists Emboldened in Limiting Foreign Groups," *New York Times*, 2 March 2017.

some similarities with the inter-war fascists.” Like those earlier figures, “today’s right-wing extremists denounce incumbent democratic leaders as inefficient, unresponsive, and weak. They promise to nurture their nation, protect it from its enemies, and restore a sense of purpose to people who feel battered by forces outside their control.” But for all that, they are not antidemocratic, even if they are decidedly antiliberal. Their mission, they say, is to perfect democracy, not replace it, and they promise better government. The upshot is that when they do come to power, it can be assumed that the “continued existence of democracy will permit their societies to opt for a do-over by later voting them out. Indeed, this may be democracy’s greatest strength: it allows countries to recover from their mistakes.”<sup>46</sup>

If this is so, then what can the Italian case tell us? More to the point, if this shoe fits so well, can we assume that Berlusconi’s legacy provides us some “teachable moments” when it comes to President Trump’s prospects, domestic and international? To answer this question, we first need to raise a prior question, one that asks whether, and if so, how, Berlusconi managed to change contemporary Italy—in the process without damaging it fundamentally as a well-consolidated democracy with a developed economy, something Italy had *not* been at the beginning of the twentieth century.

To start with, it has to be acknowledged that Berlusconi contributed to the restructuring of the Italian party system by successfully acting as a coalition builder—almost despite himself.<sup>47</sup> He “occupied and expanded a political space that had previously been politically narrow and fragmented—the Right—drawing together two completely different political forces: the post-fascist right-wing National Alliance (AN) . . . and the Northern League (LN) which supported the independence of the north and radical political change. In their traditions, language and strongholds, AN and the League represent opposed political formations.”<sup>48</sup>

Berlusconi thus became the right-wing equilibrium point of the Italian party system. And he became the longest-serving prime minister in contemporary Italy thanks to his coalitional skills. Nevertheless, Berlusconi’s cabinets did suffer—although not to any great extent—from the structural fragility that typically affected Italian governments

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<sup>46</sup>Sheri Berman, “Populism Is Not Fascism: But It Could Be a Harbinger,” *Foreign Affairs* 95 (November/December 2016): 39–44, at 43.

<sup>47</sup>Donatella Campus and Gianfranco Pasquino, “Leadership in Italy: The Changing Role of Leaders in Elections and in Government,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 14 (April 2006): 25–40; and Gianfranco Pasquino, “Five Faces of Silvio Berlusconi: The Knight of Anti-politics,” *Modern Italy* 12 (February 2007): 39–54.

<sup>48</sup>Diamanti, “Italian Centre-Right and Centre-Left,” 736.

supported by heterogeneous and fragmented parliamentary majorities. The result is that despite his much-ballyhooed record, Berlusconi remained constantly hemmed in by parliamentary politics, Italian style. Being the longest-serving leader since the Second World War did not make Berlusconi the archetypal “strongman.”

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that Berlusconi’s freedom of maneuver was steadily checked and balanced by other constitutional powers. In fact, he engaged in a decade-long arm-wrestling contest with constitutional judges and presidents of the republic (the latter the supreme guarantor of national unity and fair political competition), each of whom repeatedly exerted their powers to block or change laws intended to advantage Berlusconi’s personal interests or persona.

For instance, in 2004 and 2009, the constitutional court rejected two different laws meant to make Berlusconi immune from prosecution, the so-called Schifani Arbitration Bill and the Alfano Arbitration Bill. In 2013, this court paved the way for the Mediaset trial that Berlusconi had tried to delay since 2005—a trial in which he was eventually found guilty. In 2014, the constitutional court threw out the electoral reform that Berlusconi’s majority had passed in 2004 so as to cripple the likely victory of the center-left coalition led by Romano Prodi and through which Italian parliaments would be elected in 2006, 2008, and 2013.

The most complicated arm-wrestling arrayed Berlusconi against the head of state, the political institution to which Italians traditionally give their staunchest support and, therefore, the institution that always presents the greatest challenge to any populist leader. In fact, Berlusconi regularly complained about the three presidents with whom he successively had to deal—Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, and Giorgio Napolitano—mainly because they exercised the power to nominate prime ministers instead of dissolving the chambers after cabinet crises, but also because they exercised—or threatened to exercise—their suspensive veto on legislation that was ad hoc or constitutionally illegitimate.

Berlusconi’s power was weakened by scandals and trials and constrained by political coalitions and institutions. However, his biggest problem turned out to be his inability to satisfy the lofty expectations he himself had raised—expectations that first took root in the populist vogue that led to the ending of the so-called First Republic, whose demise was accompanied by a nationwide corruption scandal implicating large segments of the political establishment. This afforded him a window of opportunity flung wide open by widespread disaffection with a political status quo characterized by both rigidity and instability. At first, Berlusconi

profited from the opportunity to drain the Italian swamp, promising to do so through structural political change and a new economic “miracle,” which was supposed to lead to a return to the kind of burgeoning development Italy had known right after the Second World War.

