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„Trumpism: A Study of Contemporary Right-Wing Popu-
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ca Great Again to Storming it's Capitol “

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ABSTRACT

There is considerable research on the global rise in Populism, due to the fact that it is one of the most significant challenges to liberal democracy that the international community faces today. The prominence of this phenomenon on both sides of the political spectrum has continued to increase throughout the world over the course of the last few decades. Nonetheless, this study aims to examine an area that remains underexplored: the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide that is inherent to Populism. National collective narcissism refers to the lack of recognition of a perceived in-group’s exceptional qualities that is created linguistically by political leaders. The method of research is a discourse analysis by way of frame theory of six speeches presented to the entire United States population at-large throughout the term of Donald J. Trump’s 45th U.S.-Presidency. The specific frames analyzed correlate to linguistic utterances of national collective narcissism and politics of insecurity made by the former President. Due to the core of the research question relating to contemporary Populism in the United States of America, the work is largely focused on right-wing Populism and its intersection with political discourse. This said, the overall subject of Populism on both sides of the political spectrum is deeply examined throughout the study as well, along with the concepts of identity politics, status anxiety, and the heartland theory. Key research findings point out that former President Trump used national collective narcissism in an attempt to linguistically create his perceived in-group of the U.S.-American ‘people,’ which played a central role in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide in his political discourse throughout his Presidency. Furthermore, Mr. Trump relied heavily on the concept of politics of insecurity in order to make his collectively narcissistic claims appear more threatening to U.S. citizens. The results highlight the overall dangers of national collective narcissism and politics of insecurity when used effectively by Populist actors. Given that the creation of the ‘us-them/people-elite’ divide is such a foundational component of Populism in general, this study is essential in analyzing a very important aspect of a major political phenomenon that the world collectively faces today.

Keywords: National Collective Narcissism, Politics of Insecurity, Identity Politics, Status Anxiety, Heartland Theory, Frame Theory, Discourse Theory, Donald Trump, Populism, Discourse Analysis

ABSTRACT (GERMAN)

Der globale Anstieg des Populismus ist eine der bedeutendsten Herausforderungen für die liberale Demokratie. Es gibt beträchtliche Forschungen über den globalen Anstieg des Populismus, da er eine der bedeutendsten Herausforderungen für die liberale Demokratie darstellt, mit der die internationale Gemeinschaft heute konfrontiert ist. Die Prominenz dieses Phänomens auf beiden Seiten des politischen Spektrums hat im Laufe der letzten Jahrzehnte weltweit weiter zugenommen. Nichtsdestotrotz zielt diese Studie darauf ab, einen Bereich zu untersuchen, der noch nicht ausreichend erforscht ist: die Rolle des nationalen kollektiven Narzissmus bei der Konstruktion der dem Populismus innewohnenden "Volk-Elite"-Kluft. Nationaler kollektiver Narzissmus bezieht sich auf die fehlende Anerkennung der außergewöhnlichen Qualitäten einer wahrgenommenen Ingroup, die von politischen Führern sprachlich erzeugt wird. Die Forschungsmethode ist eine Diskursanalyse mittels Frametheorie von sechs Reden, die während der 45. US-Präsidentschaft von Donald J. Trump vor der gesamten Bevölkerung der Vereinigten Staaten gehalten wurden. Die analysierten spezifischen Frames korrelieren mit sprachlichen Äußerungen des ehemaligen Präsidenten, die von nationalem kollektivem Narzissmus und einer Politik der Unsicherheit geprägt sind. Aufgrund des Kerns der Forschungsfrage, die sich auf den zeitgenössischen Populismus in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika bezieht, konzentriert sich die Arbeit weitgehend auf den Rechtspopulismus und seine Schnittmenge mit dem politischen Diskurs. Dennoch wird das Gesamtthema des Populismus auf beiden Seiten des politischen Spektrums in der Studie eingehend untersucht, zusammen mit den Konzepten der Identitätspolitik, der Statusangst und der Heartland-Theorie. Die wichtigsten Forschungsergebnisse weisen darauf hin, dass der ehemalige Präsident Trump den nationalen kollektiven Narzissmus nutzte, um seine wahrgenommene Ingroup des US-amerikanischen "Volkes" sprachlich zu erschaffen, was eine zentrale Rolle bei der Konstruktion der "Volk-Elite"-Spaltung in seinem politischen Diskurs spielte. Darüber hinaus stützte sich Präsident Trump stark auf das Konzept der Politik der Unsicherheit, um seine kollektiv narzisstischen Ansprüche für die US-Bürger bedrohlicher erscheinen zu lassen. Die Ergebnisse unterstreichen die allgemeinen Gefahren des nationalen kollektiven Narzissmus und der Politik der Unsicherheit, wenn sie von populistischen Akteuren effektiv genutzt werden. In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Schaffung der "wir-sie/Volk-Elite"-Spaltung ein so grundlegender Bestandteil des Populismus im Allgemeinen ist, ist diese Studie von wesentlicher Bedeutung für

die Analyse eines bedeutenden Aspekts des großen politischen Phänomens, dem sich die Welt heute kollektiv gegenüber sieht.

Stichworte: Nationaler kollektiver Narzissmus, Politik der Unsicherheit, Identitätspolitik, Statusangst, Heartland Theory, Frame Theory, Diskurstheorie, Donald Trump, Populismus, Diskursanalyse

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On my honor as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature is highly stylized and cursive, appearing to read 'M. A. Pittner'.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global rise in Populism over the course of the last decade is one of the most heavily discussed topics amongst scholars of both Political Science and International Relations alike. Populism can arise on both sides of the political spectrum, each of which being inherently dangerous. Regardless of whether they arise from the Left or the Right, Populist leaders and their techniques have become the largest threat to liberal democracy faced by the international community today. A large reason for this danger has to do with the divide that is constructed between the “elite” and the “people;” this is to say: Populism, regardless from which side of the political spectrum it arises, inherently splits domestic populations into two supposedly homogenous groups. This divide is constructed largely through discursive practices of Populist leaders, and although the factors on which leaders choose to construct this split differ largely due to their domestic circumstances, the overall result is the same in each instance. Given that the base of Populist thought is rooted in democratic principles, this makes combating against it in liberal democratic nations particularly challenging. Furthermore, as a result of the lack of one unequivocal definition of the term, often times pinpointing Populist rhetoric is a very ambiguous process. Although the basic principles of Populism are largely agreed upon, further academic research is necessary in order to continue to formulate a more robust and concrete understanding of the term and what exactly it entails. Moreover, continued studies in how Populism takes action through the conduit of Populist leaders and what effects this has on particular societies are of particular importance. Only by persistently expanding upon these topics can we as an international community learn new ways to fight against Populism and all of the dangers brought along with it.

As previously mentioned, Populism arises on both sides of the political spectrum; thus, it is important to justify that my thesis will be focused on the recent rise of right-wing Populism and what I will refer to as “Trumpism” in the United States of America, and, more specifically, why it is important to analyze the construction of the aforementioned divide in U.S.-American society. As opposed to studying the objective definition of Populism, I will rather focus specifically on the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide in former President Donald Trump’s political discourse. Focusing on the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of this divide naturally leads to many subsequent questions as well. Given that national collective narcissism takes on the form of the independent

variable in my research question, I will first define it in a general sense, and then a U.S.-American sense as well. I will also do the same for my dependent variable: the construction of the 'people-elite' divide. Seeing that the global rise of Populism is the overarching theme of my research, I will also elaborate on the varying definitions of Populism, as well as how they play out in action. Other questions that arise from the scope of my research have to do with the notion of political discourse and all that it entails. The concepts of identity politics, heartland theory, status anxiety and politics of insecurity will all be heavily discussed throughout my thesis as well. Each of these concepts are particularly important to analyze because they all complexly intertwine throughout former President Donald Trump's political discourse to create a major divide in a nation that prides themselves as the oldest continuous liberal democracy in the world. Given that Populism poses such a threat to liberal democracy, it is therefore exceedingly critical to analyze how such a phenomenon was able to be carried out so effectively by former President Trump, and subsequently how it has overtaken the everyday lives of most U.S.-Americans as well.

Key findings of my research will point out that former President Donald Trump used national collective narcissism and politics of insecurity in order to pit the 'people' against the established political 'elite.' Mr. Trump created the 'people' by using identity politics and understanding the importance of an individual's need to feel secure; that is to say, he used the frame of the perceived notion that U.S.-Americans' inherently feel superior to other nations. In using this frame, he attempted to portray, discursively, that the status of U.S.-American citizens was under threat in relation to other nations, and their superiority was no longer recognized internationally. According to the former President, this threat to their status came from a multitude of existential threats, both domestically and internationally; in other words, Mr. Trump did not only blame foreign threats, but also threats within the United States as well, a large deal of which, according to his utterances, were there because of bad policymaking decisions by those U.S.-American politicians who came before him. Subsequently, his blaming of perceived foreign threats was largely based on the established elite's inability to deal with them as well. Furthermore, through the frames of politics of insecurity and national collective narcissism, former President Trump claimed to be the only way in which the United States could retain its superior status in international politics. In his speeches, he constantly referred to the imagined communities of the United States of America and the 'American People,' without ever explicitly

defining what or who they were. Another key finding is that in playing on the perceived notion of U.S.-American national identity, Mr. Trump not only pitted the ‘people’ against the ‘elite,’ but also against anyone that did not fit into their imagined community of a true U.S.-American citizen. He did so by claiming that the corrupt elite was supporting policy that is taking away from ‘true Americans,’ which in turn led to even further domestic political polarization throughout his presidency as well.

The main goal of my research is to help others understand the dangers inherent in the global rise of Populism, and how it has become the central challenge to liberal democracy that the international community faces today. Furthermore, by highlighting the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide, I intend to examine a specific strategy of Populist actors that has not been widely discussed academically, with hopes to further identify ways to combat against the notion overall. Specifically, I aim to portray why this phenomenon’s occurrence in the United States is, due to it’s status throughout the international community, particularly important to analyze, and that although Donald Trump’s presidency has come to an end, it’s legacies are just a starting point. Although the United States of America may have welcomed a new Administration on January 20th, 2021, the more than 74 million U.S.-American citizens that voted for Donald Trump during his second campaign are still a prominent force throughout U.S. society that must be recognized. This is not to put every citizen who voted for Donald Trump into a specific box, but instead to point out that the hatred, fear-mongering, bigotry and lies that became commonplace throughout U.S.-American politics were not completely condemned by everyone involved, in fact quite the opposite. Just as the situation that Donald Trump and his political allies took advantage of did not appear out of nowhere in 2015, so too did it not disappear into nothingness as soon as Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. took the Oath of Office at noon on the 20th day of January, 2021.

In focusing on the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide, I intend to make a significant contribution to the scholarly debate surrounding Populism and all of its forms. I recognize that the fundamental issue with the current state of academic research is the lack of one universally agreed upon objective definition of the term itself, but I instead choose to focus on a definitive aspect of Populism: the creation of the ‘us-them/people-elite’ divide. I justify my decision because, although there is a lack of one concrete definition, the basic principles of Populism are largely agreed upon. I also aim to

highlight how dangerous political discourse can be, especially when it comes from the highest levels of government. We saw over the course of Donald Trump's presidency just how divided a nation can become, and we as academics must work to identify ways in which to combat against Populism in general, as well as against individuals amongst the highest levels of government using their positions of power in order to say whatever they please, regardless of whether or not it is true. An in-depth interdisciplinary case study of how former President Donald Trump constructed his version of the 'people-elite' divide in the United States with his political discourse is an avenue on which we can continue to expand upon various broader academic fields, all of which being immensely important. Only through persistent research can we as academics move forward in formulating ways to combat against the multiple dangers inherent to Populism and what they entail on both sides of the political spectrum, as well as hope to avoid it in the first place.

Research Question:

What role does national collective narcissism play in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide in former President Donald Trump's political discourse?

Independent Variable: National collective narcissism

Dependent Variable: Construction of the 'people-elite' divide

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Populism amongst academics is by no means new. Although the term itself had floated around much earlier, one of the first attempts to analyze Populism and its effects from an academic point of view was done by Ionescu and Gellner in 1969.¹ The two of them claim that Populism is very important to study, but point out that at the point in which they were writing, it was not clear what exactly it is. Gidron and Bonikowski make the argument that this is still the case today in their 2013 comprehensive study on the varieties of Populism, making the claim that "the challenge of defining populism is at least partially due to the fact that the term has

¹ Ionescu & Gellner, "Populism", 1.

been used to describe political movements, parties, ideologies, and leaders across geographical, historical, and ideological contexts.”² Many scholars have come up with varying definitions of the term, but the state of research today largely agrees upon three general definitions: Populism as a: political ideology, political style, or political strategy. These terms are illustrated in **Table 1** at the end of this section. Although there is not one exact definition, Mudde’s concept of two groups: “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”³ is an aspect of almost every definition. The confusion and lack of consensus is more along the lines of the means in which it is carried out and the factors apparent in order for the success of a Populist leader. The basic set of principles inherent to populism is agreed upon, however: the misrepresented demographic as the “us” versus the corrupt elite as the “them.”

Another commonly agreed upon factor of Populism amongst scholarly literature is that it is not a threat to democracy, but rather liberal democracy. This is the case because the base of Populist thought is rooted in democratic principles. It is how these democratic principles are altered to the interpretations of the Populist leader that leads to so much confusion and make it so dangerous. This inherent contradiction of Populism allows Populist leaders to openly advocate for authoritarian principles in democratic states. Balfour et al., who themselves are members of the Populism as an ideology cohort, explain Populism as a type of illiberal democracy.⁴ This term has often been used amongst scholars, and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary even decided to define his State as such.⁵ Globalization is also a main theme throughout the literature, but how to interpret its effects is another primary source of contention. A lot of arguments for the rise of Populism are based on economic factors, but there are various works proving that these are not the only circumstances that need to be taken into account, and I will take this stance as well, focusing more on the role of identity politics.

The major weaknesses amongst the existing literature relate to Populism in action. This is to say, the basic definitions and principles of the term are largely agreed upon, but the particular factors that allow for its success are still largely contested. Many scholars point out

² Gidron & Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism”, 3.

³ Mudde, “Populist Zeitgeist”, 543.

⁴ Balfour et al., “Europe’s Troublemakers”.

⁵ Körösiényi & Patkós, “Liberal and Illiberal Populism”.

the same factors but interpret them a different way. I believe this is a major shortcoming of the current state of research because one factor can be brought forth and various scholars can interpret it and how it affects Populism in a completely different manner. This is apparent in the different theories on the role of globalization in the rise of Populism, for instance. Scholars such as Margalit⁶ and Roubini⁷ both claim that globalization has created “losers,” but Roubini’s argument is based far more on economic factors than Margalit’s. Other gaps in the existing literature have to do with the “them” component of Populism. Although the “us” is largely agreed upon as the misrepresented demographic, the definition of “them” leaves more to be desired. Does the “them” also refer to the media? The political system as a whole? The type of political system? Is it the politicians themselves that are corrupt, or the system as a whole? Is the system tailored in a way where one has to already be corrupt in order to become a high-level government official? These are all questions that are not easily answered; yet they pertain to every case of the rise of a Populist leader.

