Trumpian Populism: Legitimizing Chaos And Right-Wing Nationalism as a Political Strategy
El populismo "trumpiano": legitimar el caos y el nacionalismo de extrema derecha como estrategia política

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Abstract

Since 2015, Donald Trump has impacted American politics and the international system with his incendiary rhetoric. During his campaign and administration, Trump broke with convention with his communication style. Trump rose to power by championing white, conservative Christians; using a highly nationalistic narrative; maintaining a populist ideology; and drawing support from least privileged sectors in rural areas. The 45th president was able to mobilize the impoverished white vote, but also different sectors of the most affluent classes by implementing favorable fiscal policies, benefiting the richest sector of the population. In this article, we explore the creation of Trumpian populism, a concept that originated with this political leader, and Trump's influence on the American electorate. We use storytelling to examine how Trump has successfully polarized the United States' political arena, and undoubtedly, cast a shadow on the legitimacy of the electoral system.
Key words: Trumpian populism, right-wing populism, nationalism, polarization.

Resumen

Desde 2015, Donald Trump ha impactado la política estadounidense y el sistema internacional con su retórica incendiaria. Durante su campaña y su administración, Trump rompió las convenciones con su estilo de comunicar. Trump escaló el poder llevando a la cima a los cristianos conservadores blancos, usando una narrativa profundamente nacionalista, manteniendo una ideología populista y mostrando apoyo a los sectores menos privilegiados de las áreas rurales. El presidente número cuarenta y cinco fue capaz de movilizar el voto de los blancos empobrecidos, así como el de diferentes sectores de las clases más adineradas al implementar políticas fiscales que los favorecieran, lo cual benefició al sector más rico de la población. En este artículo exploramos la creación del populismo "trumpiano", un concepto que se originó con su líder político y por su influencia en el electorado estadounidense. Usamos *storytelling* para examinar cómo Trump ha polarizado con éxito el escenario político estadounidense e, indudablemnte, ensombrecido la legitimidad del sistema electoral.
Palabras clave: populismo trumpiano, populismo de extrema derecha, nacionalismo, polarización.

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Political Compromise in Consolidated Democracies

Following the creation of the modern state, the consolidation of democracy has required a dialogue among groups with opposing political views to produce functioning governments. Constructive dialogue allows the improvement of government institutions and encourages citizen participation. Including diverse voices enhances democracy by confronting society's ever-changing needs. All modern democracies face challenges in responding to growing diversity; this requires developing better institutions to protect every citizens' rights and enhance political dialogue (Mouffe, 2000).

According to Miller-Lane (2010), the checks and balances system at the federal level reflects the need for a dynamic balance between unity and diversity to improve democratic dialogue. This tension provides the necessary energy to create a vibrant democracy, while a lack of positive conflict hinders its development, and incites the creation of authoritarian regimes. Constructive disagreements generate political compromises, which in turn generate more inclusive public policies and better institutions. In a mature democracy, different voices are encouraged to voice their concerns and make their case, presenting valid and substantiated arguments; if the merit of their claims is ascertained, they should be considered to impact government institutions and programs (Miller-Lane, 2010).

Conversely, destructive disagreements, based on personal insult and disqualification, destroy the possibility of reaching a compromise, even if these positions are not so dissimilar. When citizens perceive that their voices are not heard and their claims have no effect as their life conditions worsen, there is an increase in civic disengagement and thus political inefficacy. The absence of political participation allows for the creation of authoritarian governments and highly polarized political arenas (McCoy and Scully, 2002).

Developing a democracy requires the construction of compromises, based on negotiation and public deliberation. Public life is greatly improved by dialogue among parties with diverse political and social visions (Solares, 1996). According to Habermas (1989), dialogue allows for the building of bridges between different people, destroys stereotypes, and generates understanding through the exchange of substantiated arguments, based on data, life experiences, and diverse knowledge. Hence, consensus may be built upon this type of communicative, rational interactions (Habermas, 1989).

The absence of a minimal degree of mutual respect and willingness to understand others generates conflict and empty discussions, which do not improve public deliberation or the life of citizens. Consequently, these confrontations hold the potential to polarize nations according to their political views. Moreover, they annihilate

any possibility of empathizing with people holding opposite views. As this polarization increases, positions grow increasingly apart, forcing people to take sides and ostracize those with views even marginally different from each group (Salmela and Von Scheve, 2018).

During the last five years, this has been the case of the political arena in the United States, with President Donald Trump skillfully utilizing conflict and permanent chaos to increase his popularity and, in the process, gain control and allegiance from the Republican Party and its voters (Milmo, 2021). Next, we review the conceptual evolution of populism.

The Conceptual Development of Populism

For Hermet (2003), the modern concept of populism arose at the end of the XIX century as an effort to understand different political and social movements driven by underprivileged masses demanding better living conditions from their governments. Most leaders of these populous upheavals were agricultural or factory workers, with charismatic personalities and left-wing ideological agendas. In the 1930s, the classic concept of populism arose, with underprivileged groups striving to gain representation within their governing bodies due to the lack of consideration of their worsening living conditions and increasing inequality. For Conniff (2003), this type of populism is composed of masses of populous groups, from diverse economic and social sectors, engaging in political movements led by opportunistic yet skillful leaders. Their political actions are legitimized by representing "the people", a notion that lives to this day. This concept is also used by populist leaders in their campaigns to seek social and economic restitution for those most in need (Conniff, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the concept of economic populism was developed. This idea considerably increased public spending in social protection programs, especially in health, housing and education. Economies at the time focused on protecting their internal market by applying high import taxes and increasing the size of governments, as well as maintaining high wages and high expenditure by using the surplus from exporting commodities, typically in the energy sector. During this period, governments created numerous public enterprises, focusing on providing high-paying jobs but not as much in operating efficiently; this created massive deficits throughout the 1980s, which led to markets crashing and international crises (Rapoport and Brenta, 2010).

During the 1990s, neo-populism emerged, led by political outsiders trying to gain support from underprivileged sectors, with a key promise: a total economic and moral overhaul of the political system. Such leaders, many of them coming from

industrial elites, advocated for neoliberal reforms to the economy and cutting the size of government, in particular, leaving markets to regulate themselves and supporting trickle-down economics as a principle that reduces inequality. These movements presented traditional politicians as morally corrupt, freeloading parasites profiting from inefficient and archaic institutions. These populist leaders sought to revitalize the economy by: growing the industrial sector, liberalizing trade by cutting import taxes, selling government companies and allegedly creating jobs, as well as attracting foreign direct investment and international ventures to install their operations in their countries (Tushnet, 2019).

