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Professional Amateur
Trump and Twitter

On the evening of April 30, 2011, Donald Trump attended the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner. Barack Obama's short speech that night was light-hearted and funny, but it focused on a serious subject matter. Obama addressed the birther conspiracy theory, which claims that he has been deceiving the American people because he was not, as he claims, born on Hawaii but outside of the United States and therefore had never been an eligible candidate for the office of president of the United States. These allegations had been circulating since summer 2008 but they gained more and more momentum throughout 2010 and early 2011, instigating Obama to take the unusual step of releasing the long form of his birth certificate to the public, a few days before the dinner.[1]

At the event itself, Obama took on some of the most vocal celebrity birthers. He devoted a couple of minutes to Fox News and Michelle Bachman, and roasted Donald Trump, arguably the most fervent birther of the preceding weeks, for several minutes. Suggesting that the release of the long birth certificate had settled the issue for good, he said:

> Now, I know that he's taken some flak lately, but no one is happier, no one is prouder to put this birth certificate matter to rest than the Donald. (Laughter.) And that's because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter—like, did we fake the moon landing? (Laughter.) What really happened in Roswell? (Laughter.) And where are Biggie and Tupac?

Having cast Trump as a prototypical conspiracy theorist, he then went on to make fun of a recent episode of *Celebrity Apprentice*, which Trump was still hosting at the time:

> But you, Mr. Trump, recognized that the real problem was a lack of leadership. And so ultimately, you didn't blame Lil' Jon or Meatloaf. (Laughter.) You fired Gary Busey. (Laughter.) And these are the kind of decisions that would keep me up at night. (Laughter and applause.) Well handled, sir. (Laughter.) Well handled.

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1 As every student of conspiracy theory could have told Obama, the release of the birth certificate did not discourage but rather fueled the allegations. For a detailed analysis, see Butter, "Birthers."

Say what you will about Mr. Trump, he certainly would bring some change to the White House. Let's see what we've got up there. (Obama)

Obviously, Obama has been proven right. Donald Trump has brought tremendous change to the White House. Moreover, legend has it that it was during his public humiliation by the president that Trump decided to run for the presidency (McLaughlin).

The story fits well with Trump's image as an angry, impulsive, and revengeful man that dominates in large parts of the public on both sides of the Atlantic. And this image is certainly, to a large degree, appropriate. However, exclusively focusing on this aspect of his personality, as so many media outlets do, tends to obscure how strategically Trump has been acting in other respects. For example, one can make the convincing claim that Trump spread the birther conspiracy allegations intentionally to construct for himself a political persona and prepare a run for office later. As Parker and Eder have suggested, the allegations were "a political trial balloon" for Trump, a way to test how segments of the public, critical of Obama, would react to him addressing a political issue. Amazingly they write, "[t]he more Mr. Trump questioned the legitimacy of Mr. Obama's presidency, the better he performed in the early polls of the 2012 Republican field, springing from fifth place to a virtual tie for first." Then, however, he suddenly dropped the issue—arguably because he had decided that 2012 was too early to run for President. He resuscitated the birther claims a year later, though, to support the Romney campaign. However, he no longer articulated his conspiracist allegations in TV interviews and instead turned to Twitter, a social media tool that was rapidly gaining in importance back then. Between May and November 2012, he composed more than sixty tweets in which he questioned the legitimacy of Obama's presidency. After the election, he dropped the issue again, but continued to tweet several times a day. He had found the ideal medium to articulate his political ideas.

It is therefore not entirely correct that "Trump used Twitter to turn himself from a real estate mogul turned reality show host into a political gadfly" (Galdieri et al. 2), but by the time Trump eventually did run for president, his perpetual tweeting had become his signature move. When journalist Jean Card hailed Trump as the savior of a divided and unjust society by comparing him to Katniss Everdeen, the heroine of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, she wrote: "Our hero fires off tweets instead of arrows. However, whereas Katniss's arrows are aimed at her enemies, Trump's tweets target his most loyal supporters." For Trump, Twitter is a tool to communicate with his base and to cast himself as one of them, as somebody who hates liberals, the media, and cultural and political elites just as much as they do. What I will argue here, then, is that Twitter

is the ideal platform for Trump to perform populism, and his use of the tool is highly professional, even though it constantly creates the impression of being spontaneous and amateurish. I develop this argument in two steps. I begin with a general discussion of the relationship between Twitter and populist politics. In the second section, I then explore Trump's use of Twitter, focusing on how he articulates populist ideas via Twitter and casts himself as a leader of the people through the content and style of his tweets. In the conclusion, I quickly discuss the Kavanaugh confirmation process in order to show that Trump's use of Twitter has not changed since the election.