Economic hardship is not the only contested opinion on why Populism has become so widespread. There is significant literature on political culture and the role of domestic political turmoil, identity politics (Fukuyama⁸ being the most prominent, here), and socioeconomic situations, just to name a few. Populist rhetoric and its effects are also highly debated. Hawkins and Pauwels’⁹ ideational theory of populism claims that Populism is a pre-existing set of attitudes that must be activated, while others claim that Populist leaders specific speech techniques bring out emotions in people, which, if done effectively, ultimately results in them choosing to support the leader. Another factor that is not highly discussed is the cultural impact of how an imagined community¹⁰ and what people identify as their national narrative play a role in populist rhetoric. As with the term Populism itself, the lack of one single definition of culture makes this aspect particularly tricky, because it is hard to quantitatively measure its impact when it is not adequately defined. There are plenty more debated topics amongst the existing academic

⁶ Margalit, “Economic Insecurity Reconsiderd”.

⁷ Roubini, “Globalization’s Political Fault Lines”.

⁸ Fukuyama, “Contemporary Identity Politics”.

⁹ Hawkins & Pauwels, “Populism and its Causes”, 276.

¹⁰ Anderson, “Imagined Communities”

literature on the rise of Populism, but the notions of imagined communities and identity politics will be particularly important throughout my case study. Along with them, my case study will also concentrate largely on the role of political discourse, analyzing a select number of former President Donald Trump’s speeches in particular. The above examples show that although the basic principles of Populism are well defined, there are still plenty of factors that need to be examined. By focusing on the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide in former President Trump’s political discourse, I hope to add to the existing literature in a unique and essential way.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Three Approaches to Populism Research¹¹

	Definition of Populism	Unit of Analysis	Relevant Methods	Exemplars
Political Ideology	A set of interrelated ideas about the nature of politics and society	Parties and party leaders	Qualitative or automated texts analysis, mostly of partisan literature	Mudde (2004, 2007), Kaltwasser and Mudde (2012)
Political Style	A way of making claims about politics; characteristics of discourse.	Texts, speeches, public discourse about politics	Interpretive textual analysis	Kazin (1995), Laclau (2005), Panizza (2005)
Political Strategy	A form of mobilization and organization	Parties (with a focus on structures), social movements, leaders	Comparative historical analysis, case studies	Roberts (2006), Wayland (2001), Jansen (2011)

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The stated aim of this thesis is to analyze the role national collective narcissism plays in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide in former President Donald Trump’s political discourse. This said, given that the nature of my research question is rooted in Populist theory, it is important to concentrate on Populism’s contemporary rise in the United States of America, and how former President Trump’s creation of this divide links each of the aspects of Populism

¹¹ Gidron & Bonikowski, “Varieties of Populism”, 17.

that I mention. The second part of my research question refers to political discourse, so it is therefore also vital to break down what is meant by this term as well. In tying the two parts of the research question together, I will use the notion of frame theory to conduct a discourse analysis in order to portray Mr. Trump's Populist tendency of relying on the frame of perceived threats to the U.S.-Americans' status amongst the international community to construct the 'people-elite' divide. The overall frame I will focus on is that of national collective narcissism, but I will also highlight the links between all of the other core elements of Populism discussed throughout my thesis in order to better define how former President Trump was able to successfully drive a wedge through the core of U.S.-American society.

III.I. – TRUMPISM:

Populism officially started in the United States of America with the People's Party of the late 1890's¹², but its contemporary meaning is more based on quasi-authoritarian political techniques masked in democratic principles. Donald Trump's 2015 announcement to run for President came as a large surprise to most people throughout the international sphere, and most common U.S.-American citizens as well. His electoral victory further shocked the international community, but certainly not every U.S.-American, however, as he received more than 62 million votes. The common argument is that Donald Trump won due to his appeal to the misrepresented rural middle class; although this holds a great deal of truth, it is largely an economic-based argument, and as previously discussed, there are plenty of other factors at play that must be taken into account as well.

There is currently a large amount of literature on theories that correlate to this contemporary meaning of Populism and its regards to the case study of Trumpism in the United States. This is largely due to the aforementioned shockwave that Donald Trump's 2016 victory sent throughout the international community. Naturally, this shock also rang deeply throughout the academic sphere in the same way. The global rise in Populism on both sides of the political spectrum was already well discussed in the literature by this time, but Donald Trump's victory and the succeeding four years that followed opened a large door that scholars throughout every corner of the globe rushed to infiltrate. Although there is now a fair amount of literature on the

¹² Argersinger, "Populism and Politics".

topic, given the fact that it is still so recent, it is a particularly challenging debate to tackle. We do not yet have the benefit of hindsight, and are still yet to see all of the impacts of Donald Trump's presidency play out to their full extent. This is a major deficiency in the state of research, and will also be a major weakness in my thesis as well. Having said this, it is still vitally important to study how Trumpism was able to rise to the extent that it did at the rate that it did, and on this front, there is significant evidence that can already be examined.

Many of the already mentioned theories on Populism from the Literature Review section of this thesis can and have been correlated to the rise of right-wing Trumpism, and there are a few that have been formulated that are particular to the case study of the United States itself as well. One of the more basic theories of Populism that has largely been tied to the U.S. situation is the idea of polarization. It is important to note that the United States has been polarized since much longer than when Donald Trump announced his candidacy for the Presidency in 2015. Also, in regards to polarization throughout the United States, another main theory on Populist rhetoric is that the Populist leader actually gains support when the main domestic political parties talk them down in the media¹³. The term Populism has come to be used in a very negative sense, and this is especially the case in the United States. The Democratic Party's constant belittlement of Donald Trump both as a Populist and as a person in general does nothing but strengthen his appeal to his followers. In a very basic-level Populist maneuver, former President Trump uses this negative media to further elaborate on his claims that the corrupt system in Washington, D.C. is out to get him and anyone that supports him. Expanding upon Donald Trump's rhetorical techniques, scholars have also pointed out a basic element of Populism that can be seen time and time again whenever he addresses the public: the concept of empty signifiers¹⁴. Donald Trump's campaign slogans of "America First," "Make America Great Again" and "Drain the Swamp" all have American greatness at the forefront, but at the same time have absolutely no real objective meaning. This is exactly what is meant by the concept of empty signifiers, and these can be seen across the spectrum of Populist rhetoric, as well as former President Trump's political discourse.

National identity politics plays a particularly important role in the rise of Trumpism in the United States as well. There is considerable research on the role of identity politics in Populism,

¹³ Taguieff, "Le populisme".

¹⁴ McKean, "Toward an Inclusive Populism?".

much of which can be correlated directly to the case study of Trumpism. As previously stated, identity politics is another lens in which to view the rise of Populism; this is not in opposition to the much relied-upon economic view, however, but instead in collaboration with it. Velasco¹⁵ is an example of how we can use identity politics as a way in which to further explain Populist support. He makes the argument that there are certain countries that are clear winners of globalization, but still elect Populist leaders. In order to explain this phenomenon, he refers to the global rise in identity politics as the: “intermediate stopover in the two-way feedback between economics and politics.” In his view, simply relying on economic explanations of the rise of Populism is too narrow-minded, and we must also focus on identity politics as well when attempting to further understand reasons for Populist support. Although the U.S. may not be seen as a winner of globalization, this argument can still be applied. According to a report by Rothwell and Diego-Rosell¹⁶: “[Trump] supporters are less educated and more likely to work in blue collar occupations, but they earn relatively high household incomes and are no less likely to be unemployed or exposed to competition through trade or immigration.” This portrays that economic factors are not enough on their own in order to fully explain domestic support for Donald Trump.

Müller¹⁷ makes the argument that Populism is always a form of identity politics, and further claims that often times in creating their anti-elite rhetoric, Populist leaders project themselves as the only ones to know what it means to be a true citizen of their nation. This, as Marchlewska et al.¹⁸ puts it: “promotes commitment to a group that needs recognition as the only legitimate representation of ‘the people’.” Correlating this to the basic theory of identity politics, these groups feel misrepresented or misheard, therefore when a Populist leader stands in front of them and claims to be the way in which they can form together with like people of their same situation, they will undoubtedly render their support. In tying this theory to the United States in particular, it is seen in the fact that significant deals of Trump supporters are not necessarily

¹⁵ Velasco, “Populism and Identity Politics”.

¹⁶ Rothwell & Diego-Rosell, “Explaining Nationalist Political Views”.

¹⁷ Müller, “What is Populism?”, quoted in Marchlewska et al., “Populism as Identity Politics”.

¹⁸ Marchlewska et al., “Populism as Identity Politics”.

“losers of globalization.” According to a study done by Mutz¹⁹: “candidate preferences in 2016 reflected increasing anxiety among high-status groups rather than complaints about past treatment among low-status groups.” The anxiety referred to here is in terms of the United States’ global position as a superpower, as well as the status threat of traditionally high-class U.S.-American citizens (whites, Christians and men). According to Mutz’s findings, these members of a traditionally wealthy class still supported Donald Trump in the 2016 election based on his notions of returning to a more conventional status quo (i.e., identity politics), once again proving that economic explanations for the rise of Trumpism simply are not enough.

III.II. – IDENTITY POLITICS:

The term identity politics was first discussed in the late 1970’s and 1980’s, but has become more and more common today. Anspach²⁰ first identified the term in 1979 as: “social movements which seek to alter the self conceptions and societal conceptions of their participants.” Her study focused largely on activism by people with disabilities in the late 1970’s, but the general definition is still used and has been built upon ever since. Up until the 1990’s, the term was highly contested as it referred to varying concepts of political movements based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and many other social issues. The rise of ethnic warfare in the 1990’s as well as the contemporary rise in Populism has led to the discussion of identity politics to heat up once again. Fukuyama’s recent work: *Identity Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*, discusses identity politics in terms of “politics of resentment.”²¹ What is meant here is that much of twentieth century politics has been organized around economics, but Fukuyama makes the argument that the traditional Left-Right political divide based on these terms has given way to one more concerned with identity in the second decade of the century. More specifically, the Left is has become increasingly focused on issues of communities that have traditionally been marginalized – minorities, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, women, refugees, etc., whereas

¹⁹ Mutz, “Status Threat”, 1.

²⁰ Anspach, “From Stigma to Identity Politics”, 765.

²¹ Fukuyama, “Identity”, 7.

the Right is generally focused on protecting traditional norms based on national identity, an identity that Fukuyama claims: “is often explicitly connected to race, ethnicity, or religion.”²²

Fukuyama’s focus on politics of resentment refers to the public recognition of the dignity of whichever group is in question and how political leaders mobilize support in claiming that this very dignity has been disregarded in one manner or another. Although the identities can vary, they are all a part of the common manifestation of modern identity politics. Fukuyama classifies identity in his book as: “a distinction between one’s true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self’s worth or dignity.”²³ He makes the claim that the difference in contemporary identity politics is that the individual nowadays believes that the true inner self is intrinsically valuable and therefore does not need to be made to conform to society’s rules, but in fact the opposite must take place: society itself needs to change in order to accept and recognize the value of each person’s unique individual identity. Furthermore, this inner sense of self is the basis of human dignity and this dignity inherently seeks outside recognition, and, because of this: “the modern sense of identity evolves quickly into identity politics, in which individuals demand public recognition of their worth.”²⁴ This core level of human psychology can be used to combat against the economic model that human beings are rational actors that seek to maximize their utility and that politics is simply an extension thereof. According to Fukuyama, if one understands this extension of utility not only in economic terms of wealth and material well-being, but also as a marker of status and understands that the basic desire of the individual is to have their true inner self be recognized and accepted, then they can begin to formulate a deeper understanding of human motivation and behavior, both on political and philosophical terms alike.

III.III. – NATIONAL COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM:

According to Golec de Zavala and Keenan²⁵, national collective narcissism: “is the belief that one’s own group (the in-group) is exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment, but it is

²² Fukuyama, “Identity”, 7.

²³ Fukuyama, “Identity”, 9-10.

²⁴ Fukuyama, “Identity”, 10.

²⁵ Golec de Zavala & Keenan, “Collective Narcisism”, 2.

not sufficiently recognized by others.” This concept was first discussed by scholars of the Frankfurt School when analyzing the rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany in the 1930’s.^{26 27 28 29} The traditional approach relies heavily upon psychoanalytic properties that undermine self-worth and life satisfaction, whereas the contemporary understanding has far less to do with the unconscious mind. According to Forgas and Lantos³⁰: “Rather than understanding collective narcissism as a dynamic, unconscious and pathological state, we view collective narcissism as the empirical manifestation of an interrelated set of social psychological beliefs and ideas about the in-group that mirrors the way individual narcissists also tend to think about themselves vis-à-vis others.” Due to this social aspect of the contemporary understanding, it is therefore possible to link national collective narcissism to support for Populist parties worldwide, and Federico and Golec de Zavala³¹ have done just that in their 2018 work: *Collective Narcissism and the 2016 US Presidential Vote*. Their findings place U.S.-American collective narcissism as the second highest predictor (behind partisanship) in voting for Donald Trump during the 2016 Presidential Election.

It is also important to note that national collective narcissism is not the same thing as nationalism. Although the two are very similar on many levels, and both predict intergroup hostility, the main difference between them is in regards to power. The central theme for nationalists is a dominant stance in international relations, whereas the central theme for national collective narcissism is the recognition of the in-group’s exceptionality.³² This is to say: even if a nation is not able to be powerful in its relations with others, the members of that very nation can still feel that they are exceptional and need to be recognized, therefore rendering them the possibility to practice national collective narcissism. Furthermore, the individual reasons as to why in-groups may claim to be exceptional can vary greatly. These reasons can be based on

²⁶ Adorno, “Gesammelte Schriften”, quoted in Golec de Zavala & Keenan, “Collective Narcissism”.

²⁷ Fromm, “The Heart of Man”.

²⁸ Fromm, “The Anatomy”.

²⁹ Fromm, “Greatness and Limitations”.

³⁰ Forgas & Lantos, “Understanding Populism”, 6.

³¹ Federico, & Golec de Zavala, “Collective Narcissism”.

³² Golec de Zavala, Dyduch-Hazar, et al. “Collective narcissism”, 40.

existential cultural influences, belief systems and anything the like, but, regardless of the respective aspect that the in-group believes to be exceptional, where all collective narcissists agree is their desire to be recognized. In correlating national collective narcissism with individual narcissism, national collective narcissism takes the core aspects of the individual narcissist and extends them to the social level of one's self. In other words, collective narcissists take the central point of an inflated self-view that needs external validation and applies it directly to the in-group that they identify with.