So much for the promise. The reality was that Berlusconi left Italy in somewhat worse shape than he had found it. In 1994, Italian per capita GDP exceeded the average for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries; by 2010, it had fallen below that average.<sup>49</sup> Italian total central government debt was 113.7 percent of Italian GDP in 1994; in 2010, it was still stubbornly high, at 109 percent.<sup>50</sup> In qualitative terms, the best that can be said of Berlusconi is that he only marginally realized a few of the many structural reforms of which Italy was in dire need and which he promised to effect for the necessary modernization of the country. This negative assessment of Berlusconi’s performance as a prime minister is clearly reflected in European reactions to his 2011 resignation. For instance, *Le Monde* declared that (After a decade in power, Silvio Berlusconi leaves Italy in the exact same state in which he found it) “[a]près dix ans de règne, Silvio Berlusconi laisse l’Italie dans l’état où il l’a trouvée.”<sup>51</sup> Even harsher was the judgment of the *Economist*, to which Silvio Berlusconi was the man who, in plain English, “screwed an entire country.”<sup>52</sup>

All in all, we can conclude that the legacy that Berlusconi bequeathed Italy has been a botched opportunity to bring about long overdue, and absolutely essential, reform. He promised much; he delivered little. This, in turn, has fueled even greater political distrust, with all that it implies for the likelihood of the continued vitality of the country’s democratic political culture. Are there any lessons here for America under Donald Trump? If, as we have argued, Trump is no Mussolini, but he may well be a Berlusconi, what kinds of analytical “takeaways” might we expect to see?

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<sup>49</sup>Italy’s per capita GDP in the earlier year stood at an index ranking of 113.1, with the OECD average equaling 100; by 2010, the Italian figure was 99. Data are at 2010 price levels and purchasing power parity. The comparison with the other big continental EU members confirms the mediocre Italian performance: Spain’s GDP per capita rose from 87 in 1994 to 91.2 in 2010; France’s and Germany’s each declined, albeit not as sharply as Italy’s, from 107.7 to 102.7 in the French case, and 117.1 to 113.9 in Germany. See OECD Statistics, accessed at <http://stats.oecd.org/#>, 27 May 2016.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. Spain’s public debt was 50.3 percent of GDP in 1994 and 51.7 percent in 2010; figures for France and Germany reveal that for the former, there was in this same period an increase from 38.4 percent to 67.4 percent of GDP, while for the latter, the increase was from 20.9 percent to 44.4 percent. Unlike Italy, none of these countries had a debt surpassing the national GDP.

<sup>51</sup>*Le Monde*, 12 November 2011.

<sup>52</sup>*The Economist*, 9 June 2011.

First, it bears repeating that although Trump's brand of populism has battered upon a popular dissatisfaction with the American political system, no one should ever be allowed to confuse the dysfunctional nature of U.S. politics with the much more troubled Italian system that served as the backdrop for Berlusconi's rise to power. Earlier, we remarked that the America of 2017 is not, and never could be, the Italy of 1922; here it suffices to note that neither is it the Italy of 1994. As a consequence, Trump's freedom of action and his likely influence on the political system as a whole can be expected to be much more limited than were Berlusconi's.

Second, we need to recall how relevant Berlusconi's control of the media proved to be for his initial political successes. In this regard, it is noteworthy how different the Italian and the American broadcasting systems are from each other. In the United States, the development of cable television in the 1970s, combined with widespread deregulation a decade later, resulted in a media system dominated by a plurality of private companies that do not adhere strictly to state regulations—or at least to state preferences. In Italy, while the development of private broadcasting companies and even cable television also took place, it was nevertheless relatively easy for Berlusconi, thanks to his political backers, to succeed in obtaining a quasi monopoly of the private sector, mainly because the development of cable television was comparatively slow and remained constrained by political obstacles until very recently; all of this reduced the significance and the size of private media outlets. Given that the Italian state broadcasting company has been, and remains, substantially controlled by political institutions and influenced by political parties and the government, Berlusconi while in office attained a degree of influence over both private and state broadcasting media that Trump cannot even dream of possessing, even though he is now president. In short, there was no Italian equivalent of Stephen Bannon's snarky, if not entirely inaccurate, characterization of the mainstream American media as the "opposition party." Nor could there be.

Third, the constitutional features of American democracy are so much more robust than those of Italian democracy as almost to defy meaningful comparison. True, the presidency of the United States is a much more powerful institution than any European parliamentary premiership, Italy's included. It is also true that the powers of the presidency have grown in respect to both Congress and the states since at least the Second World War, if not earlier.<sup>53</sup> Yet the American constitutional system of checks and

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<sup>53</sup>Theodore J. Lowi, *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); and John Yoo, *Crisis and Command: The History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Kaplan, 2010).

balances is even more powerful than the executive. As Richard Neustadt reminds us, although the Constitutional Convention of 1787 might have been thought to have yielded a “government of ‘separated powers’[,] [i]t did nothing of the sort. Rather, it created a government of separated institutions *sharing* powers.”<sup>54</sup> This is unlike the situation in European democracies, even if they too feature a separation of powers. In the United States, there is a binary fission that is not encountered in most European democracies, “based on the conscious segmentation of sovereignty, first along territorial lines (i.e. between the federated states and the federal state) and subsequently between governmental lines (i.e. between the federal governmental institutions).”<sup>55</sup>

We can expect that America’s more complex system of diffusing and checking power will serve as a greater constraint upon Donald Trump’s freedom of action than the looser Italian system did on Silvio Berlusconi. This is so, even if President Trump can avail himself (nominally, at least) of a Congress whose two houses are controlled by his own party, for, as we saw in the preceding section, this can turn out to be a very mixed blessing.