1. Twitter Politics

Twitter went online in 2006 and quickly became one of the most important social media services worldwide (Parmelee and Bichard 3). Since it famously used to restrict the length of a single message or tweet to 140 characters—extended to 280, as of November 2017—it has often been described as a microblogging site. This is not wrong as many tweets only consist of text, but Twitter also allows its users to embed links, images, or videos in their tweets. Klemm therefore refers to tweets as (potentially) "multimodal compressed compositions" ("Multimodale Komprimate") and stresses that they are a one-to-many form of communication, particularly apt to share news (15). Tweets are also a hybrid form of communication because they are directed, on the one hand, at a "private public" ("persönliche Öffentlichkeit"), that is, at those who have subscribed to the tweets of a specific user, and, on the other hand, they are also visible to everybody who searches for them, with most Twitter users' aim being to get as big an audience as possible for their tweets (16).

With more than 335 million users worldwide as of July 2018 ("Twitter"), this is not an easy task, especially since people use Twitter to communicate about all kinds of topics. As Marietta et al. stress with regard to political tweets:

> On Twitter, Democrats are competing not only against Republicans but also against music, sports, movies, television, comedians, friends, and every other thing that pops up on a citizen's Twitter feed. If a tweet is not amusing or otherwise attention-grabbing, it is often quickly left behind. (9)

Accordingly, whoever wants to be successful on Twitter needs to work effectively within the strict rules of the medium, turning its "epigrammatic brevity" ("epigrammatische Kürze"; Klemm 17) into a "liberating constraint" (Gross and Johnson 748). Effective tweeting is therefore a considerable "rhetorical

challenge" ("rhetorische Herausforderung"; Klemm 17)—not only but in particular for politicians who have been using Twitter more and more in recent years.

While Facebook is still by far the biggest social media platform, Twitter has by now emerged as the most important social media site for political communication. Whereas some earlier scholarship assumed that politicians would use Twitter to interact with their constituents (Parmelee and Bichard 1), scholars now generally agree that such interactions are the exception rather than the rule. Political communication on Twitter is usually one-way traffic with politicians trying to spread their agenda. As Morris has shown, campaign messages sent out via Twitter resonate at least as strongly with the public as those communicated through more traditional media channels (466). Live-tweeting now accompanies every major political debate or hearing with all interested parties trying to spin what is happening on TV or on a livestream to their advantage as the event is still unfolding (Perry et al. 65). The necessary brevity of a single tweet lends itself to communicating succinct positions or even campaign slogans much easier than, for example, on Facebook (Klemm 20). The reductionism inherent in the medium is also the reason why many scholars have suggested that Twitter is the ideal vehicle for populist ideas.

Populism, as Jan-Werner Müller defines it, "is a particular *moralistic imagination of politics*, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified ... people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior." Moreover, it is "always antipluralist: populists claim that they, *and only they*, represent the people." They thus challenge the legitimacy of rival politicians and their supporters and habitually cast them as traitors of the "proper people" (19-20; orig. emphasis). Beyond these rather general characteristics populism can be, and historically has been, aligned with very different and in fact mutually exclusive political agendas. Populism occurs on the left as well as on the right, and it can be communist as well as fascist. Hence it makes sense to think of populism as a "thin-centered ideology" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 6), a rather empty framework that is always conjoined with a "thicker," that is a more fully developed ideology such as socialism or nationalism. Finally, populist movements are often dominated by a charismatic leader figure whose image is that of "a man of action rather than words, who is not afraid to take difficult and quick decisions" (64). This leader always already intuitively knows what the people—the real people—want, and he articulates their concerns and fights for them (Müller 34-35).

Like other forms of social media, Twitter allows populist politicians to communicate directly with the electorate. This is something that populists have always tried to do because they distrust—or at least profess to distrust—the

established party structures and media outlets that usually mediate between a politician and the voters. As Müller puts it, "[p]opulists always want to cut out the middleman" (35); they want to speak directly to the "ordinary" people without having their words twisted by what they consider corrupt bureaucrats or journalists serving the elite. In the past, populists tried to use traditional media for this—Hugo Chavez, for example, hosted a weekly talk show, *Aló Presidente*, during which he would take phone calls from voters when he was president of Bolivia—but since the advent of Web 2.0, they have shifted their attention largely to social media such as Facebook and particularly to Twitter. As van Kessel and Castelein argue in a study of populist communication in the Netherlands, the use of Twitter allows both left- and right-wing populist parties to engage in a permanent campaign of opposition against the allegedly evil political elites that are ruining the country (596).

