People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry Of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University- Tébessa

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English and Literature

Trumpism and the Resurgence of Economic and Immigration Populism

A Thesis Submitted to The Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master Literature and Civilization

Candidates:

Rayen HAMIDENE

El Khamssa NECIB

Supervisor:

Mrs. Halima BRAHMI

Board of Examiners

President: Ms. Kelthoum KTIR	M.A.A Larbi Tebessi University
Supervisor: Mrs. Halima BRAHMI	M.A.A Larbi Tebessi University
Examiner: Mr. Rabie ABDERRAHMANE	M.A.A Larbi Tebessi University

2024/2025

Dedication 1

With heartfelt gratitude to Allah, whose guidance, mercy, and countless blessings have made this journey possible.

To the people around me—

Thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and presence.

Your kindness and belief in me have been a guiding light throughout this journey.

I am especially grateful to my aunts: Chaima, Houda, Mounira, and my sister Rimass whose love and strength have inspired me every step of the way.

I am truly blessed to have you by my side.

Rayen HAMIDENE

Dedication 2

First and foremost, I thank Allah the Almighty for granting me the strength, patience, and guidance to accomplish this work. Without His mercy and blessings, none of this would have been possible.

To my beloved family, my husband Malek for their unwavering love, patience, and support, throughout this journey.

Your encouragement has been my greatest strength.

To the soul of my brother-in-law Hakim.

To my dear friends Hayet, Zakia, and Amina whose companionship, understanding, and words of motivation kept me going even in the most challenging moments.

I am forever grateful.

El Khamssa NECIB

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who supported and guided us throughout this journey.

First and foremost, we extend our thanks to our supervisor, ***Mrs. Halima Brahmi****, for her guidance, patience, and thoughtful feedback.*

We are also sincerely grateful to ***Ms. Ktir Kelthoum****,* ***Dr. Bouaziz Amina****,* ***Dr. Ghazouane Arslane****, and* ***Mr. Rabie Abderrahmane*** *for their insightful teaching, academic support, and inspiring dedication.*

Each of you has contributed in meaningful ways to our academic and personal growth.

Thank you all for being part of this important chapter in our life..

ABSTRACT

This thesis employs a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis within the theoretical framework of Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony. It examines how Trumpism, as an ideological and political movement, used media rhetoric to challenge Neoliberal norms and reshape American conservative discourse between 2017 and 2021. The methodology involves the textual analysis of political speeches, media coverage, and policy documents to explore the intersection of economic Nationalism, populist rhetoric, and anti-immigration discourse.

Keywords: Trumpism, discourse analysis, ideology, Nationalism, Neoliberalism, Populism, cultural hegemony, immigration.

الملخص

تعتمد هذه الدراسة على منهج نوعي يستخدم تحليل الخطاب النقدي في إطار نظري يستند إلى مفهوم أنطونيو غرامشي للهيمنة الثقافية. وتتناول كيف استخدم الترامبية، كمشروع أيديولوجي وسياسي، الخطاب الإعلامي لتحدي القيم النيوليبرالية وإعادة تشكيل الخطاب المحافظ الأمريكي بين عامي 2017 و2021. تعتمد المنهجية على تحليل نصوص الخطب السياسية، والتقارير الإعلامية، والوثائق الرسمية من أجل استكشاف تقاطع القومية الاقتصادية والخطاب الشعبوي والخطاب المعادي للهجرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترامبية، تحليل الخطاب، الأيديولوجيا، القومية، النيوليبرالية، الشعبوية، الهيمنة الثقافية، الهجرة.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire adopte une approche qualitative en utilisant l'analyse du discours critique dans le cadre théorique du concept d'hégémonie culturelle d'Antonio Gramsci. Il examine comment le Trumpisme, en tant que mouvement idéologique et politique, a utilisé la rhétorique médiatique pour remettre en question les normes Néolibérales et redéfinir le discours conservateur américain entre 2017 et 2021. La méthodologie repose sur l'analyse textuelle de discours politiques, de couvertures médiatiques et de documents officiels afin d'explorer l'intersection entre Nationalisme économique, rhétorique populiste et discours anti-immigration.

Mots-clés : Trumpisme, analyse du discours, idéologie, Nationalisme, Néolibéralisme, Populisme, hégémonie culturelle**,** immigration.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Dedication 1 i

Dedication 2 ii

Acknowledgment iii

ABSTRACT iv

الملخص v

RÉSUMÉ vi

TABLE OF CONTENT vii

LIST OF FIGURES x

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS xi

GENERAL INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF TRUMPISM AS AN IDEOLOGY 5

Introduction 6

1.1 The Shift of Trumpism to Economic Nationalism within the Republican Party 8

1.2 Populism and Nationalism and Neoliberal Contradictions in Trumpism. 16

1.3 The Cornerstones of Trumpism: Gramsci's Hegemony, and Media Control 18

1.3.1 Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Media Control 18

1.4 The State of Democracy within Trumps Ideology: Neoliberalism VS Authoritarian Populism 20

1.4.1 Trumpism: A Crisis of Democracy or a New Form of Governance 23

CHAPTER 2: TRUMP'S ECONOMIC POLICY 28

Introduction 29

2.1 An Overview of Trump's Economic Vision 29

2.2 Tax Cuts, Deregulation, and Federal Spending 31

2.3 Trump's Trade Policies and Their Global Impact: 41

2.3.1 The Trade War: Tariffs as Political Theater and Economic Leverage 43

2.3.2 Broader Impacts: Geopolitics, National Identity, and Economic Vulnerability 44

2.3.3 Trump's Trade Policy toward Europe: Confrontation with Allies 44

2.3.4 The Case of France: Luxury Goods and Political Symbolism 45

2.3.5 Trump's Foreign Trade Strategy: Gulf Alliances, Iran Isolation, and Geopolitical Goals (2017–2020) 46

2.4 Job Creation, Unemployment, and Economic Growth 47

CHAPTER 3: TRUMP'S ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICY 53

Introduction 54

3.1 Immigration between Economic Nationalism and Rationalized Populism 55

3.2 A Short Background of US Immigration Policy before Trump; Neoliberalism vs Nativism 59

3.2.1 The Neoliberal Framework: Immigration as Economic Utility 60

3.2.2 Nativism in Retreat but Never Defeated 61

3.2.3 Obama's Technocratic Balancing Act 62

3.2.4 The Rising Tide of Populist Nativism 63

3.2.5 A Precursor to the Storm 64

3.3 Trump's Protectionism and Border Security Policies: America First and Economic Protectionism. 64

3.3.1 Immigration Policies and Border Control under Trump. 66

3.3.2 Global reactions, Human Costs and the Legacy of Trump's Policies. 68

3.4 The Role of Media and Trump's Rhetoric on Immigration 69

3.5 Social and Economic Implications of Trump's Anti-Immigration Policies 75

3.5.1 Social Implications: Institutionalized Cruelty and the Normalization of Xenophobia 76

3.5.2 Economic Implications: Undermining the Labor Supply -A Self-Inflicted Crisis- 78

CONCLUSION 85

WORKS CITED 89

Books 89

Journal Articles 92

Reports & Government Documents 94

Websites & Online Sources 95

Speeches & Media 98

Edited Book Chapters 98

BIBLIOGRAPHY 99

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: U.S. Federal Deficit (2009–2021) 39

Figure 2 Federal Budget Allocation by Category (Average % per Term) 40

Figure 3 Income Growth by Quintile: Pre- and Post-TCJA 41

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACE: Affordable Clean Energy

ARRA: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

CARES: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

CBS: Columbia Broadcasting System

CNN: Cable News Network

CPP: Clean Power Plan

DACA: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

DNC: Democratic National Committee

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GHG: Greenhouse Gas

KKK: Ku Klux Klan

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (or Questioning)

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRWORA: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

TCJA: Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

TPP: Trans-Pacific Partnership

UN / U.N. United Nations

US / U.S. United States

USMCA: United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement

WASP(s): White Anglo-Saxon Protestant(s)

WTO: World Trade Organization

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Scholarly assessments of Trumpism describe it as a political ideology that fuses populist rhetoric with a nationalist agenda focused on economic protectionism and restrictive immigration policies. While it draws on classic populist themes—such as opposition to elites, globalism, and liberal institutions—Trumpism also emphasizes a unique fusion of economic Nationalism and cultural exclusion. As Benjamin Moffitt explains, Trumpism relies on a populist logic that frames politics as a struggle between the "pure people" and a corrupt elite, using Nationalism to intensify polarization and marginalize perceived outsiders (Moffitt, 2016).

Economically, Trump advanced a "America First" doctrine that included tariffs on Chinese goods, tax cuts, and the renegotiation of trade agreements like NAFTA into the USMCA. Chad P. Bown argues that while these protectionist measures prioritized American interests, they raised consumer costs and complicated international trade relations (Bown, 2020). Thomas Piketty critiques Trump's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act for exacerbating wealth inequality, primarily benefiting corporations and high earners rather than producing inclusive growth (Piketty et al., 2018). Similarly, Naomi Klein contends that deregulation and tax incentives favored large businesses while offering little to struggling workers in deindustrialized regions (Klein, 2017).

Trump's immigration policies—such as the border wall, the travel ban targeting Muslim-majority countries, and efforts to end DACA—were emblematic of his nationalist ideology. Leo R. Chavez argues these measures reinforced harmful stereotypes of Latino immigrants as threats to national security (Chavez, 2017). Historian Nell Irvin Painter situated these policies within a racialized framework of Nationalism that sought to preserve white demographic dominance under the guise of security and merit-based immigration.

While much scholarship treats Trump's economic and immigration policies as distinct, this dissertation contends that their power lies in their synthesis. Together, they constitute a coherent ideological project that redefined American identity through exclusionary economics and racially inflected Nationalism.

The rise of Donald Trump to the United States presidency in 2016 was a turning point in American political history. His mandate marked a break with the conventions of politics in America. Trumpism refers to the ideological trend, political style and policy framework of his administration; it is not a mere political agenda of an ordinary leader but a comprehensive populist-nationalist project that has considerably reshaped the Republican Party and shifted the foundational approach to economic and immigration policy in America. This research attempts to explore Trumpism through a bifocal lens addressing both economic policy implications and anti-immigration views. With specific focus on the fact that these issues were molded by populist narratives, nationalist agendas and the contradictions of neoliberal Capitalism on these two domains. Bringing the calls of the disenchanted, left-behind constituency into the front was the core of Trumpism, above all the white working- and middle-class Americans who were dissatisfied with the outcomes of globalization and the challenges of multicultural integration which they were skeptical about, in addition to the disappointing ruling elite. In his campaign, Trump promised to " Make America Great Again", a slogan that incorporated the worries of those concerned with cultural changes, economic stagnation and the erosion of national identity, thus, Trump's economic and immigration policies cannot be perceived in isolation; they are interconnected components of a broader agenda that is in favor of economic Nationalism, advocates for nativist protectionism, and boosts the assertion of sovereign state authority.

The first chapter of this dissertation presents a conceptual overview about Trumpism as an evolving ideological framework within the Republican Party. It examines the ways in

which Trumpism transformed the established conservative norms that stood for a long time by prioritizing economic Nationalism in the Republican agenda. It further highlights the blending of Nationalism and Populism in Donald Trump's discourse and governing practices while emphasizing theoretical frameworks like Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony and the skillful use of media to maintain ideological dominance. When exploring the contradictions between Neoliberalism and authoritarian Populism, it turns obvious that Trumpism appears to be a combination of certain elements in both to further strengthen dominance and build a sound supporting popular base. Trumpism represents a different political trend marked by the rise of a personality-centered model of governance, an exceptional governing style whose legacy may last for years to come.

The second chapter sheds light on Trump's economic policies, including tax reforms, trade tariffs and deregulation. Despite these policies being presented as serious efforts to stimulate US industry, generate jobs and restrain trade deficit -notably with China-, their effectiveness remains a subject of dispute. This chapter investigates how much these policies fostered sustainable economic growth or were just implemented for temporary political gain. By analyzing Trump's rhetoric and legislations alongside with comparative economic data before and during his term, chapter two assesses the effectiveness and clarity of Trump's economic model.

The third chapter explores Trump's immigration policy as another central element in Trump's nationalist agenda. From the implementation of the travel ban and family separation policies to the building of the US-Mexico border wall, Trump's policies were shaped by exclusionary language and a protectionist mindset. In this chapter, Trump’s anti-immigration measures were compared to earlier neoliberal strategies that fluctuated between economic rationality and nativist sentiment. Moreover, it examines how media narratives and Trump's discourse amplified public anxiety concerning immigration, contributing to the reshaping of

national belonging and social integration. These policies are examined for the broader socio-economic implications especially on labor market, the disadvantaged groups and the foundational principles of American diversity.

These research questions focus on the extent to which Trump's promises were realized in reality and how they impacted the socio-political environment and reshaped the established ideological frame in US politics. Did the economic Nationalism of Trump really benefit the American economy? Were anti-immigration policies a strategic response to labor market challenges or they were just political measures that were meant to mobilize political support? How did Trump's media-centric Populism transform political discourse and shape popular opinion?

This dissertation adopts a qualitative methodological approach including discourse analysis, policy review and historical comparison. The research is based on a variety of primary sources such as presidential speeches, executive orders and media reports, in addition to secondary sources like academic literature, analytical reports and historical studies. The aim is not merely documenting Trump's administration actions, but extends to a critical analysis of the underlying ideological and structural rationales.

This study adds to the existing large literature about the global rise of populist Nationalism and its impact on economic policies, democratic institutions and multicultural social structures. As both a result and a driving force of political change, Trumpism serves as a key example of understanding the changing nature of conservative ideology in 21st century America. By investigating Trump's economic and immigration policies, this research explores the lasting legacies of Trump's leadership and the potential threats it poses to the future of democracy in America.

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF TRUMPISM AS AN IDEOLOGY

Introduction

Donald Trump the 45th American president becomes the most controversial in US history compared to those who preceded him. That was mainly due to his leadership style, populist, nationalist rhetoric, which was characterized by disruptive, unconventional and emotionally charged speeches. Trumpism is a mixture of right-wing Populism and Nationalism. It exposes the contradictions between Trump's rhetorical commitment to "the people" and the Neoliberal policies that often benefited corporate elites. It also incorporates authoritarian tendencies, forming a distinct new political identity. A key feature of this identity is a shift toward economic Nationalism, particularly evident in Trump's rejection of free trade and his embrace of protectionist rhetoric under the slogan "America First."

Trump emphasized a discourse that opposed traditional political elites, whether institutions or political figures that have historically governed the United States, such as influential politicians and families like the Bushes and Clintons, major government officials including advisers and secretaries and those who fund and control party decisions. He presented himself as the sole representative of ordinary Americans. His policy decisions challenged long-standing American norms and Neoliberal conventions, contributing to deeper societal divisions that were driven by his rhetoric which he relied on to frame his opponents as enemies leaving no space for serious dialogues. He also portrayed immigrants as unwelcomed criminals, and by using aggressive language against minorities, he intensified the "us vs them" narrative. Trump's obvious attack on mainstream media and his support of alternative news sources led to creating a large base of supporters which further isolated Americans into opposing camps. Furthermore, the anti-immigration policies he adopted such as the travel ban targeting Muslim majority countries and the strict immigration crackdown which deepened divisions and intensified racial and ethnic resentment.

Trump's rhetoric often emphasized this anti-elite stance. For example, in his Republican speech on July 21st, 2016, he declared, "I am your voice. I have joined the political arena so that the powerful can no longer beat up on people who cannot defend themselves." This statement reflects how Trump positioned himself as a champion of the marginalized while simultaneously disrupting the established political order. In order to understand his mentality, decisions and policies, it is crucial to go back to the political, economic and social context which paved the way for his rise and the emergence of his ideology. This chapter sheds light on the main principle of Trumpism and its impact on American society and democracy. This chapter offers a theoretical grounding through Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, showing how Trump built a powerful counter-hegemonic discourse. It explores the nature of Trump's appeal to certain Americans and his ability to shape public consciousness and dominate political discourse. It also highlights the role the media played to reinforce his stands and attract more supporters.

This chapter evaluates the state of democracy under Trumpism, interrogating how authoritarian Populism coexisted with – and at times undermined—liberal democratic norms. It contrasts the democratic ideals of accountability, institutional checks and balances, and civil liberties with Trump's overt disregard for institutional protocols, his attacks on the judiciary and press, and his attempt to delegitimize electoral outcomes. This section engages with the scholarly debate on whether Trumpism represents a crisis of democracy or a new form of governance grounded in post-truth personality-driven rule.

His education and business career badly helped in shaping his actual business persona and future political style. Donald Trump, the fifth son of a wealthy real estate developer Scottish immigrant pursued his higher studies at Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1968 with a degree in economics, the field he tried to use best of it during his mandate (2017-2021), alongside with a considerable

amount of experience in real estate, entertainment and branding helped in shaping the populist and nationalist cornerstones of Trumpism. By joining his father's real estate business, The Trump Organization in 1970's he adopted a business-like personality whose main concerns are competition, risky negotiations and luxury -qualities that would later determine his political strategy-

His estate business grew to include hotels, casinos, and branding deals, making him a well-known figure in the domain. Though he faced difficulties and bankruptcy in the 1980's and 1990's, he managed to recover and rebuilt his business empire. By the 2000's, the reality TV show 'The Apprentice' (2004-2015) made him a celebrity and boosted his popularity even further, the fact that encouraged him to move forward to indulge more in politics. While he was building his business empire, he showed frequent criticism of American trade policies and talked thoroughly about economic Nationalism. His official involvement in politics started when he announced his willingness for presidency as a republican in 2016 against Hillary Clinton the democrat candidate. During his election campaign, he focused on stringent immigration strategy, trade protectionism and 'America first' policy. He was distinguished by his populist and nationalist rhetoric; disruptive, emotionally charged speeches contrary to traditional politicians who adopted diplomatic speeches and structured policymaking based mainly on Neoliberal principles. After winning the race against Hilary Clinton, a new American era started with Trumpism led by Donald Trump.

1.1 The Shift of Trumpism to Economic Nationalism within the Republican Party

As its name suggests Trumpism derives from the name of the 45th American president Donald Trump. It refers to his governing ideology during presidency (2017-2021). It is characterized by several features that are unique, controversial and different from the previous American presidents. A major example of this divergence was Trump's offensive

use of trade tariffs mainly against China. While neoliberal policy advocated for loosening trade barriers for a better economic efficiency, Trump's administration-imposed billions of dollars' worth of tariffs on certain countries' goods mainly the Chinese claiming that domestic industries protection was more important than adhering to free trade rules. The impact of that measure was undesirable on farmers and manufacturers because those countries retaliated against the US actions by applying tariffs of their own (Amiti, Redding &Weinstein, 2019). As a result, the American government had to interfere to help the struggling farmers and manufactures; an action that the free-market policies tried to avoid.