III.IV. – POLITICS OF INSECURITY:

Similar to the notion of national collective narcissism, politics of insecurity refers to the desire of political leaders to invoke fear and insecurity into society on a collective level. According to Béland³³, politics of insecurity: “concerns the ways in which political actors frame and reframe perceived threats while offering potential responses to these threats.” The intention of framing these threats is in order to create a collective state of anxiety due to a supposed multitude of existential internal and external vulnerabilities. In relating this concept to Populism, one of the main goals of the Populist leader in exposing these threats is to project themselves as the savior from each of them. These insecurities can reach specific demographics of society, or the entire population as a whole, depending on the intention and effectiveness of the political actor. Given that one of the main responsibilities of a State in the current international system is to provide security for its citizens, this makes politics of insecurity a very common occurrence amongst political platforms³⁴. It is often times the case that political campaigns will employ politics of insecurity in order to project themselves as the Party who can offer solutions to proposed vulnerabilities, as well as use the same tactics to criticize other candidates' inability to provide proper protection against the internal and external threats faced by the nation.

Also similar to the notion of national collective narcissism, politics of insecurity can overlap with nationalism in certain matters as well³⁵. The main reason for this overlap is due to the implied evil intentions of a nation's enemies. Naturally, when a political leader suggests that

³³ Béland, “Right-Wing Populism”, 164.

³⁴ Béland, “Insecurity, Citizenship, and Globalization”.

³⁵ Béland, “Right-Wing Populism”, 165.

there are a multitude of external threats and claims to want to be the one to unite society in order to protect them, a sense of nationalism can prevail. Similar to the relationship between national collective narcissism and nationalism, politics of insecurity can predict nationalism to a certain extent, but it does not particularly work in the reverse order; nationalism does not predict politics of insecurity. One of the main concerns of politics of insecurity has to do with agenda shaping. It is the case of any political actor or campaign that they must have an intended agenda on which issues to discuss as well as which issues to ignore. A common theme of politics of insecurity is for political actors to practice “threat amplification”³⁶. What is meant here is that most of the threats that political actors imply are based in some sort of reality, but they choose which ones to augment for strategic purposes. This is something very important to note in regards to politics of insecurity: the fact that although the intention is to invoke fear and collective insecurity, most of the issues discussed are not simply made up. The extent of which they are actually threatening is more where the issues with politics of insecurity lay. When a political actor realizes that there is a situation that poses vulnerability, they will discuss this issue to a great extent and often times exaggerate how dangerous it just may be. Because of this, political actors are instrumental in shaping the perception of threats³⁷.

III.V. – STATUS ANXIETY:

Status anxiety has to do with the fear of losing one’s standing relative to others in a social hierarchy³⁸. The theory is economic in nature and explains why sometimes members of a high social status will still feel threatened and generate negative feelings towards minorities or immigrants³⁹. According to Olson⁴⁰, a segment of society, regardless of how wealthy they may be, who believes they are losing their privileged status in any way: “will be much more resentful of their poverty than those who have known nothing else.” This explains why, in some instances, such as in the United States, even though certain demographics are not necessarily

³⁶ Monaghan & Walby. “They Attacked the City”.

³⁷ Béland, “Insecurity and Politics” 319.

³⁸ Golec de Zavala & Keenan, “Collective Narcisism”, 2.

³⁹ Jetten, “The Wealth Paradox”.

⁴⁰ Olson, “Rapid Economic Growth”, 533.

“losers of globalization,” they still may feel vulnerable or jeopardized, especially when a political actor stands in front of them and tells them that their status is no longer the same or even recognized at all. The individual desire to be recognized and accepted is strongly discussed in many facets of psychological studies, and in terms of the concept of status anxiety, this desire is simply attributed to the group; not only does the individual want to be recognized, so too do they seek for the group in which they identify with to share the same recognition.

The overall essence of the concept of status anxiety is based upon social identity theory, which was formulated by Tajfel and Turner⁴¹ in 1979 in order to explain intergroup behavior as well as discrimination. Although this study dealt with how low status groups seeking to move up the hierarchical ladder, Haslam⁴² makes the argument that we must also view it from a top-down perspective as well in that members of a higher social status will seek to maintain their position, especially when they believe it to be at risk. It is also important to note that not all wealth leads to harsh feelings towards members of a lower social status. Although this happens in certain contexts, it is not always the case, so therefore one must exercise caution when analyzing situations through the scope of status anxiety. As stated by Jetten⁴³, social identity theorizing is ideal for answering the “when” and “why” aspects of how members of a certain social status will start to exercise ill feelings towards those they believe to be below them in the social hierarchical ladder. That is to say: ways have been developed to recognize situations where status anxiety can and may occur, but it is not the case that it arises in every instance that the situation suggests it might.

III.VI. – HEARTLAND THEORY:

Heartland theory, or otherwise referred to as collective nostalgia, has to do with politics of memory, and refers to an idealized concept of a particular nation’s past. The term was popularized by Taggart⁴⁴ in 2004, where he refers to the Heartland as: “a construction of an ideal world but unlike utopian conceptions, it is constructed retrospectively from the past—it is in

⁴¹ Tajfel & Turner, “An Integrative Theory”.

⁴² Haslam, “Psychology in Organisations”.

⁴³ Jetten, “The Wealth Paradox”, 16.

⁴⁴ Taggart, “Populism”, 274.

essence a past-derived vision projected onto the present as that which has been lost.” What is important in this definition is the concept of what has been lost. Whereas most utopian ideologies are focused on the future, the heartland theory is primarily focused on the glorification of the past and the values that are no longer present and applying them to what needs to happen in order to return to this idealized state. The collective entity of the concept refers to how it motivates members of a perceived in-group to come together for collective action in order to identify with and return to their romanticized past⁴⁵. It is often the case with heartland theory that the version of the past that members collectively long for never actually existed. Similar to the notion of Populism’s empty signifiers, collective nostalgia relies upon discursive tactics to create situations that may or may not be objectively true. Slogans such as: “Make America Great Again,” refer to a time when America was supposedly “Great,” but does not define what exactly is meant by this proclamation. Furthermore, heartland theory does not only contain the ability to bring individuals together, it also has the capacity to divide in order to scapegoat and blame others for the perceived losses that the in-group has suffered⁴⁶.

One of the main uses of heartland theory is to define “the people,” through identity politics. When a group of individuals long for their collective past, they identify themselves with it, and start to feel as if they are one cumulative entity. In doing this, members will start to formulate group-level emotion, as opposed to individual. Moreover, if members of the in-group view the group’s past in a more positive manner than its present, they are more apt to experience collective nostalgia, even if they did not personally experience the past of the group that they identify with⁴⁷. This is how “the people” start to identify themselves as members of “the heartland.” The notion of heartland theory inherently is in opposition to modernity; its focus on the good life that was already lived in the past naturally pins it against present circumstances. This is how certain political actors can rely on the heartland in order to object the current situations faced by a nation. The ahistorical nature of this theory makes it very dangerous and exceptionally simple for political actors to rely upon it in order to bring members of their respective constituencies together to garner support.

⁴⁵ Wohl & Stefaniak, “Collective Nostalgia”, 2.

⁴⁶ Golec de Zavala & Keenan, “Collective Narcissism”, 3.

⁴⁷ Wildschut et al., “Collective Nostalgia”, 9.

III.VII. – AN INTEGRATED THEORETICAL APPROACH:

This section will be dedicated to how all of the above-mentioned theories and concepts are complexly intertwined in order to feed off of one another. In Populist discourse, these theories often overlap and can become challenging to differentiate, so further clarifying how they interact with and work off of one another is therefore necessary. Given that the main subject of this thesis is the role of national collective narcissism in the creation of former President Trump’s ‘people-elite’ divide, it is also important to correlate how all of these theories work together throughout political discourse in order to create this split that is the foundational principle of Populism as well.

III.VII.I. – IDENTITY POLITICS:

Identity Politics relates to Populism in various respects, especially in the sense of the ‘people’ in the ‘people-elite’ divide discussed in the research question of this thesis. Only through feeling a common identity can a demographic of individuals start to come together to form the ever-so-important entity of the ‘people’ in the ‘people-elite’ divide. Furthermore, the concept of politics of resentment discussed by Fukuyama directly correlates with both Populism in general in that it is often the case that the Populist leader points out this lack of recognition in order to garner support, but also with national collective narcissism, due to this common characteristic of a lack of acceptance. Where the two differ is that national collective narcissism is specifically about the exceptional qualities that are not recognized by outside entities and identity politics, although it still has to do with a lack of recognition, does not inherently assume exceptional characteristics of the in-group. In terms of its relationship with politics of insecurity, Populist actors can and often do stand in front of a crowd and tell them that their identity is either in question, at risk, or not recognized at all. The collective level inherent to the feeling of a mutual identity can be triggered when a political actor practices politics of insecurity in order to invoke a feeling of discontent into a large group of people. In terms of Populism, the political actor’s intent in doing this (or their frame) is to simultaneously garner support as well as project themselves as the savior from their lack of recognition. These political actors rely on various forms of discourse to appeal to the demographic that they believe to feel misrepresented, and can

also refer to the heartland theory in the sense of discussing a time when the demographic was properly recognized.

III.VII.II. – NATIONAL COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM:

National collective narcissism relates to Populist discourse as well as directly to identity politics in the sense of the social aspect of the collective of individuals who feel they are superior to others and therefore need to be recognized. Due to this psychological aspect of narcissism, it is therefore easy for an individual Populist actor to stand before a group and practice politics of insecurity in telling them that they will be the one to return them to the status quo of the heartland when their exceptional qualities were both known and accepted by everyone, both domestically as well as internationally. National collective narcissists also inherently feel a threat to their status due to the core of the concept relating to the fact that their superiority is no longer recognized. Populist actors choose the frame of national collective narcissism in order to evoke specific emotions and drive a wedge into society in order to create the ‘people-elite’ divide. National collective narcissism often relies upon a myriad of empty signifiers in order to discursively create a situation that may not be objectively true. Similar to the sense of politics of insecurity in this matter, relying upon these empty signifiers simplifies the frame of discourse enacted by the Populist actor in order to amass loyalty. Given the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ aspect of Populism in general, it is easy for national collective narcissists to feel that anyone who does not recognize their exceptional characteristics is corrupt and evil. Furthermore, when a Populist actor stands before them and highlights ways in which the current established elite has taken away their privileged status (whether they be true or not), it is easy for the split between the ‘people’ and the ‘elite’ to further expand.

III.VII.III. – POLITICS OF INSECURITY:

The frame of politics of Insecurity directly correlates to Populism in that it is the most essential discursive technique used by Populist actors on both sides of the political spectrum. As opposed to the main aspect of national collective narcissism’s need for the exceptional status of the in-group to be recognized, the intention of politics of insecurity is for the Populist leader to invoke a collective level of fear into society and simultaneously project themselves as the only savior from these internal and external threats. By doing this, Populist leaders are effectively

able to create the divide that is necessary to become a successful actor. Similar to national collective narcissism, politics of insecurity also relies heavily upon empty signifiers in order to depict a threat to the status of whoever is being addressed. When Populist actors practice politics of insecurity, they also often refer to the notion of heartland theory in that they discuss a time when whichever specific fear-invoking situation they are referring to was not the case. Given that politics of insecurity is purposely meant to invoke fear and resentment into society, it is therefore an extremely powerful frame that Populist actors can use in order to create the image that the established elite are corrupt and no longer able to effectively govern. By relying upon fear-mongering to discursively create this situation, the Populist leader is able to gain support, and even if this does not translate to votes for them or their Party, it still injects fear and dissent into almost all levels of society, which has the ability to further polarize society on multiple fronts.

III.VII.IV. – STATUS ANXIETY:

Status anxiety is in response to the “losers of globalization” theory of Populism, and explains how even wealthy members of society can still feel threatened and in turn support a right-wing Populist actor. As stated in the above section, status anxiety is more about the supposed decline in status relative to others, so this is how in cases like the United States we see a Populist actor like Donald Trump even have the support of some members of the extremely wealthy classes. What Mr. Trump, as well as any right-wing Populist actor, does is rely upon politics of insecurity and empty signifiers to create an image that the status of these individuals, even though they remain extremely wealthy, is declining. This concept also explains why there is often times discontent toward immigrants or people of a lower social status, because those members of the group that believe their status is declining relative to others’ will then generate ill feelings toward them. Relating this to national collective narcissism, given that the main element of national collective narcissism is the recognition of the in-group’s exceptional status, it therefore correlates that when a group feels that their relative status is under question, they have the potential to exercise narcissistic tendencies. In terms of politics of insecurity, and especially related to right-wing Populism, the Populist actor’s desire to portray a series of existential threats directly relates to why a certain demographic (or in-group) may feel threatened. This is the will of the Populist actor, in order to garner support based on politics of insecurity. Furthermore, the

Populist actor will also oftentimes refer to the notion of the heartland when the status of the perceived in-group was not declining and simultaneously promise to return them to this state of affairs.

III.VII.V. – HEARTLAND THEORY:

The ‘people’ are one of the main entities of Populist discourse, and the heartland theory refers to an idealized past when this group was treated well. This relates directly with identity politics in that the ‘people’ comprise of one collective entity that is no longer treated well and needs to return to their romanticized past. It is oftentimes also the case that in the sense of the heartland, the in-group referred to is said to have had exceptional qualities that were once recognized by the international community, which inherently links this concept to that of national collective narcissism as well. The reason for a Populist actor to discursively refer to the notion of the heartland is also often in reference to a life that existed before the corruption of the present established elite. Heartland theory relies almost explicitly upon empty signifiers in that the perceived utopian nature of the past almost never truly existed. Populist actors rely upon politics of insecurity when discussing the heartland and intentionally suggest a threat to the status of the in-group of citizens of the nation that currently is not enjoying the features that it used to. The notion of the heartland is also used for collective action and Populist actors frequently refer to this glorified version of the past in order to highlight how it currently no longer exists and that they will be the ones to return the nation to the prominence that it once enjoyed.

IV. METHODOLOGY

IV.I. – KEY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The stated goal of my research is to analyze the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide in former President Donald Trump’s political discourse. After a thorough literature review and establishment of the theoretical framework pertaining to this topic, a solid foundation is in place in order to conduct a qualitative empirical analysis on how former President Trump attempted to linguistically pit his perceived in-group of the U.S.-American ‘people’ against the established political ‘elite’ in order to gain Populist support. Another overarching aim of my research is to examine one of the most important issues facing the international community today: the global rise of Populism, and how it has become the

central challenge to liberal democracy. Through a discourse analysis of Mr. Trump’s 2017 Inaugural Address, 2017 Address to Joint Session of Congress, 2018, 2019, and 2020 State of the Union Addresses, and his 2021 Farewell Address, I will make a significant contribution to the overall scholarly debate on Populism and all of its forms.