There remains one final aspect of the Berlusconi trope that warrants mention: the Italian prime minister’s foreign policy record. Is there anything in the manner in which Silvio Berlusconi directed Italian foreign affairs that might shed some light on how Donald Trump will seek to steer the American ship of state? If there is, in what does it consist? Some analysts do believe that Berlusconi changed both the form and the substance of Italian foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> Regarding form, he strongly personalized Italian diplomacy, fortified in the belief that his personal charisma could both ease “intimate relationship with important world leaders . . . [and] confer greater international status on him and his country.”<sup>57</sup> These personal special relationships also magnified Berlusconi’s concern for political communication and set the stage for him to pursue the “announcement policy,” according to which the essence of diplomatic intercourse lies in hosting events at which “several important announcement are to be made.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>55</sup>Sergio Fabbrini, *Compound Democracies: Why the United States and Europe Are Becoming Similar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143.

<sup>56</sup>See, for instance, James Walston, “Italian Foreign Policy in the ‘Second Republic’: Changes of Form and Substance,” *Modern Italy* 12 (February 2007): 91–104.

<sup>57</sup>Sergio Romano, “Italian Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14 (March 2009): 8–14.

<sup>58</sup>Filippo Andreatta and Elisabetta Brighi, “The Berlusconi Government’s Foreign Policy: The First 18 Months,” in Jean Blondel and Paolo Segatti, eds., *Italian Politics: The Second Berlusconi Government* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 221–236, at 224.

Regarding the substance of Italy's foreign policy, Berlusconi changed it by recalibrating the relative importance of traditional frameworks of the country's international posture. For instance, prior to 2001, "European integration' was a mantra of Italian foreign policy; under Berlusconi, Italy discovered euroscepticism."<sup>59</sup> Illustrative of this, the following year saw Berlusconi's decision to abandon the Airbus A400M long-range military transport aircraft, a European military procurement project that possessed enormous symbolic value linked to the "creation of a joint European defense system, which Italy had traditionally called for."<sup>60</sup> Most importantly, while before 2001, Italy had sought to balance the Atlantic, European, and Mediterranean frameworks in its foreign policy, under Berlusconi, Italy "took a decidedly more pro-American stance . . . at the expense of relations with traditional European and Middle Eastern partners," to the extent of actively supporting the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and participating in postinvasion operations, thus distancing itself loudly from the traditional engine of European integration, the Franco-German "axis."<sup>61</sup>

All in all, Berlusconi's personal diplomacy favored the development of direct bilateral relationships with great powers, and it was assumed that a clear pro-U.S. posture would increase Italian international influence. Yet these changes neither improved the international standing of the country nor made Berlusconi a key figure in transatlantic relations; to the contrary, Berlusconi's provocative behavior and statements attracted the attention of Italian and international media, in the process damaging the country's reputation and diminishing its perceived reliability within the European Union (EU). Nor did it help matters that at the start of Italy's presidency of the EU, in July 2003, Berlusconi "alienated more than just the Socialists in the European Parliament when he suggested that one of them, the German Martin Schulz, would be suitable to play the role of a Nazi concentration camp *kapo*."<sup>62</sup> By the time he stepped down in 2011, Berlusconi's choice to deemphasize the European dimension for the sake of special bilateral relations with the United States (as well as, it bears noting, with Russia) resulted in marginalizing the country in European diplomatic circles, leading to its exclusion from informal groupings through which the larger

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<sup>59</sup>Walston, "Italian Foreign Policy," 98.

<sup>60</sup>Andreatta and Brighi, "Berlusconi Government's Foreign Policy," 227.

<sup>61</sup>Filippo Andreatta, "Italian Foreign Policy: Domestic Politics, International Requirements and the European Dimension," *European Integration* 30 (March 2008): 169–181, at 175.

<sup>62</sup>Walston, "Italian Foreign Policy," 98. Schulz recently assumed the leadership of Germany's Social Democrats and will square off against Chancellor Angela Merkel in the federal election later in 2017.

EU members were seeking to comanage such compelling issues and crises as the Balkans and Afghanistan wars and the nuclear deal with Iran.