Likewise, Trump's 2017 Tax Cuts and Job Act included a combination of traditional tax cutting strategies with elements of Trump's economic Nationalism. The tax cuts for firms and high-income earners aligned with neoliberal ideas that encouraged business growth and investment. On the other hand, it had a nationalist economic aim through offering incentives for American corporations to bring profits back from overseas i.e. 'repatriation "; encouraging competitiveness and gaining markets against foreign rivals (Gale, Hoopes, & Pomerleau 2024), instead of promoting globalization, it aimed at increasing investment and job opportunities inside the US. “This is going to be one of the great gifts to the middle-income people of this country that they’ve ever gotten for Christmas.” Trump claimed that the tax overhauls would benefit middle-income Americans; however, critics argued that it was heavily weighted to ease the tax burden on businesses rather than the middle class (CNN, 2017) Middle-and working-class Americans received very little benefit, especially in the long term, because many of the middle-class tax cuts are temporary and set to expire in 2025.

The presidency of Donald Trump has revealed and intensified deep problems in American society and democracy. His election may have confused many politicians and knowledgeable people. However, from a global context, it was a mere reflection of the increasing normalization of right-wing nationalist movements and populist figures in various

jurisdictions around the world following the events of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing so-called war on terror. This wave was shaped by remarkable concern about certain issues such as terrorism, immigration and globalization, paving the way to the appearance of figures like Marie Le Pen in France, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Rodrigo Duterte in Philippines and others. (Kowalsky, 2019).

Although the sociopolitical circumstances of their emergence were not the same, they share common features with Trump's ideology and rhetoric. Trump's "America first " policy focused on economic Nationalism, anti-immigration strategy (mainly Muslims and Latin American migrants) and trade protectionism (Phama et al, 2018). Le Pen in her turn supported immigration restriction calling for stricter laws in order to protect the borders from immigrants who would take the French jobs and housing. She views globalization and Islam as "twin totalitarianisms" threatening French civilization, values, and culture. Her campaign slogan, "Au nom du peuple'' (In the name of the people), literally claims a "France for the French." She appealed to voters who feared economic insecurity and cultural change (Galbreath, 2017).

Le Pen did not earn executive power; a fact that limited her influence to electoral discourse and ideological impact, unlike Trump who was able to implement executive policies like the border wall funding and travel ban.

Same thing can be said about Bolsonaro's administration. It was influenced by right-wing Populism embraced a conservative and nationalist agenda. Aligning with Trump's administration was evident in Brazil's withdrawal from international commitments and a rejection of traditional diplomatic norms and an obvious skepticism toward global institutions.

Bolsonaro's government advocated for economic development over environmental protection, which aligned with Trump's retreat from the Paris Agreement on climate change,

the fact that led to strained relations with global partners. (Casarões 2020) Populist leaders may share similar nationalist agenda and anti-elite rhetoric; however, the outcomes of their policy, their governance style and people's reactions vary significantly. For example, due to the check and balance policy, many of Trump's plans were either moderated or blocked. Bolsonaro seemed to be more authoritarian through his support of Brazil's military dictatorship and his use of religious rhetoric. He, therefore, faced extensive protest. As for Marine Le Pen, her impact was restricted to ideological influence.

Winning the presidency in 2017 was not out of the blue, there were several circumstances that paved the way and helped Trump the republican candidate into the Whitehouse. Among the factors that contributed to the success of Trump are his status as a celebrity, the controversial letter from FBI Director James Comey to Congress about reopening the investigation into his opponent Hillary Clinton's emails, and the release of hacked emails from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) by WikiLeaks. Trump also gained dedicated support from many Americans who were frustrated with the political system, particularly those who felt ignored by traditional politicians. Additionally, his outsider status and strong opposition to the political establishment made him appealing to voters who felt left out. Trump depended on social media. Twitter also played a role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter decisions. Some even believe that Russian interference in the election process contributed to his win.

While these explanations highlight the key events and political dynamics that helped Trump gain support, they do not fully explain the deeper social and political conditions that allowed a right-wing populist like Trump to rise to power in the United States. (Kowalsky 2019). In fact, the rise of Trump to power can also be understood as a result of a leadership crisis in the USA before the 2016 elections. The crisis occurred because both major political parties; the Republican and Democrat, were too much committed to their neoliberal economic

system that emphasized free markets and corporate interests at the expense of public welfare. Under Bill Clinton's administration, for example, the Democratic Party adopted certain welfare reforms including the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). The act emphasized time limits and work demands. It also highlighted that government aid would be selective and not a lasting benefit. His administration promoted free trade such as (NAFTA) (Gerstel, 2022) which benefited the financial sector and the professional elite at the expense of most working-class voters. Likewise Republican leaders such as George Bush whose major economic initiative was a massive tax cuts for the rich enacted in June 2001 and 2003 in addition to that, Bush's administration persisted the financial deregulation; the absence of regulatory control over investment sectors and banking led to the housing bubble and later to the 2008 financial crisis. The result was devastated middle class Americans and exacerbated income inequality and economic insecurity. (Stiglitz 2010). The neoliberal policies embraced by both parties were in favor of the elite's interests, whereas the wide majority of the population had a bitter feeling of being left behind with a distrustful attitude over political institutions. Voters were disappointed with both parties which seem to offer the same promises in different shapes. Because of the strict commitment to Neoliberalism, the basic political ideas that used to keep the American political system together started to weaken and fall apart and leaders, in their turn failed to connect with their voters. They were unable to lead effectively or win the public support for their policies, leading to a vacuum that shaped the political landscape and created a fertile space for an outsider like Trump -who portrayed himself as the savior and the voice of the abandoned Americans- to rise to power.

The leadership crisis within both major U.S. political parties created the conditions for Donald Trump's rise. The Republican Party was deeply divided among various factions, weakening its leadership and preventing it from addressing citizens' concerns or offering a

new vision beyond support for elites. This division was evident in 2015 polling, where nearly 70% of Republican primary voters favored outsider candidates over establishment figures. (Kowalsky, 2019). Similarly, the Democratic Party saw a split between Bernie Sanders' progressive supporters and the Democratic National Committee (DNC), which backed Hillary Clinton to protect corporate interests. Analysts argue that Democratic elites preferred a Republican victory over a socialist-led Democratic one. (Kowalsky, 2019). Both parties lost credibility by prioritizing elite interests over ordinary Americans. As traditional political structures weakened, Populism thrived. This breakdown created the perfect opening for an outsider like Trump to gain power, as voters sought alternatives to the failing political establishment.

Trump's ideology upon assuming office was centered on revitalizing the American economy through a renewed focus on national interest and protectionist policies a core principle of Trumpism. An ideology that would maintain the core identity of the American nation at home while defending its interests abroad even if that led to strained relations with its traditional allies, that's why Trump didn't really favor the policy of alliances and international commitments and he considered it as a depletion of the country's capabilities and weakens its economy which may benefit America's rivals such as China and Russia. This view was reflected in his "America first" doctrine. For instance, during his presidency, Trump criticized NATO allies for not meeting defense spending targets, by saying: NATO was set up at a different time. NATO was set up when we were a richer country. We're not a rich country anymore. We're borrowing, we're borrowing all of this money...NATO is costing us a fortune and yes, we're protecting Europe with NATO but we're spending a lot of money. Number one, I think the distribution of costs has to be changed. I think NATO as a concept is good, but it is not as good as it was when it first evolved. Trump suggested that the U.S. bore an unfair financial burden. He argued that such commitments strained the U.S.

economy and diverted resources from domestic priorities. This stance led to tensions within NATO, with European nations reconsidering their reliance on U.S. defense support. (CBS NEWS, 2016) In addition to that in June 2017, Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, citing potential economic disadvantages. He claimed that "this agreement weakens the United States and gives economic advantages for other countries that emit the most pollution." He added: "in order to fulfill my duty to protect America and its people, we will exit the Paris Agreement but we will start negotiations on the possibility of reaching A new agreement that would be fairer" (CNN Arabic, 2017). The agreement required countries to reduce pollution to fight climate change. Trump argued that this would damage U.S. businesses, cost American jobs, and give other countries like China an advantage. He wanted to prioritize American industries mainly coal and oil manufacturing, although his will was against international climate efforts for a cleaner world.

As far as trade and economic policies are concerned Donald Trump directed the U.S. Trade Representative to withdraw from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) which was an agreement between a number of countries including America whose aim was to reduce trade barriers, promote economic integration, and setting high standards for labor and environmental protections. Trump opposed the agreement before and during his presidency emphasizing an "America First" trade policy. In June 2016, he labeled the TPP "a continuing rape of our country," highlighting his belief that the deal would harm U.S. workers and industries.

These measures and others are among Trumpism pillars which are: isolationism and protectionism, two policies that Trump's administration adopted as a shield to boost and protect the US economic interests. This worldview marked a dramatic departure from the principles that had dominated the Republican Party for decades. His economic nationalist

orientation which he stood out in his slogan “America first,” embodied the principle of putting American interests above any other concerns.

Trump's "America first" policy was characterized by a departure from the traditional American policy through undermining the Liberal international order -which helped much of the western world enjoy stability and growth for the past 70 years or more due to the sound partnerships between countries, international organizations like U.N and N.A.T.O. and the global trade agreements (Curan, 2018). Curran argues that unlike previous presidents, who viewed the US role as promoting liberty and democracy abroad, Trump's "America First" approach prioritized domestic prosperity and protection, challenging the traditional international stance and embracing an isolationist attitude that would, according to him, preserve American interests and cultural identity.

However, the withdrawal from important agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris climate agreement and Trump's skepticism toward U.S alliances triggered critics stating that those decisions were posing a direct threat to the system of global governance established by the United States in the wake of the Second World War. (Curan, 2018) They also paved the way to the rise of new rivals like China. Questioning the leadership credibility of the U.S was another outcome of the policy. The latter was shaken by Trump’s rhetoric and unilateral actions such as moving the American embassy to Jerusalem recognizing it as Israel’s Capital. That action was so provoking for some Middle East countries and America’s allies because it defied global consensus and challenged American policies.

1.2 Populism and Nationalism and Neoliberal Contradictions in Trumpism.

As mentioned above the neoliberal policy promotes free markets, minimal government intervention, deregulation, and privatization didn't meet the Americans expectations mainly the white working-class voters who felt left behind by globalization and neoliberal policies which led them to stand with 'Nationalism' and 'Populism' which are two features that characterize Trump's governance. To understand how Populism and Nationalism shape Trumpism, and how they we should first provide a short definition of both. The popular agency approach holds Populism to mean a democratic way of life built through popular engagement in politics. (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). One of the approaches to Populism that goes perfectly with Trumpism is the following:

A final approach considers Populism predominantly as folkloric style of politics, which leaders and parties employ to mobilize the masses. This approach is particularly popular within (political) communication studies as well as in the media .In this understanding, Populism alludes to an amateurish and unprofessional political behavior that aims to maximize media attention and popular support .By disrespecting the dress code and language manners , populist actors are able to present themselves not only as different and novel , but also as courageous leaders who stand with the " people'' in opposition to the "elite'' (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017) On the other hand, Nationalism is the feeling of affiliation that binds a people within and to a nation and its identity. It is a feeling of belonging, of being a part, of identity in its relation to land and border and neighbors, even when the neighbors may be of different ethnicities. Depending on Populism and Nationalism was an essential reason for winning the race to the white house. Considering himself an outsider whose presidential campaign was against the elite who think more about personal gains at the expense of public interests, Donald Trump was able to win the presidency twice regardless to his ongoing cases in the court.

Populism often emerges as a reaction to the failures of neoliberal globalization, yet paradoxically, it tends to reproduce the very inequalities it claims to oppose (Rodrik, 2018) This contradiction is evident in Trumpism, which combined populist rhetoric with economic Nationalism, promising to relieve Americans from the burdens of globalist policies. However, while Trump criticized the elite and vowed to prioritize "America First," his administration implemented traditionally neoliberal measures such as substantial tax cuts for the wealthy (e.g., the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act), extensive deregulation of industries, and pro-corporate policies—actions that primarily benefited economic elites and exacerbated income inequality. Despite its nationalist framing, these policies did little to disrupt the neoliberal economic order. Trump's use of tariffs and protectionist trade measures -core aspects of economic Nationalism-were intended to support domestic industries and American workers, yet these were inconsistently applied and often undermined by continued corporate favoritism. As Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) argues, Populism frequently employs anti-elite discourse while leaving the foundational mechanisms of Neoliberalism intact. Thus, Trumpism illustrates how Populism and Nationalism can be strategically blended—Populism to mobilize popular support and Nationalism to invoke American identity—without necessarily delivering structural economic reform. Historically, such a blend echoes the approaches of presidents like Andrew Jackson and Ronald Reagan, who similarly combined nationalistic narratives with market-driven economics. Ultimately, Trump's economic Nationalism functioned more as a rhetorical device than a substantive break from Neoliberalism.

1.3 The Cornerstones of Trumpism: Gramsci's Hegemony, and Media Control

1.3.1 Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony and Media Control

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher and political theorist, developed the concept of cultural hegemony to explain how the ruling classes dominate their people. His theory is an expansion of Karl Marx's thoughts about ideology, showing that power is not maintained only through force but also through consent. "The ruling class maintains its dominance by making its ideology appear as the natural order of things—transforming its interests into 'common sense' for the masses." (Gramsci, 1971) his frame is basically pertinent in understanding Trumpism where cultural narratives and media manipulation played a crucial role in supporting and legitimizing Trump's populist and nationalist agenda. Under his presidency, the right-wing media outlets such as Breitbart News, Fox News, News max, in addition to social media platforms -mainly Twitter- were all mobilized to amplify his claims. Through establishing hegemonic discourse, he justified anti-immigrant sentiment, raised skepticism which targeted institutions that were thought to support liberal democratic norms and progressive values and embraced an everlasting desire for an exceptional American greatness. Trump never hesitated to attack mainstream media through accusations of being biased and a source of "fake news "His repetition of " deep state " aimed to silence his dissents, delegitimize their voices and boost his own ideology which means manufacturing consent among his large base. This example illustrates Gramsci's perspective which states that it's through cultural and media domination the wide masses.

Leaders can maintain control over societies by molding cultural and ideological norms so that their worldview appears natural and common sense to the public. This process allows leaders to control without direct coercion making sure that even the disadvantaged accept the dictated system as legitimate. (Gramsci, 1971). By manufacturing values, beliefs and ideas the ruling class can achieve dominance. According to him cultural hegemony is a

type of dominance/authority that, in lieu of utilizing direct coercion or force, functions via the control of ideas, values, and beliefs (Bates, 1975)

To establish cultural hegemony, Trump founded the basics of his ideology which was not an ordinary one; it was a political movement that reshaped the Republican Party and the entire politics in the US. It is a mixture of Nationalism, Populism with leadership of a bald man who was able to create a wide popular base despite his flaws. Trumpism emphasized anti-elite rhetoric and skepticism of globalism. It insisted on protectionism, and media influence it criticizes, opposes, or delegitimizes societal elites—such as political leaders, economic elites, intellectuals, and mainstream media—to appeal to the "common people." whom he considered victims and thought he would be their savior. Gramsci's understanding of cultural hegemony suggested that the lower classes could become willing participants in their own subjugation, depending on their belief system and especially the views that they accepted as 'common sense.' The result could be willing participation in an open hostility for Obamacare and the election of Donald Trump (H. Welsh, 2017).

With traditional institutions losing influence, social media has become the primary site for hegemonic struggle. Stuart Hall (1982) argues that media is the battleground of ideological conflict where different groups compete to impose their way of perceiving and understanding reality. The digital age has created new ideological battlefields, where populists thrive by challenging elite discourse through counter-hegemonic media. Trump was not an exception he was very skillful in using media, he kept on spreading his ideas, beliefs and entire ideology through media mainly Twitter refuting what was broadcasting in the main stream media which he called "fake news "such as CNN, New York Times and others meanwhile praising conservative media (such as Fox News, Breitbart) According to Gramsci A true hegemonic leader controls not just policies, but the cultural and media landscape that

defines reality. Trump kept on fostering public distrust through framing the media as “Fake News” and the “Enemy of the People.”

In his 2017 inaugural address, Trump stated that from that day on it would be “America first” he made it clear that domestic interests should be above any other concerns. Whether in domestic or international rallies Trump never hesitated to reveal blunt declarations such as the one at the seventy-second regular session of the United Nations General Assembly:

“We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism. “a statement that encapsulated Trump’s intentions. It emphasized Trumpism core principles. The whole address was a reminder of his endeavors for the upcoming four years. Using this nationalist, populist, and anti-globalist rhetoric Trump showed how he established ideological control.

Trump kept on spreading his ideas, beliefs and entire ideology through media, mainly Twitter refuting what was broadcasting in the main stream media which he called “fake news “such as CNN, New York Times and others meanwhile praising conservative media (such as Fox News, Breitbart). According to Gramsci, a true hegemonic leader controls not just policies, but the cultural and media landscape that defines reality. Trump kept on fostering public distrust through framing the media as “Fake News” and the “Enemy of the People”, thus gaining a wide base of voters that supported him to win the 2017 presidency and severely fight against Joe Biden in 2021 elections.

1.4 The State of Democracy within Trumps Ideology: Neoliberalism VS Authoritarian Populism

This section explores how Trump’s presidency reflected contradictions between the economic norms of Neoliberalism and the political behavior of authoritarian Populism, and

how both affected American democratic norms and triggered a debate about democracy in Trump's America.

The US political system with its two political parties democrats and republican has long operated under neoliberal values which emphasizes free-market Capitalism, deregulation, and limited government intervention .(Harvey ,2005) Despite his nationalist and anti-globalist rhetoric and “America first”, Trump’s administration adopted several neoliberal policies including considerable tax cuts for big corporation which was an aggressive deregulatory agenda sought to remove what the administration viewed as excessive regulatory burdens on businesses. These measures align with the traditional republican objectives which aimed at reducing government interference in economic affairs. However, Trump’s administration didn't fully follow neoliberal policies, it instead adopted protectionist trade measures such as imposing tariffs on imports which challenged the principal of neoliberal free trade.

Authoritarian Populism on the other hand is a political style that centralizes power in a strong, charismatic leader who claims to represent “the real people” against a corrupt elite, while often undermining democratic norms and institutions. (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018) This proves that “Democracies may die at the hands not of generals but of elected leaders... who use the very institutions of democracy to subvert it.” (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). This quote reflects how leaders like Trump may use legitimate ways (like elections and executive powers) to undermine the democratic system itself which occurred before and during his election. There were a number of democratic norms that have been subject to subversion and violation during Trump’s presidency.

