The Tipping Point. Donald Trump and the Discourse on World (Dis)Order in the Press and Expert Media

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Anna Caffarena, University of Turin

Michelangelo Conoscenti, University of Turin

ABSTRACT. Since 2001, media have frequently touched upon the issue of the crisis of the international liberal order. The message sent to the Western audience was, however, reassuring. The search for renovation of international rules and institutions created after World War II was expected to take place *within* the framework of the American-led order. Trump's appearance on the stage of the presidential campaign, in the spring of 2016, was, in this respect, a tipping point. The idea that the media started conveying was that an actual transition in the international domain had been triggered and the outcome might be unfortunate. The aim of this essay is to show how the discourse in the press and expert media has developed since then, leading a wider readership to perceive that the liberal order may in fact come to an end soon. A return to a competition among the great powers, and possibly conflict, was at first presented as the most probable scenario. A strategy of discursive accommodation seems to have later been enacted by the press and expert knowledge media so that public opinion could adjust to China's new role as the newly-emerging responsible power upholding order. These findings were reached by adopting a discourse analysis methodology which integrates and complements the perspectives of International Relations and Linguistics.

Key words: International Liberal Order, Donald Trump, America/the West, China, Discourse Analysis.

1. **Introduction**[1]

The coverage of international news by the press is usually prompted by events whose intrinsic relevance is expected to arouse substantial interest in the readers even if they take place in faraway places. While describing such events, journalists and columnists, in particular, often refer to concepts borrowed from the scholars' and practitioners' toolkit to better convey their significance, or even emphasize it, so as to attract broader attention. Seldom are such concepts used but as catchwords, though. In the past few years, proactive foreign policy decisions taken by emerging actors, such as China and Russia, have been associated with incipient multipolarity. The newspapers, however, did not devote much space to make readers aware of what this change may entail, if not for that of conveying a general sense of disquiet.

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[1] Sections 1. Introduction, 2. Methodology and 7. Conclusion are co-authored. Sections 3. and 4. are by Anna Caffarena. Sections 5. and 6. are by Michelangelo Conoscenti. The research questions, the collection of the corpus and the overall development of the research are by Anna Caffarena. Michelangelo Conoscenti's analyses were carried out to benchmark the findings of sections 3 and 4 . He also made the corpus machine-readable.

Only in very special circumstances do highly consequential events in world politics trigger the sort of press coverage which requires the writer to draw on the full inventory of International Relations (IR) concepts to tackle them competently. The fall of the Berlin wall was one of those. The media, while describing the end of bipolarism, nurtured the expectation that the liberal order – rule-based, open, market-oriented – once globalized, would foster democratization and economic growth worldwide. The disappointment that accompanied globalization's delivery in the Western world proves that this complex message had effectively been passed on.

The argument we will advance in this essay is that the appearance of Donald Trump on the stage of the American presidential campaign was an event bringing highly important consequences of the kind we have just mentioned. Even before he gave his only foreign policy speech, not yet as the Republican candidate (27 April 2016), the media started considering that the international (liberal) order, American leadership and the West as a key player in world affairs, may not survive his election. To strengthen the message, this discourse, which at the time was clearly meant to influence American voters, also hinted at emerging countries as candidates eager to fill the vacuum possibly created by an isolationist America under a Trump presidency.

Since 2001[2], when the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India and China – were portrayed as a new force in global governance, media repeatedly touched upon the issue of the crisis of liberal order and the need to renovate the international institutions established after World War II. The effects of the Great Recession later reinforced this conclusion, but the reassuring message sent to the Western audience was still very much one of changes occurring *within* the American-led order. Trump's appearance was, in this respect, a tipping point. The idea that the media started conveying was that a transition had been triggered and the outcome might be unfortunate.

The aim of this essay is to show how the discourse in the press and expert media has developed since the spring of 2016, leading a wider readership to perceive that the liberal order may in fact come to an end soon. Such a 'regime change'[3] is said to be prompted by Trump's 'America first' agenda that will prevent the US from upholding it. A return to a competition among the great powers is at first presented as the most probable consequence of order demise. After Xi Jinping's World Economic Forum speech in Davos, given a few days before Inauguration (20 January 2017), the unexpectedly well-received self-candidacy of China to become the defender of globalization and free trade may be considered interesting evidence that, after sending a message of pure discomfort, the media appear to be 'preparing' the readership for the announced transition.

In a situation of perceived lack of leadership, China is no longer presented as a threat but rather as an, albeit puzzling, resource for the international community since the preservation of order – any order – is set by the press as a priority. Accommodation is the term that IR scholars would use to convey this strategy were it implemented by decision makers of established powers in world affairs. What we observe is, in fact, a variant of this strategy, discursively performed by commentators to the benefit of their readership. Since "it is the stories that states and societies

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[2] Famously by Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs, whose very successful acronym points to emerging countries as the new 'bricks' of a new architecture of global governance.

[3] To political scientists, regime change is what transition entails in the domestic domain. "If Mr Trump were to win, it would be a regime change for the world", M. Wolf, "How the West might soon be lost", *Financial Times*, 27 September 2016.

tell themselves and others that lead to conflict, or which allow a different, more peaceful path to be pursued" (Coker, 2015: 90), this framing of China's new constructive international role may turn out to be crucial in the years to come.