Conniff (2003) observed that these movements claimed several electoral victories mainly due to three key factors: *a*) ineffective distribution of public resources, perceived as contrary to the general interests of society; *b*) growing insecurity and crime rates; and *c*) low economic performance, exacerbated by cyclical widespread economic crises which impacted the poorest sectors in society. Neo-populist leaders used effective political marketing campaigns to project the interests of those sectors historically "left behind", calling on "the people" to stand with them in reclaiming democratic governments and making the State work for them. Established political parties and previous administrations were blamed for every problem in society, while these outsiders portrayed themselves as saviors of their nation, basing their success on merit and hard work. As mentioned, these political leaders came both from economic elites and blue-collar sectors, such as union leaders, solely sharing their rejection for traditional politicians and established parties (Conniff, 2003).

According to Laclau and Mouffe (cit. Smith, 1998), the expansion of neoliberalism and the need to find a more equitable form of government requires a "radical democracy," and a new political identity where social movements such as feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, immigrant rights, could join small business owners, workers, educators, and other groups to form a great coalition and restore basic rights. These authors recognized there is no clear picture of what a Marxist state could look like. While still adhering to a left-wing agenda, they accepted that building a post-capitalist system is not possible at this moment in time. Populism could be led by left or right-wing politicians, and the unifying cause would be recovering basic social protections, much diminished by prevalent neoliberal governing and economic institutions (Smith, 1998).

From the beginning of the 21st century, populism can be considered as an opposition movement, originating from the accumulative shortcomings of neoliberal democratic systems and its adverse socioeconomic effects on millions of people worldwide. At this point, populism became an expression of anti-politics, a total rejection of traditional parties and institutions. According to Mudde (2004), this populist

view divides society in two groups: the corrupt elites and the honest and hard-working *people*. In this view, the sole purpose of politics is to serve as a vehicle to materialize the will of the people.

According to De Raadt, Hollanders and Krouwel (2004), populism presents a political promise to attain an ideal world with greater justice and equality. Thus, populists resort to a redemption narrative, filled with popular nationalistic symbols to fabricate a national identity and attract massive support from the most impoverished sectors of society. The main goal of these political movements is to attain powe. Hence, their discourse is full of grand promises of revolution and change but is rather scarce in specific measures and policies on how to achieve them (De Raadt et al., 2004).

In terms of political communication, De Vreese, Esser, Aalberg, Reinemann, and Stanyer (2018), consider populism as a communicative strategy based on messages targeting elites as the enemy of the *people*. Hence, populist leaders sow discontent in the minds of the masses by aggrandizing the mistakes committed by previous administrations, blaming the government for their adverse social and economic conditions, while exacerbating mistrust in democratic institutions. Political outsiders driving these movements combine anti-systemic and anti-political views, while presenting themselves as the sole saviors and redeemers of the nation and its people. Their discourse seeks to divide and further polarize the nation, discombobulating the political arena with constant personal attacks and scandal. However, the populist leader promises to be the only one capable of bringing order to chaos and of delivering prosperity to masses of hard-working, yet forsaken patriots (De Vreese et al., 2018).

For this article, we adopt the concept of right-wing populism created by Salmela and Von Scheve (2018), as an ideology based on the existence of a nefarious economic and political elite, subject to foreign interests, willing to sacrifice the nation in exchange for personal profit. This populist rhetoric creates resentment towards those groups and individuals who, with little personal effort, enjoy a lavish lifestyle. These political outsiders tend to blame a heterogeneous collection of "others" for the nation's misfortunes; this group includes high-paying public servants, refugees, foreigners, the unemployed, and all those perceived as free-riders to the system. These populist political movements depend on transmitting the idea of an allegedly homogenous nation, composed of the hard-working class, suffering the consequences of government abandonment and a pernicious yet intangible global economy (Salmela and Von Scheve, 2018).

Right-wing populists use fear and insecurity to make the people feel hopeless and unsafe, channeling this despair to gain support and reach political power. These populists use the concept developed by Carl Schmitt, a Nazi jurist, of the *absolute enemy*, which is a group, class, or race of people culprit of every evil in society. Fear,

one of the most powerful human emotions, serves their purpose of unifying a polity, thus channeling their anger to achieve power (Mehring, 2014).

For Rivero (2016), these political outsiders seek to end the status quo, governmental inefficiency, corruption, and abuses of power committed by the establishment. Naturally, this creates a division between adherents to the movement and all others. As a result, this generates a highly polarized political arena. These populist movements mobilize their followers by aggravating differences and creating conflict through incessant incendiary statements and fabricated scandals. Normally, right-wing populists espouse conservative values, especially the protection of the heteropatriarchal family and religious *freedom*, which translates as the defense of practicing the dominant creed shared by its followers (Rivero, 2016).

For this article, we introduce the concept of *Trumpian* populism, which is a type of right-wing political movement, grounded in nationalistic and xenophobic values, with a solid neoliberal economic orientation, which uses an inflammatory rhetoric to create an environment of permanent crisis. Trump follows traditional populist ideals, such as representing "the people", being a "savior" to his nation, while craftily exploiting the new social media to directly appeal to his political base. Trump innovates in populism by exploiting and expanding an already polarized political arena. By using daily scandal, and breaking with any political traditions, he creates a chaotic environment, bombarding the public sphere with false information, while jeopardizing public trust in government and its institutions. These are the elements we will analyze in our storytelling methodology.

Donald John Trump inherited a fortune from his father, a real-estate developer from Queens, later expanding the family business to Manhattan where he became a socialite, known for his lavish lifestyle and exuberant behavior (McAdams, 2016). Trump created a non-profit organization, the Trump Foundation, which was closed for illegally misusing charitable funds for political purposes. In this case, Trump had to pay more than two million dollars due to misconduct, as he used the money obtained by his foundation to pay for his presidential campaign (James, 2019).

Another key element of Trumpian populism is having a political outsider successfully appropriating one of the two main parties in the United States. Since 1987, Donald Trump changed his political affiliation five times, ranging from democrat to republican and independent until 2012, when he finally turned republican, especially considering Trump was a known democrat for most of his life. Notwithstanding his weak republican lineage, Trump has taken over the Republican party, naming people of his inner circle to key positions, creating a massive following, and maintaining his influence even after his presidency (Crump, 2021). Now, we move to another unique element of Trumpian populism, the political base (Smith, 2020).

