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Populism and Foreign Policy: Deepening Divisions and Decreasing Efficiency

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ABSTRACT: With the rise of populism across the global system, gauging populism's impact on foreign policy becomes more and more important. One particular form of contemporary populism especially on the rise in the West is radical right populism, blending nativism and anti-establishment sentiments. Using new survey data from the United States and qualitative interviews with foreign policy experts in the Republic of Georgia, we show that this form of contemporary populism has two major implications for foreign policy. First, that the nativist rhetoric and proposed policies of populist leaders deepen divisions in foreign policy attitudes among the electorate and make compromise by lawmakers on matters of foreign policy and immigration difficult. Second, that the anti-establishment demands of populists will lead to new, inexperienced foreign policy officials, producing a foreign policy apparatus that is fickle and inefficient, especially in crisis situations.

Keywords: Populism, Foreign Policy, Nativism, Public Opinion, Anti-establishment Sentiments.

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Introduction

In contemporary political discourse, populism is a central topic of both domestic and international politics. Despite its popularity, the wide-ranging definitions and understandings of populism make it tricky to explore. This has renewed academic interest in the concept of populism, including its sources, defining features, and consequences.[1] One potential consequence of populism, which is not well understood, is its impact on foreign policy. We focus on radical right populism, a strain of contemporary populism that is nativist and anti-establishment, and draw on recent public opinion data in the United States and interviews with foreign policy officials in the Republic of Georgia to

1 Bowler et al., "Right-wing populist party supporters: Dissatisfied but not direct democrats," *European Journal of Political Research* 56 (2016): 70-91; Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," HKS Working Paper No. RWP16-026 (2016); Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, "What Unites Right-Wing Populists in Western Europe? Re-examining Grievance Mobilization Models in Seven Successful Cases," *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (2008): 2-23; Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis S. Pappas, *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (Colchester, UK: European Consortium for Political Research Press, 2015); Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jan-Werner Muller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

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show that these two facets of populism produce deep divisions in foreign policy attitudes and inefficiency at the policymaking level.

The definition of populism is still up for debate. Populist movements and leaders have drawn on various themes and issues, from both the traditional left and right, to appeal to potential supporters and distinguish the good, pure people from some set of immoral, corrupted elite.[2] One form of populist politics gaining widespread support and international attention is radical right populism. Radical right populism draws a distinction between the people and the elite along authoritarian, nativist and anti-establishment lines. Authoritarian meaning the maintenance of a strict social and moral order, nativist meaning the view of non-natives as fundamentally threatening to the nation,[3] and anti-establishment indicating a focus on overturning existing political institutions and providing an "antidote" to political elitism through a "bold infusion of popular will."[4] At its foundations, all political populism seeks to fix social and political ailments by claiming a true understanding of the remedy and exclusive representation of the pre-defined people, and therefore is exclusionary and anti-establishment. This essay will focus specifically on contemporary radical right populism, which is exclusionary of non-native individuals and groups (nativist) and discontented with the political status quo (anti-establishment).[5] Our research points to a bleak foreign policy characterized by division, gridlock, inefficiency, and minimized crisis preparedness if this populist trend continues.

Nativist Component of Populism and Potential Impacts on Foreign Policy

Donald Trump campaigned on and is implementing nativist populist policies, including a Muslim travel ban, deportation of illegal immigrants, increased border patrols, and significant cuts to diplomatic and foreign aid funding. He is part of a wave of populist leaders who foster racial or ethnic resentment and insecurity as they distinguish the native, good people from the foreign, threatening "other." A major consequence of this political separation between native and other is hardened divisions among the populace on issues of foreign policy and unwillingness on the behalf of elected representatives to

2 Muller, *What is Populism*, 1-7.

3 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe,* 22.

4 Donald J. Trump, "Let Me Ask America a Question," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2016, accessed June 28, 2017, https://www.wsj.com/articles/let-me-ask-america-a-question-1460675882.