What is more, several scholars have observed that the inherent logic of Twitter makes the medium even better suited for populist discourse than other social media platforms like Facebook.[2] To begin with, "[b]ecause of its character limitation, Twitter structurally does not allow for a communication of detailed and sophisticated messages" and thus invites simplification or the articulation of messages that were never complicated in the first place (Ott 60). Whereas non-populist politicians may have trouble or be reluctant to articulate their ideas in a single tweet, populists project a view of the world in which the people are always the hapless victims of the elites who are to be blamed for all problems and evils. Accordingly, the measures they propose to amend the situation are usually anything but complicated and easily expressed in 140 or 280 characters. As van Kessel and Castelein put it, "the format of tweets ... arguably offers more opportunities for politicians with a succinct and unambiguous message than for mainstream politicians whose positions are marked by more nuance and opacity" (596).

Besides simplification, Twitter also thrives on other elements that characterize populist rhetoric. To begin with, a recent empirical study found that tweets that articulate a moral argument in emotional language were re-tweeted at a much more significant rate than other tweets, an effect the authors of the study refer to as "moral contagion" (Brady et al. 7316). Due to the moral(istic) stance that populists invariably assume, they employ such language far more frequently than other politicians and thus have an advantage in disseminating their ideas. Secondly, since they always know exactly whom to blame and consider rival politicians who disagree with them illegitimate, populists often offend their opponents. According to Ott, Twitter encourages such "uncivil

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2   See Albertini et al. for a discussion of how populists use Facebook.

discourse" because it is—or at least appears to be—informal communication (62). Moreover, it "depersonalizes interactions" and it is usually easier to offend somebody who is not present (Tait qtd. in Ott 62). Thirdly, populists tend to paint a very bleak picture of society, highlighting threats to security and status and implying that only they can remedy the situation. Again, such rhetoric works particularly well on Twitter, where effective communication hinges on the requirement of being provocative. Often threats are "the simplest and most inciting message" imaginable (Marietta et al. 12). Finally, Twitter is much better suited for the direct, but ultimately one-directional communication with the electorate that populists seek compared to the more dialogic Facebook. The different logic of these two platforms is captured perfectly by the fact that one has friends on Facebook with whom one engages in an exchange, but followers on Twitter (Klemm 24). And this is, of course, exactly what a populist leader strives for.

2. Trump on Twitter

Ever since he opened his account @realdonaldtrump in the spring of 2009, Trump has been an extremely prolific Twitter user. As of 10:24 a.m. Central European Summer Time on October 18, 2018—the Trump Twitter Archive, which chronicles his output on the social media platform and provides a helpful search tool for researchers, contains 35,499 tweets with the earliest published on May 2, 2009. The archive is not entirely complete since Trump, as all Twitter users do, occasionally deletes already published tweets, and Brendan Brown, who runs the website, only started collecting Trump's tweets in real time early in 2017. What has been collected indicates that, on average, Trump has been tweeting ten times a day over a period of almost ten years. As Twitter is an important tool of communication and mobilization for him, the number increases during campaigns or around other important events. Between July 21, 2016, when he officially accepted the Republican nomination and November 9, election night, for example, he tweeted thirteen times a day on average. Obviously, as Twitter in general became more popular and Trump transformed from a TV celebrity into the president, the number of his followers has grown. During the most important months of the campaign he had about 17.6 million followers (Enli 53), by now he has more than 55 million, but among them are bound to be at least several thousand bots—accounts that are run by computer programs and are not owned by real human beings.

Although Trump's Twitter account is marked by a small blue hook, which indicates that it is a verified celebrity account, it is very likely that he has not been personally authoring all tweets but that staffers have access to the account as

well. Trump has repeatedly denied this, but a good indicator that the claim is correct is that during the campaign tweets on his account came from both an Android phone and an iPhone. Julia Braun, who has studied the tweets Trump posted between the nomination and the election, has found that the phrase "crooked Hillary" was used 64 times in tweets written on the Android phone but only 17 times in tweets written on the iPhone (34).[3] If one adds that several journalists reported only ever seeing Trump with a Samsung phone, it seems plausible that the iPhone tweets were not written by Trump, even though he might have dictated them to staffers (Enli 57). In spring 2017, however, Trump switched to an iPhone; tellingly, when people began to notice that there were no more Android tweets, Dan Scarvino the White House Director of Social Media, released a tweet in which he stressed that all tweets may now be coming from an iPhone but "it is #POTUS45 reading & tweeting!" (qtd. in McCormick).