The Trump campaign's narrative has always focused on appealing to white voters without college degrees, especially from rural backgrounds in places where globalization has hit the hardest over the years. Trump's slogan has been a true political marketing success. *Make America Great Again* has attracted millions of voters, even its acronym MAGA, is now a widespread term used to identify supporters. Since 2016, MAGA rallies have drawn thousands of people wearing the now-iconic red trucker hats, calling on true American patriots to reclaim their land and *Make America First*. However, the success of this new type of populism could not be completed without appealing to a more affluent sector of society, the fiscal conservatives, more traditional Republicans, who seek tax incentives for large companies and corporations, by promising to uphold the rule of law and by focusing on strengthening the American position in the global market (*The Conversation*, 2020).

According to Zhang and Burn-Murdoch (2020), Trump has provided the type of incentives and fiscal policies necessary to attract wealthier, more conservative families and large corporations; a reflection of this is the historical performance of Wall Street during his administration. In demographic terms, 57 percent of white people voted for Trump in 2016, this represents 45 percent of the electorate. From the total number of voters, Trump got 63 percent of white people without college degrees; 56 percent of those making less than 50,000 dollars a year. Conversely, Trump obtained 51 percent of voters making over 100,000 dollars a year and 87 percent of conservatives (Pew Research Center, 2018).

This represents a paradigmatic change in right-wing populism, as it draws the poorest and the more affluent sectors of the population together, under the guise of Christian conservatism while pushing an essentially neoliberal economic agenda. Aside from these policies, Trumpism developed a political marketing campaign based on daily scandals, incendiary statements, and sustained attacks on democratic institutions and the establishment. This strategy proved successful in the 2016 presidential race when, by consistently intoxicating the political arena, Donald Trump portrayed himself as the only option capable of delivering the people from corruption and poverty (McCammon, 2016).

During his presidency, the 45th president of the United States was impeached by the House of Representatives for exerting pressure on Ukraine in exchange for political information and support in his reelection campaign. As Republicans held the majority in the Senate, he was later exonerated. However, he skillfully used this scandal to portray himself as a victim of the establishment. Trump claimed he was being persecuted due to his campaign to eradicate corruption in Washington (Orr & Lippman, 2020). This communication strategy is another key element of Trumpism, which captured relentless support from an extremely faithful political base even after

his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. In fact, this resulted in a violent riot at the United States Capitol, while congress was summoned to ratify the election's results (Roberts, 2021). In the following section, we present political *storytelling* as the method used in this article.

POLITICAL STORYTELLING

This research method is developed by the school of political marketing and uses a series of strategies to analyze discourses used to attain power through the exploration of narratives contained in media messages (Liebhart and Bernhardt, 2017). Such messages can be linguistic, para-linguistic, or kinesics. This method also examines the context of the messages, such as the events where they take place, and the role of politicians or commentators as storytellers. These elements create a specific narrative that is ultimately used to reach power and increase political support (D'Adamo and García, 2016).

For Nuñez (2008), storytelling is a communicative tool used by political candidates to gain support through narratives that focus on certain issues faced by specific social groups and how the establishment has failed to address them. This method targets selective audiences by spreading messages designed to trigger strong emotional responses, thus channeling this anti-systemic energy in support of a single person and his "movement." According to Scott (2011), this tool represents an essential human activity, telling these stories to generate a cultural product, constructed around shared memories and perceived identities. This emotional resonance drives people to rally around certain issues, which are communicated by the leader with a heightened urgency. Consequently, people are drawn to a larger *cause*, while immediately building a sense of community (Scott, 2011).

Political storytelling, according to Van Hulst (2012), seeks to generate powerful emotional responses in electors, more so than generating debates or offering concrete responses to public issues. This type of communicative strategy focuses mainly on persuading, congregating, and moving electors through the use of anti-systemic and anti-political messages. Another key element is a sustained attack on institutions, which erodes public trust and reinforces the idea of a single savior. Storytelling tries to create a chaotic public sphere, by bolstering government's shortcomings, which creates frustration and anger in the electorate, thus calling on patriots to destroy the status quo (Van Hulst, 2012).

Donald Trump used the same strategy as those following Schmitt's ideas, accusing foreigners of being rapists, drug dealers, and of stealing away the American

dream from hard-working patriots. Trump used the idea of menacing hordes of criminal immigrants to unite many like-minded voters against this common cause, thus, consolidating his political base (BBC News, 2016).

For Mäckelmann (2017), current political campaigns are relying heavily on personal politics, where the character and the charisma of the candidate matter more than his ideological platform or his party. This style of politics creates voluntary and involuntary stories, which are immediately and massively communicated through social medi. Before being banned from Twitter, Donald Trump had close to 90 million followers. During his campaign and administration, Trump used this platform daily to communicate with his base, having a powerful megaphone to disclose his every thought at all times (Friedersdorf, 2016). We consider this highly effective use of social media to be another key element of Trumpian populism.

In this article, we will use the categories proposed by Richard (2011) to analyze Trumpian populism: *a) storyline*, which builds on the candidate's image and identity by augmenting personal successes and favorable personal qualities; *b) timing*, which focuses on the political junctures of the historical moment, exploits systemic and opponents' weaknesses and reinforces the contrasting qualities of the challenger; *c) framing*, used to analyze the context of the narrative, looking at the political and economic conditions surrounding the story; and *d) networking*, which looks at how each story is replicated, communicated and its impact on mass media (Richard, 2011).

Based on Garcia and D'Adamo (2015), the storytelling method presents traditional messages with a beginning, middle and end, but they can also have a setting, followed by a confrontation and a climactic conclusion, if they have a distinguishable logical sequence. Another necessary element is causality, where one history must lead to the next, thus building a progression of events. Effective storytelling requires simplicity, so the narrative needs to be easy to follow, yet filled with symbols and expressions broadly based on popular culture (Friedersdorf, 2016). Messages must be uncomplicated and simple to remember, painted with images and phrases prompting strong emotional responses. The candidate's iconography should create an immediate sense of community and a shared identity based on a greater cause, which leads to collective action (Garcia and D'Adamo, 2015).

This article analyzes three speeches made by Donald Trump at different times: 1) during his campaign, 2) while in office, and 3) at the end of his administration in order to observe its evolution. We use the following storytelling categories to identify the elements present in our concept of Trumpian populism:

Table 1
TYPE OF MESSAGE AND STORYTELLING CATEGORIES

Context of the Speech and Message			
Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
Relator's identity and personality History of personal success Brand positioning	Narrative sequence Sociopolitical context	Channel used to broadcast the message Characteristics of the event and message where the speech is delivered.	Media reaction to the message Impact and replication of the message
Source: Developed by the authors.			