5 It should be noted that radical right populism is by no means the only game in town in contemporary politics. Despite recent gains, populist radical right leaders face resistance and have been defeated by a range of alternatives. In some cases, traditional parties have maintained power while in others, anti-establishment sentiments allowed for new, non-radical right actors to prevail. Additionally, populism is not only a far right phenomenon. Left-wing populism has gained traction in the U.S. and in European countries such as Spain and Greece. Here, populism still involves a distinction between us and them, but usually along economic rather than cultural lines. Thus, our hypotheses of the impact of radical right populism on foreign policy may extend to other types of populism that also rely on exclusion of some "other" and a rejection of established politics.

compromise on such matters.

During the presidential campaign, when Trump turned to nativism his polling numbers jumped and support from various race-based hate groups increased. American white nationalist groups rarely give public support to a candidate, suggesting that normally candidates are too far from their interests. Yet, four white nationalist leaders formally endorsed Trump.[6] A white nationalist journal claimed Trump tapped into the fears of all white Americans, and that his "support comes from people who are more like [white nationalists] than he'd like to admit."[7] According to one white nationalist leader, Trump espouses "the closest thing to [white] nationalism that we have seen since the Jingoistic era," when non-European life was considered "absolutely incompatible with the existence of civilization."[8] A former Ku Klux Klan (KKK) leader claimed a direct spike in website visits after Trump proposed a Muslim ban, saying Trump had "clearly been a benefit" to the KKK and attracted more people to the white supremacist cause.[9] Research groups monitoring white supremacist groups in America, including the Southern Poverty Law Center, note the marked increase in the ranks of white nationalist and alt-right groups since Trump's campaign and election.[10] The connection between Trump and nativist groups in America was strengthened after deadly clashes in Charlottesville, Virginia during a white nationalist rally in August 2017, where a former KKK leader demanded Trump remember his "White American" supporters.

The nativist component of contemporary populism is also evident in the rhetoric and proposals of populist parties across Europe. France's National Front's 2015 manifesto stated that immigrant assimilation is no longer possible and called for a relentless fight against immigration, including severe limits on legal immigration, increased requirements for citizenship, priority for French citizens in public services, a ban on dual nationality, and increased punishment for "anti-French" crimes.[11] In reference to the refugee crisis, the party's leader Marine Le Pen lamented France's "migratory submersion" in "bacterial" migrants, signaling to her supporters the perceived status of refugees as inherently

6 Olivia Becker, "White Supremacists are Loving Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign," *Vice News*, December 13, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, https://news.vice.com/article/white-supremacists-are-loving-donald-trumps-presidential-campaign.

7 Evan Osnos, "The Fearful and the Frustrated: Donald Trump's Nationalist Coalition Takes Shape - For Now," *The New Yorker*, August 31, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-fearful-and-the-frustrated.

8 "Exclusive: US Neo-Nazi Leader Says Donald Trump 'the Real Deal'," *TeleSur*, December 9, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/Exclusive-US-Neo-Nazi-Leader-Says-Donald-Trump-the-Real-Deal-20151209-0019.html.

9 Becker, "White Supremacists are Loving Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign."

10 Nicolas Pollock and Sophia Myszkowski, "Hate Groups are Growing Under Trump," filmed June 2017 at Aspen Ideas Festival by *The Atlantic*, video, 1:59, accessed August 21, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/536793/hate-groups-are-growing-under-trump/.

11 Party manifesto was updated in February 2017 prior to the French presidential elections, so the 2015 Manifesto can no longer be accessed on the party website. Le Pen's 2017 "144 Presidential Commitments" includes many of the same reforms, if with slightly altered language.

threatening.[12] The party is one of the most popular in France and Le Pen ultimately lost in the 2017 presidential runoff, but only after garnering widespread attention, shaping the election's discourse, and attaining a record high 10 million votes for the party. In Germany, the formerly unelected Alternative for Germany party, which called for police to shoot refugees crossing the border in 2016, now holds seats in 10 state legislatures. In Poland, the governing Law and Justice Party's leader Jarosław Kaczyński warned that Muslim immigrants would cause epidemics in Poland due to parasites they carry that are dangerous to Poles.[13] Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban vowed to make Hungary an "illiberal state"[14] open only to "genuine" Hungarians.[15] In the 2016 Austrian presidential elections, the nativist populist Freedom Party advanced to the run-off and lost by only 31,000 votes.[16]