The essay develops as follows. After some methodological clarifications, it examines how Trump and his worldview are initially reported, suggesting that, at this early stage, the focus on his personality and deep-seated beliefs makes up for the lack of a fully-fledged foreign policy[4]. The discourse on how his tenure will affect the state of the liberal order is then analysed, to show how it foreshadows an outright return to power politics and conflict. The emerging role of China is then traced across the whole corpus. The discourse articulated since Trump's appearance reveals that an absolute value is attached to order itself by Western media leading to a new recognition of China considered crucial for its persistence.

2. Methodology

The analysis of media discourse will be conducted from the complementary IR and linguistics perspectives. In fact, both consider discourses as 'resources' used by producers of texts to give meaning to the world, thus influencing receivers' worldview. In particular, the discourses developed in the media as 'sites of institutionalised power' appear 'inherently political' as they are clearly "about the production and distribution of power, and struggles over knowledge, interests, identity and the social relations they enable or undermine" (Laffey and Weldes, 2004: 28; Milliken, 1999).

Some recurring themes within the press coverage of Trump's impact on order will thus be enucleated from the perspective of the IR scholar (sections 3 and 4) which will later be tested by the linguist (sections 5 and 6). The specific contribution that the linguist offers to IR and political communication scholars moves from the assumption that

> language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language. One productive way of doing social research is through a focus on language, using some form of discourse analysis. (Fairclough, 2004: 2)

As a consequence, linguistic discourse analysis encourages critical language awareness and highlights the use of a persuasive function in texts that is evident in the mechanisms of word selection and other recurrent patterns such as syntactic forms. The co-occurrence of these will influence and determine the interpretations made available to text receivers.

Critical Discourse and Metaphor Analysis, complemented by data mined with corpus linguistics techniques, will document how the communicative strategies and the discourse on Trump are enacted. In particular, it will be shown that a peculiar preoccupation is evident in all the articles considered: the authorship is aligned with an agenda that shows an evaluative intent. The linguistic analysis, through successive steps, i.e. frequency lists, distribution lists, Z-score correlations, pattern and cluster analysis will show how the hypotheses discussed in sections 3 and 4 are attested by the language observed, indicating that conceptual metaphors are used to communicate a new 'accommodating' interpretative frame.

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[4] D.E. Sanger, G. Harris, M. Landler, in "Where Trump Zings, Tillerson Zags, Putting Him at Odds With the White House", *The New York Times*, 25 June 2017, maintain that the Trump administration is still in search of consistency.

The analysis is carried out on a corpus of 82 articles from 23rd March 2016 to 23rd June 2017. Articles have been taken from *The Financial Times* and *Foreign Affairs* (the two-monthly journal of the US Council of Foreign Relations). Furthermore, two on-line resources, namely the Brookings' *Order from Chaos* Blog and *The Project Syndicate*, have been included as expert media sources. The latter are meant to sustain educated reflection on the part of a specialized audience – experts, practitioners and interested individuals – and to provide support to decision-makers. For linguists, this is a so-called specialized or 'small' corpus[5], i.e. one with a limited time-span and with a specific area of investigation, in this case the anticipated impact of Trump's election on world order. Other media have been monitored to capture the climate of opinion on the topic.

3. The Tipping Point: Trump Enters the Scene

In the last few years, the media have regularly reported that US leadership has been imperilled and that international institutions have failed over and again to meet expectations in terms of delivery. However, it was only after Trump's victorious presidential campaign took off that they depicted the liberal order as faced with a truly existential threat. In this respect, it is a telling point that over the past troubled decade no main cover line of the influential *International Affairs* journal has called into question the future of the international order or system as such. To be sure, though, readers were made aware that a reform was urgently needed to enhance both its effectiveness and legitimacy.

Donald Trump's appearance on the world stage was a tipping point in this respect. The required overhaul of the international order did not appear to have any chance to be undertaken by a Trump presidency and the consequences for the durability of order itself were said to be dramatic. Even before addressing his worldview and foreign policy, his personality was depicted by the *Financial Times* columnists as unfit to lead the country that was expected to supervise its renovation. Trump was presented as utterly inconsistent, even before he openly praised unpredictability in his 27 April speech,[6] and thus intrinsically unable to express the kind of grand design necessary to provide guidance to the international community. His inclination towards deal-making over strategic thinking was defined as the typical mind-set of a businessman, who should consequently not be considered a politician by readers, let alone a political leader. "In his writings on business – Rachman wrote –, he has extolled the virtues of making extravagant demands or promises as an opening bid, before eventually finding a compromise. This approach might work well in real estate. But it is potentially a formula for disaster in international politics"[7]. Moreover, his populist attitude and his sympathy for authoritarian rulers, such as Vladimir Putin, made him an unlikely champion of liberal values, the distinguishing feature of Western order after WW II[8]. The message conveyed to the readers by the press is perfectly summarized by the title of a recent *New York Times* article: "Donald Trump Poisons the World". Here Brooks argues that "by treating the world simply as an arena for competitive advantage, Trump, McMaster and Cohn, sever relationships, destroy reciprocity, erode trust and eviscerate the sense of sympathy, friendship and loyalty that all nations need when times get tough", in a word they raze the very

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[5] It consists of 122,081 tokens (running words) and 9,898 types (distinct words, i.e. its vocabulary). All the corpus linguistics statistics and tables are originals and generated by M. Conoscenti with the WordSmith Tools 7 package.

[6] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html

[7] G. Rachman, "Donald Trump's retreat from American greatness", *Financial Times*, 23 May 2016.