IV.II. – CRITERIA FOR DATA COLLECTION:

The units of analysis chosen for this thesis are the aforementioned six speeches that were given throughout the course of Mr. Trump’s presidency. I will rely on primary sources of the transcripts of each speech in order to conduct my research. My justification for choosing speeches during his Presidency and not his campaign is that there is already an abundance of research on the former President’s campaign tactics, and I believe that campaign speech is too amplified in nature overall. I am also interested in how Donald Trump was able to maintain the support he gained throughout his presidency and not how he gained his following in the first place. Furthermore, my justification for choosing exclusively these six speeches is that they are the only speeches intended to address the entire United States population at-large. The reason his 2017 Address to Joint Session of Congress is included is that United States Presidents do not give a State of the Union Address during the first year of their term, but their address to Congress is a very similar structure⁴⁸. Given that the root of my research question is the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide, I find it therefore necessary to only analyze speeches that were aimed at the entire population as opposed to specific demographics.

IV.III. – METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS:

My main method for analyzing the chosen speeches will be a discourse analysis. In order to carry out this discourse analysis, the method I apply will be based on frame theory. I will rely on a mix of primary and secondary sources when studying the theories and how to apply them, and then, as mentioned in the **Criteria for Data Collection** section, I will evaluate the primary sources of the transcripts of each individual speech. My discourse analysis will consist of two steps: **1)** I will code each individual speech based on specific frames detected in the transcripts, and: **2)** After coding the speeches, I will then summarize each of them based on the specific frames identified.

⁴⁸ Shogan, “The President’s State”.

IV.III.I. – DISCOURSE THEORY:

French philosopher and sociologist Michel Foucault (1926-1984) originally fathered the notion of Discourse Theory; the theory started out as a structuralist approach to study the creation and flow of knowledge through time; that is to say: the structure of knowledge. Foucault coined this theory in his work: *Archaeology of Knowledge*. He was largely focused on questioning how objective the truths created by certain disciplines (such as medicine, psychology and social sciences) really are, and was largely interested in the process of the formation and how these truths became to be accepted as an objective entity. Given the name of the theory itself, it is thus important to identify what is meant by the term “discourse.” Foucault sees it as a “combination of practices that systematically form the objects of which [we] speak.”⁴⁹ He refers to discourse not only as written or spoken language, but also the historical process by which knowledge is created. It is important to note that for Foucault, discourse is created through the effects of power throughout different societies, so therefore Discourse Theory is also concerned with questions of power by nature. Although Foucault coined the theory, there are many competing definitions of discourse, some of which are even contradictory. Leading scholars in the field often disagree on how much discourse actually entails in terms of written and spoken language, but for the sake of this thesis, I will ideologically follow Wodak’s definition that describes discourse as written and spoken language as a form of “social practice.” Her view of discourse as a social practice implies a: “dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them.”⁵⁰

IV.III.II. – FRAME THEORY:

Frame theory has to do with the ways in which political actors discuss policies. As with any discursive topic, there is a decision-making process on how and what (or what not) to talk about when discussing one’s political agenda. As opposed to an actual program or road map, frames are not an objective entity, and are rather about the method and approach towards the topics that a political actor seeks to talk about. Campbell⁵¹ identifies frames as: “Normative and

⁴⁹ Foucault, “Archaeology of Knowledge”, 54.

⁵⁰ Wodak, “DCA – Critical Discourse Analysis”, 303.

⁵¹ Campbell, “Ideas, Politics”, 26-27.

sometimes cognitive ideas that are located in the foreground of policy debates.” These frames are strategically created in order for political actors to legitimize their goals as well as have their policy programs be adopted. The concept of frame theory stems from the study of ideational processes in politics and public policy⁵², which is concerned with the importance of ideas as opposed to self-interest in public policymaking. Where Campbell draws the difference from ideational analyses is rather than focusing on the differences or similarities that ideas produce in policymaking, he instead is concerned with how the frames that political actors create allow their policies or discursive practices to become politically acceptable. These frames also allow actors to rely upon cultural and ideological identities in order to make their utterances more convincing⁵³, which can be very dangerous if used with malicious intent. In short, frame theory is about the numerous discursive techniques used by various political actors in order to get their point across.

IV.III.III. – CODING:

In order to decipher the literature, I first need to code each individual speech. **Table 2** offers a break down of the specific frames I will use for my analysis. My method in coding will be to read the transcript of each selected speech and then highlight every specific utterance that applies to each of the frames listed below:

Table 2. Discourse Analysis Frames

Frame:	Definition:	Applied To:
Politics of Insecurity	The desire of political leaders to invoke fear and insecurity into society on a collective level.	Any specific utterance intended to invoke a general sense of fear and insecurity into society on a collective level.
Domestic Threats	The reliance upon politics of insecurity to highlight a threat from a domestic source.	Any specific utterance intended to invoke a sense of fear and insecurity into society on a collective level from a domestic source.

⁵² Béland, “Right-Wing Populism”, 165.

⁵³ Béland, “Ideas and Institutions”.

International Threats	The reliance upon politics of insecurity to highlight a threat from an international source.	Any specific utterance intended to invoke a sense of fear and insecurity into society on a collective level from an international source.
National Collective Narcissism	The belief that one's own group (the in-group) is exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment, but it is not sufficiently recognized by others. ⁵⁴	Any specific utterance that highlights: A) Exceptional qualities of U.S.-Americans, or: B) The loss of recognition of U.S.-Americans.

IV.IV. – EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH METHODS CHOSEN:

I chose to carry out a discourse analysis for my main method of data analysis because the core of my research question is based on former President Trump’s political discourse. Therefore, I find that a discourse analysis aimed to examine the role of specific frames in constructing the ‘us-them/people-elite’ divide that is so inherent to Populism overall is the most effective way to find concrete results. While I recognize the criticisms of discourse analyses (representativeness, generalizations, degree of reliability and validity, etc.), I also understand its importance. My intention with my research is not to claim that this is the only way in which the speeches can be analyzed, but instead to offer my interpretation based on a careful reading that pays close attention to context, functions, and organization of former President Trump’s political discourse in his six speeches that were addressed to the United States population at-large during the time of his presidency. The reason I chose the specific frames highlighted above is that politics of insecurity is the main tool that makes the concept of national collective narcissism function. Moreover, the construction of the ‘people-elite’ divide is based on the concepts of status anxiety, identity politics and heartland theory, so therefore coding threats from both domestic as well as international sources is necessary in order to fully analyze how Mr. Trump sought to pit members of his own perceived in-group against anyone that did not fit their definition.

⁵⁴ Golec de Zavala & Keenan, “Collective Narcissism”, 2.

V. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

V.I. – JANUARY 20TH, 2017: INAUGURAL ADDRESS:

In former President Donald Trump’s first speech to the U.S.-American public at-large, the January 20th, 2017 Inaugural Address, he uses the frame of national collective narcissism in the general sense that the power was taken away from the common citizen by both foreign and domestic threats alike. Subsequently, in a basic Populist maneuver, he also projects himself as the person who will be the one to bring society out of these dire conditions. The in-group that is exceptional and entitled to special treatment, here, are the American people, although former President Trump never explicitly defines who or what he means by this notion.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

Former President Trump relies upon the frame of politics of insecurity right from the very beginning of this speech, in order to paint a specific picture of threatening and insecure domestic circumstances: “We, the citizens of America, are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and to restore its promise for all of our people.” The fact that this was, after thanking a few of the dignitaries that were present, the first sentence of his first speech as the President of the United States of America shows us that Donald Trump sought to start his term by projecting himself as the savior that would bring the common citizen of the United States out of the dire situation in which they found themselves and return them to a point where their exceptional status is sufficiently recognized by others. Linguistically referring to his Presidency as a: “great national effort to rebuild our country and restore its promise,” assumes that this effort must take place due to the current status of the country being in jeopardy, and is intentionally meant to invoke a collective feeling of unease and insecurity. Furthermore, utterances such as: “This American carnage stops right here and stops right now,” and: “We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams,” all infer that a reclamation of status is necessary as well.

Mr. Trump’s quote: “January 20th, 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again,” is a direct example of the former President attempting to linguistically create a ‘people-elite’ divide with his discourse. The date referred to, here, is that of his Inaugural Address, and the inherent assumption that “the people” will become “the rulers

of this nation again” is intentionally meant to suggest that established elite at the time of Mr. Trump’s takeover are not and have not been running the country properly. Following up this utterance with: “The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer,” is once again a guided attempt to create the ‘people-elite’ divide that the former President desires in order to maintain his support base. Mr. Trump also relies heavily upon the frame of politics of insecurity when discussing what he believes to be problems that the nation is facing. His statements:

But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.

One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions upon millions of American workers left behind.

The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world.

are examples of the former President using specific language to invoke fear and discontent when pointing out specific situations that he believes are collective problems. These proclamations are also scattered with empty signifiers as well. Utterances such as: “Mothers and children trapped in poverty,” “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation,” “which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge,” and: “crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential,” all are not able to be quantitatively or qualitatively defined or proven nor disproven. Furthermore, they are all simply meant to invoke a collective state of anxiety due to a supposed multitude of existential vulnerabilities, which directly fits the definition of the frame of politics of insecurity.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

Domestic threats is the most relied upon frame by former President Trump in his Inaugural Address. As stated in the opening remarks of this analysis, the common theme of this speech is that the power has been stripped from and therefore must be returned to the American

people. The manner in which Mr. Trump uses the frame of domestic threats in this particular address is to highlight all of the various ways that the established elite is to blame for the current circumstances in which the nation finds itself, and how he, Donald J. Trump, will give the members of his in-group the recognition they deserve. Statements of:

Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's Capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

all are intended to create a 'people-elite' divide by highlighting how the established elite does not care for the common U.S.-American citizen. As is often the case, these statements rely heavily upon empty signifiers as well. Mr. Trump does not clarify what he means by utterances of: "rewards of government," "borne the cost," "flourished," "prospered," "victories," or: "triumphs," but all of these are intended to focus on how the 'elite' component of U.S.-American society has been better off at the expense of the 'people.'

"We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action – constantly complaining but never doing anything about it," and: "You will never be ignored again," further fit the frame of domestic threats and expand upon Mr. Trump's discourse that is intended to drive a wedge through the two separate and supposedly homogenous components of society. Once again, the former President does not rely upon any sort of truth and instead chooses to make general statements, here. "All talk and no action," and: "constantly complaining but never doing anything about it," are examples of language that when viewed objectively is absolutely false. Based on the concrete definitions of the terms, if all politicians only complained and never

performed any action, then the United States would be in a complete state of anarchy. Mr. Trump, through the frame of domestic threats, is attempting to highlight how and why U.S.-American citizens (the in-group) have come to the current situation that they are in and relying on the imagined community of the common citizen and the heartland theory in the sense that there was once a time when this was not the situation, a time when America was “Great,” and the common citizen was not ignored.

Frame of International Threats:

Former President Trump does not rely upon the frame of international threats very heavily in his Inaugural Address, but there are nevertheless still a few instances. When utilizing this specific frame, Mr. Trump predominately portrays how international actors have taken advantage of the United States largely due to the established elite’s poor policymaking decisions. Statements such as:

For many decades, we’ve enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry;

Subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military;

We’ve defended other nation’s borders while refusing to defend our own;

And spent trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay.

We’ve made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon.

all infer threats from the international community, yet subsequently highlight how the elites before him have allowed these situations to occur. Once again, former President Trump also does not justify his statements with any quantitative facts or figures, he simply makes gross generalizations that cannot be credited or discredited. Mr. Trump’s statement: “We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs,” is another case where he does not provide any concrete information on the claims he is making, but uses aggressive language in order to invoke collective fear and anxiety throughout U.S.-American society.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

Mr. Trump uses the specific frame of national collective narcissism in this address to highlight how others do not currently acknowledge the exceptional status of the in-group. Subsequently, former President Trump relies upon the frame to make claims that U.S.-Americans still have superior qualities, and he will be the one to bring back the recognition that they deserve. “We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow,” inherently assumes that the U.S.-American way of life is the best and that is why everyone else will want to follow. Although this particular utterance states: “We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone,” it is still exceedingly narcissistic in that the second part of the statement assumes that others will automatically choose to replicate the U.S.-American way of life due to how desirable it is. “We assembled here today are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power,” is also narcissistic in the sense that it assumes that since the President of the United States is speaking, it will be heard: “in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power,” throughout the world.

Mr. Trump’s statements: “When America is united, America is totally unstoppable,” and: “No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America,” both explicitly assume exceptional qualities of the United States, and are intentionally meant to make members of the perceived in-group identify with each other under these broad proclamations. These utterances also rely on the concept of empty signifiers to prove their point as well. What is meant by “united,” “unstoppable,” and: “the heart and fight and spirit of America,” is not completely clear or objectively definable, but the intention is to highlight how the in-group is entitled to exceptional and privileged treatment. The utterance of: “America will start winning again, winning like never before,” assumes, by the usage of the word “again,” that there was once a time when America did “win,” and the pointing out of how they will “win” again means that the United States has the capacity to do so in the first place, regardless of what the specific utterance may mean. All of the instances where former President Trump relies upon the frame of national collective narcissism in his first speech after taking Office fit the definition of how he believes U.S.-Americans are exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment, but this is not sufficiently

recognized by anyone who does not identify themselves with his perceived in-group: the American people.

V.II. – FEBRUARY 28, 2017: ADDRESS TO JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS

In this speech, former President Trump uses the frame of national collective narcissism in the general sense that a new chapter has begun since he has taken office; a chapter in which the in-group will receive the exceptional and privileged treatment that has been stripped from them but that they so highly deserve. He relies heavily on the notion of both foreign and domestic threats as the reasons for the current situation in the United States, and once again identifies himself as the way out of this perceived plight. The amount of times Mr. Trump uses the word “I” (34) is clearly noticeable in this speech, and he still relies heavily on blaming his predecessors for all of the problems that he has inherited.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

Similar to his Inaugural Address, Mr. Trump jumps right into politics of insecurity at the very beginning of this speech. By doing so, he immediately paints a negative picture in order to create the appearance of an ominous situation out of which he is the only one that can help the common U.S.-American citizen. The rest of his speech never really moves away from this calamitous frame and he intentionally maintains this approach so that he can simultaneously blame a multitude of threats as to why the United States finds itself in such circumstances, as well as ensure every citizen that he is the only way out of them. Statements such as:

I have further ordered the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice, along with the Department of State and the Director of National Intelligence, to coordinate an aggressive strategy to dismantle the criminal cartels that have spread across our Nation.

We will stop the drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth – and we will expand treatment for those who have become so badly addicted.

It is not compassionate, but reckless, to allow uncontrolled entry from places where proper vetting cannot occur.

We cannot allow a beachhead of terrorism to form inside America – we cannot allow our Nation to become a sanctuary for extremists.

all highlight specific threats that Mr. Trump himself wants to make clear the he will be the one to eradicate. As is a recurring theme throughout his speeches, these particular comments are filled with empty signifiers as well. Utterances such as: “an aggressive strategy,” “spread across our Nation,” “[drugs] pouring into our country and poisoning our youth,” “a beachhead of terrorism,” and: “a sanctuary for extremists,” are all examples of aggressive language without a clear objective definition intended to invoke collective insecurity throughout all levels of U.S.-American society. As opposed to providing concrete numbers on how many criminal cartels have “spread across the nation,” and how many drugs have “poured into our country,” or explicitly stating the policy goals of his “aggressive strategy,” Mr. Trump relies upon very general statements in order to fit into his discourse of the frame of politics of insecurity.

