

U.S. Presidential Election 2020 and Trump's False Realism

Muhammad Ali Baig

Abstract

Trump's ascent to power as the 45th President of the United States of America in 2016 was received as a shock by the international community, most importantly its European allies. However, it was welcomed by populist and right-leaning leaders such as the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The latter was the first head of state to meet the President-Elect at the Trump Tower in New York City in November 2016. It was speculated that Trump would envisage a foreign policy pivoted upon Realist principles. Indeed, Trump administration's second National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster asserted that Trump would articulate "Principled Realism." However, "Trump's False Realism" in the articulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy caused damage to the established balance of power and the hard-earned trust of allies besides jeopardizing his election win. This article attempts to analyse four major reasons that contributed to Trump's loss of the U.S. Presidential Election 2020, of which three are domestic and one is foreign.

Keywords: Trump, Realism, U.S. Presidential Election 2020, U.S. Foreign Policy, U.S. Domestic Politics.

Introduction

The 42nd President of the United States (U.S.) William Jefferson Clinton (Bill Clinton) once famously argued that "[t]he more time I spend on foreign policy the more I become convinced that there is no longer a clear distinction between what is foreign and domestic."¹ Alternatively, we can safely assume that foreign and domestic policies are greatly influenced by one another, and it is rather arduous to distinguish the combined effects the two produce in the long

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run. However, the theoretical and doctrinal orientation of both policies can be different in certain ways. For instance, the U.S. President Dwight David Eisenhower projected a realist foreign policy by means of the Eisenhower Doctrine. Conversely, on the domestic level, it pitched thoughts of President Woodrow Wilson and elements of American Exceptionalism in its election manifesto, calling for uniting the American nation. Also, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, domestically pursued a "moral crusade against communism."ⁱⁱ Later, Eisenhower completed two terms in office and resigned. Unlike President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the latter got elected four times and remained in office until his death in April 1945.ⁱⁱⁱ

Alternatively, Eisenhower envisioned a realist approach in foreign dealings, and somehow adopted a liberal outlook in its domestic policy. However, the dislike of the realist tradition in the U.S. domestic politics was best explained by Mearsheimer and it noted rightly that "realism is largely alien to American culture."^{iv} Arguably, the articulation of a foreign policy pivoted upon realist principles, served American interests and helped the administrations to get re-elected. Nonetheless, the false and distorted interpretation of realism in foreign policy decision-making not only eroded American global power but also projected feeble determination of its leadership. The latter foreign policy behaviour pivoted upon false realism faded the leadership's image domestically as well as internationally; consequently, the administration failed to get the popular vote. The Trump Administration can be cited as a classic example of such a case, where it pursued "principled [false] realism"^v domestically as well as internationally; as a consequence, it failed to get re-elected.

Naturally, whenever a candidate gets elected or loses a contest to its competitor, there are respective feelings of joy and sorrow. Though celebrations dominate in welcoming the newly elected candidate or to congratulate the incumbent, nonetheless, much of the time, all the celebrations take place domestically, since contests such as elections are domestic matters which may or may not have international implications. However, quite

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strangely, the first two weeks of November 2020 saw some unprecedented events. In the aftermath of the U.S. Presidential Election 2020 and the defeat of the incumbent Republican U.S. President Donald J. Trump at the hands of the Democrat nominee Joe Biden, the celebrations went beyond the domestic level. Large groups of people gathered in London, Paris, and other big cities around the world to rejoice Trump's defeat. Surprisingly, people who were celebrating Trump's defeat were not rejoicing Biden's victory. Perhaps, it was the first time in recorded history that the ouster of a sitting U.S. President was celebrated internationally. However, if we look closely, we may find reasons behind such vehement revelries.

