

Four years of conflicts: State Governors and President Trump

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Abstract: Quattro anni di conflitti: Governatori statali e presidente Trump – The four years of Donald Trump's presidency have been characterised by a deep conflict between him and state governors, including Republicans. A situation that the covid pandemic has amplified but that had already emerged in other areas (from environmental to migration policies). In this sense, the aim of this contribution has been to retrace the main lines of direction within this confrontation, to highlight the most critical moments and to underline the progressive increase in the role that the Governors have assumed in the American federal system, all the more so when it comes to protecting and safeguarding the system itself against a very divisive President, and who has progressively no longer been fully recognised as such (all the more so after the events of 6 January on Capitol Hill).

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1. The American political-institutional system and State Governors

Within their States, governors preside over the most large and important political and economic territories of the American communities. They have powers specifically granted by State constitutions which give them the state's strongest power to set agenda, to define legislation¹ and to outline their political address proposals.² And the legitimacy of the State Governors, especially after the expansion of the suffrage, becoming more relevant meanwhile their powers and functions gradually grew up³.

Nevertheless, for decades, covered by the shadow of the President, the figure of the Governor has been less considered, even though it represent a very relevant part of the historical overall evolution of the all executive

¹ Recently, see: A. Rosenthal, *Engines of Democracy. Politics and Policymaking in State Legislatures*, Washington, 2009, 264–301.

² T. Kousser and J.H. Phillips, *The power of American Governors*, Cambridge, 2012; D. P. Redlawsk (ed.), *The American Governor*, London, 2005; L.A. van Assendelft, *Governors, Agenda Setting, And Divided Government*, Lanham (MD), 1997; A. Rosenthal, *The Best Job in Politics: Exploring How Governors Succeed as Policy Leaders*, Washington, 2013.

³ See G. A. Tarr, *Understanding State Constitutions*, Princeton, 1988; L. Sabato, *Goodbye to Good-Time Charlie: The American Governorship Transformed*, 2nd ed., Washington, 1983.

power in the American political-institutional system⁴. Therefore State governments have been perceived by many as backward, lethargic, or in need of federal oversight, and «Governors and their aides were rarely asked to attend federal policy conferences in Washington; and very few states seemed to care about the tremendous growth in federal aid programs directed at poverty and social-welfare issues. Federal/city relationships supplanted federal/state linkages, constituting, in effect, a de facto constitutional amendment», as noted that in the 1960s and 1970s by Kaplan and O'Brien.⁵

However, today, the states occupy a central position in domestic policymaking and the governors are responsible for implementing policies and accountable by the public for the policies' success or failure, considering also that States play a central role in defining America's political and institutional infrastructure: now, except for the President, governors are the most important and powerful elected executives in the American political system.

The relationship between the President and the Governors are very interrelated also in an institutional system based on a separation of powers and on a federal constitutional system. And within the main field of the modern executive branch of the United States and in the general American political-institutional system⁶, the gubernatorial elections - which are often held on the same presidential election day in November, notwithstanding not all states elect governors in the same year⁷ - are a moreover a great political issue to reasoning why the importance of governors is so relevant primarily for the President of United States.

At the same time, gubernatorial elections provide also a useful way to better understand fundamental political, institutional and electoral issues, considering inevitably, the coincidence of the mid-term elections with the elections of some governors represents also a general "referendum" on the President's activity, elected just two years before: a sort of "an implicit vote of confidence", a popular test on the presidency, substantially.⁸

⁴ See J. E. Kallenbach, *The American Chief Executive: the Presidency and the Governorship*, New York, 1966; M. Ferguson (ed.), *The Executive Branch of State Government. People, Process, and Politics*, Santa Barbara (CA), 2006; J. Dinan, *The American State Constitutional Tradition*, Lawrence (KS), 2009. More recently: S. M. Ambar, *How Governors Built The Modern American Presidency*, Philadelphia, 2012.

⁵ See M. Kaplan, and D. O'Brien. *The Governors and the New Federalism*, Boulder (CO), 1991, 14.

⁶ See J. D. Aberbach and M.A. Peterson, *The Executive Branch*, Oxford, 2005.