Another way Mr. Trump intentionally attempts to create a divide through the conduit of the frame of politics of insecurity in this particular speech is seen by the stories he tells of common U.S.-American citizens that were in attendance during the time of its delivery. Former President Trump chooses to tell a story of a woman named Denisha Merriweather, who failed the third grade twice, yet was still able to become the first member of her family to graduate not only high school, but also college. After this very endearing story, Mr. Trump chooses to immediately highlight how Ms. Merriweather needed to “break the cycle of poverty,” in order to succeed. Furthermore, after highlighting the fact that this cycle must be broken, former President Trump also correlates poverty to violence, although this has nothing whatsoever to do with the story of Ms. Merriweather graduating college. Mr. Trump then immediately moves to a discussion of how: “the murder rate in 2015 experienced its largest single-year increase in nearly half a century,” effectively using Ms. Merriweather’s success story as a frame to correlate how violence and poverty are ravaging the streets of the United States. Former President Trump then introduces “four very brave Americans whose government failed them,” and proceeds to tell the stories of how the son of one of them and the husbands and a father of the remaining three were murdered by illegal immigrants, once again using the story of a common U.S. citizen to fit the narrative of existential threats through the frame of politics of insecurity.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

Similar to his Inaugural Address, Mr. Trump relies very heavily upon the frame of domestic threats in this speech as well. He uses the frame to highlight how the administrations

before him have made countless errors and are fully to blame for the circumstances facing the nation. By doing this, former President Trump is attempting to shift the blame from his administration. It is still very early in his Presidency, but as opposed to focusing on how he plans to move forward, he instead has to establish all of the mistakes those before him have made so that it is clear that none of them are his fault. The utterance of: “Tonight, as I outline the next steps we must take as a country, we must honestly acknowledge the circumstances we inherited,” explicitly proves this point, and the subsequent problems that Mr. Trump chooses to highlight after this proclamation are all done so under the umbrella of “the circumstances we inherited,” which is intended to create the divide between the ‘elite’ and the ‘people’ that is the main goal of the former President’s discourse. “In the last 8 years, the past Administration has put on more new debt than nearly all other Presidents combined,” and: “And overseas, we have inherited a series of tragic foreign policy disasters,” are two further remarks where former President Trump explicitly blames previous policymakers as well. Statements such as:

For too long, we've watched our middle class shrink as we've exported our jobs and wealth to foreign countries.

We've financed and built one global project after another, but ignored the fates of our children in the inner cities of Chicago, Baltimore, Detroit – and so many other places throughout our land.

We've defended the borders of other nations, while leaving our own borders wide open, for anyone to cross – and for drugs to pour in at a now unprecedented rate.

And we've spent trillions of dollars overseas, while our infrastructure at home has so badly crumbled.

do not explicitly place the blame on previous administrations, but Mr. Trump’s intention is undoubtedly to implicitly accuse the current and previous established elite. The former President yet again relies almost solely upon empty signifiers to attempt to prove his point in these utterances as well.

In pointing out his intentions for the future, Mr. Trump utilizes the frame of domestic threats very often as well. Statements such as:

Dying industries will come roaring back to life. Heroic veterans will get the care they so desperately need.

Our military will be given the resources its brave warriors so richly deserve.

Crumbling infrastructure will be replaced with new roads, bridges, tunnels, airports and railways gleaming across our beautiful land.

Our terrible drug epidemic will slow down and ultimately, stop.

And our neglected inner cities will see a rebirth of hope, safety, and opportunity.

Above all else, we will keep our promises to the American people.

all assume that these things were not happening under previous administrations. The fact that each of these utterances assume a renewal of something that once existed fits the heartland theory as well in that in order for this renewal to take place, all of these things must have existed at some point in the first place. Former President Trump also uses very specific language (oftentimes classified as empty signifiers) in order to condemn his predecessors as well as invoke fear and uncertainty. Utterances of: “drain the swamp of government corruption,” “eliminate job crushing regulations,” and: “[withdrawing from] the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership,” are all examples of very aggressive language that unequivocally fit the frame of domestic threats.

Similar to the case in the **Politics of Insecurity** section of this analysis, former President Trump also uses a story of a U.S.-American citizen in order to infer that the established elite do not care about the common citizen. We are told a very endearing story of a young girl who survived a rare disease due to her father’s founding of a company and subsequent cure. Mr. Trump refers to this story as one “about the unbounded power of a father’s love for a daughter.” Immediately after this utterance, the former President moves directly to his reoccurring theme of blaming the current circumstances for the multitude of problems faced amongst U.S.-American society at the time of this speech: “But our slow and burdensome approval process at the Food and Drug Administration keeps too many advances, like the one that saved Megan's life, from reaching those in need.” He then reassures that he will “slash” these restraints, and therefore is not like the current elite that does not care about the common citizen, which once again uses the frame of domestic threats to linguistically create a ‘people-elite’ divide.

Frame of International Threats:

Mr. Trump does not rely very heavily on the frame of international threats in this particular speech, as his main theme is still how the established elite is to blame for all of the issues that the United States faces. Despite this, the frame is still apparent on more than one occasion throughout the speech, mainly when discussing immigration and trade. The statement:

At the same time, my Administration has answered the pleas of the American people for immigration enforcement and border security. By finally enforcing our immigration laws, we will raise wages, help the unemployed, save billions of dollars, and make our communities safer for everyone. We want all Americans to succeed – but that can't happen in an environment of lawless chaos. We must restore integrity and the rule of law to our borders.

is a mixture of both the frames of international and domestic threats in that it is attempting to create a collective feeling of insecurity because of international actors but is also subsequently blaming current policies for the reason this issues exist in the first place. This particular declaration is also filled with very threatening language and empty signifiers, similar to most of the utterances from the **Domestic Threats** section of this analysis. “As we speak, we are removing gang members, drug dealers and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our citizens. Bad ones are going out as I speak tonight and as I have promised,” is another example where former President Trump relies on the frame of international threats and uses a large deal of subjective fear-mongering language in his discourse.

In terms of trade, Mr. Trump declares: “we've lost 60,000 factories since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001,” and: “Currently, when we ship products out of America, many other countries make us pay very high tariffs and taxes – but when foreign companies ship their products into America, we charge them almost nothing.” The first of these statements relies on quantitative data but is still intended to highlight an unfair situation that the United States faces due to an international actor, and the second is filled with subjective empty signifiers such as: “very high tariffs and taxes,” and: “almost nothing.” Nevertheless, the intention of Mr. Trump when using the frame of international threats, although not very often in this particular speech, is to not only point the threats out, but also blame poor decision-making and lack of care on the part of the established elite in order to drive a wedge between the in-group and all of the others.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

As stated in the introduction of this analysis, Mr. Trump uses the frame of national collective narcissism in this speech in order to refer to: “a new chapter of American Greatness.” This utterance in of itself fits the definition of national collective narcissism in that it suggests not only that America is great, but given that it needs a new chapter, then there must have been a time when it was great in the past as well. “Our allies will find that America is once again ready to lead,” suggests that the United States has the capacity to lead due to its exceptional qualities, and like the “new chapter” statement, also suggests that the U.S. has led in the past, given the usage of the word: “again.” Mr. Trump’s uses his most famous national collective narcissistic claim: “Make America Great Again,” in this speech, and this particular phrase is a perfect example of an empty signifier that also fits the notion of the heartland theory as well. The statement: “Solving these, and so many other pressing problems, will require us to work past the differences of party. It will require us to tap into the American spirit that has overcome every challenge throughout our long and storied history,” points out the unique ability of U.S.-Americans to overcome challenges simply because of the fact that they are American, which also undoubtedly aligns with the frame of national collective narcissism as well. The most glaring example of this particular frame in this speech is: “The challenges we face as a Nation are great. But our people are even greater.” This utterance not only identifies the “people” as “great,” but also highlights how the nation faces a multitude of threats, but assumes, due to their exceptional qualities, they will undoubtedly be able to return to the privileged status that they deserve and receive the recognition they are owed as well.

V.III. – JANUARY 30TH, 2018: STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

In this speech, former President Trump relies on the frame of national collective narcissism in the overall sense that America needs to be rebuilt from the inside out, but they will undoubtedly do so because of their exceptional qualities. Furthermore, the former President also repeatedly uses politics of insecurity to blame his predecessors as well as international threats to paint the picture that other countries do not take them as seriously as they should or treat them with the dignity or respect they deserve. This speech has a much more positive and uplifting beginning than the previous two speeches analyzed in this thesis, but it still predominately relies

upon national collective narcissism and politics of insecurity to highlight a multitude of threats the more it progresses.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

As is often the case, former President Trump relies upon politics of insecurity time and time again throughout this speech. He does not only use the frame to discuss one threat, either; Mr. Trump uses the discursive technique of politics of insecurity in every topic he talks about all around. This particular speech takes a little bit longer than the previous two to get to the general frame of politics of insecurity, but the utterance:

Americans love their country. And they deserve a Government that shows them the same love and loyalty in return.

For the last year we have sought to restore the bonds of trust between our citizens and their Government.

undoubtedly is meant to invoke fear and insecurity into U.S.-American society on a collective level. “And they deserve a Government that shows them the same love and loyalty in return” has the connotation that the current established elite indeed does not care about the common citizen as much as the common citizen loves their country. Following up this utterance, Mr. Trump’s statement of how they have “sought to restore the bonds of trust” between U.S.-Americans and their government is the former President using politics of insecurity to blame those before him for the current lack of trust. In blaming those before him, Mr. Trump is intentionally attempting to create a divide between the ‘people’ and the ‘elite’ components of society discussed in the **Literature Review** of this thesis.

The language apparent in the utterance: “I halted Government mandates that crippled America’s autoworkers” also is intended to invoke anger and discontent into society about the former President’s predecessors, while simultaneously, by the usage of “I,” project himself as the one who stopped these “crippling” government mandates. Shortly after Mr. Trump’s claim of how he halted these mandates, he makes the statement: “For many years, companies and jobs were only leaving us. But now they are coming back.” This expands upon the previous utterance and also has the very same intentions: the jobs were leaving because of the previous established elite, and they are coming back because of Donald J. Trump. Just a few lines later, Mr. Trump

declares: “As we rebuild our industries, it is also time to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.” This particular claim is a perfect example not only of politics of insecurity, but also of an empty signifier. What exactly Mr. Trump means by: “our crumbling infrastructure” is not clear, as it can not be objectively or quantitatively defined, but the intention to blame those before him still rings clear, given the use of the word “rebuild” twice.

Another topic that Mr. Trump relies almost exclusively upon politics of insecurity is that of immigration reform. In laying out a four-pillar plan for such reforms, Mr. Trump makes the statements:

Crucially, our plan closes the terrible loopholes exploited by criminals and terrorists to enter our country – and it finally ends the dangerous practice of “catch and release.”

The third pillar ends the visa lottery – a program that randomly hands out green cards without any regard for skill, merit, or the safety of our people. It is time to begin moving towards a merit-based immigration system – one that admits people who are skilled, who want to work, who will contribute to our society, and who will love and respect our country.

These utterances clearly are meant to invoke fear about the current system, and language such as: “terrible loopholes,” “criminals and terrorists,” “dangerous practice,” and: “[without any regard for] the safety of our people,” are all examples of empty signifiers meant to conjure discontent and unease. The former President ends his discussion about immigration reform with the utterance: “It is time to reform these outdated immigration rules, and finally bring our immigration system into the 21st century,” and then uses politics of insecurity to directly transition into his next point: “These reforms will also support our response to the terrible crisis of opioid and drug addiction.” The language apparent in both of these quotes is also filled with fear-mongering tactics with the hope to raise dissent throughout society.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

The frame of domestic threats in this speech is used by former President Trump to blame his predecessors for the myriad of policies that he feels to be the main problems the United States faces. Almost every time Mr. Trump talks about a domestic threat, he is blaming an existing law or policy; on top of this, he often combines this discursive technique with aggressive

language to further elaborate on how those before him are to blame for whatever situation he is discussing. Utterances such as: “For decades, open borders have allowed drugs and gangs to pour into our most vulnerable communities. They have allowed millions of low-wage workers to compete for jobs and wages against the poorest Americans. Most tragically, they have caused the loss of many innocent lives,” are intentionally meant to drive a wedge into society by blaming existing policies put in place by the established elite for all of the dangers that the Nation faces. Not only is Mr. Trump blaming his predecessors, here, but also the language used is highly threatening and is intentionally meant for the ‘people’ to feel alarmed. Furthermore, Mr. Trump does not elaborate upon how he makes the connections of open borders to loss of life or drugs and gangs “pouring” into the country. Former President Trump continues to discuss immigration issues, and after telling a story of how two teenage women were murdered by members of the MS-13 gang, he makes the utterance: “Many of these gang members took advantage of glaring loopholes in our laws to enter the country as unaccompanied alien minors.” Not only does Mr. Trump not identify whether or not the people who killed the two women were actually illegal immigrants, he also does not identify what he means with the empty signifier: “glaring loopholes,” either. What the former President does do, however, and effectively at that, is bring the families of these two women to his speech in order to use their story to his advantage when trying to invoke fear and insecurity into society on a collective level.

When speaking about the immigration reform that I previously discussed in the **Politics of Insecurity** section, Mr. Trump makes the utterance: “In recent weeks, two terrorist attacks in New York were made possible by the visa lottery and chain migration.” Once again, the former President provides no factual evidence on this claim and is simultaneously blaming existing policies for a tragic event that could have been prevented if the established elite were better at their jobs and cared more for the ‘people.’ “For over 30 years, Washington has tried and failed to solve this problem,” is another example of the former President explicitly blaming the shortcomings of his forebears as to why the United States’ status is currently at threat. “After years of wage stagnation, we are finally seeing rising wages,” “old broken system,” “We repealed the core of disastrous Obamacare,” and: “I am asking the Congress to address the fundamental flaws in the terrible Iran nuclear deal,” are all more examples of utterances where Mr. Trump relies directly upon the frame of domestic threats to try and further create the

‘people-elite’ divide that is so necessary for him to maintain support as a Populist leader. “I will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position,” is as explicit as Mr. Trump can possibly get when using the frame of domestic threats in order to blame the established elite before him.

Frame of International Threats:

Former President Trump does not rely upon the frame of international threats as much as domestic or the general frame of politics of insecurity in this particular speech, but the notions of outside threats to the status of the United States are still ever-apparent throughout. Often times, the frame of international threats is combined with that of domestic ones, in order for Mr. Trump to paint the picture that he desires. The above-mentioned immigration reform utterances can be viewed as a frame of a domestic threat because Mr. Trump blames existing policies as to why these “drugs and gangs” are “pouring” into the country, but so too can they be framed as an international threat, because the definition of immigrant implies that the individual comes from somewhere outside of the United States, and is therefore an international threat. Mr. Trump’s claims of open borders can also be seen both as a domestic and an international threat in that it is the U.S.’ (namely, the established elite’s) problem that they allow the borders to be open, as well an international problem because of those people who cross the border coming from outside of the geographical United States. In discussing the terrorist attacks in New York City, Mr. Trump is also highlighting international threats when he claims, as previously quoted, that the attacks: “were made possible by the visa lottery and chain migration.”