[8] G. Rachman, "Donald Trump faces five fateful foreign policy choices", *Financial Times*, 12 December 2016.

foundations of order[9]. His legitimacy to act internationally is thus questioned, despite the position the US still enjoys within the system.

Trump's problematic character appears in the press to be compounded by his foreign policy inclination. Defined as 'hyperrealist' for the transactional, zero-sum view he holds of relations between the great powers[10], his approach to world politics is said to reflect the defence of a narrowly defined national interest. Given his 'America First' agenda, Trump is depicted as expressing with paroxysmal intensity a 'bellicose' or 'muscular' form of isolationism[11], well beyond the pro-retrenchment[12] attitude shared by part of the American electorate.[13] Since he appeared, and still appears, more unilateralist than isolationist, the fact that he is consistently presented as an isolationist suggests that commentators wish to take this interpretation to its extremes in order to signal a sharp change with respect to post World War II pro-engagement international liberalism.

One far-reaching effect of Trump's outright embracing of the most primitive 'realist' worldview [14] is that 'the raw politics of power'[15] came to be presented to the public opinion more and more as an accurate description of present international relations. The media retrieved a number of concepts belonging to this tradition to describe Trump's world, namely the place in which America's friends and foes must take their own foreign policy decisions. In a neo-Hobbesian environment, the absence of conflict was said to depend on the balance of power, while the great powers were portrayed as intent on building their respective spheres of interest. As mentioned earlier, the chief preoccupation passed on to the public opinion was that emerging countries might fill the power and leadership void that America's isolationism was creating. Such framing of world politics – besides taking the readers back to the Eighteenth century[16] – was obviously antipodal with respect to depicting it as orderly (albeit to a variable extent). So much so that, initially, the sort of transition commentators envisaged was of the 'back to the future' kind: the international system was said to be doomed to sheer disorder. This was a clearly distressing scenario for states and individuals alike. Should it materialise, even normal day-to-day activities, such as commercial and scientific exchanges, would be very difficult, if not completely impeded.

Commentators clearly intend to create a sharp contrast between order and the lack of order. While Trump is presented as not credible, unpredictable, fostering uncertainty, in particular among allies, and thus leading to a probable case of dangerous miscalculations on the part of the other countries' decision makers, the American-led liberal order is depicted using words such as 'design', 'architecture', 'institutions as pillars', which emphasize its stability and durability. Order is

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[9] D. Brooks (2 June 2017: A25). H. R. McMaster is National security advisor to Mr Trump while G. Cohn chairs the National Economic Council, being his chief economic advisor.

[10] P. Stephens, "The Trumpian Threat to the global order", *Financial Times*, 22 September 2016.

[11] See P. Stephens, "Donald Trump would tear up the Pax Americana", *Financial Times*, 5 May 2016 and P. Stephens, "Global Disorder: from Donald Trump to the South China Sea", *Financial Times*, 21 July 2016.

[12] An attitude well supported by scholarly opinion, see Posen, 2014.

[13] A Pew Research Center poll released on 5 May 2016 shows that 57% of Americans believe the US should deal with its own problems and let others deal with theirs as best they can, http://www.people-press.org/2016/05/05/public-uncertain-divided-over-americas-place-in-the-world/

[14] "Trump seems set to do on a global scale what former President George W. Bush did to the Middle East – intentionally destabilize the old order, and then fail to create a new one" since even his instinctive adherence to Realism key tenets is questioned, S. Ben-Ami, "Trump's Unrealpolitik", *Project Syndicate*, 4 January 2017.

[15] P. Stephens, "The Trumpian Threat to the global order", cit.

[16] T. Wright, "Trump's 19th century foreign policy", *Politico*, 1 January 2016.

said to be 'anchored' by a set of values. The contrast is strong, passing on to the readers the message that if the building collapses, there will be no ways to restore it. This framing in terms of radical discontinuity suggests that the international community is presently facing a real turning point. The fall of the US-led order, by the way, will not affect only America's global role, but the West 'as central force in global affairs',[17] a wording which clearly hints to (once) shared values.

4. Trump, the Future of World (Dis)Order and China

Given the value Trump attaches to unpredictability, the discourse on the impact of his presidency on world politics is evolving as his foreign policy unfolds and we can expect it will do until the end of his tenure. Different scenarios have thus been drawn since he gained the nomination as the Republican candidate. "This is not quite a Hobbesian world – Philip Stephens wrote in July 2016 – but the direction of travel is evident"[18]. The same columnist, in January 2017, further strengthened his argument by observing: "The long-term threat is that Mr Trump's presidency sees a Pax Americana that has sustained relative peace and stability for the past 70 years dissolve into a return to the Hobbesian world of great power conflict".[19] The article was a Big Read, i.e. a full page article, meant to attract the attention of the readers and the tone – a week to the inauguration – sounded more worried than ever.

By that time, Trump was no longer presented as an instance of a troubled world, but rather as a force behind unwelcome developments in international affairs. War was explicitly mentioned as a possible outcome of his conduct. On 6 February, Brookings circulated a report by Robert Kagan, entitled "Backing Into World War III". The scaring argument Kagan, undoubtedly a Realist, advances is that "history shows that world orders do collapse" and that "when they do it is often unexpected, rapid, and violent". Readers made anxious by this argument, were then informed that it is 'unmistakable' that we are on a path to a global crisis and that "the new administration is more likely to hasten us toward a crisis than slow or reverse these trends". To enhance the frightening message sent to readers worldwide, the May/June 2017 issue of Foreign Affairs includes an article by Gordon entitled "A vision of Trump at War. How the President could stumble into war".