⁷ In particular, forty-eight States elect their governors for four years term while only two, New Hampshire and Vermont, have two years gubernatorial terms. Except the State of Virginia which does not allow a governor to be re-elected, two-term limits - consecutive or not - are very common rule among the States.

⁸ States and Governors, at the end, are laboratories for the study of Executive Power and in general the Presidency, considering – according to Larry Sabato – that «Once maligned foes of the national and local governments, governors have become skilled negotiators and, importantly, often crucial coordinators at both of those levels. Once ill prepared to govern and less prepared to lead, governors have welcomed into their ranks a new breed of vigorous, incisive, and thoroughly trained leaders» (in L. Sabato, *Goodbye*

2. The presidential candidate Donald Trump and the Republican State Governors: a political distance

At the beginning of the presidential electoral campaign of 2016, Donald Trump was considered an outsider and the endorsement for him from the governors – as said, figures which can influence in an intensive way the electorate and the popular favour towards (or not) a presidential candidate⁹ – was full of distance and political resistance to support a so peculiar candidate.

So, during the presidential primaries, only a very few analysts and commentators have considered Donald Trump as a serious political force and presidential candidate¹⁰; similarly, also very few of Governors – as Chris Christie of New Jersey for instance – were supporters of Donald Trump¹¹.

Instead, Trump quickly gained popularity, not only among Republican voters, but especially among angry working-class and blue-collar white

to *Good-Time Charlie: The American Governorship Transformed*, 2nd ed., Washington, 1983, 2). From an Italian perspective, regarding the most recent influences between the mid-term elections and the gubernatorial ones, see also: F. Clementi, *Un'anatra non così zoppa (o delle elezioni di midterm del 6 novembre 2018)*, in *Federalismi*, n. 21, 2018, www.federalismi.it/nv14/editoriale.cfm?eid=495. In general, regarding all the electoral process, see: M. D. Brewer, L. S. Maisel, *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, Lanham (MD), 7th ed., 2015.

⁹ Moreover the support of a governor is able to shift also the definitive results, as the recount dispute in Florida's 2000 presidential election demonstrates. See *On Bush vs. Gore*, see: J.M. Balkin, *Bush V. Gore and the Boundary between Law and Politics*, in *The Yale Law Journal*, n. 110, 2001, 1407; R. A. Posner, *Breaking the Deadlock: The 2000 Election, the Constitution, and the Courts*, Princeton, 2001; A. J. Jacobson and M. Rosenfeld (ed.), *The Longest Night: Polemics and Perspectives on Election 2000*, Berkeley, 2002. The 2000 presidential election problems in Florida was very relevant but it's not the first major vote-counting controversy in the America's history. Recently, see: E. B. Foley, *Ballot battles: the history of disputed elections in the United States*, Oxford, 2016. At the same time, about the problem of voting in concrete in United States, see: D. S. Tran, *Unrigging American Elections: Reform Past and Prologue*, London, 2019.

¹⁰ Generally, the explanations for Donald Trump's presidential victory are based on a variety of different elements: the celebrity status of him; the re-opening the investigation into Hillary Clinton's e-mail while she was Secretary of State thanks to the James Comey's letter to Congress; the publishing of the hacked e-mails of the Democratic National Committee's by the WikiLeaks; and moreover, the great amount of citizens, energized by the anti-establishment posture of Donald Trump, pumped also by his strong use of social media and fake news to influence his political narrative. The last, but not the least element, was the supposed interference of Russian boogymen in the democratic process of the United States. On this topic, in general, see: P. Farhi, *Trump's Bizarre Communications Strategy: Constantly Upstaging His Own Agenda*, in *Washington Post*, 28 July 2017; T.J. Coles, *Donald Trump, Inc. How Big Business and Neoliberalism Empower Populism and the Far-Right*, 2017; S. Bordo, *The Destruction of Hillary Clinton*, Brooklyn, 2017; E. T. May, *Fortress America: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy*, New York, 2017; D. Frum, *Trumpocracy. The Corruption of the American Republic*, New York, 2018.