These examples show the nativist strains of contemporary populism prevalent across America and Europe.[17] This component of populism has major repercussions for political attitudes, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. An understanding of politics, and the world, as a battle between natives and non-natives translates to foreign policy attitudes that are skeptical of the intentions and actions of foreign countries and peoples. The diffusion of such attitudes, made possible by the legitimation of radical right populism, produces a fervent reaction to such attitudes. This results in deeply ingrained divisions on matters of foreign policy amongst the electorate. We can see that this is the case in the United States based on findings from the University of Maryland's Critical Issue Poll, a

12 Adam Nossiter, "National Front Faces Tougher Climb to Victory in France," *The New York Times*, December 11, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2015/12/12/world/europe/victory-for-frances-right-wing-party-appears-to-be-imperiled.

13 Remi Adekoya, "A Law and Justice victory in Poland could be good news for Putin," *The Guardian,* October 24, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/24/law-and-justice-poland-putin-russia.

14 "Illiberalism: Playing with Fear," *The Economist*, December 12, 2015, accessed June 27, 2017, http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21679792-america-and-europe-right-wing-populist-politicians-are-march-threat.

15 George Szirtes, "Hungary has been shamed by Viktor Orbán's government," *The Guardian*, September 16, 2015, accessed June 27. 2017, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/16/hungary-shamed-viktor-orban-refugee-hungarian-serbian.

16 Kate Connolly, Philip Oltermann, and Jon Henley, "Austria elects Green candidate as president in narrow defeat for far right," *The Guardian*, May 23, 2016, accessed June 27, 2017, /www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/far-right-candidate-defeated-austrian-presidential-election-norbert-hofer.

17 While outside the scope of this essay, it should be noted that the contemporary popularity of nativist populism is connected to widespread, pre-existing racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiments. The November 2016 Eurobarometer, a biannual survey of European Union (EU) citizens, found that a majority of Europeans have a negative feeling toward immigrants from outside the EU. Recent Gallup polling in the U.S. shows that race relations and immigration are top concerns of the American public. The 2015 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) found 56 percent of white Americans and 80 percent of Republican respondents think all illegal immigrants should be identified and deported. A majority of Americans disagree that it is hard for black Americans to overcome discrimination, including 85 percent of Republicans and 66 percent of independents/minor party supporters. This survey was conducted in the fall 2015, early in the Trump campaign, suggesting these represent pre-existing feelings prevalent among American voters, especially white Republicans and independents.

public opinion survey of American citizens with a focus on issues of foreign policy.[18] It is also likely that such divisions are monitored and reflected by representatives and manifest into unwillingness to compromise on matters of foreign policy by policy-makers.

University of Maryland's Critical Issues Poll surveys spanning 2016-2017 display the effect of Trump's nativist populist rhetoric on a range of issues relating to foreign policy. For example, an April 2017 poll shows a deep partisan divide over attitudes toward Muslim refugees, with 88 percent of Republicans supporting a Muslim ban and 86 percent of Democrats opposing one.[19] In another example related to immigration, the survey found that 84 percent of Trump voters support a border wall with Mexico while 87 percent of Clinton voters oppose the wall.[20] Thus, Trump supporters display nativist foreign policy attitudes while non-supporters' attitudes appear in firm opposition.