Generally, any election is a surprising event. For instance, the American political and electoral history witnessed such a surprise on November 4, 1948, when the then Democrat candidate Harry S. Truman defeated the challenger Republican nominee Thomas E. Dewey. Indeed, the media was that much adamant of Dewey's victory that newspapers like *Chicago Tribune* published the headline "Dewey Defeats Truman" beforehand.^{vi} Likewise, Republican Trump's victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton in November 2016, was another surprise for the American people and the world at large. Nonetheless, the latter surprise was not so pleasant and immediately after Trump took office, his entire administration remained turbulent. For instance, Trump's first National Security Advisor and former U.S. Army General Michael Flynn became the shortest serving advisor and had to resign from office with serving only 22 days in office.^{vii}

An Overview of the Trump Administration

Trump articulated an "America First" grand strategy and taunted the "U.S. allies as free riders."^{viii} It was argued before that "Trump's foreign dealings in relation to America's allies are causing damage to the established balance of power and the hard-earned trust of allies."^{ix} Such arguments manifested again and again during the Trump Administration. However, such dealings were not limited to foreign policy only; a radical approach was also adopted in domestic transactions. From the very start until the end, the Trump administration was nothing

but a turbulent wave, as if it did not know where to begin and where to end. Among the very first steps taken by Trump was to impose a unique Travel Ban on people coming from certain Muslim majority countries. Such a ban was taken as a defiant abrogation of American values by the media. However, the word “restriction” would have sufficed to address the criticism; nonetheless, the then White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer made things worse by defending Trump and putting the blame on the media for coining and using the term “Travel Ban.” Also, Trump’s campaign manager and later White House Chief Strategist and Senior Counsellor to the President, Steve Bannon, as well as Trump’s Deputy Assistant Sebastian Gorka were termed racist and xenophobic and were disliked by people at large. Gorka is considered the chief propagandist behind Trump’s Travel Ban who originated the term “Radical Islamic Terrorism.”^x

Arguably, Trump’s ascent to power was a by-product of Barack Obama’s continued global overstretch and unnecessary international overcommitments. Trump exploited the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and called President Obama “silly” and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as “Crooked”. Besides, he took huge advantage of events that take place in the September 2012, like the storming of the U.S. Embassy in Benghazi, Libya.^{xi} The latter unfortunate event resulted in the deaths of the U.S. Ambassador to Libya John Christopher Stevens along with three other U.S. citizens. Such avoidable obligations and military engagements by Obama administration were used by Trump to incite the Republican voters in his favour. The events in Benghazi were dubbed Clinton’s criminal negligence and reportedly, Trump successfully exploited the motion picture *13 Hours* (2016)^{xii} (the re-enactment of the events that took place in Benghazi) to malign Secretary Clinton.^{xiii}

This study is novel in that it presents theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence in explaining Trump’s defeat in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020. The article offers a brief assessment of Trump’s political psychology and conduct. It then moves towards probing his strange relationship with his

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Russian counterpart and the strategic environment of U.S. allies under Trump. The study then explains Trump's incompetence vis-à-vis Covid-19 and his potential to revive the Civil War conflict. It also considers Trump's portrayal in the media and attempts to probe why Trump lost the election. The study concludes that Trumpism has become a permanent aspect of American politics, and the legacy of such a political icon is likely to continue to cast its shadow over American foreign and domestic dealings. Moreover, it argues that Trump continues to exercise considerable sway in the Grand Old Party (GOP) (as he was impeached twice but could not be removed) and in the foreseeable future, Trump himself, his family, or close associates will likely run for the president.