¹¹ Republican Party elites clearly regarded Donald Trump as an unappealing candidate who should be vetoed. In fact, no Republican official in the House, Senate or any governor's mansion substantially offered Trump support through the entire "invisible primary" period. See: A. Bycoffe, *The Endorsement Primary*, in *fivethirtyeight.com*, 7th June 2016, projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-endorsement-primary/.

voters in battleground states (Florida, North Carolina, New Hampshire, and once reliably Democratic states in the Rust Belt area, such as Wisconsin and Michigan), promising to “Make America Great Again” by “draining the swamp,” “building a wall” on the border with Mexico to control illegal immigration and renegotiating international trade deals to put “America first”. So Trump appealed to that group of the American electorate that felt that the political elite had forgotten them.

Therefore, in a day-by-day race, progressively, the simplistic Trump’s proposal has appeared increasingly more coherent for the American citizens and his political message grown up in an unpredictable way, grabbing every more the political consensus of the available on the republican field.¹²

So, while destroying progressively the Republican claim elite-strategy “Anyone-but-Trump”, it was not so surprising that, later, to cover properly this relevant political lack - the endorsement from State governors - Trump has chosen as vice presidential running mate a governor, the 50th governor of Indiana from 2013 to 2017, Michael Pence, notwithstanding Pence has endorsed Senator Ted Cruz of Texas in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries. This choice was very acute because Michael Pence has been a very useful political figure to connect the main old economic and political tissue of Republican party donors with Trump who generally has been considered very apart from those conservatives, and, at the same time, strong links with the corporations of the American right-wing, as the Koch brothers, the most influential and powerful billionaires donors towards to the extreme, radical and far-right of the United States.¹³

Therefore, through different forms of disruption, refusing the normal conventions and classical republican patterns of electoral politics, at the end, Donald Trump has produced one of the major upsets in modern political history, permitting through his election as the 45th President of the United States, that the Republican Party gained control of Congress, both chambers of 32 legislatures and 33 governorships.

3. Four years of conflicts

Generally speaking, if you were to sum up Trump's term in office in a few lines, you would have to say that he has been able to keep and deliver on some of the campaign promises because the Congress has passed several laws that specifically aimed at rolling back some of the Obama

¹² See M. Oliva and M. Shanahan, *The Trump Presidency: From Campaign Trail to World Stage*, London, 2019; J. Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, London, 2017. B. Klaas, *The Despot's Apprentice: Donald Trump's Attack on Democracy*, London, 2017; M. Kranish, and M. Fisher, *Trump Revealed*, New York, 2017. Also, see: A. McMurry, *Trumpolect: Donald Trump's Distinctive Discourse and Its Functions*, in J. Kowalski (ed.), *Reading Donald Trump. A Parallax View of the Campaign and Early Presidency*, London, 2019, 33-57.

¹³ See J. Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History Of The Billionaires Behind The Rise Of The Radical Right*, New York, 2016.

administration's regulations; with great luck, he has appointed three new Supreme Court Associate Justices (Neil M. Gorsuch, Brett M. Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett) and he has filled more than a hundred vacancies in lower federal courts. President Trump has responded to Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma in the summer of 2017 and, in foreign policy, the administration has formulated a strong strategy against the economic global presence of China.

However, the Trump Administration has so shaken the foundations of the American constitutional system of checks-and-balances to the point of making his presidency as the most political contentious in the last century and a half at least¹⁴.

For our part, specifically, during the astonishing American four years presidency's term of Donald Trump, the relationship between the President and the Governors has been dominated by these conflicts, which has exploded even more because of the actions taken in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

The political dialogue has been realized, in general, both in formal meetings, as the Annual meeting, and in informal contacts. However, the rejection of the classic conservative positions suggested has offered to the President Trump a radical new policy agenda at the expense of conservative orthodoxy¹⁵, particularly regarding two major topics, which are very relevant especially for the States governors: immigration and environment, both themes with relevant effects on labour and the economic dynamics.

So, these two themes are mainly characterized the political confrontation between President Trump and the Governors during his term in office, marking also very several and relevant legal conflict between States, Governors and the President Trump.