So, to recap a bit, if we are convinced that Trump is *no* Mussolini but that he may well be the “Berlusconi” that Jeff Greenfield, David Brooks, and so many others assume him to be, what would this likely mean, first for American domestic politics but also, and perhaps even especially, for the second question that has animated our writing of this article, namely, the implications of the Italian tutorial for the transatlantic relationship? With respect to the first question, we have already tipped our hand: we can take it as given that if Italy could have weathered the long Berlusconi era without too much lasting damage being inflicted upon the vitality of its democracy, then America, with its much more hearty network of institutional constraints upon executive power, will prove itself highly capable of accommodating its own version with much less difficulty than the chorus of Trump critics believe possible. On this score, we are more than reasonably upbeat: American democracy will survive, perhaps even be strengthened, as a result of the current Trump interlude. However, we take much more seriously the potential damage that Trump-as-Berlusconi might do to the transatlantic relationship America has with its allies, at a time when the former will definitely be grating upon the sensibilities of the latter, stimulating a resurgence of a kind of anti-Americanism within the transatlantic community that was on such vivid display prior to the arrival of Barack Obama in power. Only this time around, the “friendly fire anti-Americanism”<sup>63</sup> in the Western world will be energized not at all by worries about “unipolarity” and a lack of “balance” in the international system and instead will be focused upon concerns related to the personality and behavioral pattern of the American chief executive. Let us now turn to this, the second question animating this article.

### THE ITALIAN TUTORIAL, ANTI-AMERICANISM, AND THE FUTURE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

To the extent that Trump *is*, in some important sense, Berlusconi, the analogy depends more upon shared personality traits than it does upon anything else, which is quite different from the Trump-Mussolini analogy, in which we argued that sociopolitical context was far more significant than personality. Above all, the meaning of the Berlusconi trope is

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<sup>63</sup>To borrow imagery suggested more than a decade ago by Julia E. Sweig, *Friendly Fire: Losing Friends and Making Enemies in the Anti-American Century* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006).

dependent upon the sometimes ineffable notion of “temperament.” This is what bringing the “bunga bunga”<sup>64</sup> to America implies: that the United States is being led by a chief executive who demonstrates many of the personality foibles—not excluding lack of focus and a propensity toward prevarication—put on such regular display by Silvio Berlusconi. This, in turn, can be counted upon to generate an unhealthy erosion of the ability of President Trump’s fellow leaders in the Atlantic alliance to have much confidence in his judgment or to trust his leadership.

This is why the Italianization thesis possesses significance for the transatlantic alliance. It is not that Silvio Berlusconi proved to be troublesome for transatlantic relations during the previous decade; in fact, it would be almost easier to say the opposite, to argue that in joining with several other European leaders to support George W. Bush, even in what turned out to be a disastrous war in Iraq, Berlusconi actually helped contain the damage that the war threatened to wreak upon the alliance at a particularly fraught moment.<sup>65</sup> It is the character, *not* the foreign policy, of Berlusconi that is germane here. Obviously, character is important in the domestic political arena as well. But unlike in the American domestic arena, where there are abundant institutional constraints on quixotic individuals, in the international setting, the coin of institutionalism will always be a secondary measure of political value, important to a degree but not nearly as important as the currency of exchange resulting from the melding of common interests and shared values. Trust matters in domestic politics; it matters even more in international relationships, especially with important allies. A lack of trust correlates positively with an absence of both shared interests and values.

This is what gives the Italian tutorial such relevance for the discussion of the future of the transatlantic relationship. Already in the United States (and it goes without saying, in Europe as well), there are any number of analysts who are prepared to agree with Republican dissidents such as Eliot Cohen and predict an unhappy—nay, calamitous—outcome for the Trump era, domestically as well as internationally. Cohen’s analysis may seem apocalyptic, but to us it deserves citing here, if only because of its reference to foreign policy.

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<sup>64</sup>Pasquali, “Americans, Brace Yourselves for the Bunga Bunga.” The expression has been associated with a variety of behavioral traits linked with Berlusconi, many of these connected with his penchant for sex parties. As we use it here, it simply connotes highly quirky, erratic behavior, especially when manifested by the leader of a country.

<sup>65</sup>For a reminder of those strains of a dozen or so years ago, see Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

Precisely because the problem is one of temperament and character, it will not get better. It will get worse, as power intoxicates Trump and those around him. It will probably end in calamity—substantial domestic protest and violence, a breakdown of international economic relationships, the collapse of major alliances, or perhaps one or more new wars (even with China) on top of the ones we already have. It will not be surprising in the slightest if his term ends not in four or in eight years, but sooner, with impeachment or removal under the 25th Amendment. The sooner Americans get used to these likelihoods, the better.<sup>66</sup>