Trump's Ascent and the Global Rise of the Right

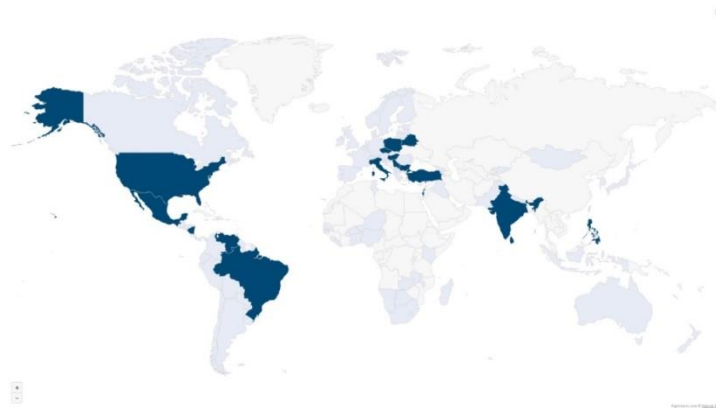
To understand Trump better, it is imperative to understand his psychology. Undoubtedly, Trump is an audacious person; however, there exists a thin line between audacity and stupidity—perhaps Trump moves in a to-and-fro motion between the two. This pendulum-like activity has dominated his entire administration. Conceivably, the perfect example of such behaviour was rendered by Trump in his dealings with North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-Un. First, Trump threatened unprecedented 'fire and fury' and then met Kim and even entered North Korean territory along with his North Korean counterpart.^{xiv} The same or even worse behaviour was seen in Trump's dealings with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump repeatedly said that he was tough on Russia; however, Trump's ascent to power was the product of Russian meddling in the U.S. Presidential Election 2016. Trump reached "treasonous" heights in his meeting with Putin during the Helsinki Summit in July 2018 and according to *BBC News*, he even sided with Russia against the FBI.

It is speculated that Trump admires dictators like Putin, Xi Jinping, and Kim; nonetheless, the American political culture and structure do not permit him to behave as such. The global rise of the right is obvious today. The rise of populist leaders and parties include Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Rodrigo Duterte in Philippines, Roberto

Fiore in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France, Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom, Narendra Modi in India, Norbert Hofer in Austria, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (Figure 1).^{xv}

Trump promised to “build a wall” between the U.S. and Mexico, and vowed to “drain the swamp” in Washington D.C. Such pledges greatly incited the people who were already unhappy with the people sitting in the capital. It was noted that “Trump was able to leverage populist anger for political advantage in ways that other candidates were not and that such anti-elitism played an important and underappreciated role in explaining the outcome of the presidential election.”^{xvi} In retrospect, Trump’s pendulum-like foreign policy behaviour dominated his dealings with Iran and North Korea.

Figure 1: An illustration of the Global Rise of the Right till 2020^{xvii}



Trump’s Political Psychology and Conduct: An Assessment

The documentaries *You’ve Been Trumped* (2011) and its sequel *A Dangerous Game* (2014), made serious arguments regarding Trump’s psychology and personality. It was argued that Trump was an absolute ignorant regarding the local ecosystem and environmental considerations in relation to making golf courses. The American revisionist and award-winning filmmaker Michael Moore made serious criticism on Trump’s decisions and actions. Moore argued that American people are liberal and promote such values. Besides, Moore’s comments, I argue that Trump’s compromised position on climate change

and global warming has had serious consequences for his foreign and domestic outlook. Such a radical yet unrealistic stance was negatively received by Americans at large. It is worth noting that these documentaries were produced long before Trump's ascent to presidential power and considerable influence within the GOP. It is also notable that such severe criticism that Trump's actions garnered reached its culmination at the end of his four years in power, though Trump did not pay any heed to it.

Trump and Putin: A Strange Relationship

On his visit to West Germany in June 1963, the 35th U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy famously said: "Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names."^{xviii} Even before becoming president, Trump hailed Russian President Vladimir Putin, his policies, and after assuming office, he frequently praised his counterpart.^{xix} Russian meddling in the U.S. Presidential Election 2016 was confirmed by the U.S. intelligence community including the National Security Agency (NSA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) while the media was protesting this unprecedented assault on American electoral process. Conversely, Trump not only praised Putin but went a step further at the Helsinki Summit in 2018 by believing in Putin's denial of such interference and criticising his own intelligence agencies. The former director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) John Brennan condemned Trump's comments by calling the action as "Nothing short of treasonous."^{xx} Moreover, Trump called Putin a "competitor" and "not my enemy." However, Trump's inane arguments were rebuffed by his fellow Republican (late) Senator John McCain who argued that "Putin is not America's friend, nor merely a competitor. Putin is America's enemy."^{xxi}