Focused on immigration law and environment, on his four years mandate President Trump has spent time to transforming the presidency

¹⁴ Naturally, the events of 6 January on Capitol Hill - which have not been commented on here for the sake of editorial homogeneity with the other contributions presented here - have led to significant reactions of strong criticism on the part of the Governors, including Republicans, above all against the behaviour of President Trump, accused of having incited the crowd of troublemakers with his words; a dynamic that, not by chance, has led him to suffer the second impeachment by Congress in four years of presidency. Moreover, as a consequence, many of Trump's vociferous supporters, in connection with the assault on the US Congress, have also started threatening to storm the Congresses of the State Capitals. However, see: J. Williams, Governors respond to violence at Capitol, in "The Hill" (thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/533012-governors-respond-to-violence-at-us-capitol), 6th January 2021; K. Gray, State Capitols, Warned of Threats, Stay on High Alert, in "The New York Times", 18th January 2021 (www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/17/us/protests-live).

¹⁵ On the contrary, some scholars are against this interpretation, thinking that the main difference from the other past Republican Presidents is based only on a different style of presidency. See: J. Herbert, T. McCrisken, A. Wroe, *The Ordinary Presidency of Donald J. Trump*, London, 2019. See also: L. Bartels, 2016 *Was an Ordinary Election, Not a Realignment*, in *Washington Post*, 10th November 2016.

and to modulating messaging and choices, even reinventing and revolutionizing the presidency.

In particular, continuing his presidential campaign, the immigration policies has been in the middle of his activity¹⁶ as real cornerstones of his political choices, especially declined along six themes: (a) the completion of the border wall with Mexico; (b) the deport of immigrants who arrived in the United States as children, notwithstanding they are currently protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA); (c) the restriction of travel and work visas from eight countries; (d) the strong increasing screening of refugees while cutting the staff organisations and supporting needed to do so; (e) the review the H-1B visa program; and (f) the curbing of the legal immigration.

All these policies have been and are strongly interlaced with States and Governors, also determining – as we said - a long list of suits from the States to the President.

The first political-legal conflict was on the Trump “travel ban” - the Executive Order n. 13769 “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” -, signed by Donald Trump on January 27, 2017, and quickly suited from the States in the federal courts of the United States against the President; until now, after an intense uncertainty, the main suit is already pending, notwithstanding that the intervention of the Federal Supreme Court in June 2018 has legitimated preliminarily the executive order because it respect the "bona fide" test, and the arguments presented by the Trump administration were "a sufficient national security justification", permitting to “suspend entry of aliens into the United States”, in particular, travellers from Syria, Iran, Libya, Yemen and Somalia.¹⁷

Then, after that the Trump Administration has released a list of immigration requests to Congress, especially a fund of \$25 billions for a wall on the border with Mexico¹⁸, and tried also to cutting the federal funds from “sanctuary” cities (the municipalities which didn’t want to cooperate with federal immigration agents), the Governors of the States in those cities have strongly attacked the President Trump and the Trump Administration for their immigration politics.

¹⁶ See M. Gilmartin, P. Wood and C. O’Callaghan, *Borders, Mobility and Belonging in the Era of Brexit and Trump*, Bristol, 2018; M. Nelson, *Trump’s First Year*, Charlottesville (VA), 2018.

¹⁷ See *Trump v. Hawaii*, n. 17-965, 585 U.S. (2018).

¹⁸ President Trump promised to complete a wall on the 2,000-mile long U.S. border with Mexico. The Secure Fence Act of 2006 built 650 miles of walls and fencing. Between 2007 and 2015, \$2.4 billion was spent. Trump is using the defence funds to construct 100 miles of barrier fencing in protected wildlife refuges. He also devoted funds to replace or enhance segments of the existing wall. The government uses the number of apprehensions as a way to track immigration levels. In 2018, there were 403,479 such apprehensions. They’re down since a record 1.67 million in 2000 because border security is better. Read, K. Amadeo, *Donald Trump on Immigration. Pros and Cons of Donald Trump’s Immigration Policies*, in thebalance.com

In particular, the DACA program - launched by President Obama the program with an executive order in 2012, which offers a two-year deferral of deportation for eligible immigrants¹⁹ - Trump tried to replace with his immigration plan; but both, on April 24, 2018, the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia, and, after, on August 4, 2018, a federal judge, have ruled that the Trump administration must fully restore DACA program. So, now the fight with the States and Governors against the President Trump is until opened, because the President Trump seek to offer a protection for the dreamers only for three years in exchange for border wall funding, while democrats rejected it because it's not permanent.