Is Cohen's pessimism justified in the sphere of foreign policy? Does Trump bid fair to exacerbate relations with the Europeans so as to lead to NATO's "collapse"? We tend to doubt that he does, but even if the alliance will survive, there is every likelihood that the coming years will witness a reemergence of the geopolitical tropism that looked to have been finally laid to rest during the Obama years. That tropism, of course, is associated with the concept of "anti-Americanism" in transatlantic relations, that is, what we referred to earlier as "friendly fire anti-Americanism" (FFAA) or what has been called by others "lite" anti-Americanism.<sup>67</sup> Whatever it is called, what makes this dispensation interesting, as well as potentially troubling, is that it is an attitudinal derivative of America's relationships with its traditional allies rather than its familiar adversaries. As such, it could be argued to detract from America's overall power in a way that confronting an adversary cannot consistently do (in fact, confronting adversaries can often be done deliberately, so as to mobilize resources and *augment* overall capability, with NSC-68 representing the best, although hardly the only, Cold War application of such an approach).<sup>68</sup> We think the signs of a reemerging FFAA have already begun to manifest themselves, but before we leap to the conclusion that NATO therefore is doomed and that Trump-as-Berlusconi is the culprit, we need to approach the question in a nuanced fashion. Especially, we need to exercise caution in demonstrating what we think FFAA has entailed in the recent past, for unless we understand the recent record of this dispensation, we will be at a loss to explain whether, and if so, how, anti-Americanism's return in the Trump era

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<sup>66</sup>Eliot A. Cohen, "A Clarifying Moment in American History," *The Atlantic*, 29 January 2017, accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/a-clarifying-moment-in-american-history/514868/>, 19 May 2017. See also David Brooks, "The Republican Fausts," *New York Times*, 31 January 2017 and Gail Collins, "Trump Stays Buggy," *New York Times*, 18 March 2017.

<sup>67</sup>Moisés Naím, "The Perils of Lite Anti-Americanism," *Foreign Policy* 136 (May/June 2003): 95–96.

<sup>68</sup>See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 89–126.

might generate important consequences for America's relationship with European allies.

We find it helpful to introduce at this juncture a framework for analysis that will be familiar to many students of international politics. We refer to Kenneth Waltz's three "images," or levels of analysis, stemming from his Columbia University dissertation, which led to his first and, in some respects, most significant book, titled *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*.<sup>69</sup> What Waltz labeled the "first image" puts the causative emphasis upon individual decision makers; his "second image" privileges the makeup of the discrete "units" of the international system, inquiring as it does into particular traits of individual states or the societies contained within them (or both); and his "third image" highlights the international system as the most important level of analysis—the system being understood both by its organizing principle of anarchy and its distribution of relative capability (also known as "power").

Although the subject matter that inspired Waltz's inquiry was the "cause" of war, we believe his framework can be applied to any number of other queries in international politics, including and especially those probing the nature and political significance of anti-Americanism in the transatlantic political sphere. How so? First-image analysts of FFAA would claim it is primarily, if not exclusively, a function of the personalities and behavior of American presidents; second-image analysts would emphasize societal (cultural) cleavages as between the United States and the transatlantic allies; and third-image analysts would stress how FFAA is correlated with asymmetries in power between Washington and the other NATO members, irrespective of personalities and cultures.

Anti-Americanism has been a topic of great debate in recent years, and not only in the particular variant covered here. Like so many important concepts in political science, it has resisted easy definition and sparked a great deal of controversy, to say nothing of heaps of scholarly and policy research.<sup>70</sup> Often, it has been second-image analyses that have set the

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<sup>69</sup>Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

<sup>70</sup>Examples include Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Irrational and Rational* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1995); Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Hating America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Gibson, *Hating America: The New World Sport* (New York: Regan Books, 2004); Russell Berman, *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2004); Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How We Are Different and Why We Are Disliked* (New York: Times Books, 2006); Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); and Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

temper of the transatlantic debate over anti-Americanism, with the very definition of the concept derived from societal disputes of endless emotional contention. As explained by Josef Joffe, European second-image critiques of the United States, which were encountered frequently during the George W. Bush years, batten upon the construction of heterostereotypes, or negative images of an Other, and can bear little or no relation to a reasoned critique of American foreign or domestic policy behavior. These traits represent, in Joffe's words, the "obsessive stereotypization, denigration, and demonization of the country and the culture as a whole," in which visions of a "Yahoo America" are juxtaposed with those of a "Superior Europe."<sup>71</sup> Two American students of the issue provide four hallmarks of such attitudinal (second-image) anti-Americanism, characterized by systematic antagonism toward an America held to incarnate evil; deliberate exaggeration of the country's shortcomings coupled with a denial that it might possess any merits; sustained misrepresentation of America for the purposes of advancing a political agenda; and constant misperception and ridiculing of American society.<sup>72</sup>

It is fair to say that second-image anti-Americanism is the variant that can be guaranteed to agitate Americans the most, particularly when it emanates from European allies that, to varying degrees, have been dependent upon American taxpayers' largesse to keep them protected, either from the erstwhile Soviet Union or from themselves. It is for this reason that Walter McDougall, a shrewd observer of America's foreign policy, chose in 1997 to begin his magisterial study of the country's strategic culture by quoting some lines from Randy Newman's satirical song "Political Science," in which the singer highlighted the unerring ability of allies to, as McDougall put it, "get our goat" with their constant criticisms.<sup>73</sup> Admittedly, there was nothing new, in the 1990s, about the tendency of American allies (either their leaders or their publics, or both) to criticize particular aspects of U.S. foreign and domestic policies.<sup>74</sup> Regularly during the Cold War, Washington seemed to be at odds with many of its friends

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<sup>71</sup>Josef Joffe, "Dissecting Anti-isms," *The American Interest* 1 (Summer 2006): 164–170. See also Joffe, *Überpower: The Imperial Temptation of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), chap. 3, "The Rise of Anti-Americanism."