Trump and U.S. Allies: An Era of Confusion

Trump's presidency was unique in many ways; however, he was perhaps the first post-Second World War American president who created unmatched confusion regarding the U.S. system of alliances. It is to be remembered here that the post-war American alliances structured the international system as

bipolar and ensured the longest peace in history.^{xxii} However, Trump made excessive demands from its allies, and the future of alliances including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) seemed gloomy. For instance, Trump's rhetoric in relation to NATO-members, Germany and Turkey, was unnecessarily aggressive, and it resulted in renewed ties of both states with American competitors, Russia and China. Likewise, Trump's relation with Australia made the future of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) a bit uncertain. Arguably, alliances erected on security and economic necessities have remained viable instruments in the realist tradition, and weakening such effective arrangements meant strengthening the adversaries and their respective alliances. However, Trump readily strengthened the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (also known as Quad); however, his focus remained on the role of Japan and India in relation to the fourth member Australia.^{xxiii}

Trump's Unilateral Withdrawal from International Agreements and Organizations

Trump withdrew unilaterally from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Paris Agreement, and more importantly the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Withdrawing from the latter garnered almost nothing and could not enforce Iran from enriching uranium. He also demanded its European allies to increase their input for the sustenance of the NATO by contributing at least 2 percent of their respective GDP. On NATO, he somehow adopted a realist course of action and was rational; nevertheless, maintaining an unfriendly rhetoric in relation to Germany and other European allies could not benefit America. In hindsight, Trump's position on NATO weakened the alliance and deteriorated American relations with its European allies. The main beneficiary of such events was none other than Russia. Such unilateral initiatives dwindled American multilateralism and garnered negative response internationally. Perhaps, Trump could not understand the basic principle i.e., great power comes with great responsibility. It is to be noted that for realists, international agreements and organizations are certain instruments which serve great powers

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in maintaining their global footprint.^{xxiv} However, Trump exhibited false interpretation of realism on these matters of grand strategic nature.

Trump remained deeply focused on persuading Vice President Mike Pence to refrain from invoking the 25th Amendment that could remove him from power. Furthermore, Trump's "Maximum Pressure" strategy in relation to Iran was not much successful and withdrawing from the JCPOA proved rather unfruitful; nonetheless, he targeted Iranian key military leader Major General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq and killed his affiliated leaders in reducing Iran's influence in the Middle East in January 2020.

Why Trump Lost: Covid-19 and Trump's Domestic Incompetence

During Trump's four years, he revealed his remorseless obliviousness and unnecessarily risky behaviour on several occasions. However, his response towards the pandemic was the most controversial. In the beginning, Trump argued that Coronavirus was the "Chinese Virus" and unsuccessfully tried to place the blame on China regarding the origin of the virus.^{xxv} Further, Trump boldly rebuffed the provision of a country-wide lockdown, saying that America was not made for lockdown. Later, Trump himself refused to wear a face mask; called the virus a minor flu; and blatantly urged the American people not to be fearful of such a virus. Afterwards, Trump also contracted the virus and was given special medical treatment. However, according to World Health Organization (WHO), till April 16, 2021, in America alone, more than 31 million people were still infected with the virus and 559,010 died of Covid-19.^{xxvi} To make things worse, another surge in the already ascending numbers was also predicted.

In retrospect, it is quite strange that despite Trump's attribution of Covid-19 as a Chinese virus and his National Security Strategy of 2017's terming of China as a "challenge to American power,"^{xxvii} Trump put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of the special task force in battling the virus instead of taking the lead himself. Trump's incompetence in relation to

Covid-19 was severely criticised not only by the politicians and academics but the American media that took it very seriously. It is not ambitious to argue however that had Trump taken right and timely decisions, thousands of American lives could have been saved.

Acting against the dictates of realism, Trump blamed the unsubstantiated theory regarding the origin of the coronavirus on China. However, irrespective of the origin of Covid-19, in hindsight, had the theory been conceived, crafted, and executed in a realist manner with the primary objective of injuring America's competitor, Trump would have seriously incapacitated China and could also have made Beijing to pay reparations for the damages caused on a global scale. Or in the least such an endeavour would have greatly maligned Xi Jinping's "China Dream."^{xxviii} The U.S. and its European allies had done this in the past when they penalised Germany by fixing on it responsibility for the outbreak of both world wars; decimating it by means of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919; and forcing Berlin to pay war reparations.^{xxix} However, Trump's short-sightedness could not achieve long-term gains.