Trumpian Populism Analysis

In the following section, we review three of Donald Trump's speeches: the first one when he announced his run for president in 2015; the second after being exonerated from the first impeachment trial; the third after he refused to concede following his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. The following table was constructed using the publicly available transcript as published by *Time Magazine* (2015).

Table 2
DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (*PBS NEWSHOUR*, 2016)

Storytelling event: Donald Trump announces his run for president of the United States, Trump Tower, New York, June 16th, 2015			
Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
Donald Trump (DT hereinafter) presents himself as an outsider: "Well, you need somebody, because politicians are all talk, no action. Nothing's gonna get done. They will not bring us— believe me— to the promised land. They will not." Then he warns about the risks of healthcare: "Obamacare kicks in in 2016. Really big league.	DT descends the golden escalator at Trump Tower with his wife, displaying his economic success. Then he comments: "Our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time.	Every main media outlet covered the event; however, pundits did not take him seriously from the start. Trump frames his candidacy under traditional conservative objectives: "We have people that aren't working. We have people that have no incentive to work. But they're going to have incentive to work, because the greatest social program is a job.	Due to the inflammatory remarks, the video went viral. Such statements include the following: "When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friends, believe me. But they're killing us economically." "It's true, and these are the best and the finest.

Table 2
DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES (*PBS NEWSHOUR*, 2016)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
It is going to be amazingly destructive. Doctors are quitting. I have a friend who's a doctor, and he said to me the other day: Donald, I never saw anything like it. I have more accountants than I have nurses. It's a disaster. My patients are beside themselves. They had a plan that was good. They have no plan now." Trump underscores his role as an outsider: "So I've watched the politicians. I've dealt with them all my life. If you can't make a good deal with a politician, then there's something wrong with you. You're certainly not very good. And that's what we have representing us. They will never make America great again. They don't even have a chance. They're controlled fully— they're controlled fully by the lobbyists, by the donors, and by the special interests, fully." "Now, our country needs— our country needs a truly great leader, and we need a truly great leader now.	All the time." "The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems." "Iran is going to take over the Middle East, Iran and somebody else will get the oil, and it turned out that Iran is now taking over Iraq. Think of it. Iran is taking over Iraq, and they're taking i≠t over the big league." "We spent $2 trillion in Iraq, $2 trillion. We lost thousands of lives, thousands in Iraq. We have wounded soldiers, who I love, I love — they're great — all over the place, thousands and thousands of wounded soldiers. And we have nothing. We can't even go there. We have nothing. And every time we give Iraq equipment, the first time a bullet goes off in the air, they leave it." "Our enemies are getting stronger and stronger by the way, and we as a country are getting weaker. Even our nuclear arsenal doesn't work." Trump then points out what the country requires: "I'm a free trader. But the problem with free trade is you need really talented people to negotiate for you.	And they'll be proud, and they'll love it, and they'll make much more than they would've ever made, and they'll be— they'll be doing so well, and we're going to be thriving as a country, thriving. It can happen. I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created. I tell you that. I'll bring back our jobs from China, from Mexico, from Japan, from so many places. I'll bring back our jobs, and I'll bring back our money." Trump presents the current political leadership as useless: "How stupid are our leaders? How stupid are these politicians to allow this to happen? How stupid are they? I am going to tell you." At that moment, a woman screams: "We need you!" Then, Trump continues: "Thank you. I'm going to tell you a couple of stories about trade, because I'm totally against the trade bill for a number of reasons." "Take a look at the deal he's making with Iran. He makes that deal; Israel maybe won't exist very long. It's a disaster, and we have to protect Israel."	When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best." Then, Trump uses xenophobic language to make his case: "They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably— probably— from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop, and it's got to stop fast." Trump moves on to another point heavily used by the right: "Islamic terrorism is eating up large portions of the Middle East. They've become rich. I'm in competition with them."

Table 2
DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (*PBS NEWSHOUR*, 2016)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
We need a leader that wrote 'The Art of the Deal'. We need a leader that can bring back our jobs, can bring back our manufacturing, can bring back our military, can take care of our vets. Our vets have been abandoned. And we also need a cheerleader." "We need somebody that can take the brand of the United States and make it great again. It's not great again. We need— we need somebody that literally will take this country and make it great again. We can do that." Trump then moves to talk about his motives and personal wealth: "I'm using my own money. I'm not using the lobbyists. I'm not using donors. I don't care. I'm really rich. And by the way, I'm not even saying that's the kind of mindset, that's the kind of thinking you need for this country." "There is so much wealth out there that can make our country so rich again, and therefore make it great again. Because we need money. We're dying. We're dying.	If you don't have talented people, if you don't have great leadership, if you don't have people that know business, not just a political hack that got the job because he contributed to a campaign, which is the way all jobs, just about, are gotten, free trade is terrible." Trump comments on his vision for the economy: "We have $18 trillion in debt. We got nothing but problems. We got a military that needs equipment all over the place. We got nuclear weapons that are obsolete. We've got nothing. We've got Social Security that's going to be destroyed if somebody like me doesn't bring money into the country. All these other people want to cut the hell out of it. I'm not going to cut it at all; I'm going to bring money in, and we're going to save it." "This is going to be an election that's based on competence, because people are tired of these nice people. And they're tired of being ripped off by everybody in the world." Trump talks about his personal wealth: "So I have a total net worth, and now with the increase, it'll be well-over $10 billion."	"Number one, the people negotiating don't have a clue. Our president doesn't have a clue. He's (Obama) a bad negotiator." Trump turns again to the economic relationship with Mexico: "So Mexico takes a company, a car company that was going to build in Tennessee, rips it out. Everybody thought the deal was dead. Reported it in *The Wall Street Journal* recently. Everybody thought it was a done deal. It's going in and that's going to be it, going into Tennessee. Great state, great people. All of a sudden, at the last moment, this big car manufacturer, foreign, announces they're not going to Tennessee. They're going to spend their $1 billion in Mexico instead. Not good." Trump framed his run as a service to the country at his expense as he was giving up his privileged life: "Well, Donald will never run, and one of the main reasons is he's private and he's probably not as successful as everybody thinks.	The video goes viral in electronic media and reaches the international press due to these racist statements. PBS NewsHour releases the full speech video and it reaches 700,000 views on YouTube. Trump moves on to the relationship with China: "They are ripping us. We are rebuilding China. We're rebuilding many countries. China, you go there now, roads, bridges, schools, you never saw anything like it. They have bridges that make the George Washington Bridge look like small potatoes. And they're all over the place." Trump turns to domestic politics: "We've got nothing. We've got Social Security that's going to be destroyed if somebody like me doesn't bring money into the country. All these other people want to cut the hell out of it. I'm not going to cut it at all; I'm going to bring money in, and we're going to save it."