Among the undermined norms was the respect for electoral legitimacy; election results shouldn't be discussed or refused even if it was against any candidate's will. In the final year of his presidency Trump rejected the results and refused to concede the 2020

election despite its credibility. He claimed that his victory was stolen by a " rigged system " that led to the Capitol insurrection on January 6th,2021 incited by Trump “If you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.” Trump, Jan 6, 2021. an event that threatened the peaceful democratic transition. He went even further by saying: “We won this election, and we won it by a landslide.” Donald Trump, November 4, 2020 A claim that undermines public trust in electoral processes, ignites rebellion and shaken democratic values.

Another norm violated by Trump was respecting the free press. He labeled critical media and the content of mainstream channels as "fake news " and branded the independent press as " the enemy of the people " stating that "The fake news media is not my enemy; it is the enemy of the American people! " These statements were not mere criticism; they hide Trump's intentions to decrease the value of independent journalism which is essential for democratic accountability and transparency. (Gessen, 2020).

One of the cornerstones of any functioning democracy is judicial independence. It ensures that judges can do their job without any political pressure besides respecting the rulings. However, Trump and officials from his administration have clashed with the judiciary. Trump’s contempt for the courts predates his presidency but reached new levels during his time in office. Usually, if a ruling went against him, the judge was deemed by Trump biased, incompetent, or part of a left-wing conspiracy. For example, in 2016 when Trump, then a presidential candidate, attacked US District Judge Gonzalo Curiel who was overseeing fraud lawsuits against his now-defunct Trump University. Trump suggested Curiel was unfit to preside over the case because of his Mexican heritage, calling him a “hater” and implying he could not be fair due to Trump’s hardline stance on immigration. Trump continued to fight the judiciary during his presidency, in 2017 when Judge James

Robart issued a temporary block on his travel ban targeting Muslim-majority countries, Trump labelled him a “so-called judge” and accused him of endangering national security.

In 2020, Trump demanded that both judges “recuse” themselves from cases involving him, accusing them of bias. In addition to deepening skepticism towards the judiciary among his supporters, Trump’s rhetoric emboldened some to harass judges and disregard their rulings.

These actions and more undermine the U.S system of checks and balances and the rule of law which are two principles designed to prevent authoritarian rule, besides undermining judicial independence could have long-term consequences for US democracy. "Authoritarian Populism presents a complex challenge to liberal democratic norms by simultaneously coexisting with and undermining them.” (Mickey, et al 2017). This paradoxical relationship showed that it is due to democratic processes that authoritarian Populism appears, however its core practices may undermine the basic principles of liberal democracy. While it claims to restore power to the people, its actions often result in the violation of democratic norms and institutions. It seems like it embraces the democratic system for the sake of gaining power, once in power, it works to dismantle the very aspects that uphold such systems.

1.4.1 Trumpism: A Crisis of Democracy or a New Form of Governance

Many scholars state that Trumpism poses a threat to democratic values and institutions. They see that Trump's actions and rhetoric have undermined the rule of law, shaken institutional checks and balances, abused the executive power and challenged the basic principles of liberal democracy. For Jan-Werner Müller who is a German historian and philosopher who has written a number of studies of right-wing Populism, Trump showed a populist anti-pluralist stance while considering himself as the sole representative of the "real

people ". Muller highlights Trump's disrespect of legality and his unconditioned belief in impunity, supported by a lack of constitutional checks. (Chotiner, 2025).

Müller argue that Trump is like most populists who claimed "I alone represent the real people " they ignored anyone who opposed or disagreed with them whether it be media, judges, dissent , or minority groups and this is what Muller referred to as anti-pluralist which means against diversity of opinions and groups in democracy .Müller says Trump acted with a sense of impunity—like someone who believes he's above the law—partly because the usual checks and balances (like Congress and the courts) didn't always stop him.

Another scholar, Titus Kosgei also argues that Trumpism poses a serious threat to the foundations of American democracy. He based his argument on the George Washington Farewell address in which warned against factionalism and the breakdown of national unity, which are significant for democracy to survive. However, Trump is described as having " identified himself with the right-wing groups, aggravating their resentment and hate, voicing them and politicizing them " Thus instead of uniting Americans, Trump widens divisions by standing with extremist groups simulating their anger and conspiracy theories. According to Koskei this type of politics undermines the democratic goal of shared governance.

Kosgei argues that Trumpism is not just a political style; it is a destabilizing force that threatens to erode American democratic norms by promoting factionalism, conspiratorial thinking, hatred, and disregard for institutional checks. The author positions Trumpism as a clear example of how populist-authoritarian leadership can emerge within democratic systems and exploit them from within.

Other scholars claimed that Trumpism brought a new form of governance that was grounded in post-truth personality-driven rule. Post-truth including 'alternative facts' and 'fake news' which refers to a socio-political condition where "objective facts are less

influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” (Glasser, 2022)

This "change" refers to the breakdown of traditional democratic practices and their replacement with a political arena dominated by affect, image, and identity where “People no longer trust institutions or rational discourse, but are moved by strong identities and affective narratives.” (McAllum & Ramos, 2017) which means that Trump uses emotions more that logic, and governs through symbols and slogans like "America first " which is short, expressive and appeals to Nationalism more than detailed policies. He also appeals to specific groups, claiming to represent "real Americans " saying “The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.” (Trump, 2016) while excluding others such as immigrants -like Mexicans whom he described as “drug dealers, criminals and rapists’’ depicting them as the dangerous other, using fear and emotional language which are qualities of authoritarian Populism mainstream media and elites. (Trump, 2016)

Thus, Trumpism didn't only violate the basic norms of democracy, or a mere challenge of the basic standards of democratic governance, but it was also an ideology that leaned to disruptive unconventional and emotionally charged speeches and spectacles at the expense of rational, policy-based politics for.

Trump appeals to his voters and supporters with a remarkable ego performance, as he sees American society and the world as the stage of his “Reality Show.” He projects himself as an invincible winner and an untouchable tycoon in the business of real estate, a strong macho man of bravado talking tough, the protector, and the savior of a nation from the incursion and infiltration of immigrants and Muslims (Yang, 2017)

Trump was very skillful in attracting voters through depicting himself as the hero who would protect the nation from criminals and intruders. He did his best to look like an unbeatable successful businessman and a national savior who alone was entitled to act

decisively. Although Trump ignores serious political debates, behaving as such enabled him to connect with his large supporting base and gained unexpected approval among Americans.

To sum up, chapter 1 explores Trumpism as an ideology that challenged traditional Republican norms and molded the principles of American conservatism. It highlights how Trumpism is a blend of economic Nationalism, authoritarian Populism and a media strategy that allowed Trump to create a sound base of supporters and attract more voters who believed in the political legitimacy he founded. Trumpism insisted on rejecting neoliberal globalization and embraced protectionist economic policies that were established under the "America first "slogan which prioritized America's cultural and economic interests. The economic Nationalism that characterized Trump's governance marked an alteration within the Republican Party and a reaction to the failures and disappointments brought by Neoliberalism. However, Trump's charged rhetoric very often proved to incorporate contradictions as most of the time Trump's policies were in favor of the elite's interests despite his populist stands.

The chapter examines how Trump portrayed himself as the protector and the sole representative of those "who could not defend themselves " through constructing counter-hegemonic discourse in Gramscian terms, a skillful manipulation of media narratives and cultural values. His opposition with the elite, institutions and mainstream media helped him delegitimize democratic mechanisms and dismiss constitutional accountability.

Trump managed to create a polarized public rhetoric through emotionally charged, divisive discourse mainly about immigration and national identity, this polarization was deepened even further by his attacks on immigrants, basically Latinos and Muslims depicting them as a danger and threat to the national security, thus igniting nativist sentiment and social split. In addition to that the chapter investigated the contradiction between liberal democracy and authoritarian Populism in the context of Trumpism. Despite claiming to represent the

people and speak for them, Trump violated the very norms of democratic institutions such as checks and balances, media freedom, electoral legitimacy and independent judiciary.

Trumpism proved to be more than a mere political strategy, it turned to be a disruptive ideology that was powerful enough to divert public conception and reshape their consciousness, it also revealed a serious crisis within American democracy that is grounded in the disintegration of civic trust, the loss of rational democratic dialogue and the emergence of personality-driven rule.

CHAPTER 2: TRUMP'S ECONOMIC POLICY

Introduction

This chapter critically examines the economic policies pursued during Donald Trump's presidency between 2017 and 2020. Rather than providing a descriptive list of measures, it explores the extent to which these policies; ranging from tax reforms and trade tariffs to deregulation, reflect the principles of economic Nationalism. It also assesses their impact on long-term U.S. economic growth.

Presented as a strategy to revitalize domestic industry and reduce global economic dependence, Trump's agenda remains the subject of debate among economists and policymakers. This section aims to evaluate both the intentions behind these initiatives and their tangible consequences through a focused analysis of the 2017 administration.

2.1 An Overview of Trump's Economic Vision

The unorthodox presidency of Donald Trump marked a significant turning point in the trajectory of U.S. economic policy. As a businessman-turned-president, Trump approached governance with a distinctly corporate mindset, often prioritizing transactional logic over traditional political protocols. His "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement capitalized on widespread economic anxieties and nostalgia for the perceived prosperity of previous decades, particularly the post-war boom of the 1960s and the deregulated market optimism of the 1980s. Central to his campaign narrative was a promise to restore economic greatness, emphasizing affordability, job security, and upward mobility for the American working and middle classes. However, Trump's presidency represented a clear shift in economic ideology, characterized by economic Nationalism and neo-capitalist restructuring. Unlike his predecessors, Trump openly challenged multilateral trade agreements and embraced a protectionist agenda, shifting away from the globalist economic policies that had long dominated U.S. governance.

Key actions, such as the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, significantly reduced corporate tax rates from 35% to 21% benefiting large corporations and investors, reflecting the principles of neo-capitalist restructuring. Trump also escalated trade tensions, particularly with China, initiating a trade war that involved billions of dollars in tariffs, a move emblematic of economic Nationalism. His administration further advanced this agenda by removing regulations, canceling environmental and financial rules introduced under the Obama administration. These actions collectively represented not just a shift in policy, but a fundamental change in economic ideology; one that blended economic Nationalism with neo-capitalist restructuring, reshaping the basic principles of U.S. economic governance.

These changes can be understood through two key concepts: economic Nationalism and neo-capitalist restructuring, which serve as frameworks for understanding Trump's economic policies. Economic Nationalism focuses on prioritizing domestic industries and jobs over global economic integration, often through policies such as trade protectionism, reshoring production, and a skeptical stance toward international organizations. Trump's use of tariffs, his effort to renegotiate trade agreements like NAFTA (which became USMCA), and his "America First" approach exemplify this strategy. At the same time, neo-capitalist restructuring describes a shift toward more market-driven policies that reduce the role of the government in favor of market forces. This was evident in the administration's significant corporate tax cuts, deregulation efforts, and attempts to privatize or defund public services. Together, these ideas illustrate how Trump's presidency differed from past administrations, not just in tone but in its recalibration of the state-market relationship.

However, Trump's economic vision was not limited to populist appeals. A key aspect of his platform involved securing the interests of the wealthy elite and large corporate entities, achieved through tax reforms, deregulation, and favorable government contracts. From the outset of his administration in early 2017, Trump's economic strategy began to take

shape around an agenda that could be viewed as a revival—or mutation—of neoliberal Capitalism, infused with nationalist rhetoric and protectionist policies. One hallmark initiative was the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which aimed to stimulate domestic investment by reducing corporate tax rates, thus benefiting major corporations and wealthy individuals. Alongside this, the administration launched an aggressive trade campaign, most notably initiating a high-stakes trade war with China, framed as a necessary correction to decades of trade imbalances and perceived economic exploitation. These policies were further bolstered by promises to revitalize American manufacturing, reduce unemployment, and bring back jobs that had been outsourced overseas.

Despite the ambitious scope of these policies, the long-term outcomes and implications remain subjects of ongoing debate. This chapter delves into these developments, assessing the ideological foundations, policy mechanisms, and economic consequences of Trump's strategy, particularly through the lenses of economic Nationalism and neo-capitalist restructuring.

The following sections explore three major areas that shaped his economic agenda:

1- Tax Cuts, Deregulation, and Federal Spending

2- Trump’s Trade Policies and Their Global Impact

3- Job Creation, Unemployment, and Economic Growth

2.2 Tax Cuts, Deregulation, and Federal Spending

The first main part of Trump’s economic plan was to change the tax system to help big companies grow. He also increased government spending, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted his original plans. Trump’s strategy began with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), signed in December 2017. This law lowered the corporate tax rate from

35% to 21%. The idea was to make companies more profitable so they would invest more and boost the U.S. economy (Tax Foundation, 2017).

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, it changed the expected results of these tax reforms. As the global economy faced challenges, many businesses, especially in services and retail, struggled to keep running. This made it harder for lower corporate taxes to encourage economic growth. To support the economy, the government spent more through stimulus programs like the CARES Act, which aimed to reduce the pandemic's impact. This increased spending somewhat went against the original purpose of the TCJA, as the government had to support both companies and individuals (Congressional Budget Office, 2020).

The tax cuts were supposed to encourage investment, but their impact wasn't the same across different sectors. Some industries, like manufacturing and technology, saw big benefits. For example, companies like Apple and Intel invested billions to expand their operations in the U.S., thanks to the more favorable tax conditions. The energy sector also grew, as lower taxes made it easier to increase production and create jobs (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020). However, the retail sector didn't see the same kind of investment growth. The uncertainty caused by the pandemic outweighed the benefits of lower taxes, so the retail industry didn't expand as much.

Other countries responded to the pandemic differently. For example, Germany focused on keeping workers employed by offering wage subsidies and supporting small businesses. Canada also provided direct financial help to individuals to keep consumer spending steady. These strategies were quite different from the U.S. approach, which focused more on lowering corporate taxes. Some critics felt that these international strategies did a better job of keeping the economy stable compared to Trump's policies (OECD, 2021).

The tax cuts also sparked debates among economists and experts. At first, the strategy seemed to encourage companies to invest in the U.S. and take a more nationalist approach. But it was controversial because the positive effects didn't last. In 2018, the U.S. GDP grew from about 2.4% to 2.9%, partly because of the tax policies. However, this growth didn't continue, making some people question whether the tax cuts were truly effective in the long run (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019).

Economist William G. Gale warned back in 2016 that Trump's tax cuts might not bring the strong growth many expected. He pointed out that the plan resembled a similar policy from President Bush's administration, which failed to increase wages or jobs but did raise government debt. In an article for the Brookings Institution, Gale explained that Trump's plan would reduce government revenue significantly. He wrote: "His plan would drain government coffers of revenues. Coupled with his promise to avoid cuts to Social Security and Medicare – two big parts of the budget – it would boost public debt to all-time record levels". Since Trump promised not to cut Social Security or Medicare—two major parts of the budget—this would force the government to borrow more money than ever before.

Gale criticized the plan for giving large tax cuts to the richest Americans while removing many features of the tax system designed to help regular people. The policy would lower the highest income tax rates, eliminate the estate tax (which only affects a small fraction of the population), and cut corporate and business tax rates by more than half. These changes could encourage tax avoidance by using the lower business tax rates (Gale, 2016). Supporters of Trump's tax cuts, such as economist Arthur Laffer, argue from a supply-side economics perspective that lowering taxes on businesses and the wealthy encourages investment, entrepreneurship, and job creation. Laffer popularized the idea that lower tax rates can stimulate economic activity and potentially increase government revenue in the long

term (Laffer 1981). However, critics like Paul Krugman (2009) and Joseph Stiglitz (2012), who follow Keynesian and progressive economic views, warn that such tax cuts mostly benefit those less likely to spend money immediately, limiting short-term demand growth. They also raise concerns about rising federal debt, which could reduce funds available for public investment and social programs essential for inclusive growth.

Trump's tax cuts had some similarities to past policies, like those from Presidents Reagan and Bush. In the 1980s, Reagan's tax cuts aimed to boost the economy by lowering taxes, especially for businesses and wealthy people. The idea was that businesses would invest more, leading to job growth and higher productivity. While the economy did grow during Reagan's time, these tax cuts also increased the national debt (Tax Policy Center, 2019).

Trump's tax plan had a similar goal: encourage companies to invest by cutting their taxes. After the tax cuts became law, some businesses did start investing more—about 5% more in 2018 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019). For example, Apple announced plans to spend billions on new facilities in the U.S., saying that the lower corporate tax rate made it easier to invest (Apple, 2018). Unemployment also dropped to a very low 3.5% by the end of 2019 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). However, this growth didn't last long. GDP went up from 2.4% in 2017 to 2.9% in 2018 but then slowed down to 2.1% in 2019 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019). Gale pointed out that while there were some positive changes, they were smaller and didn't continue as expected. At the same time, the government's debt grew a lot, which made some experts worry about the economy's future (Congressional Budget Office, 2020).

Trump's tax cuts had some similarities to the Bush administration's tax policies from 2001 to 2003. During a recession, Bush lowered taxes mainly for the wealthy, aiming to

boost the economy. However, his tax cuts also included some benefits often labeled as "middle-class" tax cuts:

1. A new 10% income tax rate for income that was previously taxed at 15%.
2. The Child Tax Credit doubled from $500 to $1,000 and became available to more low-income families.
3. "Marriage penalty relief" reduced taxes for some married couples.

These changes offered some help to middle-class families, but overall, the economic impact was limited. Economists noted that while there was a short-term boost, income inequality kept increasing, and the economy did not grow as expected (Horton, 2017). However, higher-income individuals also benefited from these changes. For example, they gained from the new 10% tax rate and some benefited from the marriage relief. Originally, these tax cuts were set to expire in 2010, but a budget deal extended many of them for two more years. This deal also brought back the estate tax in 2011, but with more generous terms, only affecting estates worth over $5 million per person.

In 2012, the American Taxpayer Relief Act made most tax cuts for low- and middle-income families permanent. However, it allowed tax cuts for the wealthiest to expire, bringing the top tax rate back to 39.6%. In the end, around 82% of the Bush tax cuts were made permanent with President Obama's support (Horton, 2017).

Critics of Trump’s plan argued that, like Bush’s tax cuts, it mostly benefited wealthy Americans and big companies rather than regular workers. By cutting corporate taxes and lowering rates for high earners, both plans aimed to promote business growth but ended up increasing federal debt. Although Trump’s plan had some family-focused benefits—like a childcare deduction—it mostly helped upper-middle-class households rather than lower-income families. Emily Horton from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities pointed out

that Trump's approach favored businesses more than working people and might actually increase economic inequality (Horton, 2017).