The issues relating to immigration involves also the very well-known wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. This is a symbol, really the most powerful utopia of Trump's supporters, which the President Trump wants to complete without any hesitation.

To block this strategy, in 2017-2018, sixteen States coordinated by their Governors have filed a federal lawsuit challenging President Trump's national-emergency declaration to pay for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border²⁰.

But recently the Supreme Court, after a long debate, has allowed Trump to use funds for border wall.²¹

On the same theme but regarding another topic, more recently, the California Governor Gavin Newsom, with the Governors of Maine, Oregon and Pennsylvania, as well as the District of Columbia, have sued the Trump Administration against the new rules blocking green cards for many immigrants, contesting the restrict of the legal immigration, especially regarding the an indefinite detention for immigrant children.²² And also other thirteen States – including Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico and Rhode Island - have sued the Trump Administration for the same reasons,

¹⁹ It's important to know that eligible people are those under 31, who were illegally brought to the United States as children. Since its launch, over 2 millions of persons "dreamers" have applied for and received work permits.

²⁰ See F. Clementi, *President Trump and the American Governors: Two years of a conflictual dialogue*, in G.F.Ferrari (eds.), *The American Presidency under Trump*, The Hague, 2020, 85 ss.

²¹ 588 U. S. (2019), Supreme Court Of The United States, n. 19A60, *Donald J. Trump, President Of The United States, Et Al. V. Sierra Club, Et Al.*, on Application For Stay, 26th July 2019.

²² See. D. Thompson, *California Files Lawsuit Over Trump Immigration Rule*, www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Immigration-Public-Benefits-California-Lawsuit-Green-Cards-547450231.html Read the text of the suit: www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/CalifImmDetention-COMPLAINT.pdf It's very interesting that, at the moment, this is the 56th lawsuit that the California State has filed against the Trump administration (the latest was the legal action to stymie federal officials' plans to change how the Endangered Species Act is implemented).

considering that the new rules would add unlawful barriers to legal immigration in violation of the equal protection, guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, and also interfering also with States' rights.

In parallel, considering that the Donald Trump's immigration policies follow economic nationalism and completely different ideas on environment, in June 2017 President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the international Paris Agreement on Climate Change, though the withdrawal can't take place before November 4, 2020, which happens to fall on the day after the 2020 presidential election. Promptly, after the presidential announcement, Governors of 13 states and Puerto Rico formed the United States Climate Alliance to continue to abide by the Paris accord and later they have sued Trump Administration against the replacement of Obama's Clean Power Plan.

In particular, over twenty-two States, six cities and the District of Columbia²³, filled a lawsuit against the Trump Administration to block repeal and replace the Obama-era policy environment plan that set emission-reduction targets, required states to restrict their use of coal-burning power plants and mandated a switch to renewable energy²⁴.

Furthermore, three Governors strongly fought with the Trump's Census program, fearing that citizenship changes – included in the 2020 census –, can reduce the number of voters and re-districting them strategically, in a useful way to the Republican party.

When the Covid pandemic arrived, the President's handling of the emergency compared to the Governors was as different as could be imagined. The more concerned the Governors were, the calmer the President was. The more they asked for funds, the more unresponsive the President was, even going so far as to deny the problem. To such an extent that, regarding the management of the pandemic of Covid, the President started even to berate governors during the pandemic and never stopped.

In fact, Trump has targeting governors, called them “weak” and “pathetic,” “jerks” and “fools.” One was a “snake” and another, he said, “doesn't have a clue.” And, throughout 2020, Trump repeatedly pushed the responsibility for the response to the pandemic and the protest largely onto the states, while simultaneously threatening to punish governors and intervene - most recently with the US military - if they didn't act as he wanted.

²³ In particular, New York, State of California, State of Colorado, State of Connecticut, State of Delaware, State of Hawaii, State of Illinois, State of Maine, State of Maryland, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, People of the State of Michigan, State of Minnesota, State of New Jersey, State of New Mexico, State of North Carolina, State of Oregon, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, State of Rhode Island, State of Vermont, Commonwealth of Virginia, State of Washington, State of Wisconsin, District of Columbia, City of Boulder (CO), City of Chicago, City of Los Angeles, City of New York, City of Philadelphia, and the City of South Miami.