In the press, the post-liberal order scenarios are predictably just sketched. The aim is to convey a general idea of what each may entail for people's everyday life: live in peace or struggle in conflict, in the end. After pointing to sheer disorder and conflict, commentators[20] suggest that emerging powers, while filling the void left by Trump's America, may wish to negotiate a 'new concert' as the one that kept the peace for a while after 1815 (soon replaced for functional reasons by institutionalized multilateralism, it should be pointed out). A second scenario is 'half-organized disorder', a possible product of weakening current order when a proper alternative, supported by a willing new leader, is lacking. Finally, there is a third one, put forward by "another school of thought – call it realism, pragmatism or, more realistically, fatalism – that says there is

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[17] M. Wolf, "How The West May Soon Be Lost", cit.

[18] P.Stephens, "Global disorder: from Donald Trump to the South China Sea", cit.

[19] P. Stephens, "Trump presidency: America First or America Alone?", *Financial Times*, 9 January 2017.

[20] In particular P. Stephens, "How the west has lost the world", *Financial Times*, 13 October 2016.

simply nothing to be done. Later, if not sooner, this multipolar world will find a new equilibrium". Alarmingly, nothing is said about what might happen in the meantime.

In January, just before Trumps steps in as President, the alternative scenarios – drawn by Martin Wolf in his "The long and painful journey to world disorder"[21] – boil down to two, where the second clearly paves the way for a reconsideration of the role of emerging countries. "The question – he writes – is whether what follows will be an unravelling of the post-WW II era into deglobalization and conflict, as happened in the first half of the 20th century, or a new period in which non-western powers, especially China and India, play a bigger role in sustaining a co-operative global order".

How this option – presented earlier as disruptive, even threatening – is finally made palatable to Western readers comes out by looking at expert media. *Foreign Affairs* has devoted its first four 2017 issues of the journal to order transition. The wording of all the main cover lines is more than suggestive: "Out of order? The Future of the International System" stands out on the January/February issue cover. After "Trump Time", we get "Present at the Destruction", and finally a puzzling "What now?". It is worth mentioning that various contributions are collected in an Anthology of the Foreign Affairs Series shrewdly entitled "What Was the Liberal Order? The World We May Be Losing".

The authors of the articles seem to elaborate the 'change' scenario as if the old order were already gone. Niblett, for example, in his "Liberalism in Retreat. The Demise of a Dream"[22], writes that established supporters of liberal order are weaker than ever and autocratic governments might hence try to take advantage of the situation. Since resorting to containment may bring about conflict, he suggests "for liberal countries to prepare themselves for a period of awkward coexistence with illiberal ones, cooperating on some occasions and competing on others". The sort of accommodation to the new realities suggested by Mazarr, in his "The Once and Future Order"[23], is no different. His suggestion is that America should go for a 'mixed order' – neither unified, nor homogeneous – made of "several different yet overlapping forms of order: universal and major-power-centric[24], global and regional, political and economic, liberal and realist". In a sense, Mazarr draws a scenario for the future that appears to be designed to increase flexibility in responding to other major powers claims to a greater role in world affairs. After all "burgeoning multipolarity does not have to be at odds with an inclusive and mutually beneficial global system", writes Solana, former NATO Secretary-General. In the global order "revisited", he goes on, "rising powers like China are equipped to act as responsible stakeholders" (*Project Syndicate*, 23 June 2017).

The trend in the press and expert media is clear in this respect. While, in the first articles, no distinction was made between Russia and China since they were both presented to the readers as challengers of the international liberal order, the attitude towards Beijing changes well before Xi Jinping's Davos speech. After a few articles stressing the demise of the West as a force behind

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[21] *Financial Times*, 5 January 2017, the format is a full page Big Read.
[22] In *Foreign Affairs*, 96, 1, p. 24.
[23] In *Foreign Affairs*, 96, 1, p. 30.
[24] China fosters the adoption of the *major* powers label in place of great powers to avoid replicating the game of the great power politics. In terms of discursive power China has scored far better than the West recently, see Breslin 2016; Zhao 2016.

world order and the ensuing risks, on 5 November the *Financial Times* hosts a piece by Stephens entitled "China must learn to be a great power". Here the idea that "a new order must accommodate both" America and China is openly set forth.

The discourse is then developed by the newspaper through an article commenting on Xi Jinping's speech at Davos by Acharya, tellingly entitled "Emerging powers can be saviours of the global liberal order" (18 January 2017). The accompanying photo, however, does not show the BRIC summit participants, but President Xi Jinping alone. The argument set forth is that "While China's approach to globalism rejects liberal political values, it may nevertheless help to ease international uncertainty as the Trump administration takes over in Washington". That China's understanding of globalization and global order should be better considered by supporters of liberal principles is certainly stressed by other contributors[25], but the point is that there is apparently no alternative to China taking the lead and provide the needed public goods at the international level. Corpus linguistics analysis will show how Beijing is made to appear reliable, while framing its new role, essentially by downplaying its potential disruptiveness.