When compared to Trump's tax act, both Bush's and Trump's plans ended up benefiting upper-middle-class families more than lower-income workers. However, Bush's approach was more traditional, leaning into supply-side economics with broader changes. In contrast, Trump's plan was more targeted, focusing mainly on wealthy corporations through significant corporate tax cuts.

Furthermore, during Trump's presidency, government spending and deregulation were key components of his economic strategy. The administration aggressively rolled back regulations, particularly in the areas of the environment, labor, and finance. Trump's approach to deregulation was captured by his "two out, one in" philosophy, which required removing two existing regulations for every new one introduced (Baker, 2020).

One of the most significant areas affected by deregulation was environmental policy. According to Cayli Baker, former project assistant at Brookings, Trump's environmental rollbacks primarily served short-term economic interests rather than long-term public health and environmental protection. Baker argued that these actions neglected the enforcement of environmental laws, potentially undermining decades of progress (Baker, 2020). She emphasized that the rollback of critical environmental regulations could increase pollution, weaken climate policies, and have lasting negative impacts on public health (Baker, 2020). An example of this approach was the administration's handling of the Clean Power Plan (CPP). In March 2017, just two months after taking office, President Trump issued an Executive Order directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review the CPP. By October of the same year, the EPA proposed rescinding the policy. Instead of setting clear guidelines for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the replacement policy—the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule—focused on heat-rate efficiency improvements at existing power

plants. However, the EPA's own analysis predicted that ACE would increase CO2 emissions by more than 60 million short tons by 2030 compared to the CPP (Environmental Protection Agency, 2019). This change prompted legal challenges, with states arguing that the rule failed to significantly reduce emissions, thus violating the EPA's responsibility to address carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act (New York et al. v. EPA, 2019).

Trump's administration also made the controversial decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, which was seen as favoring the interests of fossil fuel companies over global climate commitments. Trump framed this decision as reclaiming U.S. economic sovereignty, but many environmentalists viewed it as a step backward in addressing climate change (Harvey, 2017).

According to Baker (2020), Trump's deregulation agenda seemed aligned with the interests of large corporations, especially those in industries prone to environmental violations. By reducing regulatory burdens, these companies were effectively encouraged to overlook environmental protections in favor of higher profits. This approach reflected a broader economic philosophy reminiscent of Reagan-era Capitalism, which prioritized corporate interests while sidelining environmental and worker protections.

Critics argued that Trump's actions mirrored a worldview rooted in skepticism toward climate change. For some of Trump's supporters, environmental regulations were seen not as necessary protections but as obstacles to industrial growth. This perspective was consistent with the administration's narrative that environmental activism served as a threat to the American economy rather than as a safeguard for public health (Baker, 2020).

Thus, Trump's deregulation policies favored immediate economic benefits for large businesses while compromising environmental and public health standards. This strategy, aimed at cutting red tape, was consistent with a broader pro-business agenda but sparked significant controversy among environmentalists and public policy experts.

Federal Spending under Trump vs. Obama: A Tale of Diverging Priorities

Federal spending under Barack Obama and Donald Trump followed very different approaches. After the 2008 financial crisis, Obama used government spending to support the economy. His administration passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2009, a $787 billion package focused on infrastructure, healthcare, and education (CBO, 2015). This was meant to reduce unemployment and help Americans affected by the recession. Some economists, such as Krugman (2012), noted that the stimulus prevented a deeper economic collapse, although recovery was slowed by later political pressures for budget cuts.

Donald Trump, in contrast focused on cutting taxes and reducing regulations. His signature policy was the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017, which reduced taxes by $1.5 trillion, mostly benefiting corporations and wealthy individuals (Furman, 2019). While the administration claimed this would lead to higher investment and job growth, economists like Zandi (2017) found that the benefits largely went to the top income earners and had limited impact on wages for average Americans. The result was a significant increase in the federal deficit. As shown in Figure 1, the deficit remained below $1 trillion during Obama's last years, but under Trump, it increased sharply, surpassing $3 trillion in 2020.

FIGURE 1

U.S. Federal Deficit (2009–2021)

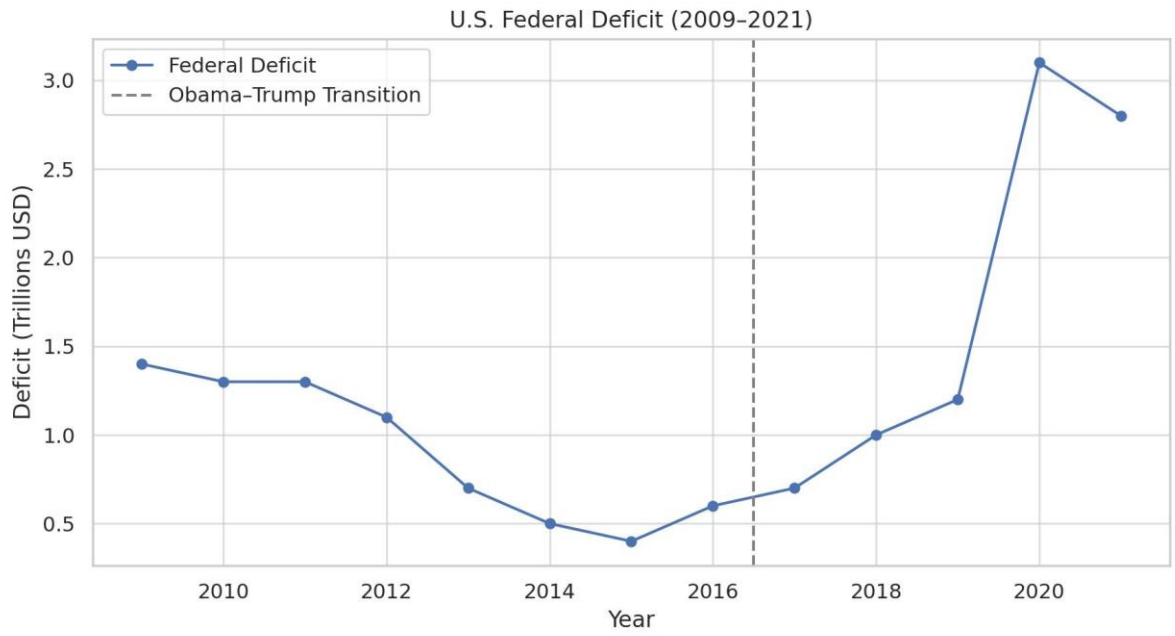


Figure 1 shows the U.S. federal deficit from 2009 to 2021. The deficit declined steadily during the Obama administration, reaching a low in 2015, but began rising again after 2016, with a massive spike in 2020 due to COVID-19 relief spending. The vertical dashed line marks the transition from President Obama to President Trump. (Congressional Budget Office 2022; U.S. Department of the Treasury 2021)

Spending priorities changed significantly between the two administrations. Obama focused more on programs like healthcare (mainly through the Affordable Care Act), education, and renewable energy. In contrast, Trump increased defense spending and reduced funding for social and environmental programs. This difference is shown in Figure 2, which highlights that defense spending took up a larger share of the budget under Trump, while spending on healthcare and education decreased.

FIGURE 2

Federal Budget Allocation by Category (Average % per Term)

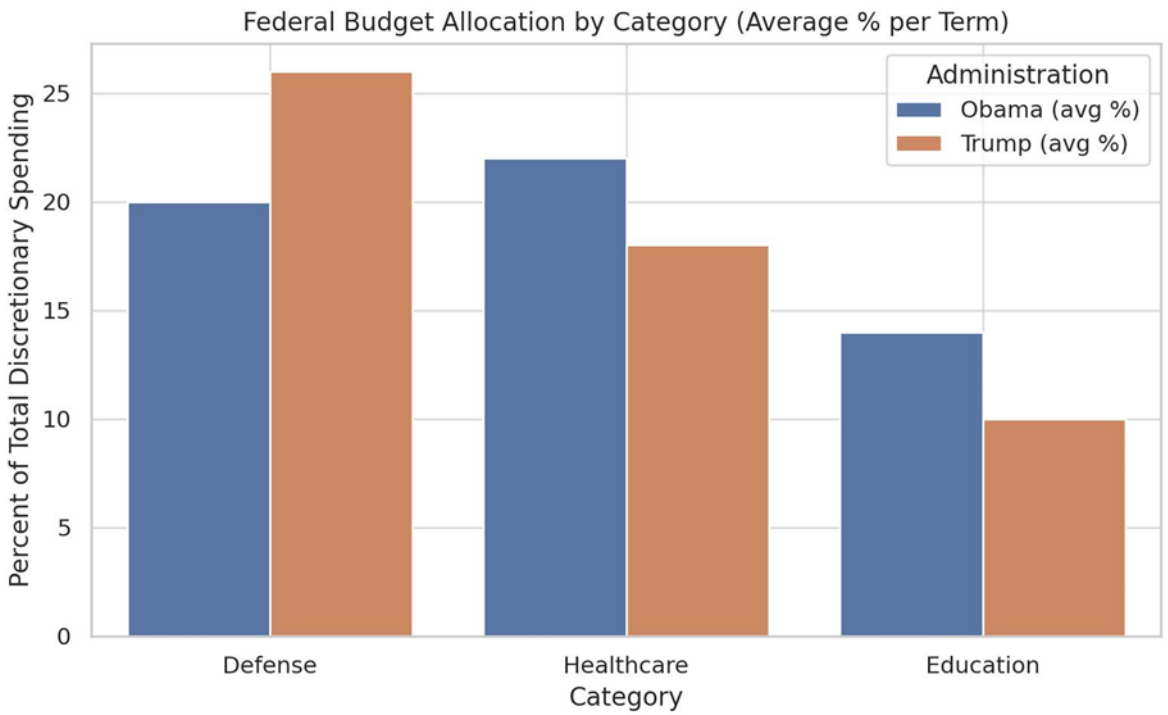


Figure 2 compares average federal budget spending under Obama and Trump across three categories: defense, healthcare, and education. Trump spent a higher percentage on defense, while Obama allocated more to healthcare and education, indicating different policy priorities between the two administrations. (Kogan and Reich 2019)

These differences in spending also affected how income was distributed. During Obama's presidency, income growth was more evenly shared across all income groups. However, after Trump's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) in 2017, most of the income gains went to the top 20% of earners. Lower and middle-income groups saw much smaller increases in income. As shown in Figure 3, income for the top group raised the most after the tax cuts, while the lowest group saw little or no improvement.

FIGURE 3

Income Growth by Quintile: Pre- and Post-TCJA

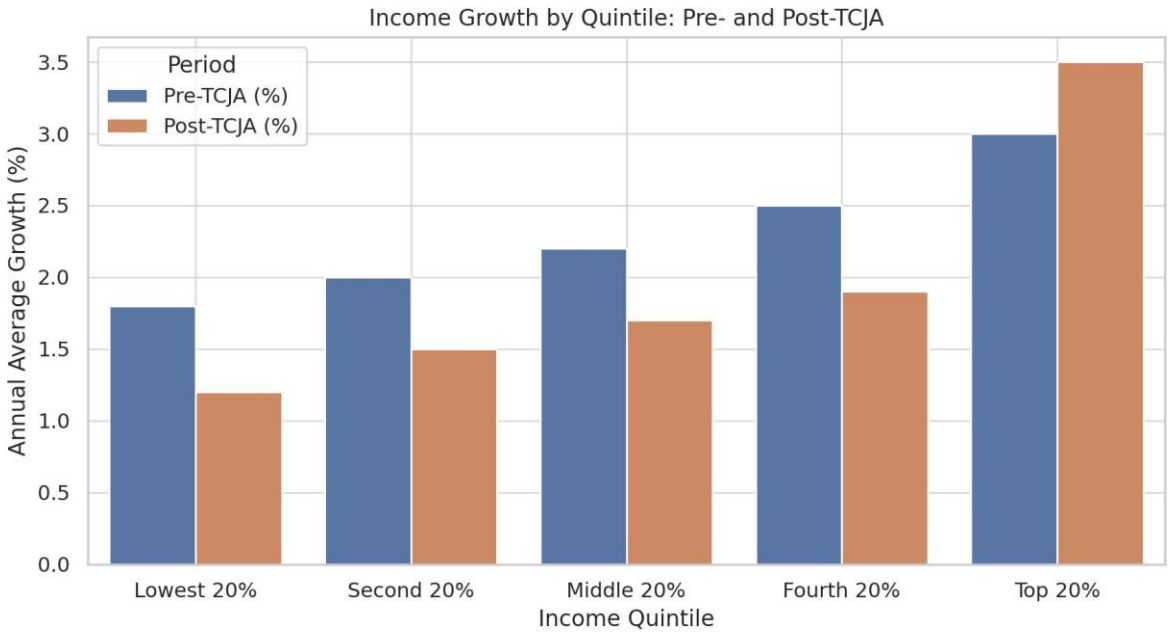


Figure 3 compares income growth rates by income group before and after the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). Income growth slowed for most groups after the law, except for the top 20%, whose growth increased—suggesting the TCJA primarily benefited higher-income earners. (Gale 2018)

Trade policies also reflected a major shift in the U.S. economic strategy. Under the slogan "America First," Trump aimed to protect domestic industries by challenging long-standing trade agreements and imposing tariffs on imports. This protectionist approach marked a clear break from the free trade strategies pursued by previous presidents, including Obama. Between 2017 and 2020, Trump used tariffs not just as economic tools, but as symbols of national strength. He famously said, "Trade wars are good, and easy to win" (Trump, 2018), turning trade into a confrontation rather than cooperation.

The most notable example of this strategy was the U.S.–China trade war, where Trump imposed several rounds of tariffs on Chinese goods. China responded with retaliatory

tariffs on U.S. exports, especially agricultural products. According to economist Bown (2020), this approach resembled old-style mercantilism, where trade is used to gain power rather than mutual benefit. These actions caused uncertainty in global markets and harmed certain American sectors such as farming and manufacturing, while failing to reduce the overall trade deficit (Fajgelbaum et al., 2020).

Trump also targeted traditional allies. In 2018, he imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum from the European Union, citing national security under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act. This move upset trade partners and led to disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO), which later ruled against parts of Trump's policy (World Trade Organization, 2020). As Baldwin (2019) observed, Trump's approach reflected a new phase of "contested globalization," where even advanced economies began to view open trade as risky instead of beneficial.

Interestingly, Trump was not equally aggressive with all countries. For instance, he maintained strong economic ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, despite his broader anti-globalization stance. His administration continued to support arms sales and investments in the Gulf, partly to counter Iran's influence. This selective approach shows that Trump's trade policy was often strategic and transactional rather than purely ideological (Bremmer, 2020). In other words, he used trade as a bargaining tool—supporting allies and punishing rivals when it suited U.S. interests.

In short, Trump's trade agenda was not part of a consistent long-term plan. Instead, it involved short-term actions aimed at demonstrating strength, disrupting global norms, and increasing U.S. leverage. Combined with his domestic policies, it highlights how Trump reshaped economic policy into a tool of power politics—not just for prosperity, but for political and geopolitical control.

For many years, U.S. leaders from both political parties believed in engaging China through trade, trusting that economic cooperation would lead to shared values and mutual growth. However, during his presidency, Donald Trump took a different path. Instead of continuing this approach, he chose open confrontation. He described China as a growing threat to U.S. global power and blamed past trade policies for weakening the American economy (Bown & Kolb, 2021).

Trump's "America First" policy focused on protecting U.S. interests, rejecting multilateral agreements, and treating trade deficits as signs of national weakness. Rather than working through global organizations or collective partnerships, Trump preferred direct, one-on-one pressure on countries like China to push them into trade concessions.

2.3.1 The Trade War: Tariffs as Political Theater and Economic Leverage

From 2018 to 2019, the Trump administration placed tariffs on over $360 billion worth of Chinese imports. The official goal was to reduce the trade deficit and address unfair trade practices, such as forced technology transfers and intellectual property theft (Evenett & Fritz, 2019). However, these measures had unintended consequences for the U.S. economy.

One major sector that suffered was agriculture. U.S. soybean exports to China dropped by more than 75% in 2018 alone. As a result, the Trump administration had to spend over $28 billion to bail out American farmers; ironically using government intervention to protect a supposedly free-market economy (Bown, 2020).

Many economists argue that the trade war felt more like political theater than an effective economic plan. While it aimed to defend American jobs and reduce reliance on Chinese goods, it ended up hurting U.S. consumers and businesses just as much as it pressured China. A 2019 study found that American firms and households paid nearly the full cost of the tariffs, leading to an extra $1.4 billion in monthly costs (Amiti, Redding, & Weinstein, 2019).

Ultimately, the trade war reshaped how Americans viewed globalization and economic power, but it is still unclear whether it led to lasting changes in U.S.–China trade relations (Goodman, 2021).

2.3.2 Broader Impacts: Geopolitics, National Identity, and Economic Vulnerability

Trump's aggressive trade stance was not only about economics—it was deeply tied to geopolitics. He saw China not just as a competitor but as a real challenge to American global leadership. By imposing tariffs and cutting back on cooperation, he tried to push the U.S. toward economic independence. But this push came with contradictions. While the administration promoted "bringing jobs back," it created hardships for many American producers. Companies that relied on Chinese parts struggled with disrupted supply chains and higher costs. This raised serious doubts about whether the U.S. was truly prepared to separate its economy from China's.

Trump's policies highlighted just how interconnected global trade had become. They revealed weaknesses in America's economic system and suggested that confrontation without proper planning could cause internal damage. The situation suggested that the U.S. economy—and possibly its global role was entering a more uncertain phase, marked by rising tensions and declining influence.

2.3.3 Trump's Trade Policy toward Europe: Confrontation with Allies

Trump's "America First" agenda extended to U.S. allies as well. His administration took an unusually aggressive stance against the European Union (EU), especially key members like Germany and France. He accused them of benefiting unfairly from trade with the U.S., calling out trade deficits and criticizing their economic models (Schneider-Petsinger, 2019).

Germany was a frequent target because it exported much more to the U.S. than it imported, especially in the auto sector. Trump argued that Europe, especially Germany, was taking advantage of American markets while not offering the same in return. He used tariffs and public threats to pressure these allies, often ignoring the deep economic ties and shared history between the U.S. and Europe.

2.3.4 The Case of France: Luxury Goods and Political Symbolism

France was especially affected by Trump's tariffs, particularly in industries like wine, cheese, and fashion. Major companies such as LVMH faced threats to their U.S. sales. French business leaders criticized the European Union's weak response, warning that their industries were being left vulnerable (Trump and Trade – Policy and Law, 2020).