One topic where Mr. Trump relies exclusively upon the frame of international threats is that of North Korea. The intention of the utterance: “North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland,” is to invoke fear out of everyone who is listening to the President speak. Furthermore, his remark referring to North Korea as a: “menace that threatens our world” is meant to arise fear and discontent amongst those tuned-in. Mr. Trump also discusses ISIS and al-Qa’ida under the frame of an international threat as well, but simultaneously once again blames existing policies as to why the United States has not been able to fight against them as effectively as they should. “In the past, we have foolishly released hundreds of dangerous terrorists, only to meet them again on the battlefield – including the ISIS

leader, al-Baghdadi,” “I am also asking the Congress to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al-Qa’ida, we continue to have all necessary power to detain terrorists – wherever we chase them down,” and “our military is no longer undermined by artificial timelines, and we no longer tell our enemies our plans,” all display how Mr. Trump is discussing not only the international threat of terrorism, but also the domestic threat of the United States’ lack of ability to properly combat against it, due to poor decision-making by those who came before him.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

The specific frame of national collective narcissism is mostly used in this speech by former President Trump to highlight the exceptional characteristics of U.S.-Americans that are no longer recognized. Moreover, as is often the case with specific national collective narcissism used by Mr. Trump, his utterances are filled with empty signifiers that have no objective definition or quantitative meaning. Statements such as: “But through it all, we have seen the beauty of America’s soul, and the steel in America’s spine,” “the American way,” and “home to an incredible people,” all make the assumption that U.S.-Americans are collectively superior, yet also are not able to be measured or defined in any concrete way (this is not to mention Mr. Trump’s most famous narcissistic claim: “Make America Great Again”). Mr. Trump also makes some collectively narcissistic claims about U.S.-Americans that are more easily definable: “Over the last year, the world has seen what we always knew: that no people on Earth are so fearless, or daring, or determined as Americans,” “the state of our Union is strong because our people are strong,” “but, as Americans always do, we will prevail,” “there is nothing we cannot achieve,” and: “we will not fail.” As one of the key components of national collective narcissism has to do with the lack of recognition by others, Mr. Trump’s utterances of: “This is our new American moment,” “and our people deserve,” and “as America regains its strength,” therefore directly correlate to the frame that their exceptional qualities are not currently acknowledged.

Mr. Trump discussing how: “American taxpayers generously send those same countries billions of dollars in aid every year,” and: “We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling, and the underprivileged all over the world,” alludes to the fact that one of the outstanding characteristics of U.S.-Americans is their hospitality and unselfishness. Whether or not these statements have any factual backing, however, is widely

debated, and the utterances of “generously send” and “we do more than any other country” both are empty signifiers in of themselves. As is the case with each of the speeches analyzed for this thesis, the end of Mr. Trump’s speech is also filled with the frame of national collective narcissism. The utterance of: “Americans fill the world with art and music. They push the bounds of science and discovery. And they forever remind us of what we should never forget: The people dreamed this country. The people built this country. And it is the people who are making America great again,” is a perfect example of how Mr. Trump implies that U.S.-Americans have exceptional qualities. The usage of the word “people,” here, is once again used with the intent to create a divide between anyone who chooses to support Mr. Trump and the established elite who has done so much to take away from them what they deserve: for their exceptional qualities to be sufficiently recognized by others.

V.IV. – FEBRUARY 5, 2019: STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

In this speech, former President Trump relies upon national collective narcissism in the overall sense that the United States has done so much for the world throughout its history, but now they are not able to anymore, thanks to bad policymaking decisions and terrible trade deals by the former established elite. Mr. Trump is calling upon the nation to trust him as their savior who will bring them back to the elite status that they used to and should once again enjoy. As is the case with each of the speeches analyzed so far in this thesis, Mr. Trump repeatedly highlights how his predecessors are to blame for the meager situation in which the country finds itself and simultaneously points out a myriad of international threats that face the nation as well.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

Mr. Trump relies upon the frame of politics of insecurity right away in this speech. His choice to highlight how:

Many of us campaigned on the same core promises: to defend American jobs and demand fair trade for American workers; to rebuild and revitalize our Nation’s infrastructure; to reduce the price of healthcare and prescription drugs; to create an immigration system that is safe, lawful, modern, and secure; and to pursue a foreign policy that puts America’s interests first.

at the very beginning assumes that these promises were not being kept by those before him. Specifically, the utterance of: “rebuild and revitalize,” explicitly states that things must be changed. Intuitively making the claim that the current immigration system is not: “safe, lawful, modern and secure,” is also another way that the former President intentionally attempts to inject fear into society. Another topic where Mr. Trump relies heavily upon the frame of politics of insecurity is, similar to his previous speech, immigration. His utterances of:

The lawless state of our southern border is a threat to the safety, security, and financial well-being of all Americans.

Meanwhile, working-class Americans are left to pay the price for mass illegal immigration – reduced jobs, lower wages, overburdened schools and hospitals, increased crime, and a depleted social safety net.

Tolerance for illegal immigration is not compassionate – it is cruel. One in three women is sexually assaulted on the long journey north.

all paint a very dim picture meant to make U.S.-Americans feel uneasy and apprehensive about the state of their nation’s security. These claims are also filled with empty signifiers as well. The utterances of: “lawless state,” “left to pay the price,” and “depleted social safety net,” all are intended to strike concern, yet concurrently have no objective meaning.

A large deal of the discursive ways in which former President Trump relies upon the frame of politics of insecurity in this particular speech has to do with what Americans are losing. Utterances such as: “America’s crumbling infrastructure,” “Americans pay vastly more than people in other countries for the exact same drugs, often made in the exact same place,” and: “But it must include real, structural change to end unfair trade practices, reduce our chronic trade deficit, and protect American jobs,” all discuss loss in one way or another, be it explicitly or implicitly. The fact that Americans have a crumbling infrastructure means they are losing what was once there, the fact that they pay “vastly more” for drugs means that they are unnecessarily losing money, and the fact that the chronic trade deficit must be reduced and American jobs must be protected means not only are Americans losing money, but also job opportunities. Highlighting all of this forfeiture is a technique used by Mr. Trump in order to blame the established elite in the hopes of creating his ‘people-elite’ divide, as well as a way for him to promise to be the individual who will raise the common U.S.-American out of these

circumstances. The former President's utterance of: "If I had not been elected President of the United States, we would right now, in my opinion, be in a major war with North Korea with potentially millions of people killed," is an almost perfect example of politics of insecurity. This phrase is intentionally meant to conjure a collective state of fear and insecurity, but at the same time has absolutely no way which it can be proven or disproven. Similar to the concept of empty signifiers, former President Trump is relying on fear-mongering discursive techniques through aggressive and apprehensive language that simply cannot be proven true or not true, in order to drive a wedge between the perceived 'elite' and common members of society.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

As is the case with each of the speeches analyzed for this thesis, former President Trump relies upon the frame of domestic threats in order to highlight how the 'elite' component of the desired 'people-elite' divide is to blame for a multitude of problems that U.S-American society faces. The language apparent in all of the phrases coded as the frame of domestic threats in this speech show how Mr. Trump repeatedly seeks to avoid blame for any of the problems that the United States is still facing, since by this point, he had already been President for more than two years. This can be proven with utterances such as: "Together, we can break decades of political stalemate," "problems neglected by leaders of both parties over many decades," "My administration has cut more regulations in a short time than any other administration during its entire tenure," "reversing decades of calamitous trade policies," "I blame our leaders and representatives for allowing this travesty to happen," and: "discredited theories that have failed for decades to yield progress." All of these examples explicitly show how Mr. Trump continuously blames those before him; furthermore, many of these statements show how he will be the one to bring the United States out of their current circumstances as well. The utterance: "My administration has cut more regulations in a short time than any other administration during its entire tenure," exhibits how Mr. Trump is the path towards reclaiming the position that the United States once held and deserves to hold again. The statement: "I blame our leaders and representatives for allowing this travesty to happen," is the most explicit of the bunch, given the use of the utterance: "I blame."

Due to the recurring theme of immigration throughout Mr. Trump's speeches, it is therefore unsurprising that he uses the frame of domestic threats to discuss this topic in this

speech as well. Mr. Trump's claiming: "No issue better illustrates the divide between America's working class and America's political class than illegal immigration. Wealthy politicians and donors push for open borders while living their lives behind walls and gates and guards," is an example where the former President deliberately attempts to call out the elite's way of life and assert that they do not care for the safety or well-being of the common citizen. Moreover, this utterance is yet another example of one that is completely subjective and can neither be proven nor disproven. The claim: "no issue" is an all-or-nothing remark, and although it is almost certainly not the case, it's inherent subjectivity renders it impossible to either confirm or deny. This remark also claims that all "wealthy politicians and donors push for open borders," which actually can be disproven. It is absolutely not the case that every single wealthy politician pushes for open borders, especially since Mr. Trump himself fits the category of a wealthy politician and is standing before the entire nation advocating for just the opposite. The ending of the statement claiming that the elite: "live their lives behind walls and gates and guards," also implies that they do not care about what goes on at the common level of society, and this is used intentionally by Mr. Trump in order to create the divide that he desires.

Frame of International Threats:

The topic where Mr. Trump utilizes the frame of international threats the most in this speech is immigration. The middle of his speech is littered with discursive utterances where the former President is intentionally using aggressive and threatening language to discuss why he believes immigration is such a large problem that the United States faces. His utterances of:

Smugglers use migrant children as human pawns to exploit our laws and gain access to our country.

Human traffickers and sex traffickers take advantage of the wide open areas between our ports of entry to smuggle thousands of young girls and women into the United States and to sell them into prostitution and modern-day slavery.

Tens of thousands of innocent Americans are killed by lethal drugs that cross our border and flood into our cities – including meth, heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl.

The savage gang, MS-13, now operates in 20 different American states, and they almost all come through our southern border. Just yesterday, an MS-13 gang member was taken into custody for a fatal shooting on a subway platform in New York City.

Year after year, countless Americans are murdered by criminal illegal aliens.

are almost hard to read because of how aggressive they are in nature. These utterances are filled with language that is undoubtedly meant to invoke fear into each and every U.S.-American listening, and once again rely heavily on the concept of empty signifiers to inject this collective insecurity and discontent. Furthermore, many of the words utilized by former President Trump are used intentionally due to their subjectivity and lack of objective meaning. “Human pawns,” “wide open areas,” “modern-day slavery,” “almost all,” and: “countless,” are all examples utterances that cannot be objectively defined, yet are still able to be used to fit the narrative that Mr. Trump intends to put across. Additionally, the truth behind how much open borders correlates to the amount of drug overdoses in the United States is not clear in Mr. Trump’s statement, but he nevertheless proceeds to make the assumption that immigration policies are the reason for this epidemic. Likewise, stating that “almost all” of the “savage” members of MS-13 came through the southern border offers no sort of quantitative measurement that could be used for future policy recommendations, but instead simply creates the picture that an open southern border is the main reason why the gang exists in the first place, an assumption that also cannot be validated in any way.

Mr. Trump also makes the claim: “We are now making it clear to China that after years of targeting our industries and stealing our intellectual property, the theft of American jobs and wealth has come to an end.” Although it may be proven that China was targeting industries and stealing intellectual property, the discursive choice of Mr. Trump to add this specific utterance to his speech is nevertheless intended to highlight a situation in order to make U.S.-Americans feel collectively uncomfortable. Language such as the word “theft,” in the statement: “the theft of American jobs and wealth,” is intentionally utilized in order to depict a threat, and therefore directly fits the frame of international threats. Another international threat that Mr. Trump chooses to discuss is that of Iran. He introduces the country as: “the world’s leading state sponsor of terror: the radical regime in Iran.” After making this claim, Mr. Trump follows it up with: “We will not avert our eyes from a regime that chants death to America and threatens genocide against the Jewish people. We must never ignore the vile poison of anti-Semitism, or those who spread its venomous creed. With one voice, we must confront this hatred anywhere and everywhere it occurs.” Although the regime in Iran is not viewed favorably throughout most

of the international community, language such as: “chants death to America and threatens genocide against the Jewish people,” “vile poison,” and: “venomous creed,” are all intended to spread politics of insecurity through the conduit of the frame of an international threat; the specific words used are intentionally placed in order to implement a collective level of insecurity throughout U.S.-American society.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

The specific frame of national collective narcissism is used in this speech by Mr. Trump to highlight the many exceptional qualities U.S.-Americans have and all of the outstanding things they have done as a nation throughout history. Many of the utterances used by the former President in this frame also cannot be credited or discredited, as he relies upon general statements with a large degree of subjectivity. Statements such as: “In the 20th century, America saved freedom, transformed science, and redefined the middle class standard of living for the entire world to see,” “No force in history has done more to advance the human condition than American freedom,” and: “our triumph over communism, our giant leaps of science and discovery, our unrivaled progress toward equality and justice,” are all subjective in nature, and rely exclusively upon inexact discursive utterances in order to assume exceptionality of the U.S.-American. Reading these statements individually forces the reader to question what exactly is meant by each of them, and to what degree of accuracy are the claims being made. Not only does the former President rely on ambiguous statements about the superiority of U.S.-Americans, he also directly claims that members of the community have extraordinary characteristics as well, with the utterance of: “We are Americans. We do the incredible. We defy the impossible. We conquer the unknown.”

Mr. Trump also discusses the future through the frame of national collective narcissism, and highlights how, because of him, the United States will re-claim its privileged status that it deserves. His statement of: “After 24 months of rapid progress, our economy is the envy of the world, our military is the most powerful on earth, and America is winning each and every day,” shows that because of him, Donald J. Trump, America is back on track. The reason one can assume that Mr. Trump intends the listener to believe it is because of him that the U.S. is re-claiming its status is due to the utterance of: “After 24 months.” Given that this is the former President’s second State of the Union Address, he is referring only to his Presidency as making

“rapid progress.” His utterance of: “we will outspend and out-innovate all others by far,” is another example of how, due to their exceptional capabilities, the United States will be better than “others by far.” To end his speech, Mr. Trump offers the statement: “We must keep America first in our hearts. We must keep freedom alive in our souls. And we must always keep faith in America’s destiny—that one Nation, under God, must be the hope and the promise and the light and the glory among all the nations of the world!” This pronouncement also refers to how the United States must remain superior in the future and be an example to all other nations. His reference of: “America’s destiny” as: “one Nation, under God, [that] must be the hope and the promise and the light and the glory among all the nations of the world!” is explicitly narcissistic in nature, and is a perfect example of the frame of national collective narcissism that former President Trump consistently relies upon.