On the other hand, Trump's position is so outspoken with respect to his unwillingness to provide international public goods, such as security, that America is presented as a 'mercenary superpower', whose protection can be enjoyed only by those who pay[26]. It goes without saying that this metaphor projects the idea of America as utterly untrustworthy and, as such, unfit to lead. The absence of Europe, which seems to be able to play no role unless it cooperates within the West, is striking.[27] However paradoxical, this is the worldview the wider western audience has received from some of the most influential international media since Trump appeared on the world stage, in the spring of 2016.

5. Communicating the Tipping Point: Metaphors of Order

The goal of sections 5 and 6 is documenting how the communicative strategies and the discourse on Trump are enacted, while confirming the evaluative intent of the articles present in the corpus. Beside the tenet discussed in the methodological section, this part builds on Stubbs' (2001: 149-215) idea that:

> The world could be represented in all kinds of ways, but certain ways of talking about events and people become frequent... Some ideas are formulated over and over again, such that, although they are conventional, they come to seem natural. The frequency makes conventional look 'natural'...Repeated patterns show that evaluative meanings are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, but widely shared in a discourse community.

In this particular case, corpus linguistics and its tools, namely specific software for datamining texts, allows the researcher to detect those regularities in news that reverberate the academic and political discourse, thus defining the 'public idiom' and the consequent 'formation of consensus' (Fowler, 1991) on the topic.

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[25] See for example J. Kynge, "China stakes a claim for globalism without liberalism", *Financial Times*, 27 January 2017.
[26] Niblett, "Liberalism in Retreat", cit., p. 20.
[27] Only one article underlines an opportunity for Europe arising from Trump's isolationism, see A. Stubb, "It's Europe's turn to fill the global power vacuum", Financial Times, 3 February 2017.

The initial issue addressed in the first part of the analysis is the adoption of the IR terminology, concepts and thematic contexts[28] by journalists in the attempt to define the new evidence they are observing, i.e. the tipping point generated by the rise of 'Trump the candidate'. Since, as we will see later, "No matter what an or the international world, or global society is, scholars think about it and communicate about it metaphorically" (Marks, 2011: 55), the first test has been carried out on the way specific terms, linked to the domain of IR, are distributed throughout the corpus. These document the way scholars express their theories and, in this case, journalists memetically replicate their concepts showing acceptance of the theoretical assumptions made. The most frequent six constituent metaphors of IR discourse present in the corpus are considered here, three belong to the conceptual metaphor WORLD POLITICS IS ORDER[29]: *order* (574), *institution** (386)[30], *system** (231). Three belong to the WORLD POLITICS IS ANARCHY/CHAOS metaphor: *challenge** (99), *danger** (55), *conflict** (45). The constituents were firstly identified from the frequency list of the corpus and then validated as meaningful terms reflecting the metaphorical theorization of IR by the specialist co-author. Examples of the statements that revealed a metaphorical use of the constituents in the theorization of the thematic contexts are:

"Kissinger defines 'world *order*' as a concept of just international arrangements that is 'thought to be applicable to the entire world.'" (31 October 2014);

"The result would not be a new *order*. It would be perilous disorder." (27 September 2016);

"The liberal international *order* has rested not simply on economic vitality and military strength. It has been anchored by a set of *values* whose appeal is universal. Freedom, the *rule of law*, human dignity, tolerance, pluralist *institutions*: these are all now scorned by the president-elect of the world's most powerful nation. Liberal democracy itself is thus delegitimised." (10 November 2016) and

"It follows that the ability of the US to *shape* the world to its liking will rest increasingly on its influence over the global economic and political *systems*." (27 September 2016).
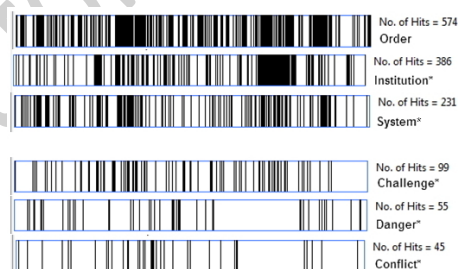

Figure 1: distribution table for Constituent Metaphors.

If we observe their frequencies and their distribution table[31] we can note that: a) writers devote more discursive attention to the metaphorical narrative of WORLD POLITICS IS ORDER than to

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[28] Thematic contexts are used in content analysis to determine the narratives that are dealt with through regular patterns, i.e. the "themes" that are observed across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. It is a way of dealing with data focusing on the content of communicated material.

[29] It is a convention that Conceptual Metaphors are indicated in small capital letters.

[30] It is a convention of corpus linguistics that type-words are written in *italics* with their frequency following in parenthesis. When a type-word ends with an * it means that all the inflecting forms for that word are considered in the frequency count.

[31] Lines represent the word as it is distributed along the time axis. Thicker lines and black areas represent higher concentrations of the word repetition.

the alternative WORLD POLITICS IS ANARCHY/CHAOS one. This reveals an intention to have readers perceive that ORDER is much more important than the institution or person who should guarantee it and to emphasize what might be lost; b) since these distribution graphs represent the corpus on a diachronic axis, where press and expert media are together, it can be said that the specific terminology of the experts is readily adopted by the journalists as well as the thematic contexts. Furthermore, since the corpus represents a heterogeneous authorship, it is evident that all the texts produced in the period are, in a way, 'aligned' with an agenda that considers paramount the maintenance of the status quo, or, at least, the protection of a given order. This is so to the point that the very nature of the order is taken for granted. The constant and even distribution of these terms suggests that we are observing a discursive activity that is enacting, by means of metaphoric statements, "a value system [that] is unlikely to take into account the feelings of the addressee: it is likely to count as an imposition of a set of values" (Charteris-Black, 2004: 12).