Tensions worsened when France introduced a digital tax on big tech companies, many of which were American. In response, Trump threatened to impose tariffs on luxury French goods. French officials, including Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, stood firm, arguing that the tax was about fairness, not protectionism.

This back-and-forth showed how Trump used trade as a political weapon, focusing on symbolic goods like Champagne and designer bags to make a point. It was less about economic logic and more about demonstrating power.

Interestingly, not all EU countries were treated the same. The Netherlands, despite having a strong trade advantage with the U.S., avoided most of Trump's criticism. Analysts believe this was due to its strong investments in the U.S. and lack of controversial policies like digital taxes (Schneider-Petsinger, 2019).

In contrast, France's assertive stance and its role in EU-level disputes made it a direct target. These differences show how Trump's trade approach was selective, often based more on political context than consistent policy logic.

2.3.5 Trump's Foreign Trade Strategy: Gulf Alliances, Iran Isolation, and Geopolitical Goals (2017–2020)

Between 2017 and 2020, President Donald Trump changed the way the United States used trade in its foreign policy. Instead of focusing on global cooperation or promoting free trade with many countries, his administration preferred direct, one-on-one deals. Trump used trade as a way to support U.S. interests, reward friendly countries, and pressure rivals. His different approaches toward the Arab Gulf countries, Iran, China, and the European Union show how economic decisions were closely tied to political and strategic goals.

In the Middle East, Trump built strong ties with countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These nations were rich in oil and looking to grow other parts of their economies. Trump's administration encouraged trade with them, especially in areas like arms sales, energy, and investment. A major example was the $110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia in 2017. Deals like this helped both sides: the U.S. made money and created jobs, while Gulf states got military support and closer ties to Washington (Atlantic Council, 2020). These countries were seen not just as trade partners, but as important allies in the region.

On the other hand, Trump took a very different approach to Iran. After pulling the U.S. out of the nuclear deal in 2018, his administration reimposed tough sanctions. These targeted Iran's oil exports, banking system, and shipping industries. The goal was to weaken Iran's economy and limit its ability to influence the region (Chatham House, 2019). The "maximum pressure" campaign also tried to cut Iran off from other countries, especially its neighbors. Instead of trade and diplomacy, Trump's team used economic pressure to force Iran to change its behavior (The Guardian, 2018).

This contrast between how the U.S. treated the Gulf states and Iran shows that trade was more than just business it was a tool to build alliances or punish opponents. Friendly

countries were offered economic partnerships, while rivals were shut out of international trade. Trump's foreign policy was deeply shaped by who he saw as allies or threats.

A similar pattern appeared in his dealings with China and the European Union. With China, Trump focused on what he called unfair trade practices and a growing threat to U.S. power. He imposed tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars in Chinese goods and tried to limit the influence of Chinese technology companies. This was more than a trade issue—it was part of a larger effort to challenge China's rise as a global competitor (Ross, 2019).

When it came to Europe, the approach was less aggressive but still competitive. Trump saw countries like France and Germany as taking advantage of the U.S. in trade. France, in particular, faced public criticism and some trade penalties. Other countries, like the Netherlands, were treated more neutrally, possibly because they were smaller or less involved in disagreements. Still, even traditional allies were judged based on whether they helped or hurt U.S. interests.

Overall, Trump's trade strategy during his presidency was based on clear political goals. He supported countries that aligned with U.S. plans and punished those that didn't. Instead of following international rules or long-standing alliances, his administration used trade as a flexible tool to get what it wanted. Whether in the Middle East, Asia, or Europe, economic policy was always tied to power, influence, and national advantage.

2.4 Job Creation, Unemployment, and Economic Growth

When Donald Trump took office in January 2017, the U.S. economy was already recovering from the 2008 financial crisis. By the time President Obama left office, the unemployment rate had dropped from 10% to 4.7%, and the country had seen 75 straight months of job growth (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2021). Despite this progress, Trump described the economy as being in crisis, using the phrase "American carnage" in his

inauguration speech. This seemed more like a way to create a strong political message than a reflection of the actual economic situation (BLS, 2021a).

From January 2017 to February 2020; just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the U.S. economy added about 6.6 million jobs, or around 182,000 jobs per month. While this was a solid number, it was slightly lower than the 211,000 monthly averages during Obama's second term (Kessler, 2020). Still, the Trump administration promoted this job growth as a major success. In reality, the job market continued along the same path it had been on. What changed most was how the story was told to the public.

Unemployment also kept falling during Trump's presidency, reaching 3.5% in February 2020; a 50-year low (BLS, 2021). However, this trend had already started before Trump took office and moved at a similar pace during both administrations. This suggests that the lower unemployment rate was the result of ongoing economic momentum, not a major policy shift. The Trump administration was skilled at presenting these developments as the result of new leadership, even though they were part of a longer trend.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall economic growth, showed a steady but not dramatic pattern. Growth was 2.4% in 2017, peaked at 2.9% in 2018 after the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and then dropped to 2.3% in 2019 (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis [BEA], 2021). While the corporate tax cut from 35% to 21% was expected to boost business investment, that boost did not last long. By mid-2019, business spending had slowed, and the long-term impact of the tax cuts was limited (BEA, 2021).

During Obama's presidency, economic growth averaged about 2.1% per year. It was steady, but not especially fast (Congressional Budget Office [CBO], 2018). Trump promised to double that rate and claimed that 4% growth would be easy to achieve. However, the economy under Trump never grew faster than it did during Obama's best year. What stood out most about Trump's approach was how he used language and messaging to present the

economy as being transformed, even when the data showed steady continuation rather than dramatic change.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 revealed how vulnerable the economy was. Between March and April 2020, more than 20 million jobs were lost, and the unemployment rate jumped to 14.7%; the highest since the Great Depression (BLS, 2020). While the pandemic disrupted economies worldwide, the U.S. response faced challenges, including delays and mixed messaging from the federal government. These issues may have made the situation worse (Tankersley, 2020). In this moment, political messaging could no longer hide the reality of economic hardship.

In summary, the economy during Trump's presidency; before the pandemic, was generally stable and continued trends that had already begun under Obama. Job growth and GDP followed a similar pattern to previous years. What made Trump's approach different was how he told the story: turning regular progress into something that looked new and dramatic. This ability to shape public perception played a big role in how his economic record was understood by many (Tankersley, 2020)

This chapter has explored the economic strategy of the Trump administration from 2017 to 2020, revealing that while the administration positioned itself as a force of economic change, many of its policies extended long-standing approaches rather than breaking from them. Although the rhetoric emphasized national revival and economic independence, the actual policies reflected familiar patterns rooted in corporate tax relief, market deregulation, and trade protectionism.

At the center of Trump's economic agenda was the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which significantly reduced corporate taxes in the hope of encouraging business investment and job creation. While some companies expanded their operations in the short term, the long-term effects of the tax cuts were mixed. Economic growth did not significantly

accelerate, business investment began to slow by late 2019, and income gains were concentrated among higher-income groups. Meanwhile, these outcomes raised concerns about the growing national debt, and the promised economic benefits were not shared equally across different income groups. Thus, the promise of broad-based economic improvement remained unevenly fulfilled.

The administration also prioritized deregulation as a strategy to stimulate the economy. This approach focused on removing federal rules, particularly in the areas of environmental protection, finance, and labor. While some industries benefited from lower compliance costs, the broader public impact raised concerns. For example, the rollback of environmental regulations weakened protections that had long supported public health and sustainability efforts. This highlighted a tension between economic growth and social welfare, particularly when short-term business gains came at the expense of environmental safeguards and worker protections.

Trade policy was another defining feature of Trump's presidency. The administration's approach to global trade emphasized confrontation over cooperation. By imposing tariffs on key trading partners—especially China and the European Union—the administration aimed to protect domestic industries and reduce trade deficits. However, these actions led to higher costs for American consumers and businesses, while retaliation from trading partners negatively affected sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. The trade war with China, in particular, placed pressure on U.S. farmers, requiring federal support to offset losses. This trade strategy, while rhetorically effective in projecting strength, often produced economic uncertainty and failed to deliver the structural corrections it aimed for.

The administration's approach to economic performance relied heavily on storytelling. Job creation and declining unemployment were key achievements often emphasized in public statements. However, a closer look at employment trends reveals that

the economy was already recovering prior to Trump's presidency. Job growth continued at a pace similar to that of the previous administration, and GDP followed a familiar trajectory. What distinguished Trump's economic leadership was less a matter of new outcomes and more a matter of framing—using language, symbols, and slogans to recast ongoing progress as a dramatic reversal.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 exposed the fragility beneath this narrative. Within weeks, millions of jobs were lost, and unemployment spiked to historic levels. The federal response faced challenges, including delays in coordination and inconsistent messaging. The image of a strong economy quickly gave way to a reality marked by hardship and uncertainty. In this context, the limits of a performance-based economic strategy became clear, as the administration's messaging could not contain the impact of a global crisis.

In the end, Trump's economic legacy is best understood as one of rhetorical innovation rather than structural transformation. The administration did not significantly reshape the foundations of the U.S. economy, but it did reshape how those foundations were perceived. Policies that prioritized corporate interests, deregulation, and protectionist trade were not new, but they were presented as part of a bold new vision. This rebranding gave the appearance of disruption while maintaining many elements of existing economic structures.

Ultimately, the administration's emphasis on telling a powerful story than making deep, long-lasting changes reveals a deeper dynamic within modern American Capitalism—one where political leadership increasingly depends on the ability to control meaning rather than outcomes. The policies promoted under the banner of economic Nationalism often served to reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them. While framed as a return of economic power to the American people, the benefits of these policies remained concentrated

among those who already held significant wealth and influence. The result was a system in which change was more visible in language than in lived experience.

This chapter concludes that the Trump administration's economic approach was not defined by a rejection of the past, but by a repackaging of it. It combined traditional neoliberal tools with populist rhetoric, creating the impression of disruption without delivering broad-based reform. As such, it invites continued reflection on the role of narrative in economic governance and the challenges of achieving inclusive growth in a politically polarized and media-driven landscape.

CHAPTER 3: TRUMP'S ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICY

Introduction

Immigration is the international movement of individuals from their homeland to another country in search of improved living conditions, safety, or various other opportunities. This international movement inevitably carries significant social, economic, and cultural implications, particularly for the host country. Thus, the migration of people ought to be organized and legalized to avoid clash or inconsistency with the main interests of the destination country. The US has always been a prominent example of the country that was built on waves of European settlers in the early 19th century to the influx of immigrants from Latin America, Asia and other parts of the world in recent decades, thereby famously known for its melting pot, forming a diversity that has become as both a foundational strength and political contention in addition to reshaping the American national identity by integrating newcomers and sometimes excluding others. Throughout American history, various federal administrations have enacted immigration laws aimed at regulating entry into the United States, ensuring that only individuals who meet specific criteria are permitted to immigrate. The Republican administration under President Donald Trump was not an exception, it implemented its own set of restrictive immigration measures. One of the main promises during Trump's presidential campaign was to curb the flow of immigration by setting unprecedented rules that reveals his xenophobic immigration plan mainly against Latino and Muslims under his slogans "America first'' and "make America great again", making America's interests above immigrants' needs. His plan focused on reinforcing immigration laws by rejecting undesirable immigrants who would form a burden on American economic and social status. In addition to, restricting the number of asylum seekers and refugees deporting undocumented immigrants. Actually, throughout American history, immigrants' issues have often been treated not as a humanitarian case due to the narratives used by white supremacists which portrayed immigrants as invasive threats. Guided by a white nationalist

agenda, Trump sought to limit the entry into the country and increase deportations of those within its borders. These measures reinforced a sense of nativism among the Americans, creating a sort of fear and doubt of outsiders. The chapter's main concern is to explore Trump's anti-immigration policies' impact on the American labor market and wages. Addressing this issue goes through five main points. First, a profound discussion of the tension between economic Nationalism and rationalized Populism, two of Trump's frameworks that characterizes his immigration policy, which seem to be interlinked but sometimes show contradictory aspects. Then, highlighting the way Trump shaped immigrants as a threat to the American labor market and wages, identity and sovereignty.

Additionally, it is important to provide a concise background on immigration policy before Trump, contrasting neoliberal openness and tolerance with nativist rejecting sentiment. After, the focus moves to Trump's implementation of protectionism plan following a severe border security strategy including the construction of the border wall and the travel ban mainly for Muslims. The attention shifts later to investigating the role of the media and Trump's polarizing rhetoric to mobilize his audience to support his anti-immigration policy. Finally, this chapter sheds light on the socioeconomic implications of this policy particularly on the job market, wages and America's global image.

3.1 Immigration between Economic Nationalism and Rationalized Populism

Donald Trump’s immigration strategy cannot be fully understood without placing it within the broader framework of economic Nationalism and populist rhetoric. While the former is pragmatic—focusing on practical concerns like the protection of domestic industries and labor as essential for survival—the latter develops narratives that accuse political and economic elites of allowing immigration, which is framed not only as an economic but also as a civilizational issue. Trump clearly stated, “Every decision on trade, on

taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families." He claimed also, "We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs" (Trump ,2017).

Trump underscored the "America First" doctrine, focusing on trade, immigration, and foreign policy. One of the defining features of economic Nationalism is its framing of immigration as a direct threat to the domestic labor market. This perspective casts foreign labor—particularly temporary and employment-based visa holders—as a force that suppresses wages and reduces job opportunities for native-born citizens. During his presidency, Trump repeatedly argued that both legal and illegal immigration harmed American workers by saturating the labor market and driving down wages. "Foreign workers are taking jobs and suppressing wages for American citizens," he asserted (Bump, 2017).

In alignment with this rhetoric, the Trump administration introduced significant restrictions on employment-based immigration, targeting especially the H-1B and H-2B visa programs widely used in sectors like technology, hospitality, and agriculture. This stance was codified through executive actions such as the Buy American and Hire American Executive Order (EO 13788), which declared: "In order to create higher wages and employment rates for workers in the United States... it shall be the policy of the executive branch to rigorously enforce and administer the laws governing entry into the United States of workers from abroad" (White House, 2017).

These policies reflected a broader nationalist vision that prioritized American labor and economic sovereignty over the needs of foreign workers or the global economy. Analysis from the Migration Policy Institute confirmed that the administration's justifications rested on the belief that "foreign labor undercut U.S. wages and displaced American workers" (Pierce and Bolter, 2020). The administration's reforms, therefore, were not only rooted in

protectionist economics but also served to reinforce the political messaging of “America First,” promoting a labor market insulated from foreign competition.

Trump became notorious for using rhetoric to mobilize audiences against perceived external threats. His anti-immigration stance was evident in nearly all of his public addresses. He used condemnation and fear of immigrants as potent political tools. His severe approach and policy shifts reflected a transformation in both the immigration sector and American social discourse. Trump’s rationalized populist narratives blamed immigrants not only for economic instability but also for undermining American cultural values. “I only want to admit individuals into our country who will support our values and love our people,” he claimed (Trump, 2016). Membership in American society, therefore, became conditional on adopting a narrow, traditionalist view of American identity, excluding those with differing religious, political, or cultural beliefs. This effectively fostered an “us vs. them” dynamic.

Trump turned his rhetoric into specific anti-immigration policies that populists typically implement thereby deepening divisions in the nation and, somewhat unintentionally, reviving residual racial tensions. Alam and Asef assert that Trump was able to exploit this rhetoric to activate white nationalists and to revive xenophobia throughout the country. He infused the U.S. describing himself as an exploited victim of the foreign entities he exploited while blaming immigrants (primarily Mexicans and Muslims) for crime and for allegedly diminishing opportunity for local unskilled workers (Alam & Asef, 2020). He suggested the U.S. was "a dumping ground for everybody else's problems."

Trump's populist notion that his government placed "Forgotten Americans" ahead of "immigrants" created a world where immigrants received unmerited advantages of the nation state's limited resources. From this binary perspective, immigration harmed all Americans; particularly native-born Americans who occupied the lower levels of the socioeconomic hierarchy. This framing is convenient as it ignores the realities of labor where immigrant

labor helps entire industries. Agriculture, construction and health care sometimes have a lot of trouble finding native-born people to fill job vacancies (Pierce & Bolter 2020).

Trump's antipathy to immigration was enhanced greatly by the media's complicity. This media was friendly to his government, and routinely published stories that either inflated immigrant crime or illustrated immigrants as a burden to public welfare systems. Research from groups like Pew Research Center and Brookings determined that immigrants were actually beneficial for the economy, consuming less in income support, services, or general assistance than they contribute in taxes. The government often gave the research short shrift, opting instead for emotionally charged stories and divisive language that painted immigrants as a threat to the nation (Alam, Asef 2020).

Trump's foreign policy clearly changed toward giving migration and national security top priority. His view on protectionism and his critique of globalism are captured in the slogans "America First" and "Buy American, Hire American." One of President Trump's first actions was withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), therefore underlining his general skepticism about world trade agreements.

Trump especially linked immigration to economic retardation, a perspective that strongly appealed to underprivileged American workers. He noted, "Particularly affecting African-American and Latino workers, four decades of steady immigration have led to reduced salaries and higher unemployment." (Trump, 2016). "We seek to establish an immigration system American people would benefit from." (Trump, 2016). Additionally thanking border patrol agents, whom he allegedly showed the success of his immigration efforts, he promised to build a "massive border wall" to stop illegal immigration, drug smuggling, and gang-related violence.

Trump worried in a campaign speech in 2016 that such policies might "overwhelm your educational institutions and healthcare facilities, reduce your earnings, and hinder the

ability of new arrivals to escape poverty." This stood in stark contrast to Trump's goals. He described Hillary Clinton's immigration plan as one marked with "complete amnesty, unchecked immigration, and total chaos concerning the law."

Trump finally envisioned a new foreign labor force grounded in economic protectionism, border security, and Nationalism. He claimed that since 1997, America had experienced a drop of almost thirty percent in its manufacturing jobs, blaming this economic downturn on NAFTA and the trade agreements "endorsed by Bill and Hillary Clinton." Viewed this way, his opposition to immigration was not aberrant but rather a fundamental component of a significant nationalist agenda meant to change the cultural identity of the country as well as the American labor market.

3.2 A Short Background of US Immigration Policy before Trump; Neoliberalism vs Nativism

The evolution of U.S. immigration policy prior to the Trump administration reflects a long-standing tension between two competing paradigms: the neoliberal embrace of global labor mobility and the nativist impulse toward cultural and economic exclusion. This contradiction is not new—it has been woven into the fabric of American identity since the 19th century, oscillating between expansionist and protectionist impulses. What defines the pre-Trump period, however, is the way Neoliberalism institutionalized itself as the dominant ideology in policy making circles, even as nativism simmered beneath the surface, waiting for a populist resurgence.