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DONALD TRUMP ANNOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES (*PBS NEWSHOUR*, 2016)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
We need money. We have to do it. And we need the right people." Trump presents himself as a business genius: "I started off in a small office with my father in Brooklyn and Queens, and my father said — and I love my father. I learned so much. He was a great negotiator. But he used to say, 'Donald, don't go into Manhattan. That's the big leagues. We don't know anything about that. Don't do it.' I said, 'I gotta go into Manhattan. I gotta build those big buildings. I gotta do it, Dad. I've gotta do it.'" Trump promises a tougher approach on immigration: "I will immediately terminate President Obama's illegal executive order on immigration, immediately." Trump then finishes with a point favorite to white conservatives: "Fully support and back up the Second Amendment."	Trump touches on one of the country's foes: "Nobody would be tougher on ISIS than Donald Trump. Nobody. I will find the guy that's going to take that military and make it really work. Nobody, nobody will be pushing us around. I will stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons." Finally, Trump comments of his vision of America's infrastructure: "You look at these airports, we are like a third-world country. And I come in from China and I come in from Qatar and I come in from different places, and they have the most incredible airports in the world. You come back to this country and you have *lax*, disaster."	So, I said to myself, you know, nobody's ever going to know unless I run, because I'm really proud of my success. I really am. I've employed— I've employed tens of thousands of people over my lifetime. That means medical. That means education. That means everything." Trump finishes with how his profile as a "builder" will improve the country: "Rebuild the country's infrastructure. Nobody can do that like me. Believe me. It will be done on time, on budget, way below cost, way below what anyone ever thought. I look at the roads being built all over the country, and I say I can build those things for one-third. What they do is unbelievable, how bad." Trump speaks of his role in improving the life of people of color: "Together, we are building the world's most prosperous and inclusive society. We are lifting up citizens of every race, color, religion, and creed. We are bringing hope to forgotten communities, and more Americans are working today."	"But we're becoming a third world country, because of our infrastructure, our airports, our roads, everything." Speaking of his competition: "We have losers. We have people that don't have it. We have people that are morally corrupt. We have people that are selling this country down the drain." Next, Trump touched on one of the key points of his administration: "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall." By the end of his speech, he clearly paints the picture for the following four years: "Sadly, the American dream is dead. But if I get elected president, I will bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and we will make America great again."

Table 3
NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST AND PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECHES AFTER SENATE ACQUITTAL FROM IMPEACHMENT (FOX BUSINESS, 2020)

Storytelling event: Trump attends the National Prayer Breakfast and gives a press conference in Washington, D.C., on February 6th, 2020. The 45th President speaks about his impeachment acquittal in the Senate and how the establishment is seeking to destroy him, due to his efforts to weed out corruption within the political class. He presents himself as the one true savior of his country. The following table was constructed using the publicly available transcript published in Rev.com (Rev.com, 2020).

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
Trump begins by reiterating his efforts for the country: "I am working very hard for you; I will tell you. And sometimes you don't make it easy, and I certainly don't make it easy on you. I will continue that tradition." Trump mentions the existence of allies and enemies, sounding particularly paranoid: "That's all I get to meet anymore. That and the enemies and the allies, and we have them all. We have allies, we have enemies. Sometimes the allies are enemies, but we just don't know it. But we're changing all that." Trump mentions how the American people are clearly satisfied with his administration: "According to the latest Gallup poll that just came out a little while ago, a few minutes ago, American satisfaction is at the highest level ever recorded. Can you imagine? And that's from Gallup, no friend of mine. 90% of Americans say they are satisfied with their personal lives.	Trump speaks about the implications of his impeachment: "As everybody knows, my family, our great country and your President, have been put through a terrible ordeal by some very dishonest and corrupt people. They have done everything possible to destroy us. And by doing so, very badly hurt our nation. They know what they are doing is wrong, but they put themselves far ahead of our great country." "Weeks ago, and again, yesterday, courageous Republican politicians and leaders had the wisdom, fortitude and strength to do what everyone knows was right." Trump speaks of religious freedom while addressing his base: "In America, we don't punish prayer. We don't tear down crosses. We don't band symbols of faith. We don't muzzle preachers. We don't muzzle pastors. In America, we celebrate faith. We cherish religion.	Trump frames his administration as the best in history: "We've made tremendous progress, tremendous progress. You know what we've done. I don't think anybody's done more than all of us together during these last three years, and it's been my honor." Trump continuously advertises his administration's performance while adding a touch of religiosity to his message: "Everyone here today is united by your shared conviction. We know that our nation is stronger, our future is brighter, and our joy is greater when we turn to God and ask him to shed his grace on our lives. On Tuesday, I addressed Congress on the State of the Union and the great American comeback. That's what it is. Our country has never done better than it is doing right now. Our economy is the strongest it has ever been."	Trump uses his speech to attack Nancy Pelosi first, democratic majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, who was present in the audience: "I don't like people who use their faith as justification for doing what they know is wrong. Nor do I like people who say I pray for you, when they know that that's not so." Every media outlet covers this speech, specially focusing on Trump turning to the offensive after being acquitted by the Senate in the impeachment trial. Trump was accused of exerting pressure on a foreign power in exchange for political information and support. The 45th president touches on the son of Joe Biden about alleged corruption claims: "I probably have a legal obligation, Mr. Attorney, to report corruption, but they don't think it's corrupt when a son that made no money, that got thrown out of the military, that had no money at all is working