In one of the best articles on Trump's campaign and the first months of his presidency, Galen Stolee and Steve Caton observe that "what is striking about Trump's campaign, and his eventual win, was his consistent address of his base, often at the expense of a wider reach within the electorate" (150). Whereas candidates and especially presidents have traditionally tried to "shape a Message [sic] that could be addressed to as wide a constituency as possible," Trump's approach was and continues to be much narrower, especially on Twitter (150). Amongst the people who follow Trump on Twitter are, of course, numerous journalists and other political observers who react neither positively nor negatively to his tweets. There is also a considerable number of people who hate Trump and everything that he represents, and who are often the first to reply to his tweets in order to contradict him, to accuse him of lying, or to berate him. But most of his followers, it is safe to assume, support him and are receptive to his messages. It is these people that Trump addresses with his tweets, and he obviously does not care that his tweets do little to win over undecided voters or bridge the partisan divide.

Since he had used Twitter for (mostly) nonpolitical purposes before, the rhetoric of Trump's tweets obviously changed when he decided to run for president. It took him a while to find the voice ideally suited to his political platform, but since the middle of 2016, I would claim, the tone and structure of his tweets has been remarkably consistent and was not even much affected by Twitter's extension to 280 characters per tweet in November 2017. Consequently, a fairly random selection of tweets sent over two days in August 2016 can serve to exemplify how he tweets:

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3 I may only quote her here, but my argument in this section has been significantly shaped by Julia Braun's MA thesis on Trump's use of Twitter during the election campaign.

The failing @nytimes has become a newspaper of fiction. Their stories about me always quote non-existent unnamed sources. Very dishonest! Aug 13, 2016 01:29:23 PM ("Failing")

We now have confirmation as to one reason Crooked H wanted to be sure that nobody saw her e-mails—PAY-FOR-PLAY. How can she run for Pres. Aug 13, 2016 03:02:38 PM ("We")

Crooked Hillary Clinton is being protected by the media. She is not a talented person or politician. The dishonest media refuses to expose! Aug 14, 2016 11:50:51 AM ("Crooked")

I am not only fighting Crooked Hillary, I am fighting the dishonest and corrupt media and her government protection process. People get it! Aug 14, 2016 11:55:07 AM ("I am not")

Trump's tweets often consist of three parts. They tend to begin with a sentence or clause that functions, to a certain degree, like a topic sentence in a longer paragraph: "The failing @nytimes has become a newspaper of fiction" or "I am not only fighting Crooked Hillary" set the topic of the tweet. The next sentence or clause then develops the topic and often, just as the second and third sentences in a paragraph should do, elaborates on the claim ("I am fighting the dishonest and corrupt media and her government protection process") or provide evidence—only that the evidence Trump presents is often entirely fabricated ("Their stories about me always quote non-existent unnamed sources"). Often, the tweets then end with a short and pointed conclusion ("Very dishonest!"; "People get it!").

Trump frequently employs emotionally loaded and morally evaluative adjectives, especially in the first and third parts of his tweets: "The *failing* @nytimes has become a newspaper of fiction ... . Very *dishonest*!"; "*Crooked* Hillary Clinton is being protected by the media ... . The *dishonest* media refuses to expose!" (emphases added). As discussed in the previous section, this is the most effective way to incite users and ensure wide distribution of the tweet. As the examples above also show, Trump often devotes several tweets in short succession to a topic, repeating his argument again and again. He also often uses exactly the same words, often adjectives, to describe the people and institutions he criticizes in all tweets devoted to a specific topic. The *New York Times* is always "failing;" the media are always "dishonest;" and Hillary Clinton is always "crooked." By way of these epithets, Trump attempts to frame the perception of Clinton and certain media outlets in a specific way.[4]

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4 On the importance of cognitive frames for political debates, see Wehling.