This gap between Trump supporters and non-supporters widened over the last year, especially on the topic of refugees. Between May 2016-April 2017, the percentage of Democrats that support accepting Middle Eastern refugees after security screening increased from 77 percent to 83 percent, while 63 percent of Republicans remained opposed over the same time.[21] As Shibley Telhami argued, while this may be because Trump's success emboldened his supporters, it is more likely because it united those in opposition to him and his proposed policies. As Telhami puts it, "the more one side emphasized the issue...the more the other side took the opposite position."[22] In another example of the increasing gap resulting from nativist populist rhetoric, between October 2016-April 2017, the percentage of Republicans with an unfavorable view of the Muslim religion increased from 63 percent to 73 percent while the percentage of Democrats with

18 The Critical Issue Poll (CPI), started in 2016, conducts multiple public opinion surveys a year to examine American attitudes on salient political topics and potential attitude shifts in response to recent events. The survey focuses on foreign policy questions, especially related to the Middle East, and domestic issues such as race and demographic change. The study's director is Shibley Telhami, The Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development, and the associate director is Stella Rouse, director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland. Survey panels consist of a probability-based representative sample, recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its probability-based national panel, contacted by mail/telephone using a random sample provided by Survey Sampling International. Responses weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, geographic region, and partisan identification. CPI findings recently appeared in Politico, NBC News, Reuters, The Washington Post, Foreign Policy, and Defense News and were presented at the Brookings Institution.

19 The Critical Issues Poll results and reports can be accessed online at: https://criticalissues.umd.edu/landing/Research. The April 2017 survey included 2,138 respondents; the margin of error is 2.12 percent.

20 "Trump's First 100 Days Examining Voter Attitudes during Trump's Presidency," *Critical Issues Poll,* April 2017, accessed June 27, 2017, https://criticalissues.umd.edu/sites/criticalissues.umd.edu/files/umcip_april_2017_report_5.pdf.

21 Shibley Telhami, "Syria strikes, travel ban, refugees, and Muslims: American attitudes on Trump's early policies" (powerpoint presented at Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy event on May 11, 2017), accessed June 27, 2017, https://sadat.umd.edu/sites/sadat.umd.edu/files/may_2017_presentation_final_version_edited.pdf.

22 Shibley Telhami, "How Trump changed Americans' view of Islam – for the better," *The Washington Post,* January 25, 2017, accessed June 27, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/25/americans-dont-support-trumps-ban-on-muslim-immigration.

a favorable view of the religion remained consistent at 65 percent.[23] This division extends beyond foreign policy issues relating to refugees. Surveys carried out between 2014-2016 show that over time Republicans remained stable in the attitude that the U.S. should do nothing in response to new Israeli settlements, with 86-88 percent agreeing, while Democrats gradually coalesced in opposition, from 48-49 percent in 2014 and 2015 to 60 percent in 2016.[24] In all, we see a widening gap and hardened divide between opposing attitudes on a range of foreign policy issues since the emergence and legitimation of Trump's nativist populism.

While opinion surveys provide limited insight into policy formation, it is plausible to expect representatives to respond to and reflect this deepening divide between constituents. This is especially likely given that foreign policy issues, like fighting the Islamic State, poll as top concerns of the American public, making the stakes on these issues high for elected officials. It is also plausible that as policymakers and opinion leaders take a stance on a foreign policy issue, it will gain traction in the media and further divide the electorate.[25] Thus, the nativist underpinning of contemporary populism in America deepens divisions within the electorate on critical issues of foreign policy and makes compromise among partisan policy-makers harder to come by on issues relating to foreign policy, immigration, and diplomacy.

It is reasonable to expect these predictions apply beyond the U.S for a few reasons. First, as discussed earlier, nativist populism is present in the rhetoric and proposed reforms on issues of foreign policy and immigration in other democracies. Second, across Europe, immigration and terrorism poll as top concerns of the electorate, signaling the high salience of foreign policy related issues.[26] Third, individual support for populist parties in Europe is remarkably stable and, like in the U.S., recent campaigns have been notably contentious on issues of foreign policy, immigration, and national sovereignty. Finally, the incentives facing elected representatives in the United States are consistent across democratic countries, where policy makers have a vested interest in the views of their constituents. Overall, from this survey data we see widening and hardening divisions over foreign policy that discourages compromise among representatives involved in foreign policy development.

23 The October 2016 survey included 1,528 respondents and a 2.5 percent margin of error.

24 Shibley Telhami, "American Attitudes on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (powerpoint presented at Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy event on December 2, 2016), accessed June 27, 2017, https://criticalissues.umd.edu/sites/criticalissues.umd.edu/files/brookings_december_2016_presentation_final.pdf.