Table 3
NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST AND PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECHES AFTER SENATE ACQUITTAL FROM IMPEACHMENT (FOX BUSINESS, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
How about that, isn't that something?" Trump underscores his pro-life conservative agenda: "We are upholding the sanctity of life, sanctity of life. And we are doing that like nobody has ever done it before from this position. You better get out and vote on November 3rd, because you have a lot of people out there that aren't liking what we're doing." Trump speaks about the legal system's reform: "We passed criminal justice reform into law, and I signed it nine months ago. And it's proving more and more that America is indeed a nation that believes in redemption. What's happened with prisoners is a miracle. Prisoners would come out; nobody would give them a job. And oftentimes, most of the time, almost all of the time, they'd go back into prison." Trump then focuses on his impeachment trial: "When they impeach you for nothing, then you're supposed to like them. It's not easy, folks. I will do my best. But I'll tell you what we are doing. We're restoring hope and spreading faith.	We lift our voices in prayer, and we raise our sights to the glory of God." "I have taken historic action to defend religious liberty, including the constitutional right to pray in public schools." Following up on his promise of being the jobs' president, Trump states the following: "160 million, a little bit short, just a little bit. 160 million, we've never been even closer than ever before. Think of it. More Americans are working today, almost 160 million than ever before. Our unemployment numbers are the best in the history of our country." "African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American… The best unemploy-ment numbers in the history of our country. Women, best in 71 years. Sorry, we'll have you there soon. Soon it will be assured. I have to apologize to the women, it's only 71 years. But we have the best unemployment numbers, we have." Trump takes credit for the stock market performance, even before he took office:	Trump compares himself to George Washington: "In the bitter cold of Valley Forge, Washington and his men had no food, no supplies, and very little chance of victory. Reminded me a little bit of 2016, we had very little chance of victory, except for the people in this room and some others believed we were going to win. I believed we were going to win. But what they did was have an unwavering belief that God was with them. I believed that too." Trump casually mentions interventionism in Latin American affairs: "In Venezuela, the dictator, Maduro, has arrested church leaders. At the State of the Union, I was honored to host the true and legitimate president of Venezuela, Juan Guaidó. Good man. I told him that all Americans stand with the Venezuelan people in their righteous struggle for freedom." Trump mentions firing the former head of the FBI and accuses him as follows:	for $3 million up front, 83,000 a month, and that's only Ukraine. Then goes to China, picks up $1.5 billion dollars." Trump uses his speech in front of religious leaders to speak about the revival of the nation's spirit: "As we revive our economy, we are also renewing our national spirit. Today, we proudly proclaim that faith is alive and well and thriving in America, and we're going to keep it that way. Nobody will have it changed. It won't happen. As long as I'm here, it will never ever happen. Something which wasn't done nearly enough, I could almost say wasn't done at all. We are standing up for persecuted Christians and religious minorities all around the world like nobody has ever done." "Faith keeps us free. Prayer makes us strong, and God alone is the author of life and the giver of grace." "Religion in this country and religion all over the world, certain religions in particular, are under siege. We won't let that happen. We are going to protect our religions."

Table 3
NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST AND PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECHES
AFTER SENATE ACQUITTAL FROM IMPEACHMENT (FOX BUSINESS, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
We're helping citizens of every background take part in the great rebuilding of our nation". Trump speaks of his perception of the impeachment: "We went through hell unfairly, did nothing wrong, did nothing wrong. I've done things wrong in my life, I will admit. Not purposely, but I've done things wrong. But this is what the end result is." Trump then personally attacks the Representative in charge of arguing the case for impeachment: "They made up facts. A corrupt politician named Adam Schiff made up my statement to the Ukrainian president. He brought it out of thin air, just made it up. They say he's a screenwriter, a failed screenwriter." Trump presents himself as kingmaker in the GOP: "Can you imagine, I'm interviewing people for the United States Senate. This is what I do. Where have I gone? But I love it. I love it because we're getting great people." Trump presents his conclusion of the first impeachment trial: "They took a phone call that was a totally appropriate call…	"Let me tell you, if we didn't win, the stock market would have crashed, and the market was going up a lot before the election because it was looking like we had a good chance to win, and then went up tremendously from the time we won the election until the time we took office, which was November 8th of January 20th. That's our credit." Even after four years, Trump still spoke of the 2016 election result: "We did win. It was one of the greatest wins of all time." Trump acknowledges the support from the Republican Senate Majority leader in the trial: "Mitch McConnell, I want to tell you, you did a fantastic job. Somebody said, 'Mitch is quiet,' and I said, 'He's not quiet. He's not quiet, but he doesn't want people to know him.'" Trump uses his speech to comment on Democrats: "They want to raise taxes, so they have open borders, sanctuary cities, raise everybody's taxes. Get rid of everybody's health care." Trump also commented on the U.S. role in NATO:	"Had I not fired James Comey, who was a disaster by the way, it's possible I wouldn't even be standing here right now. We caught him in the act. Dirty cops, bad people." Trump comments on the Mueller Report: "We were treated unbelievably unfairly. You have to understand, we first went through Russia, Russia, Russia. It was all bullshit. We then went through The Mueller Report, and they should have come back one day later. They didn't. They came back two years later after lives were ruined, after people went bankrupt, after people lost all their money." Trump comments on how the Republican Majority leader helped him reconfigure the makeup of the legal branch: "This guy is great, and I appreciate it. Mitch, and he's also given us 191 now, 191 federal judges, two Supreme Court judges. We're up to 191. Great guy." Trump frames the opposition as follows: "These people are vicious.	Trump turns to being attacked by the establishment: "…we had the witch hunt. It started from the day we came down the elevator, myself and our future first lady who's with us right now." "And it never really stopped. We'd been going through this now for over three years. It was evil. It was corrupt. It was dirty cops. It was leakers and liars. And this should never ever happen to another president, ever. I don't know that other presidents would have been able to take it. Some people said no, they wouldn't have." Trump judges to be the most persecuted President in U.S. history: "We had a rough campaign. It was nasty. It was one of the nastiest, they say." "It was a nasty both in the primaries and in the election, but you see, we thought after the election would stop, but it didn't stop. It just started, and tremendous corruption." Trump closes the speech by insisting on what the Democrats want for the country:

Table 3
NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST AND PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECHES
AFTER SENATE ACQUITTAL FROM IMPEACHMENT (FOX BUSINESS, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
I call it a perfect call because it was… and they brought me to the final stages of impeach-ment, but now we have that gorgeous word. I never thought a word would sound so good. It's called total acquittal."	"I said, asked a question, 'How much is Germany paying? Why isn't Germany paying? Why is the United States always the sucker?' Because we're a bunch of suckers."	Adam Schiff is a vicious, horrible person. Nancy Pelosi is a horrible person, and she wanted to impeach a long time ago."	"They'll do whatever they can because instead of wanting to heal our country and fix our country, all they want to do, in my opinion, it's almost like they want to destroy our country. We can't let it happen."

Source: Developed by the authors (Fox Business, 2020).