Another evidence of Trump's short-sightedness was the well-organized and thought-out plan to attack the U.S. capital Washington D.C. on January 6, 2021, one of the darkest days in the U.S. history. However, it was neither a coincidence nor the last such attempt to stage a coup d'état. I argue that Trump has effectively divided the American nation on the basis of political beliefs and affiliations. It has also resurrected the old cleavage of North vs South by effectively propagating conspiracy theories. For instance, the recently released comedy motion picture *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm* (2020) showed a few Republicans reportedly declaring Democrats to be more dangerous than the Coronavirus.^{xxx}

Why Trump Lost: Racism and Sexism

Regarding Russia, it was argued by many that Putin has some compromising evidence against Trump like a video or some documentation, which could significantly put Trump off-balance in his domestic as well as foreign dealings. However,

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Trump's relationship with that of women is not a myth. He has already been referred to as misogynist, sexist, and racist.^{xxxii} In February 2017, Meryl Streep, one of the most celebrated and veteran *Hollywood* actresses, slammed the then newly elected Trump on account of his past behaviour with women.^{xxxiii} The Stormy Daniels episode revealed some of the most controversial acts committed by Trump. Moreover, he made contemptuous remarks about Ilhan Omar and Rashida Talib, democrats serving as members in the U.S. House of Representatives.^{xxxiii} The American people are thus critical of this behaviour on part of a president.

It would not be far-fetched to conclude that the hike in racial hate crimes in the U.S. is a direct result of Trump's patronage for such heinous activities. The disturbing death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, at the hands of the Minneapolis police officers can be taken as the evidence of such patronage. Instead of supporting an independent inquiry to probe the matter, the following country-wide protests were taken as an attempted rebellion by Trump who tweeted: "When the looting starts, the shooting starts."^{xxxiv} He also threatened to be using deadly military force in suppressing the protests. The slogan "Black Lives Matter" gained momentous traction afterwards, primarily due to Trump's open dislike of the black people.^{xxxv}

Why Trump Lost: Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona

In the U.S. Presidential Election 2016, Trump succeeded in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona; however, in 2020 he lost these states to the Democrats. It is very important to understand that why such a shift occurred, and there are at least two ways to look at it. One way is to analyse it through the lens of domestic factors, and the other is to examine it from the perspective of foreign policy. Arguably, both factors were instrumental in losing such states; nonetheless, domestic factors dominated over the foreign ones.

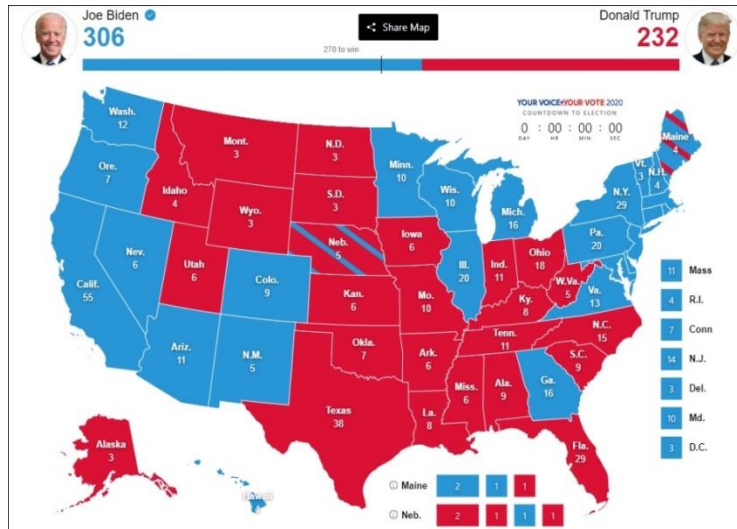
It was noted that Trump secured "a very large share" of the rural vote in 2016 amounting to 6.3 million in relation to Hilary Clinton, and that share even increased in the 2020 Presidential

Election surging to 7.1 million against Biden. A large number of Trump voters included “non-Hispanic white residents and a low proportion of college graduates” despite the fact that the voter turnout in the urban areas was much higher.^{xxxvi} It is noteworthy that the rural area comprises nearly “75 percent of the land area of the United States and 50 million people.”^{xxxvii} Trump lost in the upper Midwest especially Wisconsin and Michigan, the two states are now known as the “Blue Wall.”^{xxxviii} Previously in 2016, Trump succeeded because of the five states in the Midwest and Great Lakes including “Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.”^{xxxix} Figure 2 shows the Exit Poll data collected by the *CNN* during the 2016 Presidential Election, which shows how Trump won in the states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona.