25 John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

26 The May 2017 Eurobarometer. Reports can be accessed online at: http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD.

Anti-Establishment Component of Populism and Potential Impacts on Foreign Policy

The anti-establishment facet of modern populism blames established political leaders for failing the people and demands new alternatives to traditional party actors and policies. American's contemporary dissatisfaction with parties,[27] expressed desire for a third party,[28] and high levels of independent identifiers[29] all signal discontent with politics as usual. These trends also appear in other countries as evidenced by increased voter volatility and recent party system shake-ups in countries such as the United Kingdom, Austria, and France. Anti-establishment demands can lead to an infusion of new people into government, but this infusion can have a negative impact on creating clear and concise foreign policy.

Donald Trump says he will "drain the swamp," signaling the perceived unsavory nature of those in power and the need to eliminate them. In France, one of Le Pen's selling points is that she is a political outsider, supported by people who wanted to "[send] all those people who have been elected since 1981 back to nowhere,"[30] despite her party's forty plus year history in French politics. Le Pen argues that, "the French need new people who break free from bad habits. We are in a system that is a little rotten. We need a fresh pair of eyes."[31] In public criticism of former President Hollande in 2015, Le Pen accused him of serving as "vice chancellor" to Angela Merkel and allowing Germany to administer the "province of France."[32] By propagating this image of established political leaders as weak, corrupt, and co-opted against the interests of the native people, Le Pen and other populists spur anti-establishment sentiment and delegitimize the political status quo.

Such rhetoric cannot be expected to evaporate upon election, as Muller notes, "populists can govern as populists."[33] When populist demands for new political actors are implemented, we can expect diminished expertise and experience among those involved in policy development and implementation. Often this means high-level officers picked

27 "Party Images Stable Amid Heated Nomination Contests," *Gallup Poll*, May 31, 2016, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/191921/party-images-stable-amid-heated-nomination-contests.aspx.

28 "Americans' Desire for Third Party Persists This Election Year," *Gallup Poll*, September 30, 2016, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/195920/americans-desire-third-party-persists-election-year.aspx.

29 "Democratic, Republican Identification Near Historical Lows," *Gallup Poll*, January 11, 2016, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.gallup.com/poll/188096/democratic-republican-identification-near-historical-lows.aspx.

30 Frank Langfit, "French Workers In Calais Throw Support Behind Marine Le Pen," *NPR*, April 11, 2017, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2017/04/11/523450953/french-workers-in-calais-throw-support-behind-marine-le-pen.

31 Anne-Sylvaine Chassany and Roula Khalaf, "Marine Le Pen lays out radical vision to govern France," *Financial Times*, March 5, 2015, accessed June 28, 2017 at: https://www.ft.com/content/21c43558-c32e-11e4-ac3d-00144feab7de?mhq5j=e3.

32 "French far right's Marine Le Pen clashes with Hollande," *France 24*, October 8, 2015, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.france24.com/en/20151008-french-far-right-marine-le-pen-clashes-with-hollande.

33 Muller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 4.

for loyalty rather than experience - or even picked for their inexperience, untouched by the presumed corruption of a career in politics. Trump has been noted by both Elizabeth Saunders[34] and Daniel Drezner[35] for his tendency to surround himself with inexperienced foreign policy advisers and agents. Under Trump this has led to a "vacuum of leadership" in the State Department and numerous high level vacancies.[36] While other populist leaders like Wilders and Le Pen were unsuccessful in their bids for power, their rhetoric suggests they would have taken similar action, displacing long-standing foreign policy experts in exchange for new, less-corrupted officials, had they entered office. What happens then, when foreign policy it is turned over to those with limited expertise and experience?

We collected thirty-five open-ended interviews with foreign policy officials in the Republic of Georgia, including multiple ex-Ambassadors, ex-advisors and current high-level foreign service officers, on the topic of foreign policy formation and the impacts of inexperience. We found evidence that inexperience results in unclear policy direction and decreased crisis management, with elites suggesting inexperienced decision-makers lack the ability to "own" policy and correctly calculate crisis response.