In other words, the collective authorship is aligned along a specific agenda realized through the conceptual metaphor TRUMP IS CHAOS and, by means of frequent repetitions, it solicits a specific proactive response from the readership[32].

It has already been stated that the constant repetition in all the corpus of a number of words, sustained by their high frequency, points to an ideological goal. In Table 1 the constituent metaphors for the source domain *Order* and *Chaos*, incidentally two key-words of the Brookings' blog *Order from Chaos*, have been listed and measured following the source domain of the two main conceptual metaphors identified in the corpus, namely WORLD POLITICS IS ORDER and WORLD POLITICS IS ANARCHY/CHAOS, the latter referring to the Hobbesian 'state of nature'.

Source Domain	Metaphor	Total
ORDER	Order (574), Institution* (386), System* (231), Rule* (169), Leader* (134), Multilateral* (107), Leadership (91), Cooperation (73), Value* (65), Status (59), Engage* (51), Regime* (40), Current* (39), Design* (33), Trust* (17), Architec* (16), Pillar* (14), Scenario* (13), Embed* (9), Anchor* (9).	2130
ANARCHY	Challenge* (99), Danger* (55), Conflict* (45), Uncertain* (27), Unpredictab* (18),Disorder* (12), Confrontation (11), Chaos (10), Instability (10), Zero-sum (10), Rivalr* (10), Fragment* (10), Clash* (9), Distrust (6), Peril* (6), Anarch* (5), Unstable (5), , Miscalculat* (5), Uncomfortable (3), Mistrust (3).	359
TOTAL		2489

Table 1: Constituent metaphors for superordinate conceptual metaphors WORLD POLITICS IS ORDER and WORLD POLITICS IS ANARCHY/CHAOS.

Given the frequencies of the two conceptual metaphors, and that of their constituents, one can say that there is a general preoccupation among all the authors in the corpus that Trump can destroy this *order*. Thus, rather than describing the characteristics of this possible 'new chaos' that is statistically not meaningful, the 'establishment' is preoccupied to stress and reiterate in different ways the concept of *order*, 2130 times, to suggest where the pivot of this order will be, i.e. China. In fact, 86% of the metaphorical narrative is devoted to ORDER, while 14% realizes the cognitive metaphor CHAOS; this complex interplay between the frequencies of the terms, the conceptual metaphors and the implicatures they generate, in the Gricean acceptation, points to the stand that the system is unwilling to consider the option that Trump could generate.

Since the very beginning – considered the risk of CHAOS determined by the variable Trump – the metaphorical frame restructuring (Schon 1993: 137) operated by the media has a specific goal, that of making the entrance of *China* on the stage of the *International Order* more palatable and

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[32] This is in line with the emphasis put on his personality and problematic character by journalists and commentators, mentioned in section 3 and discussed in section 6.

smoothly accepted to the international readership while ruling Trump out of it. The testimony that an accommodation strategy towards the country is at work here is also indicated by other linguistic evidence. The most important is the high frequency of *China* (915), almost double than that of *order*, but close to the one for *Trump* (861). Thus, even from a quantitative point of view, the ideal substitute is cognitively offered with a process that in NLP is known as 'swish pattern', a method that makes possible to 'install' an automatic, positive response to a certain stimuli, which has previously provided you with a negative outcome. Furthermore, its distribution clearly points to the future pivot of the *world order*.

Furthermore, the dispersion of the constituent metaphorical words documented in Table 1 points to another interesting phenomenon observed in political communication (Conoscenti, 2013), namely, the use of sprinkled metonymies. Since readers are changing for the better in resisting to manipulative spinning techniques simply based on the repetition of a single word or concept, metonymy is preferred. In order to obtain a higher impact and influence on the audience, metonymy is 'sprinkled' through time and space in different texts using terminologies that belong to the same semantic area or thematic context. In this specific case, the evidence is even more interesting since the two main sprinkled metonymies are carried out by a number of individual authors. A possible explanation would be the one of a well-coordinated agenda by the editorial teams. Given the importance of this subject in current political communication, further investigation in the near future is required.

6. Communicating the Tipping Point: Emotional Narratives

Another issue addressed in the first part of the paper is the way Trump is portrayed. A suitable tool to verify this aspect is the *Z-score*: a statistical index used to measure a specific relationship between a node word and the words, named collocates, which occur in its neighbourhood[33]. The higher the value, the higher the likelihood two words collocate not by chance, but because of the author's intention. Thus, *types* (vocabulary), *tokens* (frequency), *collocations* (the Z-score) and *distribution* allow us to index and realise a four-dimension matrix that maps the ways meaning is instantiated in a specific text and shapes reality.

Rank	Word	Z-score
6	ABANDONED	6,39
12	UNPREDICTABILITY	5,09
17	INSTINCT	4,93
18	UNQUALIFIED	4,93
20	INCREDULITY	4,93
21	DEALMAKING	4,93
24	CAPRICIOUS	4,93
27	NIGHTMARE	4,93
57	PROTECTIONIST	3,62

Table 2: Z-score for the node word *Trump*.