Table 4
PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES THE RESULTS
OF THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (REV.COM, 2020)

Storytelling event: On December 2nd 2020, after the election results were announced, Donald Trump addressed the nation claiming there had been an election fraud of historical proportions. The speech was broadcasted from his personal Facebook page as none of the major media outlets transmitted the message in its entirety

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
Trump begins his speech by expressing this would be the most important speech of his life: "This may be the most important speech I've ever made. I want to provide an update on our ongoing efforts to expose the tremendous voter fraud and irregu-larities which took place during the ridiculously long November 3rd elections." Trump announces he will contest the result of the election:	First, Trump speaks of the context and the validity of the 2020 election: "We used to have what was called, election day. Now we have election days, weeks, and months, and lots of bad things happened during this ridiculous period of time, especially when you have to prove almost nothing to exercise our greatest privilege, the right to vote."	Trump frames this speech not as a personal matter, but one based on his constitutional mandate: "As President, I have no higher duty than to defend the laws and the Constitution of the United States. That is why I am determined to protect our election system, which is now under coordinated assault and siege." Trump accepts the validity of every vote he received but questions any vote cast for Biden:	In his initial remarks, Trump attacks his rival, Joe Biden, who refused to do in-person campaign rallies due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and correlates this to the election being fraudulent as Trump did carry out numerous massive rallies throughout the U.S.: "For months, leading up to the Presidential election, we were warned that we should not declare a premature victory.

Table 4
PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES THE RESULTS
OF THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (REV.COM, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
"Today I will detail some of the shocking irregularities, abuses and fraud that had been revealed in recent weeks but before laying out just a small portion of the evidence we have uncovered, and we have so much evidence, I want to explain the corrupt mail-in balloting scheme that Democrats systematically put into place that allowed voting to be altered, especially in swing states, which they had to win." Without substantial proof, Trump questions the integrity of mail-in ballots: "This colossal expansion of mail-in voting opened the flood gates to massive fraud. It's a widely known fact that the voting rolls are packed with people who are not lawfully eligible to vote, including those who are deceased, have moved out of their state, and even non-citizens of our country." Trump puts in jeopardy the peaceful transition of power, a paragon of American democracy: "If we are right about the fraud, Joe Biden can't be president. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of votes.	"Within days after the election, we witnessed an orchestrated effort to anoint the winner even while many key states were still being counted." Trump indicates election fraud is common in the U.S.: "While it has long been understood that the Democrat political machine engages in voter fraud from Detroit to Philadelphia, to Milwaukee, Atlanta, and so many other places. What changed this year was the Democratic party's relentless push to print and mail out tens of millions of ballots sent to unknown recipients with virtually no safeguards of any kind. This allowed fraud and abuse to occur in a scale never seen before." "In Wisconsin, the state's Board of Elections could not confirm the residency of more than 100,000 people, but repeatedly refused to remove those names from its voter rolls before the election. They were illegal voters." Trump insists on this point: "In other words, they went in to vote and they were told that they voted, and they didn't vote. They left and they felt horror and they lost respect for our system.	"The constitutional process must be allowed to continue. We're going to defend the honesty of the vote by ensuring that every legal ballot is counted and that no illegal ballot is counted. This is not just about honoring the votes of 74 million Americans who voted for me, it's about ensuring that Americans can have faith in this election and in all future elections." Trump denounces the results in the states he lost: "Many states, such as Nevada and California sent millions of live ballots to every person on their voter rolls whether those individuals had requested ballots or not, whether they were dead or alive, they got ballots. Other states such as Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin, instituted universal absentee balloting right in the middle of an election year, sending absentee ballot requests forms to all voters on all rolls. It didn't matter who they were." Trump argues that the company that makes political machines favored democrats:	We were told repeatedly that it would take weeks, if not months, to determine the winner, to count the absentee ballots and to verify the results. My opponent was told to stay away from the election, don't campaign. 'We don't need you. We've got it. This election is done.' In fact, they were acting like they already knew what the outcome was going to be." In the midst of the pandemic, Trump uses it as part of his argument, as repeated in conservative news outlets: "Using the pandemic as a pretext, Democrat politicians and judges drastically changed election procedures just months, and in some cases, weeks before the election on the 3rd of November." Trump questions the validity of the election as a whole: "We have in all swing states major infractions or outright fraud, which is far more in numbers or votes then we need to overturn the results of a state.

Table 4
PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES THE RESULTS
OF THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (REV.COM, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
We're talking about numbers like nobody has ever seen before." Trump presents himself as the great leader of the GOP: "Under my lead, the Republicans won almost every state house in the United States, which they weren't expected to do. We went up to 16 seats in the house. The numbers are still being tabulated, because there are nine seats that nobody really knows." After contesting the election in Georgia, Trump provides his take on the recount: "They found thousands and thousands of votes that were out of whack, all against me. This was during a recount that I didn't even think mattered. They found many thousands of votes, and that recount didn't matter. The one that matters is the one that's going on now, that because of the fact it's so close, they had to by law give another recount, but the recount has to be a recount where they check the signatures. Otherwise, they're just checking the same dishonest thing. It won't matter." Trump reminds his audience of the amount of support he has:	This happened tens of thousands of times all over the country." Trump aspires to provide evidence for his claim: "It is statistically impossible that the person, me, that led the charge lost. The greatest pollsters, the real pollsters, not the ones that had us down 17 points in Wisconsin when we actually won." "Pollsters that are fair, and honest said, 'We can't understand a thing like this. It's never happened before. You led the country to victory, and you were the only one that was lost. It's not possible.'" Trump makes these remarks pairing the COVID-19 pandemic with Democrats: "The Democrats had this election rigged right from the beginning. They used the pandemic, sometimes referred to as the China virus, where it originated as an excuse to mail out tens of millions of ballots, which ultimately led to a big part of the fraud, a fraud that the whole world is watching, and there is no one happier right now than China." Trump assesses what should happen in the context of these alleged irregularities:	"96% of the company's political donations went to Democrats, not surprisingly. Frankly, when you look at who's running the company, who's in charge, who owns it, which we don't know, where are the votes counted? Which we think are counted in foreign countries, not in the United States, Dominion is a disaster." "Detroit is corrupt. I have a lot of friends in Detroit. They know it, but Detroit is totally corrupt." Trump goes on to question the integrity of state officials running the elections. However, these governments were in fact, Republican: "In the recent recount in Georgia, which means nothing because they don't want to check signatures, and if you're not going to check signatures in Georgia, it doesn't work, but we have a secretary of state, and a governor who made it very difficult to check signatures." Having appointed three Supreme Court Justices, Trump expected the highest court to take up the case and turn the election in his favor:	In other words, in Wisconsin, as an example, where we were way up on election night, they ultimately had us miraculously losing by 20,000 votes." Trump denounces the voting machines as faulty; this would be a constant talking point in conservative outlets: "On top of everything else, we have a company that's very suspect. Its name is Dominion, with the turn of a dial or the change of a chip, you could press a button for Trump and the vote goes to Biden. What kind of a system is this? We have to go to paper, maybe it takes longer. But the only secure system is paper." This claim responds to Trump voters having cast their ballot physically on the day of the election. Trump would reiterate the same talking point on conservative media, one which called for the presidential election to be discarded: "Millions of votes were cast illegally in theswing states alone, and if that's the case, the results of the individual swing states must be overturned and overturned immediately.