The unresolved duality embedded in U.S. immigration history often served elite interests. Immigration policy, when directed by capital, emphasized flexibility and productivity; when shaped by populist sentiment, it veered toward suspicion and restriction.

Thus, immigration in the pre-Trump era cannot be viewed as a linear progression but as a cyclical confrontation between economic rationale and ethno-nationalist fear.

3.2.1 The Neoliberal Framework: Immigration as Economic Utility

From the 1980s onward, U.S. immigration policy increasingly reflected neoliberal principles, particularly under the influence of free-market orthodoxy popularized by the Reagan administration and later entrenched by the Clinton and Bush administrations. Immigration was largely framed in economic terms—labor supply, competitiveness, and demographic sustainability. Policymakers treated immigrants as market actors, depoliticized and instrumentalized for national economic growth.

The 1990 Immigration Act, passed with bipartisan support, expanded legal immigration quotas and created employment-based visa categories that served the needs of high-tech and corporate sectors (Wasem, 2012). The introduction of preference categories for skilled workers, multinational executives, and investors institutionalized the neoliberal tenet that human worth was measured in economic output. The underlying assumption was clear: immigration policy should prioritize market value over moral or humanitarian concerns.

The H-1B visa program epitomized this logic, facilitating the importation of skilled foreign workers to meet the demands of Silicon Valley and Wall Street. In the process, immigration was reimagined as a corporate instrument. These policies treated immigrants not as future citizens, but as temporary inputs in a global supply chain. As Ngai (2004) argues, the “alien” under Neoliberalism becomes commodified—a unit of labor stripped of political identity. Moreover, by establishing a hierarchy of desirability among immigrants, Neoliberalism quietly reinforced racial and class stratifications.

Yet, this economic rationalism coexisted uneasily with a punitive undercurrent. While borders opened selectively to serve corporate interests, they were increasingly militarized against irregular migrants, particularly from the Global South. The Illegal Immigration

Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, signed by President Clinton, expanded deportation criteria and implemented mandatory detention for a range of infractions (Kanstroom, 2007). The duality is glaring: Neoliberalism needed migrant labor, but nativism demanded its criminalization. The state became both a facilitator of economic migration and an enforcer of exclusion.

This contradiction was visible in agricultural policy as well. While guest worker programs such as H-2A were promoted to sustain farm labor, unauthorized migrants continued to form the backbone of the workforce, living under constant threat of enforcement. Neoliberalism outsourced risk to the immigrant while insulating employers from accountability.

3.2.2 Nativism in Retreat but Never Defeated

Despite the dominance of neoliberal rhetoric, nativist ideology did not vanish. It merely adapted. The 1990s witnessed a rise in anti-immigrant sentiments, often disguised as concerns over national security or economic competition. California's Proposition 187 in 1994, which sought to deny undocumented immigrants access to public services, signaled the enduring potency of nativism at the state level (Newton, 2008). Although ultimately struck down by the courts, Prop 187 illustrated the ability of nativist initiatives to shape public discourse, normalize exclusion, and influence federal policy debates.

After 9/11, security-based arguments gained traction, culminating in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the fusion of immigration enforcement with counterterrorism. The USA PATRIOT Act and the expansion of programs like Secure Communities tethered immigration to surveillance, detention, and biometric tracking (Coleman, 2009). In essence, the immigrant, particularly the non-white immigrant, became a proxy for threats to the body politic. The border was no longer merely a geographic line but a symbolic battleground over American identity.

The growing emphasis on "securitized migration" reframed the debate: immigrants were not judged by their economic contributions but by their proximity to perceived danger. Mexican laborers, Arab students, and African asylum seekers were swept into a matrix of suspicion. The distinction between legal and illegal blurred under the weight of racialized fear.

These post-9/11 policies did not emerge in a vacuum; they tapped into longstanding racialized anxieties. The political center, while endorsing market-based immigration reform, failed to challenge the deeper cultural panic fueling nativist backlash. This failure would prove fertile ground for Trump's eventual mobilization of white grievance. Indeed, the groundwork for Trumpism was laid not infringe movements, but in the bipartisan normalization of enforcement as a prerequisite for reform.

3.2.3 Obama's Technocratic Balancing Act

Barack Obama's administration straddled the neoliberal-nativist fault line with ambivalence. On one hand, his 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy offered temporary reprieve for undocumented youth, projecting a vision of inclusive pragmatism. On the other hand, Obama presided over unprecedented levels of deportation, earning him the moniker "Deporter-in-Chief" (Gonzales, 2016).

This contradiction was not ideological incoherence but strategic calculation. The administration hoped that tough enforcement would placate Republican hardliners enough to secure comprehensive immigration reform—a hope that proved futile. As Meissner et al. (2013) note, the Obama years witnessed a "smart enforcement" doctrine, in which high-tech surveillance and prosecutorial discretion were employed to engineer a rational immigration state. The use of Priority Enforcement Programs and administrative discretion sought to draw a line between the "good" immigrant and the deportable one.

Yet, even this technocratic approach failed to escape the political vortex. By emphasizing “deserving” immigrants (students, soldiers, entrepreneurs), the administration reinforced the idea that some lives were more integrable than others. The neoliberal paradigm, while less overtly hostile than its nativist counterpart, remained conditional, transactional, and fundamentally exclusionary. It operated on the logic of exception, rewarding compliance while invisibilizing vulnerability.

Moreover, the dream of bipartisan immigration reform proved elusive. Despite high public support for pathways to citizenship, legislation like the 2013 Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act died in Congress. Obama’s policies, then, were defined by a paradox: they expanded rights and repression simultaneously, opening doors for some while slamming them shut for others.

3.2.4 The Rising Tide of Populist Nativism

By the mid-2010s, the neoliberal consensus on immigration was crumbling. Economic precarity, cultural resentment, and right-wing media ecosystems had coalesced into a potent force. What had been a subterranean current of American politics—resentment toward immigrants as symbols of demographic change and economic displacement—was now erupting into the mainstream.

The 2016 presidential campaign merely amplified what had been gestating for years. Trump’s rhetoric of building walls, banning Muslims, and mass deportation did not emerge ex nihilo; it was the culmination of decades of simmering contradictions within U.S. immigration policy. His Populism gave voice to those who felt betrayed by globalization and dislocated by demographic shifts. Neoliberalism’s promise of prosperity had proven hollow for many, and immigrants became the scapegoat.

Trump's campaign capitalized on the failure of both parties to articulate a cohesive immigration vision rooted in justice rather than utility or fear. The political establishment's

reliance on managerial solutions had alienated constituencies who demanded cultural affirmation. In this vacuum, Trump offered a reactionary clarity.

3.2.5 A Precursor to the Storm

In retrospect, the pre-Trump era of immigration policy was less a golden age than a fragile détente between capital's need for mobile labor and the nation's anxieties about identity and sovereignty. Neoliberalism attempted to depoliticize immigration by turning it into an economic equation, but in doing so, it left the cultural and racial dimensions unaddressed—if not aggravated. Nativism, long submerged, returned with vengeance in the Trump era, not as an anomaly but as a response to the void Neoliberalism left behind.

Trumpism, therefore, was not a rupture but a reaction. It exposed the limits of technocratic immigration reform and neoliberal multiculturalism. And in doing so, it made the contradictions of U.S. immigration policy impossible to ignore. The road to Trump was paved not by ideological extremism alone, but by decades of bipartisan ambivalence and commodification.

3.3 Trump's Protectionism and Border Security Policies: America First and Economic Protectionism.

Donald Trump's presidency (2017–2021) brought a revolutionary break from historical customs and a fresh version of the U.S. economic strategies and immigration control. Central to the basic operations of Trump's political mind was the slogan of "America First," which later refers to a broader ideology of protectionism and merciless border control. Fundamentally to economic protectionism, traditionally those proposals to reduce immigration levels by increasing border security and to protect American businesses and workers from worldwide competition help define it. The duality of these approaches shows

an administration that was constant in its attack on urgent domestic problems, in a sense almost negligent of American and international political order, but strong in persuasion.

The Trump presidency ushered in a heightened sense of ontological insecurity in the US, based on a national self-narrative that portrayed an emasculated America. Trump promised to return the US to primacy by pursuing policies and practices that focused on border protection, militarization, and the vilification of external others, while amplifying racial tensions within the country. From caging immigrant children at the border, to an enabling of white supremacy and the Capitol riots, Trump's presidency was broadly seen as an aberration in the self-narrative of America as a tolerant, democratic nation" (Agius, 2022).

Economic protectionism stems from the idea that free trade accords favorably discriminate against American workers and businesses. The Trump administration viewed international trade treaties as unfavorable bargains disadvantageous to American employees. It renegotiated NAFTA into the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), withdrew from the agreement, and applied a tariff system targeting major global allies such China, with regard to all trade flows. Naturally, this marks the start of an era of self-sufficiency and economic Nationalism. While campaigning in 2016, Trump noted, "Our leaders have vigorously sought a policy of globalization—moving our jobs, our wealth and our factories to Mexico and overseas."

Actually, Trump started the trade conflict with China in 2018 when he imposed taxes on Chinese products that reached approximately $250 billion (Bown, 2020). He claims these tariffs would help to establish a more compliant environment with respect to trade imbalance, theft of intellectual property rights, and restoration of the industrial manufacturing base in the United States. Tariffs on washing machines, aluminum, steel, and solar panels -- seen as strategic sectors essential to national security -- also pertained to imports of these goods.

Economists warned, though, that tariffs would lead to consumer price increases and job losses in industries depending on worldwide supply networks.

Although Trump's protectionist policies appeal during his campaign might have mixed results on the economy, the audience that felt left behind by globalization clearly showed support to his ideas, particularly his emphasis on reviving a manufacturing base. His behavior implies that the respondents' assertions have some validity, but the few jobs generated were also followed by major declines in sectors affected by his countervailing policies. Some academics contend Trump's campaign was more symbolic than substantive, appealing to the voters' financial concerns without offering a thorough and cohesive development plan (Bown).

3.3.1 Immigration Policies and Border Control under Trump.

Along with his economic plan, Trump declared a firm border control. Perhaps the one campaign promise he left even more awkwardly than the others was the building of a "big, beautiful wall" along the borders of the U.S.-Mexico. Though Trump did not get Congress to approve complete funding for the wall, he announced a national emergency so he could apply military funds to keep building it. Though it was a main promise and a major policy claiming to be a barrier, it was also an effective political symbol: the wall. For the project, eminent domain comes into play together with means and measures of the most aggressive anti-immigration campaign, such as the 'Remain in Mexico' initiative and family separation at the border. Reasons for security justified the wall, but more often than not its operational effectiveness gave way to rhetorical and symbolic meaning showing force for the state.

Apart from his physical walls, Trump's government enforced harsh immigration regulations. Launched in 2018, the presently "Zero Tolerance" policy aimed to charge every single adult illegally crossing the southern border. Thousands of youngsters were separated from their parents as a result of this policy, which sparked outrage both at home and in other

countries (Pierce & Bolter, 2020). Trump further deepened his administration's hardline by issuing several executive orders, travel bans on mostly Muslim country nationals, and other orders.

During his presidency, the budget earmarked for border security saw a considerable increase. For overfunding detention, deportation, and surveillance assets, Immigration and Customs Enforcement ICE and Customs and Border Protection CBP dedicated historically high amounts of money. Similarly, this approach combined other physical obstacles to border control with drones, sensors, and surveillance towers.

Trump's border security approach was intimately entwined with his economic protectionist policies. Both had the same ideological basis of sovereignty, worker defense, and cultural preservation. Trump has portrayed immigration from the start as an economic threat: immigrants were sometimes charged with being competitors for American jobs, drains on welfare, or a safety hazard. Although "border security" was ostensibly President Trump's main policy focus, official data reveal that he did not enhance it. In fiscal year 2019, Border Patrol reported 41 percent more successful illegal crossings than in 2016; through four months of 2020, it was on pace for 47 percent more (Bier, 2021). Reports suggest that the figures have climbed even higher as he left office in January; these statistics probe the success of this policy.

Along with a populist appeal addressing the people's concern about losing their culture because of economic dislocation, the economic and migration problems are combined. These policies included tariffs and immigration limitations, collectively dubbed as guarding America's middle class. This kind of mix suggests a great ideological change for the Republican Party from orthodoxy to Nationalism Populism.

3.3.2 Global reactions, Human Costs and the Legacy of Trump's Policies.

Critics argued, though, that it merely romanticized xenophobia and damaged America's image in the view of outsiders. Studies revealed that immigration had always had a positive impact on the U.S.; yet, foreign immigrants and rivals were portrayed as threats, which helped to stoke a divide and terror economy (Borjas, 2016). Allies overseas viewed the tariffs and travel restrictions as hostile and harmful for the long-term diplomatic and commercial ties. Trump's tariffs caused so much economic disturbance. Retaliatory tariffs damaging both American farmers and businesses reflected the trade conflict with China bouncing back. US agricultural exports to China fell nearly 50% at the height of the trade war (Pierce & Bolter, 2020). Although the government tried to offset a slight decline by offering subsidies, the effects on rural communities were terrible.

Where immigration was concerned, the human cost was far greater. Human rights groups, religious organizations, and even lawmakers all strongly condemned family separation at the border. Though the Trump administration later reversed that policy, America's moral capital had suffered greatly (Pierce & Bolter, 2020). Legal difficulties remain over the handling of asylum seekers and the indefinite detention of migrant families.

Trump's border and trade policies stressed connections with other world actors. Mexico, Canada, and the European Union responded to the U.S. tariffs; rising tension has emerged worldwide. Trump relegated international collaboration to a second place, thus more damaging America's reputation in global institutions. Many see Trump's presidency as a watershed moment in the evolution of immigration and economic policies in the United States. Strict border control measures and protectionist trade policies reflected a more populist, nationalist worldview deeply ingrained in that mindset, not unrelated developments.

Notwithstanding the disputes, Trump's protectionist and border security measures reinforced his image among his base as a president who put "America First." Following the

ideological presumption of Trumpism, these policies reflected skepticism of globalization, mistrust of foreign institutions, a preference of unilateralism, and a nativist view of national identity. Trump's appeal, according to political theorist Corey Robin, comes from his view of the world as a zero-sum battle between "real Americans" and foreign or elite foes (Robin, 2018). Though occasionally unpredictable or legally challenged, his policies consistently symbolically communicated defense of the American country from external menaces, economic or demographic.

3.4 The Role of Media and Trump's Rhetoric on Immigration

One cannot examine Donald Trump's immigration rhetoric without addressing the intricate web of media amplification and ideological consolidation that supported and, in some cases, shaped it. From the moment Trump descended the escalator in 2015 and declared that Mexican immigrants were "bringing drugs… bringing crime… [and] rapists," a defining trope of his political persona was born—unapologetically nativist, aggressively reductionist, and rhetorically incendiary. This framing was not incidental. It marked the fusion of populist rhetoric with media sensationalism, creating fertile ground for the growth of alt-right discourse. Trump's words did not merely reflect the prejudices of a segment of the electorate; they reconfigured the immigration debate in American political culture.

Mainstream and fringe media outlets played divergent but symbiotic roles in this transformation. Fox News, for instance, offered a platform that consistently echoed Trump's narratives, legitimizing his frames of "invasion," "open borders," and the portrayal of undocumented immigrants as existential threats to American sovereignty (Berry, Sobieraj & Hullman, 2019). Simultaneously, Breitbart News, under Steve Bannon's leadership, acted as an ideological echo chamber, seeding conspiratorial themes such as "white genocide" and "replacement theory"—concepts previously relegated to the margins of white nationalist

forums (Hawley, 2017). These media spaces not only reported Trump's statements—they laundered them through the lens of cultural grievance, lending a form of intellectual scaffolding to otherwise bigoted tropes. Adding to this ecosystem was social media, particularly Twitter, where Trump's direct messaging circumvented traditional gatekeepers, creating an unmediated channel of affective mobilization (Ott, 2017).

Trump's influence on the alt-right's immigration stance was not merely one of reinforcement but of radicalization. The president's rhetoric mirrored and amplified the alt-right's preexisting beliefs, serving as a signal of mainstream validation. His use of phrases like "America First," while historically tainted by isolationist and antisemitic origins, was rebranded as a legitimate political slogan, normalizing a vocabulary once confined to the dark corners of internet subcultures (Neiwert, 2017). As Trump's policies materialized—from the Muslim travel ban to family separation at the border—so too did his symbolic alignment with ethno-nationalist anxieties. The administration's zero-tolerance approach to immigration was more than policy; it was performance, choreographed for an audience well-versed in cultural war rhetoric.

Conservative political commentators such as Tucker Carlson played a pivotal role in bridging Trump's institutional power with the ideological fervor of the alt-right. Carlson's nightly broadcasts on Fox News frequently blurred the line between populist Nationalism and xenophobic panic. His infamous remarks on demographic change—"How exactly is diversity our strength? resonated directly with the alt-right's fixation on cultural purity and European heritage" (Miller, 2020). By mainstreaming such views, Carlson acted not merely as a commentator but as a rhetorical architect, shaping the contours of what constituted acceptable discourse about immigration in American media. In this sense, media figures functioned not just as echo chambers, but as amplifiers and translators of Trump's core ideological tenets, lending them both legitimacy and reach.

At the same time, liberal media outlets such as CNN and MSNBC, though critical of Trump, often contributed inadvertently to the amplification of his messaging. By replaying his most controversial statements—whether to condemn or dissect them—these outlets ensured their repetition and wide circulation. As Entman (2008) argues in his theory of "cascading activation," media frames do not simply inform the public; they shape cognitive hierarchies of salience. In this light, even oppositional coverage contributed to the saturation of Trumpian frames into the public consciousness. This unintended feedback loop illustrates how the media ecosystem, regardless of intent, was instrumental in scripting Trump's political theater.

Critically, Trump's rhetorical style—marked by simplicity, repetition, and symbolic binaries ("us" vs. "them")—was tailor-made for media reproduction. Unlike previous administrations that spoke in coded policy language, Trump thrived in spectacle. His discourse was not designed for policy deliberation but for affective mobilization. This performative Populism was instrumental in galvanizing support among alt-right adherents who viewed immigration not as a socio-economic issue but as a civilizational threat (Wodak, 2021). Furthermore, his messaging relied on emotional triggers—fear, anger, nostalgia—which rendered rational debate ineffective and elevated reaction over reflection.

Trump's legacy, then, cannot be assessed solely through legislation or executive orders. His real impact lies in the rhetorical shift he engineered: transforming immigration from a complex policy domain into a cultural litmus test. By anchoring immigration within a narrative of national decline and betrayal, Trump legitimized exclusionary identities and reactivated latent ethno-nationalist currents. In this way, media—both right-leaning and otherwise—acted not merely as observers but as accelerants, shaping a discursive battlefield in which the alt-right found not just voice but validation. Scholars such as Yilmaz &

Morieson (2022) argue that this shift marks the global normalization of authoritarian Populism, where strongman narratives find fertile ground in democratic contexts.