As can be observed in Table 2, the Z-score confirms both the qualitative analysis carried out in the first part, and the hypothesis of an existing agenda to spread the metaphor TRUMP IS CHAOS. The candidate, then POTUS, is qualified by means of pre and post-modifications that leave no room for a positive evaluation. Some examples of the statements generated are:

"But Mr Trump has abandoned America's traditional support for European integration, suggesting that it would be a good idea if Britain voted to leave the EU." (23 May 2016);

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[33] In our case we look at 5 words to the left and 5 to the right of the node word, in this case *Trump*. We also consider the frequency of the node word and of the collocate in the corpus and the total number of running words in it.

"Unpredictability, in Mr Trump's book, is a strength. Mostly though, he would attach unapologetic nationalism to old-fashioned isolationism." (5 May 2016) and

"He appears to be intent on replacing multilateralism with bilateralism, liberalism with protection and predictability with unpredictability." (4 May 2017).

All the authors use the terminology in an evenly distributed way and with the clear intent of orienting readers' interpretation to fostering the view that WORLD POLITICS IS ORDER and it is necessary, at any cost, while Trump is but a 'variable'. Here the *Trump discourse* is instantiated as the recontextualization of a social practice that determines the orthodox norm and what the desired and accepted values for the current scenario are. Since metaphors are not a requirement of the semantic system but are a matter of speaker's choice, the symbolic narrative generated by the authors makes it possible to identify "the propositions that underlie the cognitive basis of metaphors and reveal the intentions of speakers" (Charteris-Black, 2004: 11). Thus, we can focus on the persuasive intent of conveying an evaluation of the topic under discussion to the point that the ideology of the texts analysed is evident through the coherent view of reality that is consequently formed and reframed. Further evidence of the accommodation strategy we indicated. This is the reason why the word *order* assumes a strategic importance in the corpus.

N	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
1	THE	THE	THE	THE	INTERNATIONAL	ORDER	AND	THE	THE	TO	THE
2	OF	OF	OF	LIBERAL	LIBERAL		THAT	THAT	AND	THE	AND
3	TO	TO	TO	OF	WORLD		THE	BE	TO	AND	OF
4	AND	AND	AND	GLOBAL	THE		IN	TO	IS	OF	TO
5	IN	CHINA	IN	AND	GLOBAL		IS	IN	BY	IS	THAT
6	THAT	THAT	AN	AN	ECONOMIC		TO	CHINA	IN	WITH	IS
10	LIBERAL	INSTITUTIONS	LIBERAL	TO	POSTWAR		AS	ON	CHINA	CHINA	CONTENT
12	STATES	FOR	INSTITUTIONS	WAR	OLD		IT	TRUMP	FT	ON	AS
18	LEADER	THESE	NEW	ON	POLITICAL		1.0	HAD	WESTERN	INSTITUTIONS	US

Table 3: Patterns for *order*.

In our corpus the traditional representational axis *new order* ←→*old order* is articulated in a way that the pattern analysis in Table 3 makes evident. All the terminology and its ideological organisation points to a number of image schemas that are generated to contrast what is *given* – the international order before the tipping point, the one that should be maintained within the boundaries of the status quo – and the *new* – the scenario of a possible chaos that could be generated by the Trump administration. This is why authors place *Trump*, in quantitative and discursive terms, far from the focus of *order* and with connotations that the Z-score has highlighted. Being considered a potential destabilising actor of the setting, *Trump* is found only at level 12 in position R2. It can be noted that the first levels around the central key word define all the possible variants of the order. The most frequent patterns thus generated are shown in Table 4.

At the same time it can be observed that the ideological system enacted by the diffused authorship tries to counterbalance the centrifugal effects that could be generated by the *new*, identifying a possible/different new pivot for the order, namely China. The country is present in levels 5, 6 and 10 in Left and Right positions. This entails a vision where China has the capacity to pre-modify the *order* – left positions – but it can be also be affected by it – right positions. Stated otherwise, postmodifications indicate that, in contrast with previous discourses on China, the latter having been 'tamed' by the *international liberal order*, it is now less dangerous. Another form of the discursive accommodation strategy indicated earlier. Commentators do not envisage a role for Europe in this possible *new* scenario, since it is absent from the patterns. The contribution of the western institutions, placed at level 18, R3 and R4, is considered marginal.

Cluster	Freq.	Range
INTERNATIONAL ORDER	121	30
LIBERAL ORDER	91	23
WORLD ORDER	66	31
THE ORDER	60	10
LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER	48	15
GLOBAL ORDER	42	21
LIBERAL WORLD ORDER	21	11
ECONOMIC ORDER	14	7
EXISTING ORDER	12	4
GLOBAL LIBERAL ORDER	10	5
POSTWAR ORDER	9	5
NEW ORDER	8	7
OLD ORDER	8	6
CURRENT ORDER	8	2
GEOPOLITICAL ORDER	5	4
POLITICAL ORDER	5	3
GLOBAL ECONOMIC ORDER	5	4
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER	5	1

Table 4: Clusters for *order*.

Cluster	Freq.	Range
INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM	34	17
TRADING SYSTEM	13	11
POLITICAL SYSTEM	11	9
GLOBAL SYSTEM	11	9
EXISTING SYSTEM	9	3
SECURITY SYSTEM	7	6
ECONOMIC SYSTEM	7	7

Table 5: Clusters for *system*.