<sup>72</sup>Rubin and Rubin, *Hating America*, viii–ix.

<sup>73</sup>Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 9.

<sup>74</sup>See Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1957); Annie Kriegel, "Consistent Misapprehension: European Views of America and Their Logic," *Daedalus* 101 (Fall 1972): 87–102; Thierry Maulnier, "L'Antiaméricanisme et les Américains," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 145 (March 1975): 522–526; and Marcus Cunliffe, "The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism," in Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem, eds., *Anti-Americanism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 20–36.

and allies, so much so that one U.S. defense secretary in the administration of Jimmy Carter was heard to query, apropos the receipt of news that the alliance had fallen into disarray, “When has NATO ever been in array?”<sup>75</sup>

As we know, these intra-alliance tensions of the Cold War, however grave they may have appeared at the time, ultimately proved to be less than fatal from the point of view of America’s (and, it must be said, its allies’) overriding interest, namely, the containment of the Soviet Union and the safeguarding of transatlantic security. The Soviets were held in check until they finally collapsed; the Western Europeans never did experience either a Soviet invasion or, just as bad, if not worse, a relapse into the kind of internecine, interstate bloodletting that had so frequently been their lot since the dawn of the Westphalian order in the mid-seventeenth century. However, beginning in the later years of the Bill Clinton administration and escalating dramatically during the first administration of George W. Bush, it started to become an article of widespread conviction that opposition globally, as well as in Europe, to what America did and even what it stood for had swollen to unprecedented proportions, with the obvious implication that, unless abated, the rising tide of anti-Americanism would be bound to have sinister implications for the United States and, presumably, for the entire West.<sup>76</sup> Then, it seemed to be much more a question of America’s getting its allies’ goats than of the reverse, for many were insisting that it was the anti-Americanism emanating from within the West, rather than from outside it, that would prove to be of utmost consequence as the Cold War receded from collective memory.<sup>77</sup>

Significantly, a great deal of this post-Cold War anti-Americanism could be said to have been “structural” in nature and inspiration, fueled by a conviction that with the demise of the Soviet Union and the era of bipolarity, the new era of “unipolarity” must prove an uncomfortable one for the interests of the European allies. Of course, not all of the transatlantic allies (or even most of them) regarded matters quite in this light, but one prominent European state did, and its stance attracted to it, and to Europe in general, a great deal of attention. That state was France. We introduce the French case because it tells us much about the anti-Americanism of the Bill Clinton/George W. Bush years, and because it can be expected to stand in contrast with whatever anti-Americanism might

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<sup>75</sup>Harold Brown, as quoted in David G. Haglund, “Must NATO Fail? Theories, Myths, and Policy Dilemmas,” *International Journal* 50 (Autumn 1995): 651–674, at 651.

<sup>76</sup>John Fonte, “Liberal Democracy and Transnational Progressivism: The Future of the Ideological Civil War within the West,” *Orbis* 46 (Winter 2002): 2–14.

<sup>77</sup>See, in particular, Christopher Coker, *Twilight of the West* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); and Robert Conquest, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

stem from America's being made to grate again on European sensibilities during the Trump era.

The French critique of America during the first flush of unipolarity was important not just because Paris seemed to be leading the charge against Washington (it *was* doing this) but also because of the reasons why it did so. France might not have been the country in which this ideological dispensation we know of as anti-Americanism originated, but it certainly can be argued to be the one place in the entire West where that dispensation managed to attain its “most sophisticated intellectual expression.”<sup>78</sup> This is in large part because in France, unlike elsewhere in Western Europe, anti-American positions were staked out almost as much, and likely more, on third-image bases than on either second- or first-image ones. This is an important point.

From the European perspective, those who fretted about life, first under Clinton and much more so under Bush,<sup>79</sup> analyzed their dilemma broadly in one of two ostensibly similar, but in reality divergent, fashions. There were those, such as the Germans, who concentrated upon an America that was comporting itself poorly, in the sense that it was abandoning the practice of “strategic restraint”<sup>80</sup> that had served as the pillar of the “constitutional order” within which Germany and Europe had become restored to economic and moral legitimacy after the Second World War.<sup>81</sup> For those who regarded matters in this fashion, what was needed was not so much a relatively weaker (that is, “balanced”) America as an America that was better behaved, one that understood that forging collective decisions on what was important (or not) served to advance both its *own* interests and those of its allies. The logical implication of this (essentially a first-image) criticism was that a solution to FFAA could easily be found if America were simply to choose a leader more congenial to the allies than George W. Bush was considered to have been.

But there was another, contrasting, position, articulated most clearly and most often by the French, and it accounts for the incipient structural critique of America that predated Bush and was on such vivid display

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<sup>78</sup>Walter Russell Mead, “Why Do They Hate Us? Two Books Take Aim at French Anti-Americanism,” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (March/April 2003): 139–142, at 139.