Trump also makes frequent use of the exclamation mark and, albeit only in one of my examples here, often spells entire words or sentences in capital letters. This is unusual for a man, especially one who stresses traditional masculinity as obsessively as Trump, because it is usually women who use these techniques in their written communication (see Dewey). Linguists refer to this as "upscaled graduation;" it is "a means of intensifying the emotional tenor of your message in order to ratchet up the response of your audience." However, it makes sense that Trump employs these stylistic devices because in online communications "people tend to feel closer ... to those who frequently use them" (Dewey). In other words: it is a strategy that helps Trump create the "emotional contagion" necessary for successful tweets and it aligns him with his audience. It is thus a crucial component of the populist message he articulates.

Unsurprisingly, in these and many other tweets Trump fashions himself as a champion of the people, employing the moralistic language so typical of populism. Not only does he not care about the rules of proper English, he also does not care about the rules by which a corrupt elite conducts politics. He draws a sharp distinction between the people on the one side and the elite (such as in the tweets I have selected here), Clinton, the media, and various government agencies, on the other. The latter are "dishonest and corrupt;" they "PAY-FOR-PLAY," and do not care about the common people. Trump, by contrast, presents himself as the champion of the people, as somebody who wants to repair the broken system—"I am fighting the dishonest and corrupt media and her government protection process"—and demonstrating that he knows that he can count on the people's support and understanding: "People get it!"

That both the style and content of these tweets did not come naturally to Trump becomes clear through comparing these four tweets to earlier ones. In the 85 tweets, published between November 2011 and September 2014, that the Trump Twitter Archive collects under "Birtherism" in a special section of the website, Trump uses only twenty exclamation marks, and does not write a single word in capital letters, although these accusations are obviously a topic that invites emotionality. Moreover, while these tweets are critical of what one could term a liberal elite, they lack the notion of the innocent people and are thus not yet populist in the sense I defined earlier. As Uri Friedman has argued, Trump only became a populist in this sense during the summer of 2016 when Steve Bannon joined the campaign and Stephen Miller gained more influence on his speeches.

In his tweets, then, Trump does not just spontaneously articulate his beliefs and feelings. He may occasionally or maybe even frequently be voicing his genuine convictions, but he does it in a careful and controlled manner. Either by chance, instinct, by following other Twitter accounts and copying their style, or

by listening to his advisers, Trump has developed a style of tweeting that allows him to convincingly fashion himself as a populist leader. It is part of this image that he appears to be impulsive—and he probably also is impulsive in most of his life—but he uses Twitter in exactly the opposite fashion. It is a medium which he employs to present himself "as a genuine outsider" (Enli 56), as somebody who does not care about the rules by which politics is usually conducted. Nevertheless, while he may project an image of himself that is diametrically opposed to how more traditional politicians present themselves via Twitter, his social media campaign is anything but representative of a "counter-trend" to the ever-growing professionalization of American political campaigns (55). For the platform Trump was running on, tweeting like an amateur who cares as little about spelling as about political correctness was the most professional stance he could assume.

3. Conclusion: "VOTE REPUBLICAN!"

Since populists usually do not shed their alarmist rhetoric after they have come into power, it is not surprising that Ramona Kreis found, in her analysis of Trump's tweets from his first months in office, that he continued "to construct and reinforce the concept of a homogeneous people and a homeland threatened by the dangerous other" (607). As is quite typical of right-wing populism, this "other" comprises two groups: the corrupt elite inside the country and undeserving outsiders, that is, the Democrats and liberals in general, on the one hand, and visitors from certain Muslim countries and (undocumented) immigrants from Mexico, on the other. While Trump focused on the external threat throughout 2017, over the course of 2018 he has increasingly targeted the Democrats because of their support for the Mueller investigation, the upcoming midterm elections, and their allegedly obstructive role in the controversial confirmation process of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. The tweets Trump wrote while the Senate and the public were discussing the Kavanaugh case demonstrate, in a nutshell, that Trump as president does not tweet any differently than Trump the candidate and that he exclusively addresses his base.

After announcing his nomination of Kavanaugh in a series of tweets in July 2018, Trump does not pick up the topic again until the first day of the confirmation hearings on September 4 when he issues a two-part tweet in which he criticizes "the other side" of being "mean, angry, and despicable" ("Brett"). As allegations of sexual abuse surface and the Senate committee schedules an additional hearing, Trump accompanies these developments in a series of about twenty tweets. Thirteen of them contain at least one exclamation mark, and