Tables 4 and 5[34] show that, with respect to the academic usage in IR, the terms *order* and *system* are used as synonyms in the corpus. Furthermore, clusters for *order* uncover the commentators' intent of advocating a specific ideological perspective even at the quantitative level. The traditional *new order* ←→*old order* axis has little statistical importance, 8 references for each compound, in a limited range of articles (13). It is possible to say that the basic polarization new vs. old has been dropped, even from a cognitive point of view, in favour of a more complex and articulated vision. *Order* is pre-modified in different ways, but the first three entries total 278 repetitions and cover the whole corpus. The ranking of the clusters in tables 4 and 5 shows that this discourse prefers a taxonomy of *order* that reflects the terminology of economics instead of the one of politics, in spite of the heterogeneous composition of the authorship and corpus.

To appreciate the impact of these findings consider that *order* is present in the British National Corpus, a collection of authentic English language texts consisting of more than 100 million words, 33,646 times. None of the collocates or clusters found in our corpus are present in its first 100 ranks. *International order* scores 28, *liberal order* (0), *world order* (122). This means that we have been able to detect and observe the introduction of a new set of statistically significant expressions and thematic contexts in a limited period of time in a specific area of expert and press discourse.

A more balanced approach is shown by the clusters for *system*, another key-word of the source domain ORDER. In table 4 we can observe that the *international system* (34) is substantially a triangulation of a *trading system* (13), a *political* (11) and a *global* (11) one. The sum of the latter three (35) perfectly quantitatively balances the first one.

It has already been said that both qualitative and quantitative analyses show a specific preoccupation of authors to support a specific view of the current state of the world order and an evident evaluation of Trump. This is confirmed by another analysis carried out with the *LIWC2015* software.[35] The advantage of this tool is that it calculates the degree to which people use different categories of words. *LIWC* can check and count 80 different variables and their relative values are expressed in percentages. The output is linked to "32 word categories tapping psychological constructs (e.g., affect and cognition)" [36] and many others. The most important added value of the software is that its dictionaries and categories were validated through a rigorous peer reviewing process (Pennebaker and Francis, 1996). Each word can thus be counted and stored in different variables and can be referred to through the semantic networks – or Semantic Areas (SA) – it generates. The results for each corpus, expressed in percentages, can be checked against the

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[34] In table 3 *range* refers to the number of articles the compound is present.

[35] *LIWC, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count*. For a detailed explanation of the program cf. http://liwc.wpengine.com/.

[36] Information cited from website and software accompanying documentation.

values, expressed with a Grand Mean (GM), recorded for each category/genre of the speech/text used for the validation process.

LIWC Semantic Area (SA)	Corpus GM	LIWC GM	Δ%
Positive emotion	2.77	3.67	- 24.5
Negative emotion	2.47	1.84	+34.2
Anxiety	0.53	0.31	+71.0
Anger	0.94	0.54	+74.0

Table 6: LIWC Semantic Areas in the Corpus.

The SA that relate to a*ffect* words, see Table 6, confirm a discourse that is developed along a general negative feeling supported by the *anxiety* and *anger* SA. The corpus records a positive tone quite below the GM (-24.5%). This datum is confirmed by the weight the SA of *negative emotion* has (+34.2%) and the variance of the *anxiety* (+71.0%) and *anger* (+74%) ones.[37] We are dealing with a number of texts that, in spite of the two discourse communities that generated them, concede a lot to negative emotional writing and give up a function of knowledgeable expertise and detachment that should be manifested by complex and articulated cognitive mechanisms typical of the academic and quality press genres. It can be said that the corpus mirrors, in terms of semantic networks, the language of Trump.

Given the results of the elections and the course set by the Administration, this is a factor that should be considered by professional communicators who wish to counter specific political/communicative phenomena by means of a language that, in the end, tends to resonate with the 'enemy'. In fact, all the terminologies and images observed in the corpus point to a limited number of conceptual metaphors that prefigure a post-structuralist joint activity of meaning construction aimed at generating a 'compelling narrative' as the one described by Westen (2007). The result is that it reinforces the 'original one', i.e. that activated by Trump, and to his own advantage.

7. Conclusion

The high level of anger and anxiety observed among Western commentators when dealing with Donald Trump is unusual, but it can be explained by the findings of our analysis. The impression shared by the press and expert media is that an unexpected and 'unfortunate' transition is underway, which will dissipate the long-term investment the US made in setting up the liberal international order. Trump's "transactional view of international relations" is the key to understanding why "the larger, interdependent logic of the US-led system" is now lost (Ikenberry, 2017). Trump is associated with chaos throughout and his appearance during the 2016 presidential campaign is blatantly a tipping point in the existence of the liberal order, as the media coverage proves. Consistently, a narrative is offered to the public opinion about China becoming the responsible stakeholder that many hoped for.

The introduction of a new set of thematic contexts and terminologies has been observed. These point to an apparent 'emotional reaction' of the analysed diffused and collective authorship. As Coker (2015: 100) suggested, "the United States has identified the main trend in world politics, the rise of China, and it has not sought to oppose it. But […] it has failed to re-frame

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[37] This is also validated by the semantic networks related to the *cognitive processes* SA. The whole area scores -12.6% compared to the GM, while the *insight* and the *tentative* SA respectively are -26.4% and -22.2%.

a competitive situation in a language intelligible to everyone else". Today, the press and expert media seem to have taken upon themselves the task of making public opinion familiar with the increased role of emerging countries and accommodating them as new responsible major powers. Our findings show, however, that in doing so they give up the typical detachment of knowledgeable expertise, which is supposed to be a distinguishing feature of academic and quality press genres. This is an issue that the scholars and professional communicators cannot but address.

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