Two of the most emblematic cases in which Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric solidified into state policy were the so-called "Muslim Ban" and the U.S.-Mexico border wall. Both measures were not merely administrative decisions; they were semiotic declarations—symbols of belonging and exclusion, calibrated to appease a base animated by fear, cultural resentment, and racial grievance. They embodied what one might call performative exclusion: a politics of border-making not just in physical terms, but in civilizational and ideological ones. These policies materialized the nativist imaginary Trump cultivated from his campaign's inception.

The "Muslim Ban," initially enacted as Executive Order 13769 in January 2017, targeted travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries under the pretense of national security. But its genesis lay less in empirical threat assessments and more in symbolic politics. Trump had repeatedly vowed during his campaign to enact "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," a statement that was widely condemned but strategically effective (Greenhouse, 2017). The order—despite revisions and eventual rebranding into a "travel ban"—was met with legal challenges, mass protests, and international outrage. Yet it persisted, upheld by a conservative-leaning Supreme Court in Trump v. Hawaii (2018), which essentially ratified religious discrimination under the guise of executive discretion.

The critical point here is that the Muslim Ban, like much of Trump's immigration doctrine, was less about policy efficacy and more about identity signaling. It drew a line between the American "us" and the Islamic "other," reinforcing Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" framework—but now repackaged for the alt-right digital age. Scholars such as Rana (2017) argue that the ban functioned as a "racial project," recoding national security

as a racialized border regime. For Trump's followers, it was proof of his willingness to defy political correctness and assert an unapologetic defense of Western, read: white Christian, civilization.

The border wall with Mexico operated in a similar symbolic register. Chanted as a mantra in rallies— "Build the Wall!"—the project became a totem of Trump's immigration platform. Despite logistical limitations, incomplete construction, and internal opposition even within the GOP, the wall remained central in shaping the narrative of an embattled homeland under siege. In truth, Trump did not need to build a continuous wall across the southern border. He needed only to perform the idea of the wall—to dramatize the border as a frontier between chaos and order, criminality and civilization, "them" and "us." As Jones (2020) suggests, walls are "monuments to fear"—and in Trump's case, fear was mobilized as a political currency.

Media outlets on the right eagerly amplified this spectacle. Fox News frequently aired segments featuring supposed "border invasions," complete with night-vision footage and panic-inducing language. Breitbart, Infowars, and even more obscure platforms contributed to what scholars have called a "moral panic pipeline" (Daniels, 2018), where the undocumented immigrant is recast as an existential threat. It was here that Trump's populist ethos merged seamlessly with alt-right paranoia: the wall was not just a border—it was a barricade against demographic and cultural extinction. Notably, YouTube channels and Reddit communities aligned with the alt-right also served as accelerants, generating viral content that mythologized the wall as a last stand of Western civilization.

Meanwhile, liberal media's attempt to fact-check, debunks, or satirizes the wall and the ban often had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing their centrality in public discourse. CNN's obsessive coverage of the border wall shutdown, or MSNBC's legal dissections of the Muslim ban, while grounded in democratic concern, nevertheless replayed Trump's

messaging ad nauseam. This phenomenon reveals a deeper media dysfunction: the inability to disentangle critique from amplification. In a media economy driven by clicks and confrontation, Trump's provocations were algorithmically rewarded, even by those who opposed them.

Ultimately, both the Muslim Ban and the wall served to harden the ideological infrastructure of exclusion in contemporary American politics. They were flashpoints around which a coalition of nationalist voters, conspiratorial influencers, and right-wing media coalesced—each reinforcing the other in a feedback loop of grievance. Trump, by articulating their anxieties in visceral, televisual terms, became not just a political figure but an affective symbol. His policies were rarely technocratic; they were mnemonic. They signaled who belonged and who didn't. They were, above all, the architecture of a story—a story in which the white, Christian, "real American" was under siege and needed protection from the alien other.

Trump's brand of Populism, characterized by exaggerated rhetoric and alarmist discourse around immigration, catalyzed widespread public debate and ideological polarization. His portrayal of the United States as being under siege—particularly by immigrants from Latin America and Muslim-majority countries—served to reinforce and legitimize longstanding xenophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes. These narratives were not only central to Trump's campaign messaging but also instrumental in mobilizing a significant segment of the Republican base. Importantly, his radical framing of immigration issues gave rise to a new generation of self-proclaimed "culture warriors" operating in digital spaces, particularly on platforms such as YouTube and Spotify. Influencers like Joe Rogan and Candace Owens emerged as prominent voices within this ecosystem, using podcasts and social media to amplify conspiratorial and often harmful narratives about Muslims, Mexicans, and the perceived threats of multiculturalism.

This ideological shift was not without tangible consequences. A chilling example is the 2019 terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The shooter, a self-identified Christian nationalist, explicitly cited Candace Owens as a source of inspiration in his manifesto. He also described Donald Trump as a "symbol of renewed white identity" and a modern crusader against what he saw as the encroaching forces of globalism and the political left. While Trump disavowed the attacker's actions, the association underscores how the fusion of populist Nationalism and alt-right digital culture can radicalize individuals beyond American borders.

It becomes evident, then, that immigration functioned not just as a policy issue in Trump's political playbook but as a powerful rhetorical weapon to consolidate a nationalist, populist identity among his supporters. This rhetoric found a new and highly effective medium in the form of online content creation and podcasting, which for younger audiences effectively supplanted the older generation's reliance on cable news networks such as Fox News. Just as Fox News played a critical role in framing the War on Terror for baby boomers, figures like Owens and Rogan have adapted the language of fear, identity, and cultural conflict to a digital age—turning their platforms into incubators for the same reactionary ideologies Trump popularized during his presidency.

3.5 Social and Economic Implications of Trump's Anti-Immigration Policies

Trump's anti-immigration agenda—rooted less in empirical necessity than in ideological performance—reshaped American governance. From the 2016 campaign trail to his presidency, Trump situated immigration as the central threat to national identity, economic stability, and social cohesion. Yet, rather than securing the nation, his policies fragmented it further, both socially and economically. As Mae Ngai notes in Impossible

Subjects (2014), “immigration policy has always been about defining the boundaries of national belonging,” and under Trump, those boundaries became aggressively exclusionary.

His administration did not merely regulate borders—it ritualized exclusion. This performative Nationalism became a stage on which immigration was not a policy issue, but a cultural battleground, where fear replaced fact. The narratives evoked were saturated with racial anxieties, with immigrants painted as economic parasites and criminal threats. This ideological framing provided fertile ground for policies whose real-life implications would prove not just divisive but deeply damaging to the social fabric and economic engine of the United States.

3.5.1 Social Implications: Institutionalized Cruelty and the Normalization of Xenophobia

The 2018 “zero-tolerance” policy, which resulted in the forced separation of thousands of migrant families at the border, was not an aberration but the logical culmination of a broader punitive approach. As García Hernández argues in Migrating to Prison (2019), “immigration enforcement has become a central theater for symbolic punishment.” These actions, cloaked in legal formalism, produced lasting trauma. The American Academy of Pediatrics warned that family separation posed “irreparable harm” to children's cognitive and emotional development (AAP, 2018).

Worse still, the policy was implemented with an astonishing lack of planning or humanity: no database linked children with their parents. Investigations by the Department of Health and Human Services later revealed that some children were effectively "lost" in the system. Legal scholar César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández described it as a system that "intentionally traumatizes as a deterrent, sacrificing human dignity for political optics" (2019).

3.5.1.1 Islamophobia as a Policy: The Travel Ban's Cultural Violence

Executive Order 13769—the so-called Muslim Ban—excluded citizens from several Muslim-majority countries under the guise of protecting national security. The policy, which the Supreme Court ultimately upheld in Trump v. Hawaii (2018), not only restricted mobility but broadcasted the message that Muslim identity was fundamentally suspect. In Being Muslim (2018), Sylvia Chan-Malik observes that such state-sanctioned suspicion "renders Muslims as permanent foreigners," regardless of citizenship.

A study by the Brennan Center for Justice (2019) documented a sharp rise in hate crimes against Muslim Americans in the immediate aftermath of the executive order. The travel ban functioned as a form of cultural exclusion, entrenching a hierarchy of belonging. It did not merely limit entry; it revoked dignity.

3.5.1.2 Civic Retreat: Surveillance, Fear, and Silence in Immigrant Communities

The amplification of ICE raids, publicized detentions, and threats to DACA created what sociologists call a "chilling effect." Immigrants—documented and undocumented—became less likely to seek health care, report crimes, or engage in civic life. The Migration Policy Institute (2020) found a measurable decline in participation in public services in high-enforcement zones. In The Deportation Machine (2020), Adam Goodman asserts that these outcomes are not collateral damage but "essential features of a deterrence-driven regime that thrives on fear and visibility."

In Latino communities, community policing efforts faltered as trust in institutions eroded. A 2019 study published in The American Journal of Public Health linked ICE presence to lower vaccination rates and prenatal care usage. Fear became policy. Silence became a survival strategy.

3.5.2 Economic Implications: Undermining the Labor Supply -A Self-Inflicted Crisis-

Trump's hardline stance caused measurable labor shortages in key sectors. In agriculture, the deportation of undocumented workers and reduced issuance of H-2A visas caused a significant decline in harvest yields in states like California and Georgia. A National Bureau of Economic Research study (Clemens & Gough, 2021) showed that ICE activity directly correlated with reductions in agricultural output and increases in product prices. In The New American Farmer (2020), Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern highlights how immigrant labor is not an accessory but a structural pillar of American agriculture. By stripping that pillar, the Trump administration endangered not only food security but rural economies. The irony, of course, is that many of the hardest-hit states were strongholds of Trump's political support.

3.5.2.2 Choking High-Skilled Immigration: Innovation in Retreat

Trump's freeze on H-1B, J-1, and L-1 visas in 2020—allegedly to protect U.S. jobs during COVID-19—triggered panic in industries reliant on global talent. Brookings researchers (Muro et al., 2020) warned that such actions would hamper innovation, noting that over 40% of Fortune 500 firms were founded by immigrants or their children. In The Gift of Global Talent (2018), William Kerr emphasizes that high-skilled immigration fuels both patent production and entrepreneurship.

In Silicon Valley, companies delayed projects and moved research operations abroad. Universities feared brain drain as international students, discouraged by the hostile climate, looked to Canada or Europe. The policies did not protect American workers. They outsourced the opportunity.

3.5.2.3 Demographic Decline and Fiscal Backlash

Perhaps the most ironic outcome of Trump's restrictionism is its threat to America's demographic sustainability. As the birth rate declines and the population ages, immigrants have been essential to maintaining a balanced labor force. The Cato Institute (2018) found that immigrants contribute approximately $11,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits over their lifetimes.

The Social Security Administration itself projected shortfalls in contributions as legal immigration slowed. By restricting the inflow of young, working-age immigrants, Trump weakened the long-term viability of entitlement programs—undermining the very retirees many of his policies claimed to protect.

3.5.2.4 Symbolic Economics: Risk, Reputation, and Retraction

Finally, immigration policy under Trump sent damaging signals to international investors and global partners. Policy unpredictability and anti-globalist gestures—including threats to end birthright citizenship and constant legal changes—eroded the perception of the U.S. as a stable, rule-of-law environment. Economist Douglas Holtz-Eakin noted before Congress in 2019 that "this administration's policies communicate volatility rather than vision" (U.S. Senate Budget Hearing, 2019).

The consequences were tangible: foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by nearly 50% from 2016 to 2019 (BEA, 2020). Immigration policy, once viewed as a channel for skilled labor and global ties, became a liability. The economic stage mirrored the political: fragmented, reactive, and riddled with uncertainty.

3.5.2.5 Theoretical Framework: Nationalism, Populism, and Moral Panic

Trump's anti-immigration politics can be more fully understood through the lenses of right-wing Populism and moral panic. Following the work of Cas Mudde (2019), Trump

exemplifies what Mudde calls the "populist radical right": a movement combining nativism, authoritarianism, and Populism. Immigration, in this schema, becomes a perfect antagonist—a symbol of elite betrayal and cultural decay.

Stanley Cohen's (1972) classic theory of moral panic is also instructive. Immigrants, particularly those portrayed as undocumented or Muslim, were cast as "folk devils"—threats constructed not through data but through imagery and repetition. Trump capitalized on this panic, deploying fear to mobilize political support. The border wall, the travel ban, and family separation were not merely tools of enforcement but emblems of ideological purity.

3.5.2.6 The Performance of Protectionism

Trump's anti-immigration policies, marketed as a form of national self-defense, were in fact a political performance—designed to signal strength while sowing division. The social cost: fear, alienation, and the undermining of pluralism. The economic cost: labor shortages, innovation declines, and fiscal stress. In America for Americans (2019), Erika Lee writes that "xenophobia is not just a side effect of American history—it is one of its central forces." Trump harnessed that force, not to build, but to barricade.

Undoing these effects will require more than policy reversal. It will demand a narrative shift, a reinvestment in pluralism, inclusion, and empirically grounded economic thinking. The challenge for the post-Trump era is not merely to reverse the policies, but to reconstruct the moral and institutional frameworks they damaged. If immigration policy is a mirror of national identity, then the Trump years offered a deeply distorted reflection: one we must interrogate, not inherit.

3.5.2.7 From Campaign Slogans to Economic Evidence: Revisiting the Immigration Debate

One of the most persistent arguments used by Trump to justify his anti-immigration stance is the idea that immigrants—particularly undocumented or low-skilled ones—are to blame for job losses and wage stagnation among American workers. This claim, repeated throughout his 2016 and 2020 campaigns, was central to his promise to "protect the American worker." Yet when the campaign slogans are held up against economic data, the story begins to unravel.

At first glance, the logic may seem simple: more workers entering the labor market create more competition, which pushes wages down and takes jobs from native-born Americans. But the real dynamics are far more nuanced. Empirical studies show that immigration has not caused significant harm to native workers' wages or employment. In fact, many immigrants take on jobs that native workers tend to avoid—often in physically demanding, low-paying, or seasonal roles—thereby supporting the economy in ways that are often invisible in the public discourse.

Giovanni Peri (2010) provides a useful long-term analysis of major U.S. cities and concludes that immigration tends to complement rather than substitute native labor. His research found that immigrants often fill gaps in the low-skilled labor force, which allows native-born workers to move toward higher-skilled or better-paying roles. As a result, wages for natives are not significantly affected—and in some cases, even rise due to the increase in overall productivity. So, the claim that immigration inherently depresses wages is not supported by the data; it simply appeals to economic anxiety.

Trump's narrative also frames the issue as a zero-sum game—where every job held by an immigrant is a job taken away from an American. But this binary framing ignores the flexibility of the labor market. The National Academies of Sciences (2017) found that while

low-skilled immigration may have a modest impact on the wages of earlier immigrants, it does not significantly harm native workers. Instead, immigrants help expand the economy by increasing demand for goods and services, which in turn generates more employment opportunities. The idea that immigration is a direct threat to American jobs, then, serves more of a political function than an economic one.

Ironically, when Trump's policies actually succeeded in reducing immigration—especially in sectors like agriculture, construction, and food service—they revealed a different kind of problem: labor shortages. Clemens and Gough (2018) highlight how farmers, particularly in states like California and Georgia, struggled to find workers after immigration crackdowns. Some even left crops to rot in the fields because native workers either did not apply for the jobs or quit shortly after starting. This suggests that the issue was never about immigrants taking jobs Americans wanted—it was about immigrants doing jobs Americans weren't willing to do.

So instead of protecting the American worker, these restrictions arguably hurt industries that depended on immigrant labor, slowed production, and forced some businesses to either raise prices or reduce operations. In this light, the problem wasn't too much immigration—but too little of the kind that supports the base of the labor market.

In sum, Trump's claim that immigration caused job loss and wage decline is more of a strategic narrative than a conclusion supported by economic evidence. It reflects a populist desire to identify clear villains and easy fixes, rather than a serious attempt to understand or address the complexities of the labor market. Once again, the gap between campaign rhetoric and policy reality is wide and filled with consequences.

In tracing the contours of Trump's immigration agenda, this chapter has mapped a political project not only grounded in nativist rhetoric but architected through a bureaucratic assault on the very idea of American inclusivity. From the controversial travel bans to the

family separation policy at the southern border, the administration's approach functioned less as a calibrated legal framework than as a symbolic performance—designed to signal power, restore control, and stoke fear. Such policies may have succeeded in appeasing an electoral base, but their broader social implications—ranging from community fragmentation to heightened xenophobia—are far less defensible when examined through empirical and humanitarian lenses.

Economically, the administration's restrictive stance disrupted labor markets, particularly in agriculture, construction, and service sectors that have historically depended on immigrant labor. While the populist rhetoric championed American jobs for American workers, the real-world effects often produced labor shortages, rising costs, and a deeper reliance on undocumented workers operating in the shadows. Ironically, the very policies intended to "protect" American labor markets ended up highlighting the structural dependence of the U.S. economy on precisely the immigrant labor it sought to exclude.

The role of conservative media in legitimizing and amplifying these policies cannot be understated. Outlets such as Fox News functioned not merely as messengers but as co-architects of the administration's anti-immigration crusade. They supplied the affective energy, the alarming metaphors ("invasions," "caravans"), and the moral justification needed to sustain public consent. What emerged was a closed communicative loop: media narratives shaped policy, and policies, in turn, were reported as necessary responses to the very crises the media helped construct.

Taken together, Trump's immigration policy portfolio was less about regulation than about spectacle—a spectacle of border walls, executive orders, and televised raids. But behind the spectacle lies a deeper political logic: the construction of a national identity predicated on exclusion. As this chapter has argued, the consequences of such a logic are not

only social or economic but existential, raising fundamental questions about who gets to belong in the American story and who gets erased.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of Trumpism has undeniably altered the political and ideological fabric of the United States. What began as a populist campaign infused with provocative slogans and anti-elite sentiment quickly evolved into a broader nationalist project that redefined economic and immigration policy through a protectionist lens. As this study has demonstrated, Trump's rise was not an accident of populist theatrics, nor merely a political anomaly—it was a strategic reconfiguration of conservative identity built upon cultural anxieties, economic disillusionment, and a carefully curated media performance.