<sup>79</sup>For insight into the European mood prior to George W. Bush's presidency, see Martin Walker, “What Europeans Think of America,” *World Policy Journal* 17 (Summer 2000): 26–38.

<sup>80</sup>There is a lengthy scholarly debate as to whether power can be “restrained” by its possessors in such a way as to assuage allies (and possibly even potential adversaries). For a good summary of that debate, tinged with skeptical overtones, see Tudor Onea, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War: Restraint versus Assertiveness from George H. W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>81</sup>See G. John Ikenberry, “Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order,” *International Security* 23 (Winter 1998/1999): 43–78.

during the Kosovo War of 1999, a conflict that for a time looked more to have pitted the United States against France than to have ranged either of these allies against Serbia.<sup>82</sup> It was a position suffused with the conviction that “multipolarity” was a much more propitious structure of the international system than either of the two logical alternatives of bipolarity and unipolarity. No one manifested this structural (third-image) aspect of FFAA better than Hubert Védrine, who served as Lionel Jospin’s minister of foreign affairs from 1997 to 2002. To Védrine, what constituted the crux of the problem for Paris was not so much American behavior (held to be epiphenomenal) but rather American *power*—power, that is, that was relative to others in the international system at a time when the historical adversary of the Cold War era of bipolarity had ceased to exist. For the French, it was simply inconceivable that America could be enjoined or expected to behave in a more satisfactory manner if the principal determinant of that behavior—its relative capability—was not somehow “balanced.” To his credit, Védrine acknowledged that were Paris to possess as much power as Washington did, it probably would behave in a manner judged by allies to be even more insufferable than American behavior!<sup>83</sup>

It would, of course, be highly misleading to imagine that this structural, one could almost say “antiseptic,” variant of FFAA was the sole version on offer in France.<sup>84</sup> France, as elsewhere in Europe, also had critics of America whose targets were the latter’s perceived cultural and other societal foibles, defects that were as resistant to repair as any third-image demerits of the United States, as glimpsed by trepidatious European publics. But it was in France, much more than elsewhere in the Atlantic alliance, that third-image considerations played a central part in shaping geostrategic cognition, and that did set it apart from the European mainstream.

For what that mainstream really did not desire, certainly not during the Cold War and not even since 1991, was a weakened America, brought about

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<sup>82</sup>For French critiques of America during the Clinton years, see in particular Jean Guisnel, *Les Pires Amis du monde: Les relations franco-américaines à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1999); and Catherine Durandin, *La France contre l’Amérique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

<sup>83</sup>Hubert Védrine, *Les Cartes de la France: À l’heure de la mondialisation* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), 50. It was Védrine who was credited with coining the very structural label for America as a “hyperpower.” For another structural critique, see Dominique David, “Pourquoi sommes-nous ‘anti-américains?’,” *Études* 398 (January 2003): 9–20.

<sup>84</sup>For comprehensive assessments (and criticisms) of French anti-Americanism, see Jean-François Revel, *L’Obsession anti-américaine: Son fonctionnement, ses causes, ses conséquences* (Paris: Plon, 2002); Philippe Roger, *L’Ennemi américain: Généalogie de l’antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Pierre Rigoulot, *L’Antiaméricanisme: Critique d’un prêt-à-penser rétrograde et chauvin* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004); and Bernard-Henri Lévy, *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, trans. Charlotte Mandel (New York: Random House, 2006).

presumably by the mysterious qualities of something known as “soft balancing.” Instead, what the European mainstream desired was a better-behaved America, something that seemed to have been delivered by the American electorate in November 2008, when the very popular Barack Obama won the White House.<sup>85</sup> With Obama’s replacement by the very unpopular Donald Trump, Europeans once more are beginning to wonder about the reliability of their American ally, partly for familiar reasons but also for very unfamiliar ones. We have already witnessed an upsurge in anti-Trump emotionalism that could spread to revulsion, not just of the president but to the country itself. This being said, there are also some important differences with respect to the FFAA that was witnessed in the Clinton and Bush years (especially the latter), and they give us a hint as to what we may reasonably anticipate during a time when many Europeans look at Donald Trump and see Silvio Berlusconi.

## CONCLUSIONS

European governments continue to place a high value on the Atlantic alliance, much higher than was the case during the recent bout of third-image FFAA, when a mood of optimism bordering on euphoria, if not delusion, led some policy intellectuals (and a few policymakers) to imagine that an era in which America had a reduced presence in European affairs was bound to be a pleasant era.<sup>86</sup> Things are very different today, and optimism is not a quality in abundant supply on the Old Continent. The reasons for Europe’s current geopolitical funk are as apparent as they are numerous. Russia has reemerged as a geostrategic menace for many, although not all, of the European Union member-states. The aftereffects of the financial crisis of 2008 continue to be felt in a Europe with too much economic divergence and too little currency flexibility, leading to acrimony on the respective merits/demerits of austerity and budget balancing—acrimony sometimes couched in language both reflecting and exacerbating cultural schisms between northern and southern Europeans. Britain is leaving the EU. The threat of “homegrown” terrorism continues unabated and may be increasing. And for good measure, the migratory crisis