V.V. – FEBRUARY 4, 2020: STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

In this address, former President Trump uses national collective narcissism in the general sense that, because of him, the United States is almost back to having its exceptional status fully recognized by others. Mr. Trump continuously highlights the exceptional characteristics of the United States and its citizens and projects himself as the savior that has brought them back to the status they deserve. Furthermore, Mr. Trump blames his predecessors for all the problems that he and his team have fixed more often in this particular speech than any of the others analyzed to this point.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

Mr. Trump does not rely as heavily upon the general frame of politics of insecurity in this speech as much as he does that of domestic threats, and this is largely due to the fact that this speech is focused upon how he has made the situation better since taking Office. In utilizing the frame of politics of insecurity in the speech, former President Trump is usually referring to past events and highlighting how bad things used to be. This said, there are still multiple instances throughout the speech that Mr. Trump relies upon the specific frame of politics of insecurity when discussing the current situation or the future as well. His utterances of: “Pass the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunities Act – because no parent should be forced to

send their child to a failing government school,” “The United States of America should be a sanctuary for law-abiding Americans, not criminal aliens,” “My administration has undertaken an unprecedented effort to secure the southern border of the United States,” and: “With every action, my administration is restoring the rule of law and reasserting the culture of American freedom,” all heavily include the frame of politics of insecurity in that they are discussing situations that are meant to make the common citizen feel anxious about their circumstances but re-assuring them that Donald J. Trump will make everything better. Moreover, utterances such as: “the great American comeback,” “In fact, unfair trade is perhaps the single biggest reason that I decided to run for President,” and: “We must also rebuild America’s infrastructure,” are all meant to point out prior uncertainties that motivated Mr. Trump to run for the Presidency and become the change from the status quo that the ‘people’ need.

As can be seen in each of the speeches analyzed in this thesis, former President Trump frequently relies upon personal stories of U.S.-American citizens to fit his narrative. Often times, these stories rely exclusively upon the frame of politics of insecurity. This discursive technique is particularly effective in that it evokes sympathetic emotions from the listener due to the fact that the former President is speaking of one of the members of the in-group that he hopes to identify: the American people. The following story from this particular speech is a perfect example of this:

We are joined this evening by Carl and Marsha Mueller. After graduating from college, their beautiful daughter Kayla became a humanitarian aid worker. She once wrote, “Some people find God in church. Some people find God in nature. Some people find God in love. I find God in suffering. I’ve known for some time what my life’s work is, using my hands as tools to relieve suffering.” In 2013, while caring for suffering civilians in Syria, Kayla was kidnapped, tortured, and enslaved by ISIS, and kept as a prisoner of al-Baghdadi himself. After more than 500 horrifying days of captivity, al-Baghdadi murdered young, beautiful Kayla. She was just 26 years old.

There is no question that ISIS is a particularly horrifying and terrible terrorist organization, but Mr. Trump choosing to include this story in his State of the Union Address is intentionally meant to inject a collective feeling of not only sorrow but also fear. Instead of just highlighting the actions that the United States has taken against ISIS since his taking over, former President Trump decides to tell a very heart-wrenching story to reach the deepest level of emotions of the

common U.S.-American citizen. Mr. Trump decides to follow this story up with another one that perfectly fits the frame of politics of insecurity:

One of these American heroes was Army Staff Sergeant Christopher Hake. On his second deployment to Iraq in 2008, Sergeant Hake wrote a letter to his one-year-old son, Gage: “I will be with you again,” he wrote to Gage. “I will teach you to ride your first bike, build your first sand box, watch you play sports, and see you have kids also. I love you son. Take care of your mother. I am always with you. Daddy.”

On Easter Sunday of 2008, Chris was out on patrol in Baghdad when his Bradley Fighting Vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. That night, he made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Sergeant Hake now rests in eternal glory in Arlington, and his wife Kelli is in the Gallery tonight, joined by their son, who is now a 13-year-old and doing very, very well. To Kelli and Gage: Chris will live in our hearts forever. He is looking down on you now. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Thank you both very much.

Again, Mr. Trump is using the personal tragedy of a U.S.-American citizen in order to fit his narrative of how terrorists must be destroyed.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

Former President Trump relies upon the frame of domestic threats more than any other in this speech. As is the case with each of his speeches, the frame is used exclusively to blame the circumstances in which the United States finds itself on the established elite that came before him. Because of this, I will only highlight a few phrases that stand out from the others. The utterances of: “The years of economic decay are over,” and: “Gone too are the broken promises, jobless recoveries, tired platitudes, and constant excuses for the depletion of American wealth, power, and prestige,” directly at the beginning of his speech indicate how those before him have failed, but he, Donald J. Trump, is the reason why these travesties no longer occur. Furthermore, his statements:

True. If we hadn’t reversed the failed economic policies of the previous administration, the world would not now be witnessing this great economic success.

Under the last administration, more than 10 million people were added to the food stamp rolls. Under my administration, 7 million Americans have come off food stamps, and 10 million people have been lifted off of welfare. (Applause.)

In eight years under the last administration, over 300,000 working-age people dropped out of the workforce. In just three years of my administration, 3.5 million people – working-age people – have joined the workforce. (Applause.)

That's why my administration reversed the failing policies of the previous administration on Cuba.

all do the same while explicitly blaming the administration before him, as opposed to implicitly assuming.

Similar to the stories mentioned in the **Politics of Insecurity** section, Mr. Trump also relies on this discursive technique under the frame of domestic threats as well:

Just 29 days ago, a criminal alien freed by the sanctuary city of New York was charged with the brutal rape and murder of a 92-year-old woman. The killer had been previously arrested for assault, but under New York's sanctuary policies, he was set free. If the city had honored ICE's detainer request, his victim would still be alive today.

The state of California passed an outrageous law declaring their whole state to be a sanctuary for criminal illegal immigrants – a very terrible sanctuary – with catastrophic results.

Here is just one tragic example. In December 2018, California police detained an illegal alien with five prior arrests, including convictions for robbery and assault. But as required by California's Sanctuary Law, local authorities released him.

Days later, the criminal alien went on a gruesome spree of deadly violence. He viciously shot one man going about his daily work. He approached a woman sitting in her car and shot her in the arm and in the chest. He walked into a convenience store and wildly fired his weapon. He hijacked a truck and smashed into vehicles, critically injuring innocent victims. One of the victims is – a terrible, terrible situation; died – 51-year-old American named Rocky Jones.

Rocky was at a gas station when this vile criminal fired eight bullets at him from close range, murdering him in cold blood. Rocky left behind a devoted family, including his brothers, who loved him more than anything else in the world. One of his grieving brothers is here with us tonight. Jody, would you please stand? Jody, thank you. (Applause.) Jody our hearts weep for your loss, and we will not rest until you have justice.

These are both examples of instances where Mr. Trump tells tragic stories involving U.S.-American citizens in order to inject collective fear and insecurity throughout all levels of society. Many of the former President's utterances contain completely false statements as well:

Before I came into office, if you showed up illegally on our southern border and were arrested, you were simply released and allowed into our country, never to be seen again. My administration has ended catch and release. (Applause.) If you come illegally, you will now be promptly removed from our country.

One hundred thirty-two lawmakers in this room have endorsed legislation to impose a socialist takeover of our healthcare system, wiping out the private health insurance plans of 180 million very happy Americans. To those watching at home tonight, I want you to know: We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare. (Applause.)

Over 130 legislators in this chamber have endorsed legislation that would bankrupt our nation by providing free taxpayer-funded healthcare to millions of illegal aliens, forcing taxpayers to subsidize free care for anyone in the world who unlawfully crosses our borders. These proposals would raid the Medicare benefits of our seniors and that our seniors depend on, while acting as a powerful lure for illegal immigration. That is what is happening in California and other states. Their systems are totally out of control, costing taxpayers vast and unaffordable amounts of money.

These statements are littered with claims that either classify as empty signifiers, or are simply not true at all. Utterances such as: "you were simply released and allowed into our country, never to be seen again," "legislation that would bankrupt our nation," and: "forcing taxpayers to subsidize free care for anyone in the world who unlawfully crosses our borders," are all examples of Mr. Trump blatantly lying behind the podium. Furthermore, utterances of: "a socialist takeover of our healthcare system," "180 million very happy Americans," "raid the Medicare benefits," and: "unaffordable amounts of money," all have no concrete definition and are completely subjective in nature. Claiming that proposed healthcare reform is a "socialist takeover" is an example of aggressive language that relies upon a certain degree of truth, but the fact that socialism is defined very differently depending in which part of the world you find yourself, this statement has no objective meaning. Also, claiming that 180 million U.S.-Americans that have private healthcare are "very happy" is not only an empty signifier in the sense of there is no way to

define what “very happy” actually means, it is also a broad assumption that is almost certainly not true.

Frame of International Threats:

The international threats that former President Trump frames in this speech have to do with unfair trade deals, NATO, and terrorism. Mr. Trump does not rely very heavily upon this particular frame in this speech, but there are nevertheless still multiple examples. “The days of our country being used, taken advantage of, and even scorned by other nations are long behind us,” is a perfect example of the frame at the very beginning of the speech, and also a case of Mr. Trump once again claiming to be the savior that the ‘people’ needs, which subsequently furthers the gap in the ‘people-elite’ divide. “China’s massive theft of America’s jobs,” is an utterance that is easily classified as an empty signifier, in that “massive theft” has no objective meaning and is also not quantitatively measurable. “For decades, China has taken advantage of the United States,” is another empty signifier as well, both of which are simply meant to create collective unease in the minds of all U.S.-Americans. “We are also getting our allies, finally, to help pay their fair share,” refers to how NATO members were taking advantage of the United States and forcing them to lose money, which also is another instance of former President Trump highlighting unfair circumstances the United States is facing due to international actors. “The barbarians of ISIS,” “bloodthirsty killer known as al-Baghdadi,” “Soleimani was the Iranian regime’s most ruthless butcher, a monster who murdered or wounded thousands of American service members in Iraq,” and: “The Iranian regime must abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons; stop spreading terror, death, and destruction; and start working for the good of its own people,” are all examples of specific language used by Mr. Trump to instill horror and collective insecurity. It is certainly the case that all of the people that Mr. Trump is discussing are indeed terrorists and are responsible for multiple atrocities worldwide, but the former President’s usage of aggressive explanatory adjectives and nouns in each utterance are perfect examples of fear-mongering.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

Mr. Trump relies on the specific frame of national collective narcissism in this speech to highlight how he has brought the United States back to its place atop the international

community. He does not specifically assume that its exceptional status is not recognized, but instead projects himself as the reason as to why it is while simultaneously highlighting how this was not the case with the administrations before him. Almost every instance where Mr. Trump relies upon the frame of national collective narcissism throughout this speech is in reference to how the world admires the United States in one way or another. Utterances such as: “Our military is completely rebuilt, with its power being unmatched anywhere in the world – and it’s not even close,” “we are building the world’s most prosperous and inclusive society,” “It is something that every country in the world is looking up to. They admire,” “The fact is that everybody wants to be where the action is, and the United States of America is indeed the place where the action is,” “These are warfighters that we have – the best in the world...” and: “As the world bears witness tonight,” all assume that the United States holds an exceptional status and the rest of the world is watching as they should be. As is repeatedly the case, most of these statements are filled with empty signifiers as well.

Not only does former President Trump assume that the rest of the international community is in awe of how superior the United States is in every facet, the utterance of: “As we restore American leadership throughout the world,” explicitly states that it is the duty of the U.S. to lead the world as well. His utterances of:

America is a land of heroes. This is a place where greatness is born, where destinies are forged, and where legends come to life.

The American nation was carved out of the vast frontier by the toughest, strongest, fiercest, and most determined men and women ever to walk on the face of the Earth. Our ancestors braved the unknown; tamed the wilderness; settled the Wild West; lifted millions from poverty, disease, and hunger; vanquished tyranny and fascism; ushered the world to new heights of science and medicine; laid down the railroads, dug out the canals, raised up the skyscrapers. And, ladies and gentlemen, our ancestors built the most exceptional republic ever to exist in all of human history, and we are making it greater than ever before.

We are Americans. We are pioneers. We are the pathfinders. We settled the New World, we built the modern world, and we changed history forever by embracing the eternal truth that everyone is made equal by the hand of Almighty God

all show us that Mr. Trump undoubtedly believes that the United States is the best country in the world and is therefore entitled to privileged treatment. Although most every collectively

narcissistic claim that the former President makes is subjective in nature and relies almost exclusively upon the concept of the empty signifier, he is still effective in discursively instilling a sense of pride in everyone that identifies themselves as a member of his in-group.

V.VI. – JANUARY 19, 2021: FAREWELL ADDRESS

Former President Trump’s Farewell Address differs greatly from the previous speeches analyzed in this thesis. Mr. Trump does not rely very much upon the frames of politics of insecurity or foreign and international threats in this speech, but there are a fair amount of utterances that fit the frame of national collective narcissism, however. The overall way in which the frame of national collective narcissism is used in this address is to define how and why the United States was able to adapt and overcome all of the threats they faced when Mr. Trump took over as President. Mr. Trump’s discussion of what took place during his Presidency frequently makes the assumption that U.S.-Americans were able to do as much as they did during his Presidency due to their exceptional qualities.

Frame of Politics of Insecurity:

Although the former President does not rely upon the frame of politics of insecurity nearly as much as the other speeches, the frame is still apparent on more than one occasion throughout his address. For instance, the first statement made by Mr. Trump fits the frame appropriately: “My fellow Americans: Four years ago, we launched a great national effort to rebuild our country, to renew its spirit, and to restore the allegiance of this government to its citizens. In short, we embarked on a mission to make America great again – for all Americans.” The specific language used in this utterance makes the assumption that this “great national effort” was necessary in the first place, which has the potential to leave some U.S.-Americans with a sense of unease. Furthermore, highlighting how the government did not have allegiance to its citizens assumes that this is because the established elite at the time of former President Trump’s takeover of the Presidency did not have the ‘people’ in mind, which in turn is intended to once again create the ‘people-elite’ divide that is Mr. Trump’s overall desire. This particular statement is also filled with empty signifiers, such as: “great national effort,” “rebuild our country,” “renew its spirit,” and: “a mission to make America great again.” Each of these

specific utterances are subjective in nature and intended to assume that the United States needed to be rebuilt in order to enjoy the privileged treatment that it deserves but was not receiving.

A large deal of the usage of this particular frame in Mr. Trump's farewell address is also to point out how he himself is the reason for much of what was done during the time of his Presidency. The utterance of: "For years, the American people pleaded with Washington to finally secure the nation's borders. I am pleased to say we answered that plea and achieved the most secure border in U.S. history," is a perfect example of this. In this statement, Mr. Trump highlights a problem that he inherited due to those elites before him not doing their job adequately and then proceeds to specify how he (notice the usage of the word: "I") is the reason for the improvement in status. This utterance also relies upon a glaring empty signifier to prove the point: "most secure border in U.S. history." What is meant here by the former President is completely unclear, but he proceeds to make the utterance anyway in order to project himself as a hero that the 'people' deserve and have not often received.