Trumpism, as explored in the first chapter, is not a traditional ideology grounded in coherent doctrine. Instead, it is a flexible populist-nationalist project deeply anchored in Trump's personal brand and charismatic appeal. It reshaped the Republican Party from a platform of free-market orthodoxy and globalist ambitions to one that champions protectionism, cultural nostalgia, and sovereign assertion. By fusing populist anti-elitism with exclusionary Nationalism, Trumpism carved out a new hegemonic narrative that resonated with those who felt economically and culturally abandoned.

Drawing on Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, this study has shown how Trumpism operated not only through policy but through the occupation of symbolic and media space. Through tweets, televised outrage, and public confrontation, Trump disrupted political norms and replaced them with spectacle. In this regard, Trumpism was as much a performance as it was a program. Its ideological foundation rested on contradictions—deregulation alongside protectionism, corporate tax cuts beside worker-centered rhetoric. These contradictions, rather than weakening Trumpism, allowed it to reach across constituencies and consolidate support. It succeeded in realigning the Republican identity around grievances, Nationalism, and the personal authority of Trump himself.

Chapter two tackled the question of whether Trump's economic Nationalism delivered on its promises. The evidence, while mixed, leans toward underachievement cloaked in rhetorical overstatement. The tax cuts passed in 2017 largely benefited corporations and the wealthy, while their long-term effects on growth and income equality were negligible. Deregulation energized certain industries but also reduced protections for labor, consumers, and the environment. Trade wars particularly with China were touted as victories, but in practice they resulted in market volatility, retaliatory tariffs, and only marginal benefits to U.S. manufacturing.

Trump's economic policy was best understood as a narrative strategy: "America First" appealed to national pride and economic grievance, even when the policy outcomes did not materially benefit the very communities they claimed to protect. The chapter demonstrated that while the economy did show short-term signs of growth, this trajectory began before Trump's presidency and was severely disrupted by the pandemic. As such, Trump's economic model appears more concerned with political messaging than structural reform. It was a performance of revivalism that borrowed from nationalist rhetoric while quietly reinforcing neoliberal logics of wealth accumulation and deregulated Capitalism.

Chapter three explored whether Trump is anti-immigration policies addressed structural labor challenges or functioned as symbolic politics. The answer, as the analysis has shown, leans heavily toward the latter. Despite claims of economic rationale—protecting American jobs, reducing competition, and curbing illegal labor, Trump's immigration agenda was overwhelmingly shaped by exclusionary rhetoric and the construction of national threat. Policies such as the travel ban, family separation, and the militarization of the U.S-Mexico borders were driven less by evidence-based labor market assessments and more by identity-based fears and political performance.

This study demonstrated that immigration became a stage where Trumpism populist discourse came to life. Immigrants were cast as invaders, laws as tools of protection, and the border wall as both a material and symbolic project. When juxtaposed with earlier neoliberal approaches, which oscillated between economic pragmatism and selective tolerance, Trump's strategy was far more absolutist and nativist. Moreover, the media narratives that surrounded and amplified these policies contributed significantly to the redefinition of national identity, one that centers whiteness, cultural homogeneity, and securitized citizenship. Ultimately, immigration policy under Trump was not designed to solve, but to provoke turning social anxiety into political capital.

This dissertation does not aim to offer simplistic conclusions about Trumpism's rise or its aftermath. Instead, it sought to unpack the deeper ideological logics, contradictions, and historical conditions that made Trumpism possible. The findings underscore how populist Nationalism, when fused with the contradictions of neoliberal Capitalism, produces a volatile yet powerful political formation—one capable of reorienting party platforms, institutional norms, and public expectations. Trumpism revealed the vulnerability of American democratic institutions and the ease with which long-standing norms can be overturned in the name of "the people."

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to analyze Trumpism not as a passing episode, but as a symptomatic manifestation of broader structural tensions: the crisis of neoliberal governance, the erosion of trust in democratic elites, and the uncertain place of cultural identity in a rapidly globalizing world. By exploring both economic and immigration policies, the research offers a multidimensional understanding of how populist-nationalist projects operate, how they gain traction, how they govern, and how they leave their mark. Ultimately, Trumpism may fade from headlines, but its imprint on the American political psyche and on conservative ideology will likely persist. Understanding Trump's economic

and immigration policies is not merely a historical exercise, but a necessary step in confronting the future of democratic governance in an age of rising Populism. If this study serves one purpose, it is to remind us that ideologies do not emerge in a vacuum; they are constructed, contested, and carried forward by those willing to transform grievances into power and narratives into policy.

That said, this study was not without its challenges. The primary difficulty resided in the very nature of Trumpism itself: its ideological ambiguity, its constant mutation through media spectacle, and its resistance to categorization. Trump's discourse often blurred the line between performance and policy, between strategy and impulse, making it hard to distinguish intentional ideology from improvised Populism. In addition, the polarized political atmosphere surrounding.

Trump complicated the selection of sources—many were either overtly partisan or excessively cautious, requiring careful critical engagement to avoid bias while maintaining analytical clarity.

Finally, measuring the long-term impact of policies still in flux demanded a methodological openness, especially when dealing with phenomena that remain both unfinished and deeply contested in public debate. Yet, precisely because of these challenges, the need for sustained, critical inquiry into Trumpism becomes even more urgent.

WORKS CITED

Books

- Berry, Jeffrey M., et al. *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility*. Oxford UP, 2019.
- Borjas, George J. *We Wanted Workers: Unraveling the Immigration Narrative*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2016, pp. 110–125.
- Chan-Malik, Sylvia. *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*. NYU Press, 2018.
- Chavez, Leo R. *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford UP, 2017.
- Cohen, Stanley. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. MacGibbon and Kee, 1972.
- Daniels, Jessie. *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- García Hernández, César Cuauhtémoc. *Migrating to Prison: America's Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants*. The New Press, 2019.
- Gerstle, Gary. *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era*. Oxford UP, 2022.
- Gessen, Masha. *Surviving Autocracy*. Riverhead Books, 2020.
- Goodman, Adam. *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton UP, 2020.

- Gonzales, Roberto. *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*. U of California P, 2016.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, International Publishers, 1971.
- Hall, Stuart. *The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies*. Routledge, 1982.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Hawley, George. *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*. Columbia UP, 2017.
- Jones, Reece. *White Borders: The History of Race and Immigration in the United States from Chinese Exclusion to the Border Wall*. Beacon Press, 2020.
- Kanstroom, Daniel. *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History*. Harvard UP, 2007.
- Kerr, William. *The Gift of Global Talent: How Migration Shapes Business, Economy & Society*. Stanford UP, 2018.
- Klein, Naomi. *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need*. Haymarket, 2017.
- Lee, Erika. *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States*. Basic Books, 2019.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. Crown, 2018.
- Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right*. Princeton UP, 2020.

- Minkoff-Zern, Laura-Anne. *The New American Farmer: Immigration, Race, and the Struggle for Sustainability*. MIT Press, 2020.
- Morieson, Nicholas, and Ihsan Yilmaz. *Authoritarian Populism and the Rise of the Strongman: Dangerous Spaces and Political Myths*. Routledge, 2022.
- Mudde, Cas. *The Far Right Today*. Polity Press, 2019.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2017.
- Neiwert, David. *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*. Verso Books, 2017.
- Newton, Lina. *Illegal, Alien, or Immigrant: The Politics of Immigration Reform*. NYU Press, 2008.
- Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton UP, 2004.
- Robin, Corey. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*. Oxford UP, 2018.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. *Freefall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.
- Wodak, Ruth. *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse*. SAGE, 2021.

Journal Articles

- Agius, Christine. "'This Is Not Who We Are': Gendered Bordering Practices, Ontological Insecurity, and Lines of Continuity under the Trump Presidency." *Review of International Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2022, pp. 385–402.
- Alam, Fahmida, and Samin Farhan Asef. "Populist Rhetoric and the Rise of Xenophobia: The Trump Phenomenon." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2020, pp. 15–21.
- Amiti, Mary, et al. "The Impact of the 2018 Tariffs on Prices and Welfare." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2019, pp. 187–210. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26796842.
- Bates, Thomas R. "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1975, pp. 351–66. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2708933.
- Coleman, Mathew. "What Counts as the Politics and Practice of Security, and Where? Devolution and Immigrant Insecurity after 9/11." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 99, no. 5, 2009, pp. 904–13.
- Entman, Robert M. "Theorizing Mediated Public Diplomacy: The U.S. Case." *International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2008, pp. 87–102.
- Galbreath, Megan. "An Analysis of Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen." *Harvard International Review*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2017, pp. 7–9. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26528673.
- Gale, William G., et al. "Sweeping Changes and an Uncertain Legacy: The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2024, pp. 3–32. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27320372.

- Gerstle, Gary. "The Rise and Fall(?) of America's Neoliberal Order." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 28, 2018, pp. 241–64. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26862250.
- McAllum, Michael. "Reconceiving the Self and the Other: Possibilities Beyond the Seduction of Popularist and Authoritarian Polarities." *Journal of Futures Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, Mar. 2017, pp. 15–24. https://jfsdigital.org/articles-and-essays/2017-2/vol-21-no-3-mar-2017/.
- Mickey, Robert, et al. "Is America Still Safe for Democracy? Why the United States Is in Danger of Backsliding." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 3, 2017, pp. 20–29. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44823727.
- Ott, Brian L. "The Age of Twitter: Donald J. Trump and the Politics of Debasement." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2017, pp. 59–68.
- Peri, Giovanni. "The Effect of Immigration on Productivity: Evidence from U.S. States." *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 94, no. 1, 2010, pp. 348–358. https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00130.
- Pham, Huy Nguyen Anh, et al. "The Financial Effects of Trumpism." *Economic Modelling*, vol. 74, 2018, pp. 264–74.
- Rana, Aziz. "Race and the Constitution." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 130, no. 4, 2017, pp. 1471–1549.
- Ramos, José. "Donald Trump and the Birth of a Planetary Culture." *Journal of Futures Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, Mar. 2017, pp. 83–92. https://jfsdigital.org/articles-and-essays/2017-2/vol-21-no-3-mar-2017/.

- Rodrik, Dani. “Populism and the Economics of Globalization.” *Journal of International Business Policy*, vol. 1, no. 1–2, 2018, pp. 12–33.
- Welsh, Benjamin H. “Framing Culture and Diversity Today: Cultural Hegemony.” *Journal of Underrepresented and Minority Progress*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2017, pp. 3–7.
- Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. “Trumpism: A Disfigured Americanism.” *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 4, article 117, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0170-0.

Reports & Government Documents

- Bureau of Economic Analysis. *Foreign Direct Investment in the United States: 2016–2019*. 2020, https://www.bea.gov/.
- Clemens, Michael A., and Kate Gough. *Immigration Restrictions and U.S. Agricultural Output*. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021.
- Horton, Emily. "The Legacy of the 2001 and 2003 'Bush' Tax Cuts." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 23 Oct. 2017, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/the-legacy-of-the-2001-and-2003-bush-tax-cuts.
- Holtz-Eakin, Douglas. *Testimony before the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, Hearing on Immigration and the U.S. Economy*. 2019.
- Meissner, Doris, et al. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*. Migration Policy Institute, 2013.

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration*. National Academies Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.17226/23550.
- Pierce, Sarah, and Jessica Bolter. *Dismantling and Reconstructing the U.S. Immigration System: A Catalog of Changes under the Trump Presidency*. Migration Policy Institute, 2020–2021.
- U.S. Supreme Court. *Trump v. Hawaii*, 585 U.S. ___ (2018).
- Wasem, Ruth Ellen. *U.S. Immigration Policy on Permanent Admissions*. Congressional Research Service, 2012.
- White House. *Executive Order 13767: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*. 25 Jan. 2017.
- White House. *Executive Order 13788: Buy American and Hire American*. 18 Apr. 2017.

Websites & Online Sources

- American Academy of Pediatrics. *AAP Statement on Executive Order on Family Separation*. 2018, https://www.aap.org/.
- American Civil Liberties Union. *Family Separation By the Numbers*. 2021, www.aclu.org/issues/immigrants-rights/immigrants-rights-and-detention/family-separation.

- Bier, David J. “Trump’s Border Policies Let More Immigrants Sneak In.” *Cato Institute*, 10 Mar. 2021, www.cato.org/blog/trumps-border-policies-let-more-immigrants-sneak.
- Bump, Philip. “Trump’s Case against Legal Immigration: Foreign Workers Hurt Americans.” *The Washington Post*, 22 Aug. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/08/22/trumps-case-against-legal-immigration-foreign-workers-hurt-americans/.
- CBS News. “A Guide to Trump's Past Comments About NATO.” *CBS News*, 21 Mar. 2016, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-nato-past-comments/.
- Chotiner, Isaac. “How Trump’s Tariffs Fit the Autocrat’s Playbook.” *The New Yorker*, 10 Apr. 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-trumps-tariffs-fit-the-autocrats-playbook.
- Clemens, Michael A., and Kate Gough. “Can U.S. Agriculture Survive without Mexican Farmworkers?” *Center for Global Development*, 2018, https://www.cgdev.org/blog/can-us-agriculture-survive-without-mexican-farmworkers.
- CNN Arabic. “ترامب يعلن انسحاب أمريكا من اتفاقية باريس للمناخ لحماية أمريكا وشعبها.” *CNN Arabic*, 1 June 2017, https://arabic.cnn.com/world/2017/06/01/trump-paris-climate-decision.
- Congressional Budget Office. *Historical Budget Data*. U.S. Congress, 2022. www.cbo.gov/data/budget-economic-data.

- Curran, James. "'Americanism, Not Globalism': President Trump and the American Mission." *Lowy Institute for International Policy*, 2018. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep19793.
- Gale, William G., et al. *Effects of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: A Preliminary Analysis*. Tax Policy Center, 2018, https://www.taxpolicycenter.org.
- Glasser, Susan B. "Covering Politics in a 'Post-Truth' America." *Brookings Institution*, 2 Dec. 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/covering-politics-in-a-post-truth-america/.
- Kogan, Richard, and David Reich. *Trump Budget Proposals Would Shift Substantial Resources from Domestic Programs to Defense*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019, https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget.
- Laffer, Arthur B. *The Laffer Curve: Past, Present, and Future*. The Heritage Foundation, 1981, https://www.heritage.org/taxes/report/the-laffer-curve-past-present-and-future.
- Muro, Mark, et al. *The H-1B Visa Suspension: Short-Term Reaction, Long-Term Damage*. Brookings Institution, 2020.
- Piketty, Thomas, et al. *World Inequality Report 2018*. World Inequality Lab, 2018, https://wir2018.wid.world/.
- Time Staff. "Here's What Donald Trump Said About Mexican Immigrants." *Time*, 29 June 2015, time.com/3923128/Donald-trump-announcement-speech/.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. *Monthly Treasury Statement*. U.S. Treasury, 2021. https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/.

Speeches & Media

- Trump, Donald J. *Campaign Speech*. 31 Aug. 2016, Phoenix, Arizona. NPR, www.npr.org/2016/09/01/492091228/transcript-donald-trumps-full-immigration-speech.
- Trump, Donald J. *Inaugural Address*. The White House, 20 Jan. 2017, trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/.
- Trump, Donald J. *Republican National Convention Speech*. 21 July 2016, Politico, https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974.

Edited Book Chapters

- Casarões, Guilherme. "The First Year of Bolsonaro's Foreign Policy." *Latin America and the New Global Order*, edited by Antonella Mori, Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2020, pp. 81–109. DOI: 10.14672/55261883.
- Kowalski, Jeremy. "Introduction: The Emergence of America's Trump and Trumpism." *Reading Donald Trump: The Evolving American Presidency*, edited by Jeremy Kowalski, Springer, 2019, pp. 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93179-1_1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aiad-Toss, Kristina. “Factors that Influence Mexican Emigration to the United States: The Role of Economics, Education Quality, Crime, and Violence”. *Honors Research Projects* 753 (2018): 1-18.

Amuedo-Dorantes, Catalina and Jose R. Bucheli. “Family Separation and Reunification Under President Trump’s Zero-Tolerance Policy”. 2022. https://conference.iza.org/conference_files/AMM_2022/amuedo-dorantes_c1295.pdf

Autor, David, David Dorn, and Gordon Hanson. "The China Shock: Learning from Labor Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade." *Annual Review of Economics*, vol. 8, 2016, pp. 205–240. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080315-015041

Bennett, David H. “Immigration and Immigrants: Anti-Immigrant Sentiment”. *Syracuse University*. https://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary sources/newsvault/gps_newsvault_19thcentury_usnewspapers_immigration_essay.pdf

Cherkaoui, Mohamed. “Donald Trump: The Rise of Right-Wing Politics in America”. *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 2016. Web. 25 Oct. 2018.

“Defining Trumpism: A Movement, Not Just a Presidency.” *Trump Aftershock*.

Donald, Trump. *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again*. The United States of America: Threshold Editions, 2015.

Frum, David. *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*. Harper, 2018.

Giroux, Henry A. “Trumpism and Its Afterlife.” *Outspoken: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Adrian Parr and Santiago Zabala, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2023, pp. 11–38. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.3078900.5. Accessed 21 May 2025.

Grant, Edwin E. “The Scum of the Melting-Pot”. *American Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 6 (1925): 641-651. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2764588

Horton, Emily. "The Legacy of the 2001 and 2003 'Bush' Tax Cuts." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, October 23, 2017. Available at: https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/the-legacy-of-the-2001-and-2003-bush-tax-cuts.

‘Lunatic’: Trump’s long history of abusing judges who oppose him | Donald Trump News | Al Jazeera. SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/03/20/

Maltz, Earl M. “The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban”. *Lewis & Clark Law Review*, Forthcoming (March 23, 2018). SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3148137 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3148137

Ramkhelawan, Dhillon. “The Separation of Migrant Families at the Border Under the Trump Administration’s Zero Tolerance Policy: A Critical Mistreatment of Immigrant Children Held in U.S. Custody”. *Child and Family Law Journal* 7, no. 1 (2019): 151–172. https://lawpublications.barry.edu/cflj/vol7/iss1/7

"There are similarities between Silvio Berlusconi and Donald Trump, two emblematic protagonists of the populist phenomenon." *Le Monde*, 13 November 2024.

Thompson, Michael J. *Americanism, Not Globalism: President Trump and the American Mission*. 2018. PDF. www.example.com/americanism-trump.pdf.

"Trump can dismantle ... but he cannot build." *The Australian*, 22 March 2025.

United States Trade Representative. *The President's 2018 Trade Policy Agenda*. Executive Office of the President, Mar. 2018. [PDF file].

"Understanding Trumpism: Nationalism, Populism, and Industrialism." *Baron Public Affairs*, Spring 2017.

After America: can Europe learn to go it alone without the US? | Europe | The Guardian. http://theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/23/

How Trump's Tariffs Fit the Autocrat's Playbook. https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-trumps-tariffs-fit-the-autocrats-playbook?

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america