Table 4
PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES THE RESULTS
OF THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (REV.COM, 2020)
(continuation)

Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
"I just keep on going forward, because I'm representing 74 million people, and in fact, I'm also representing all of the people that didn't vote for me. The mail-in voting scam is the latest part of their four-year effort to overturn the results of the 2016 election, and it's been like living in hell." Trump presents his case arguing he wants to defend Republican votes: "Voters who submitted floored ballots in some Democrat precincts were notified and asked to fix their ballots, while Republican precincts, and in particular Republican voters, were not so notified which plainly violates the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution." "This election is about great voter fraud, fraud that has never been seen like this before. It's about poll watchers who were not allowed to watch. So illegal. It's about ballots that poured in, and nobody but a few knew where they came from." "This is about restoring faith and confidence in American elections." Trump concludes as follows: "If we don't root out the fraud,	"Maybe you'll have a revote, but I don't think that's appropriate. When those votes are corrupt, when they're irregular, when they get caught, they're terminated, and I very easily win. In all states, I very easily win the swing states, just like I won them at 10 o'clock in the evening, the evening of the election." Trump continues to rally his political base, which would in the end provoke the storming of the US Capitol on January 6th 2021: "All over the country, people are together in holding up signs, 'Stop the steal.' To understand how we will challenge this fraud, it is important to know the problems with mail-in balloting. Pennsylvania, Michigan, Nevada, Georgia, Arizona, and most other states allowed anyone to get an absentee ballot and cast their vote without showing any ID." Trump continues detailing examples of voter fraud: "She was also told to illegally backdate ballots, many, many ballots, received after the deadline. This is something that is so unconstitutional, and she estimates that thousands and thousands of ballots were improperly backdated by her and many others."	"The Supreme Court of the United States will see it, and respectfully, hopefully, they will do what's right for our country, because our country cannot live with this kind of an election. We could say, let's go on to the next one, but no, we have to look also at our past. We can't let this happen." Trump establishes he is not being persecuted, but rather it is the American people they are attacking: "They want to take not me, but us down. Then we can never let them do that. Everything has been looked at. A friend of mine, who's very smart, said, 'You've probably seen more than anybody else. You've probably been investigated more than anybody else.'" Trump frames his opponents as follows: "Dramatically eroding the integrity of our elections was the Democrats number one priority for a simple reason, they wanted to steal the 2020 presidential election. All of the Democrat efforts to expand mail-in balloting laid the groundwork for the systematic and pervasive fraud that occurred in this election."	Some people say that's too far out, that's too harsh. Well, does that mean we take a precedent, and we've just elected a president where the votes were fraudulent? No, it means you have to turn over the election." Trump tries to argue his case based on his acquittal from the Mueller investigation and his support from Republican senators: "There was no collusion in the end, none whatsoever. Senator Marco Rubio, the head of the Senate Intelligence Committee stated, 'The committee found no evidence that then-candidate Donald Trump, or his campaign colluded with the Russian government.' And I thank Senator Rubio for that statement." The Republican Party has made moves to increase barriers to voting, given that they have lost the popular vote in every presidential election since 2004: "Throughout the Democrat effort to dramatically expand mail-in voting, the Democrat party leaders were also, feverishly working to block measures, designed to protect against fraud,

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Table 4			
PRESIDENT TRUMP ADDRESSES THE RESULTS OF THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (REV.COM, 2020) (continuation)			
Storyline	Timing	Framing	Networking
the tremendous and horrible fraud that's taken place in our 2020 election, we don't have a country anymore. With the resolve and support of the American people, we will restore honesty and integrity to our elections. We will restore trust in our system of government."	"It was about many other things, but above all, it was about fraud. This election was rigged. Everybody knows it. I don't mind if I lose an election, but I want to lose an election fair and square."	"In swing state after swing state, the number of ballots rejected has been dramatically lower than what would have been expected based on prior experience. That means years and years of voting." "This is about our democracy and the sacred rights that generations of Americans have fought, bled, and died to secure."	such as signature verification, residency verification, or voter ID." "The only conceivable reason why you would block common sense measures to verify legal eligibility for voting, is you are trying to encourage, enable, solicit, or carry out fraud." "What I don't want to do is have it stolen from the American people. That's what we're fighting for. We already have the proof. We already have the evidence, and it's very clear."
Source: Developed by the authors.			

Concluding Remarks

As we first established, building a modern, solid democracy requires an energetic, yet peaceful confrontation of ideas to develop any functioning government. Factual debate and ideological diversity allow for the construction of a more representative and accountable system of government. However, as presented in this article, a chaotic media strategy, fueled by daily scandal, extreme political polarization and a relentless cult to personality, allowed Donald J. Trump to become the 45th President of the United States of America. During his time in office, Trump developed a particular style of political communication, filled with popular symbols, and nationalistic rhetoric which successfully created a highly energetic and mobile political base. Nevertheless, he further extended the divide between conservatives and progressives, republicans and democrats, by appealing to the WASP demographic majority in the United States.

Trump was extremely successful in capturing not only the vote but also the full support of millions of Americans, many of them from rural, impoverished areas,

who were hit hardest by the neoliberal economy and globalization. Trump spoke in classical populist terms to those forgotten by the government, who felt left behind, giving them the promise of a cause larger than themselves and a massive political movement. Trump gave hope to people who feel they are losing their country, and was able to capture and control one of the two main political parties in the United States.

Trump normalized breaking the law and using racist, xenophobic language, while being permanently immersed in scandal, thus causing severe damage to the social fabric of the United States. Donald Trump was the first U.S. President to be impeached twice, yet acquitted both times by a Republican-controlled Senate. His defeat in the 2020 Presidential election puts a halt to his time in power, but his influence has undoubtedly continued. During his administration, Trump appointed more than 234 federal judges, including three Supreme Court Justices. His legacy in shaping the nation's judicial system and polarized sociopolitical arena will be felt for generations to come.

Notwithstanding Trump losing the election, he obtained more than 74 million votes, the second-largest in any Presidential election. Hence, Trump will have a more profound legacy as he has jeopardized the confidence in the United States electoral system. To this day, millions of Americans feel the election was rigged, that Trump was robbed, and believe democratic institutions are a hoax. President Joseph R. Biden has many challenges ahead but rebuilding trust in the institutions of government will have to come first to save the immediate future of the United States of America.

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