six contain one or more words in capital letters, showing Trump's attempt to stir up the emotions of his loyal followers. In fact, the phrase "the other side" from the first tweet on the controversy makes perfectly clear whom Trump addresses, and how he reinforces the polarization of American society in order to exploit it for his purposes ("Brett"). Rendering the details of the case at hand unimportant, he paints the Democrats as just wanting "to destroy and delay" everything on his agenda. "I go through with this with them every single day in D.C.," he concludes a tweet from September 21 ("Judge"). The next day, he accuses them of "playing a high-level CON GAME" and engaging in "the politics of destruction" ("Democrats"). The purpose behind this way of spinning the case is to assure his base that Kavanaugh is blameless and that he is just who Democrats are currently focusing on in their attempt to hurt the American people. When the Senate demands an FBI investigation, he presents this as a pointless exercise he has to agree to and assures his followers that the outcome is a foregone conclusion: "Just started, tonight, our 7th FBI investigation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh. He will someday be recognized as a truly great Justice of The United States Supreme Court!" ("Just").

When the Senate votes to end the debate on October 5 and schedules the final vote for the next day, Trump moves completely to the offensive and begins to connect the Kavanaugh case with the upcoming midterm elections. "[L]ook at all of the professionally made identical signs. Paid for by Soros and others. These are not signs made in the basement from love! #Troublemakers," he tweets on October 5 ("Very"), harking into the—implicitly anti-Semitic—conspiracy theory that the Democrats do not enjoy any popular support and therefore pay protesters with money provided by exactly those international banking elites that are also responsible for the decline of the white working-class in the Midwest and elsewhere in America.[5] He follows with a tweet the next day that highlights how the "real people" spontaneously support his nomination of Kavanaugh: "Women for Kavanaugh, and many others who support this very good man, are gathering all over Capital [sic] Hill in preparation for a 3-5 P.M. VOTE. It is a beautiful thing to see—and they are not paid professional protesters who are handed expensive signs. Big day for America!" ("Women").[6]

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5 See Butter, "Nichts" 214-18 for a discussion of how Trump used this conspiracy theory in the final weeks of the election campaign.

6 Trump frequently praises his supporters in his tweets. In fact, the public perception that he uses Twitter primarily to stir up negative feelings is wrong and probably results from the media and opponents primarily noticing these tweets. In line with his image as a leader who truly cares for the people, Trump frequently celebrates their common sense—"The harsh and unfair treatment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh is having an incredible upward impact on voters. The PEOPLE get it far better than the politicians," he wrote on October 4 ("Harsh")—and

His final tweet of the day spells out the lesson his supporters should learn from the Kavanaugh case: "You don't hand matches to an arsonist, and you don't give power to an angry left-wing mob. Democrats have become too EXTREME and TOO DANGEROUS to govern. Republicans believe in the rule of law—not the rule of the mob. VOTE REPUBLICAN!" ("You").

Trump's tweets during the Kavanaugh confirmation process thus once again prove that his "use of Twitter is not a form of erratic communication but should be interpreted as strategic" (Kreis 616). There is no other politician in the Western world who uses Twitter for his purposes as skillfully as Trump does. He may be erratic and impulsive in most of what he does, and in many respects the worst president the United States has had over the past century at least, but he knows perfectly well how to orchestrate the feelings and actions of the considerable part of the population that still supports him and will most likely continue to do so as long as he is president. Whoever the Democrats nominate to run against him in 2020, Trump will most probably be difficult to beat, and Twitter will be an important component of his re-election campaign.

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fashions himself as their protector. During the weeks of the Kavanaugh controversy, for example, Trump wrote dozens of tweets that addressed people in states about to be hit by hurricanes, asking them to protect themselves and their loved ones. For example, when hurricane Florence was about to hit the East Coast in mid-September, Trump tweeted: "It is imperative that everyone follow local evacuation orders. This storm is extremely dangerous. Be SAFE! #HurricaneFlorence" ("It").

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—. "The Democrats are playing a high level CON GAME in their vicious effort to destroy a fine person. It is called the politics of destruction. Behind the scene the Dems are laughing. Pray for Brett Kavanaugh and his family!" *Trump Twitter Archive.* 25 Sept. 2018, 7:55 p.m. Tweet.

—. "The failing @nytimes has become a newspaper of fiction. Their stories about me always quote non-existent unnamed sources. Very dishonest!" *Trump Twitter Archive.* 13 Aug. 2016, 01:29 p.m. Tweet.

—. "The harsh and unfair treatment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh is having an incredible upward impact on voters. The PEOPLE get it far better than the politicians. Most importantly, this great life cannot be ruined by mean & despicable Democrats and totally uncorroborated allegations!" *Trump Twitter Archive.* 4 Oct. 2018, 5:16 a.m. Tweet.

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