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<sup>85</sup>For the rise and demise of European “soft balancing” against the United States, see Lorenzo Cladi and Andrea Locatelli, eds., *International Relations Theory and European Security: We Thought We Knew* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>86</sup>See, for this earlier sense of optimism regarding the EU’s prospects, Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Mark Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005); and Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

associated with, but not completely linked to, the Syrian civil war goes on defying easy resolution, notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) the current Band-Aid response worked out between the EU and an ever more rebarbative Turkey. Even if the risk of terrorism associated with migratory flows can be grossly overstated, there remains the challenge that high levels of immigration can and do pose to “societal” (or what some term, “ontological”) security in important European countries—a challenge that has had a great deal to do with fueling the current enthusiasm in many parts of the Old Continent for populist political parties.

Most worrisome for Europeans is the thought that they might value NATO much more highly than the United States does. There is certainly a basis for their worry, one that is rooted in what Donald Trump so often said about “freeloading” allies on the campaign trail. He, of course, is not the first president to remark upon the discrepancy between the relative size of the American budgetary contributions to collective defense and that of the country’s allies. In this respect, there is really nothing erratic or otherwise remarkable about his emphasis upon the merits of more equitable “burden-sharing”: all of Trump’s predecessors from the time of Dwight D. Eisenhower down to the present have sounded similar themes. What really stimulates European fears, however, is the suspicion that Donald Trump, being more like Silvio Berlusconi than any previous chief executive, might actually deliver on what he sometimes threatens to do and leave allies to their own devices. In a word, President Trump is seen as being a bit too quirky for the Europeans to count upon—one of the reasons why some in Europe have begun to imagine that they might need to confront a world in which America has cut them adrift.<sup>87</sup> This is especially so for those Europeans who understand what it was like to live in a world when “America First” was not just a campaign slogan but a foreign policy doctrine of a determinedly isolationist America.

Neatly capturing this radically altered European mood is a dispute that arose over an editorial cartoon gracing the cover of the 4 February 2017 edition of the popular German newsweekly *Der Spiegel*. Depicted was President Trump, holding a sword in his left hand and the freshly severed head of the Statue of Liberty in his right hand (the context here was the president’s initial attempt to “ban” immigration from seven predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East and Africa). Many in Germany and elsewhere questioned both the cartoonist’s taste and his editor’s judgment.

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<sup>87</sup>Max Fisher, “Fearing U.S. Withdrawal, Europe Considers Its Own Nuclear Deterrent,” *New York Times*, 7 March 2017.

Just as many were convinced that, to the extent that a new era of FFAA loomed in the transatlantic world, it had much more to do with sentiments of abandonment than with anything else. Noted the German tabloid *Bild*, while *Spiegel* had developed for itself quite a reputation for being anti-American during the years in which the Iraq War was inflaming passions in the transatlantic world, “[t]hen it was often American interventionism that *Spiegel* was criticising, while with Trump it is the end of interventionism that *Spiegel* is criticising.”<sup>88</sup>

No one can say whether we are likely to see come to pass any American abandonment of NATO; frankly, we doubt that it will. But that such fears are now being expressed by otherwise sentient figures in transatlantic security affairs is a testament to the current level of anxiety and mistrust regarding the president. American leadership still matters, a great deal. The skills required to provide this may simply be far too much for a Berlusconi in the White House to muster. This is why we happen to believe that the negative consequences of the Trump presidency will be experienced much more abroad than they will be in the United States itself.

The evidence to date on Trumpian presidential skills is, of course, partial, and what little there is of it is hardly encouraging for Atlanticists. Things may change for the better, once (or if) the new administration gets a chance to find its footing. Or, if Eliot Cohen is to be believed, things might improve as a result of an impeachment or a resignation. But for the short term at least, it is hard to summon much enthusiasm for the prospect of continued American leadership of the West if America really is to be led by Silvio Berlusconi. Nor does it appear to us that the “counter-analogy” proffered by some Trump supporters mentioned previously<sup>89</sup> supplies much in the way of comfort, because if there really is to be any substance in the “Jacksonian” motif, it would seem more to invite comparisons with Michael Jackson than with Andrew. For whatever else America’s seventh president represented, it was decidedly not a predilection to quirkiness.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>As reported by the BBC, “Der Spiegel: Trump Beheading Cover Sparks Criticism,” 4 February 2017, accessed at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38867961>, 19 May 2017.

<sup>89</sup>See n. 5 herein.

<sup>90</sup>It could well be, as Walter Russell Mead claims, that Trump’s followers represent the resurgence of “Jacksonian” America in a sociological sense, but anyone familiar with the two presidents’ respective biographies would have difficulty finding much of a Jacksonian in the life and persona of Donald J. Trump. See Walter Russell Mead, “The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal Order,” *Foreign Affairs* 96 (March/April 2017): 2–7. On Jackson, the best starting point is Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2008).