²⁴ Read the text of the suit: www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/clean-power-suit.pdf.

Thus, Trump has both shifted the responsibility for problems, such as the pandemic, onto the governors, and abdicated his prerogatives, showing that he wants to avoid any form of accountability. Thus governors have been accused of overreaching with their demands for medical supplies but also of waging a war for fans, even to the point of being refused assistance by President Trump through Vice-President Pence if they were not adequately 'grateful' for his efforts²⁵.

At the end, the strategy of Trump was evident: to shift responsibility for the pandemic government crisis onto the shoulders of the Governors.

Therefore Governors — Democrats and even some Republicans — allied together to fight pandemic but also to resist against the President Trump.

This shows that all the instruments of political connection between the President and the Governors have worked poorly and badly.

In fact, even the annual meetings scheduled²⁶, as well as the informal dialogue, seem to have not allowed any real form of objective confrontation between the President and the States, even with non-Republicans.

We can add that in the United States gubernatorial elections, held on November 6, 2018 in thirty-six States and three territories, during the mid-term elections, has presented a picture not so brilliant for President Trump.

However, despite his defeat later also in the presidential election, as the data shows, the Joe Biden's victory was more of a personal victory than a victory for the Democrats. So, despite, or perhaps because of, Donald Trump's political leadership, now the result is a political landscape in which the Republicans maintain 27 governorships out of 50, after having won back Montana from the Democrats, confirming nine of the eleven republicans governors into office elections (Spencer Cox won in Utah, Greg Gianforte won in Montana, becoming the only governor to win the office instead of a Democrat, as said).

As much as one can criticize President Trump, at the moment, however, his way of doing things, Trumpism, appears to have been a very useful weapon of victory for the Republican Party and therefore also for many of its governors, thus leaving open the question of whether Trumpism as a style and political direction will survive even at the end - if he does not intend, as he says, to run in 2024 - of Donald Trump's political career.

²⁵ See: A. Kumar, *Trump's 2020 strategy: A never-ending war with states*, in "Politico.com", 23 June 2020 (www.politico.com/news/2020/06/23/trump-governors-2020-328085).

²⁶ Read the Presidential remarks regarding the Annual meeting with Governors of 2018 (www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-2018-white-house-business-session-governors/) and 2019 (www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-2019-white-house-business-session-nations-governors/).

4. Final remarks

In conclusion, despite the breadth of the issues surrounding the pandemic - which allowed us to clearly see the contentiousness of the relationship between President Trump and the Governors and their opposing and differing assessments when there was an assessment of the choices and measures to be taken to prevent or minimize human morbidity and mortality, social upheaval, and the economic consequences caused by the Covid pandemic -, four years of confrontation has allowed the President to certainly recognize the great role and importance of the Governors in the American federal system.

At the same time, he has discovered how can be hostiles - not only in a political ways but also through the legal conflicts - the Governors against the President, resisting to the direct methods of persuasion in respect to policies dear to their hearts which President Trump has organized.

Normally, even before taking office, the most modern presidents of the United States tried to sharing connections and best practices with Governors as soon as possible, also to promote a no partisan political debate when in charge.

Reversely, President Trump didn't not promote this, provoking also for the republican gubernatorial candidates some delicate questions on their support for Trump, considering the big implications of the support to this divisive President for their personal electoral success.²⁷

In his 2016 GOP convention acceptance speech, President Donald Trump said that "Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it."

Probably, today, after four years of Presidency, Trump has discovered how is complex, articulate, different the landscape of the American political system, especially if you do not focus the battle in depth on the a number of key elements relevant which the reality presents to the Presidency.

Indeed, in political discourse, a brutal approach, based on populism and nativist and nationalism roots²⁸, is not enough to solve the normal major political issues – a fortiori a pandemic – also if you are the President of the largest and most complex liberal democracy in the world.

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²⁷ See A. Greenblatt, *For or Against Trump? The Question Candidates for Governor Can't Escape*, in *Governing. The States and Localities*, 13th December 2017, www.governing.com/topics/politics/gov-trump-governor-elections-races-candidates.html.

²⁸ See N. Gingrich, *Trump's America*, New York, 2018.