Georgia is an excellent case study for the question of limited expertise and impacts on foreign policy for several reasons. Georgia is a small country, with many high-level political actors who are extremely open to interviews. The importance of this accessibility cannot be underestimated, as it widens the breadth of possible interviews and therefore strengthens the generalizability of any conclusions. Georgians also consider themselves Western actors and see themselves as having a Western identity, especially those involved in the government.[37] As an ex-Deputy Minister said, "Geography [...] very much creates the identity of Georgians, which means that, we are leaned towards the West, Georgians have that mindset, we are someone of the West."[38] Georgia is an open democracy, comparable to Hungary and considered more open than Ukraine and Moldova, and is actively working to join the European Union.[39] The formation of foreign policy in Georgia is very similar to other democracies, largely originating with the bureaucracy through a Foreign Minister and Foreign Department, with additional foreign policy powers vested

34 Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Mitch McConnell thinks you don't need experience to be president. Here's why he's wrong," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2016, accessed July 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/27/mitch-mcconnell-thinks-you-dont-need-experience-to-be-president-heres-why-hes-wrong/.

35 Daniel W. Drezner, "What campaign promises would a President Trump try to keep?" *The Washington Post*, November 4, 2016, accessed July 28, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/11/04/what-campaign-promises-would-a-president-trump-try-to-keep.

36 Atwood, Kylie. "State Department feels the pain of vacancies," *CBS*, July 25, 2017, accessed 8/11/2017 at http://www.cbsnews.com/news/state-department-feels-the-pain-of-vacancies/.

37 In-person interviews conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #2-6380, #3-7600, #4-9149, #5-1464, #6-5261, #9-8577 for some examples. McCulloch (2017) data.

38 In-person interview conducted on April 19th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #9-8577. McCulloch (2017) data.

39 Freedom House. *Freedom in the World 2016: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

in its executive and legislative bodies. While the United States and Georgia have different foreign policy concerns due to size, alliances, and international position, they do share comparable institutions. Overwhelmingly, interviewees suggested that while international context (the threat of Russia, alliance positions, etc.) is important in informing foreign policy, the process of policy formation was largely dependent on regime type.[40] Georgia therefore offers a rare chance to question top foreign policy leadership about foreign policy formation while allowing a degree of generalizability to other democratic nations.

The dilemma of foreign policy inexperience is ever present in Georgia, although for different reasons than the populist influx of new officials. In such a small country, there is a limited amount of experts to pull from. This, as well, makes Georgia an ideal case for identifying issues caused by inexperience. When the top leadership in the foreign service is purged with government changeover or older foreign policy experts retire, it is hard to recruit experienced officers. An ex-foreign policy adviser to the president said simply "in Georgia we have problems with qualifications" and finding those who possess them.[41] This regular influx of inexperienced officials takes time to overcome; as an ex-Ambassador pointed out "new people come and they need to learn new skills, [learn the] alphabet of foreign policy, [the] alphabet of security policy - talking to people, foreigners, et cetera, et cetera… that takes time."[42] To overcome inexperience, intelligence is not enough; the same ex-adviser also stated: "being the foreign minister of the country and being the main guy to shape foreign policy requires something more than being a smart guy."[43] It requires years of training and experience to make the types of decisions required of foreign policy officials.

While the root of the inexperience may be different in this situation from the problem in more populist governments, the impact is similar. Elites suggest that lack of experience leads to two major things. First is a lack of clear foreign policy direction, making it hard for audiences to follow and engage with foreign policy. Second is a lack of efficiency in foreign policy response, especially in security and crisis situations.

Elites strongly suggested that having a coherent and transparent foreign policy is a "matter of skills more than actual process"[44] and that these skills are built up over time by experience. Lack of experience was linked repeatedly to both less governmental ownership of policy direction and lack of transparency. This is because inexperienced foreign policy elites are unwilling to make and then stand firmly behind foreign policy

40 In-person interviews conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #2-6380, #3-7600, #4-9149, #5-1464, #13-7020, #36-4100 for some examples. McCulloch (2017) data.