Frame of Domestic Threats:

The only instance in this speech where Mr. Trump relies upon the frame of domestic threats is also a retrospective jab at the ways of the established elite that came before him: "Another administration would have taken 3, 4, 5, maybe even up to 10 years to develop a vaccine. We did in nine months." Mr. Trump is referring to the production of two COVID-19 vaccinations, here, and once again relies on no evidence of truth whatsoever in his statement. This specific utterance is simply just a jab at the established political system and has no objective or quantitative meaning in any way. This statement is similar to the secure border statement analyzed in the **Politics of Insecurity** section in that it identifies a problem and then portrays Mr. Trump as the one who is the solution to it. Furthermore, his utterance of: "They said it couldn't be done but we did it. They call it a 'medical miracle,' and that's what they're calling it right now: a 'medical miracle'," alludes to the fact that due to Mr. Trump and his team, a "medical miracle" was enjoyed by U.S.-Americans, and if it weren't for them, it would not have been able to be done.

Frame of International Threats:

The frame of international threats is only relied upon one time in Mr. Trump's Farewell Address, and similar to the domestic threat, the utterance highlights how Mr. Trump stood up to the threat and that the condition was there in the first place due to politicians before him lacking policymaking skill:

We reclaimed our sovereignty by standing up for America at the United Nations and withdrawing from the one-sided global deals that never served our interests. And NATO countries are now paying hundreds of billions of dollars more than when I arrived just a few years ago. It was very unfair. We were paying the cost for the world. Now the world is helping us.

This statement is intentionally meant to indicate how Mr. Trump inherited a specific situation of the United States being mistreated by international actors, but because of him, this is no longer the case. Mr. Trump does not elaborate how the deals were "one-sided," or how they "never served our interests," but the utterances nonetheless assume that the established elite before him were the reason why these deals were made in the first place.

Frame of National Collective Narcissism:

The specific frame of national collective narcissism is used in this speech by Mr. Trump to reflect upon his time in office. Although a large number of the utterances highlight the exceptional characteristics of the United States and its citizens, many of the statements do not fit the aspect of the definition of national collective narcissism that pertains to how their privileged status is not currently recognized. This has largely to do with the fact that this particular speech is a Farewell Address, and former President Trump is simply reminiscing over his time in Office and discussing what he believes to be the reasons why U.S.-American citizens are superior in the first place. His utterances of:

As a result of our bold diplomacy and principled realism, we achieved a series of historic peace deals in the Middle East. Nobody believed it could happen.

What has always allowed America to prevail and triumph over the great challenges of the past has been an unyielding and unashamed conviction in the nobility of our country and its unique purpose in history.

For nearly 250 years, in the face of every challenge, Americans have always summoned our unmatched courage, confidence, and fierce independence. These are the miraculous traits that once led millions of everyday citizens to set out

across a wild continent and carve out a new life in the great West. It was the same profound love of our God-given freedom that willed our soldiers into battle and our astronauts into space.

point out specific characteristics of U.S.-American as to why Mr. Trump believes that they are entitled to privileged treatment. As is often the case, these statements are scattered with empty signifiers as well. Utterances of: “bold diplomacy and principled realism,” “historic peace deals,” “unyielding and unashamed conviction in the nobility of our country and its unique purpose in history,” and: “unmatched courage, confidence, and fierce independence,” are examples of linguistic assertions that cannot be objectively defined, but are nonetheless intended to highlight outstanding aspects that U.S.-American citizens collectively hold.

Mr. Trump not only points out the characteristics that he believes to be the reasons why United States citizens are entitled to privileged treatment, he also explicitly states that the United States is the best country in the world. His statements:

As the world’s most powerful nation, America faces constant threats and challenges from abroad. But the greatest danger we face is a loss of confidence in ourselves, a loss of confidence in our national greatness.

This is a republic of proud citizens who are united by our common conviction that America is the greatest nation in all of history. We are, and must always be, a land of hope, of light, and of glory to all the world.

As long as the American people hold in their hearts deep and devoted love of country, then there is nothing that this nation cannot achieve.

are all examples of an inflated view by Mr. Trump of America that needs external validation. Although once again none of these particular utterances are provable and are extremely subjective and based solely upon opinion, Mr. Trump nevertheless takes the liberty to assert that the United States is the best country on the planet and is therefore exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment.

VI. DISCUSSION

It is seen as a common thread throughout all of the speeches analyzed for the sake of this thesis that former President Trump relies heavily upon the frames of politics of insecurity and national collective narcissism in his political discourse in order to create the ‘people-elite’ divide that he instinctively desires as a Populist actor. The predominant way in which Mr. Trump relies upon these frames is in order to discursively create a collective status of anxiety and insecurity by blaming the multitude of foreign and international threats that he inherited from the established U.S.-American political elite that came before him. In blaming his predecessors, Mr. Trump is intentionally attempting to drive a wedge through the core of society in order to project himself, the Populist actor, as the savior members of his in-group need in order to return the privileged status and recognition of their exceptional qualities that they used to enjoy throughout the international community.

VI.I. – IDENTITY POLITICS:

The theme of identity politics can be seen all throughout former President Trump’s political discourse in the speeches analyzed for this thesis. As discussed in the **Theoretical Framework** section, Fukuyama makes the argument that identity politics today are about “politics of resentment” and the desire for public recognition of the dignity of whichever in-group that one identifies with. In the case of Mr. Trump’s political discourse, he constantly plays on this intrinsic desire to be recognized in pointing out all of the ways that this dignity has been disregarded not only by international actors, but also by the current established elite at the time of his taking Office. Former President Trump’s constant utterances under each of the frames analyzed in the **Discourse Analysis** section, and especially the frame of domestic threats, are extremely effective in creating a divide between his perceived in-group of the U.S.-American ‘people’ and the ‘elite.’ This disconnect takes form due to Mr. Trump’s linguistic creation of a supposedly homogenous demographic who has not been treated properly and are facing the bulk of their problems due to the imagined community of the ‘elite’ that does not care for them or recognize their struggles. This is a principally Populist maneuver, given that the core of Populism lies in a divide between the misrepresented demographic as the “us” versus the corrupt elite as the “them.”

VI.II. – NATIONAL COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM:

National Collective Narcissism is the main theme of this thesis and so too is it the main theme of former President Trump's political discourse. The overall goal of each of the speeches analyzed for this thesis is for Mr. Trump to point out how the United States is the greatest country in the world and how this is no longer recognized. He has a myriad of ways in which he goes about proving this point, but it is undeniably the overarching theme of each of his speeches that were addressed to the entire United States population at large. As can be seen in the **Discourse Analysis** section, former President Trump relies on the frame of national collective narcissism both in a general sense in each of his speeches, as well as a specific one. What I mean here is that the overall goal of each speech is to point out how the United States is better than any other country in the world, and only due to lack of care on the part of the 'elites' is this no longer recognized, which is a very general sense of national collective narcissism. In terms of specific national collective narcissism, former President Trump repeatedly highlights clear-cut reasons as to why he believes U.S.-Americans are superior and deserve privileged treatment and how their status is not sufficiently recognized by the rest of the international community. Given that the central theme for national collective narcissism is the recognition of the in-group's exceptionalism, Mr. Trump constantly making explicit references to this throughout all of his speeches makes it the central role in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide in President Donald Trump's political discourse.

VI.III. – POLITICS OF INSECURITY:

Politics of insecurity is almost as central to former President Trump's political discourse as national collective narcissism. The way in which Mr. Trump relies upon politics of insecurity is to create a collective state of anxiety due to a supposed multitude of existential internal and external vulnerabilities. This is the main disparity between politics of insecurity and national collective narcissism in Mr. Trump's political discourse analyzed for this thesis in that he uses politics of insecurity as the frame in which to highlight many of his collectively narcissistic claims. That is to say, in order to discuss how the United States has gotten to a point where their exceptional qualities are no longer recognized, former President Trump relies upon the frame of politics of insecurity. In doing so, Mr. Trump is injecting collective angst and unease into society with the intention of projecting himself as the way out of these circumstances. This is

another quintessential Populist maneuver in that former President Trump plays on members of his perceived in-group's insecurities in order to gain support from them. As stated in the **Theoretical Framework** section, one of the main goals of politics of insecurity is agenda shaping and it is common for "threat amplification" to follow. This can be seen time and time again throughout the speeches analyzed in this thesis, and although most of the issues that former President Trump discusses are based in some sort of reality, the level of threat they impose is often linguistically intensified through the practice of utilizing empty signifiers.

VI.IV. – STATUS ANXIETY:

Former President Trump relies on the notion of status anxiety in his political discourse in order to try and generate a following even from members of traditionally wealthy classes. The way in which he does this is point out how international threats are either taking jobs from the United States or treating them unfairly in trade deals. Furthermore, Mr. Trump's reoccurring theme of immigration is also intended to pose a threat to the status of the demographic that he hopes to identify as the U.S.-American 'people.' As discussed in the **Theoretical Framework** section, given that status anxiety has to do with the fear of losing one's standing relative to others in a social hierarchy and explains how sometimes members of a high social status will still feel threatened and generate negative feelings towards minorities or immigrants, Mr. Trump's decision to constantly highlight how immigrants and other foreign actors are supposedly causing great loss to all U.S.-Americans alike is intended as an attempt to enlarge his in-group in order to garner even more support. This technique is also Populist by definition in that Mr. Trump is not only intending to expand his support group, but also constantly highlighting how the established elite has done nothing about this threat to the status of his perceived in-group and how, he, Donald J. Trump, will be the true politician who understands the 'people' and stops all of these threats to their status.

VI.V. – HEARTLAND THEORY:

Mr. Trump relies almost exclusively upon heartland theory throughout his political discourse analyzed for this thesis. All of his collectively narcissistic remarks of how the United States needs to return to its privileged status imply that at some point in the past it was some sort

of utopia. The main factor in the definition of heartland theory is the concept of what has been lost, and Mr. Trump's repeated references of how much his predecessors allowed to be taken from the United States and how they are solely to blame as to why America needs to be made "Great Again" unequivocally align with the notion of heartland theory. Mr. Trump constantly glorifies the past of the United States throughout his discourse, and oftentimes, through the usage of empty signifiers, refers to a romanticized version of a situation in the past that is not objectively definable. The former President's intentions in relying on the notion of the heartland is once again in order to enlarge his support base. As stated in the **Theoretical Framework** section, when a group of individuals long for their collective past, they identify themselves with it, and start to feel as if they are one cumulative entity, and this is what Mr. Trump hopes for when he constantly refers to the time when America was "Great."

VII. CONCLUSION

The aim of my research was to identify the role that national collective narcissism plays in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide in President Donald Trump's political discourse. Based on a qualitative discourse analysis of six speeches addressed to the entire population of the United States at-large during his presidency, it can be concluded that national collective narcissism is the essential component in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide that Mr. Trump sought to create with his political discourse. The results indicate that former President Trump continuously highlighted how he believed that the American 'people' are entitled to privileged treatment and that their exceptional characteristics were no longer sufficiently recognized by the rest of the international community. Furthermore, former President Trump largely relied upon politics of insecurity in order to justify these claims. In relying on national collective narcissism and politics of insecurity, Mr. Trump was able to effectively drive a wedge through the core of U.S.-American society and further widen the divergence between the two quintessential components of Populist rhetoric: the misrepresented "us" and the corrupt elite "them."

Mr. Trump utilized the various other theories discussed in this thesis (namely: identity politics, status anxiety, and heartland theory) in order to expand upon his reliance on national collective narcissism to intentionally further polarize U.S.-American society as well. All of the notions discussed in this thesis intricately mesh in order to create a collective feeling of anxiety

and unease amongst U.S.-American society. The purpose of Mr. Trump invoking this collective angst and uncertainty was in order to carry out the basic Populist maneuver of establishing himself as the only way out of the multitude of threats that the nation faced during the time of his takeover. Former President Trump's perpetual blaming of the established elite not only is intended to create a 'people-elite' divide, but is also a way for him to shift blame from himself and his administration. Blaming his predecessors in his Inaugural Address and the next two speeches analyzed in this thesis is justifiable in that all three of these speeches came within a year of his election to the Presidency, but given that Mr. Trump continued to blame who he deemed to be the elite class in the subsequent speeches largely appears to be a dodging technique on the part of the former President. Nevertheless, former President Trump effectively identified his perceived in-group as the U.S.-American 'people' through linguistic practices of all of the theories examined in this thesis, and in doing so was able to influence them into thinking that their status had weakened due to a myriad of existential threats that only he the Populist actor could save them from.

It must be stated that throughout the conduction of my research, some important findings presented themselves. When coming up with a research design, it was apparent that national collective narcissism would play an integral role in former President Trump's political discourse, but not that politics of insecurity would play such a large part as well. After qualitatively analyzing all of Mr. Trump's speeches intended to address the U.S.-American population at-large, it became clear that politics of insecurity was almost as central to the creation of the 'people-elite' divide as national collective narcissism. This said, as clarified in the **Discussion** section, where the difference is drawn is that Mr. Trump used politics of insecurity in order to strengthen his collectively narcissistic claims. The overall goal of his political discourse analyzed in this thesis is still to point out all of the ways in which everything has been taken away from the American 'people,' which nevertheless directly correlates to the concept of national collective narcissism. Furthermore, a major shortcoming of the research identified during the discourse analysis is the coding of terms that generally highlight exceptional characteristics of the United States such as: "American spirit," "Freedom," "heart and fight of America," and a small number more. Utterances such as these are utilized by every U.S.-American President, and being able to code them in order to fit the frame of national collective narcissism benefited the research. The justification in still coding them as such, however, is that

Mr. Trump used them far more often and much more aggressively than his predecessors. A recommendation for further research on the topic could address these nationally collective narcissistic phrases that have been used by U.S.-American Presidents throughout the nation's long history and analyze the psychological role they play in U.S.-American exceptionalism as well as Presidential political discourse.

Apart from identifying the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide in President Donald Trump's political discourse, another main goal of my research was to help others understand the dangers inherent to the global rise of Populism, and how it has become the central challenge to liberal democracy that the international community faces today. By highlighting the role of national collective narcissism in the construction of the 'people-elite' divide, I have examined a specific strategy of Populist actors that is not largely researched academically. Given that the creation of the 'us-them/people-elite' divide is such a foundational component of Populism in general, the in-depth multidisciplinary case study that I have carried out is essential in analyzing a very important aspect of a major political phenomenon that the world collectively faces today. Continuing to formulate new ways in which to examine the broader concept of Populism and all that it entails is the only way we can adequately combat against it in the first place. As we have seen throughout the course of this thesis: no matter which side of the political spectrum, Populism offers an exorbitant amount of difficulties wherever it presents itself. Due to the fact that Populist actors contain the ability to create a 'people-elite' divide as effectively and destructively as Mr. Trump did during the time of his campaign and presidency, further research on all facets of Populism is not only warranted, but should also be desired by us as academics and members of the international community.

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