41 In-person interview conducted on June 26th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #36-4100. McCulloch (2017) data.

42 In-person interview conducted on May 10th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #13-7020. McCulloch (2017) data.

43 In-person interview conducted on June 26th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #36-4100. McCulloch (2017) data.

44 In-person interview conducted on May 10th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #13-7020. McCulloch (2017) data.

decisions, and when they do make decisions, they are more prone to being wrong. This confuses domestic and international audiences as it draws away from having a central foreign policy message.[45] These fluctuations in policies are often seen as fickleness, and lead to uncertainty among voters and foreign countries about government positions and policy direction.[46]

The lack of efficiency, however, is more worrisome. In crises, policy from less experienced foreign policy professionals was seen as less effective and less responsive. Another ex-Ambassador pointed out that inexperienced foreign policy elites simply "cannot make quality calculations in [this] difficult environment"[47]—a statement backed by two other elites, who also pointed out that inexperienced foreign policy advisors are not capable of properly calculating responses, and that this is exacerbated under the pressure of a crisis.[48] Previous academic work agrees, arguing that it is common for inexperienced leaders to commit "serious errors" in foreign policy, unable to form sound calculations of risks and opportunities - especially unable to "skillfully manag[e] a crisis."[49]

While these interviews are specific to the Republic of Georgia, we argue that inexperience and its impacts are fairly universal. It is human nature to learn through trial and error, and the generalizable predictions from interviewed experts are that inexperienced foreign policy elites result in more extreme fluctuations in foreign policy decisions and governments that are less prepared to deal with crisis. Trump's presidency has, thus far, been in line with such predictions. He has not set a clear foreign policy path for the United States, and has in general demonstrated fairly fickle foreign policy, from his movement on the obsoleteness of NATO[50] to his shifting foreign policy towards major powers like China.[51] These elite interviews suggest that Trump's current foreign policy is not a political or tactical trick but simply a sign of his and his advisers' inexperience. Foreign policy is a game of weighing many different simultaneous options and possible outcomes. Anti-establishment policies and new, inexperienced foreign policy elites can lead to decreased clarity, capacity to calculate, and crisis response in foreign policy.

A specific form of populism characterized by nativist and anti-establishment appeals is

45 In-person interview conducted on June 26th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #36-4100. McCulloch (2017) data.

46 Michael D. Bernhardt and Daniel E. Ingberman, "Candidate Reputations and the Incumbency Effect," *Journal of Public Economics* 27 (1985), 47-67.

47 In-person interview conducted on June 24th, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #34-4925. McCulloch (2017) data.

48 In-person interview conducted on June 26th, 2017/June 1st, 2017, in Tbilisi, Georgia, interview #36-4100/23-7111. McCulloch (2017) data.

49 William B. Quandt, "The electoral cycle and the conduct of foreign policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 101.5 (1986): 825-837.

50 Kevin Liptak and Dan Merica, "Trump says NATO no longer 'obsolete'," *CNN*, April 13, 2017, accessed June 28, 2017, http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/12/politics/donald-trump-jens-stoltenberg-nato/index.html

51 "Trump backs away from labeling China a currency manipulator," *Reuters*, April 13, 2017, accessed June 28, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-currency-idUSKBN17E2L8.

on the rise in the global system, with major implications for foreign policy. The legitimation of populist nativism in mainstream politics charges divisions within the electorate across issues of import to foreign policy. These hardened divisions among voters in turn depress the possibility of compromise among policy makers on issues ranging from immigration to intervention. Meanwhile, the anti-establishment's demands for populism have the effect of putting less experienced leaders in charge of decisions they are not fully able to handle. Drawing from public opinion surveys in the U.S. and elite interviews in Georgia, we argue that these consequences are already apparent and apply to countries beyond those discussed in this essay. The nativist and anti-establishment components of contemporary populism will likely further popular divisions over foreign policy issues, stall the development of foreign policy reform and action, and produce more confused and ineffective foreign policy.

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