Figure 2: The Exit Polls data collected by CNN during the 2016 Presidential Election.^{xl}

State	% Who decided in last month	% Vote Clinton	% Vote Trump	% Trump advantage
Arizona	23%	40%	48%	8%
Florida	26%	43%	50%	7%
Georgia	20%	47%	53%	6%
Iowa	26%	35%	53%	18%
Michigan	26%	37%	52%	15%
Minnesota	29%	33%	51%	18%
Nevada	28%	46%	41%	-5%
New Hampshire	29%	42%	50%	8%
North Carolina	25%	33%	57%	24%
Ohio	25%	37%	54%	17%
Pennsylvania	24%	43%	49%	6%
Wisconsin	25%	34%	57%	23%
Texas	24%	46%	47%	1%
Averages	25.4%	39.7%	50.9%	11.2%
NATIONAL	26%	40%	48%	8%

Figure 3: The Presidential Election 2020 results (*ABC News*).^{xli}



The ‘Untied’ States: Would Trump become Davis?

The former U.S. President Trump repeatedly refused to accept the U.S. Presidential Election 2020 results and subsequently rejected to concede though he had to leave the office eventually. Openly defying election results is a common phenomenon in the third world countries; however, such precedent cannot be seen through the American political and electoral history. Nonetheless, there was one event of such a grave magnitude that divided American people between the United States of America and the Confederate States of America in 1861—consequently, the rift drifted the nation towards the American Civil War lasting until the middle of 1865.

The 16th U.S. President Abraham Lincoln (Republican) sworn in January 1861 with his anti-slavery motivation gained much traction throughout the North. However, just after Lincoln took office, hostilities broke out and the Southern states began to secede the union (South Carolina started seceding in December 1860). Later, six other states including Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, and Louisiana, also seceded. Throughout the civil war, Lincoln led the U.S. while Jefferson Davis acted as the President of the Confederate States.

U.S. Presidential Election...

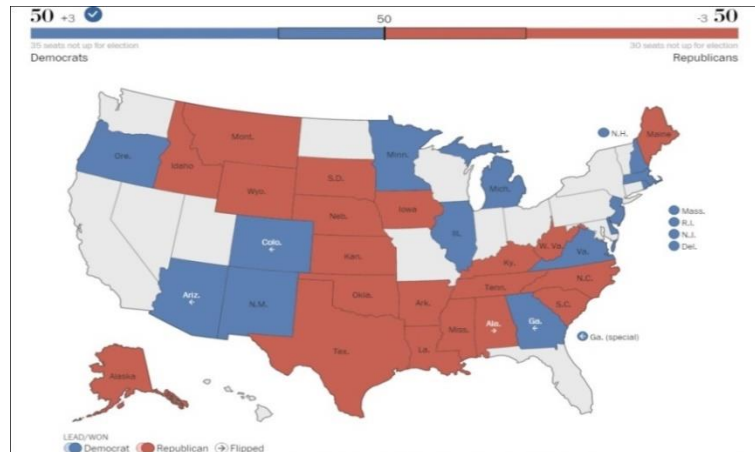
President Lincoln's superb leadership combined with military geniuses like the future president Ulysses S. Grant, along with Winfield Scott, William Tecumseh Sherman, and George G. Meade, made the union victory possible. The Union Forces defeated the Confederates in May 1865, and the union was restored. The Battle of Gettysburg fought in July 1863 in Pennsylvania was among the most important yet decisive military engagements in which the U.S. Army General George G. Meade defeated Confederate Army General Robert E. Lee.^{xlii} Later, the Battle of Appomattox Court House fought in May 1865 culminated with General Lee surrendering to General Grant, thus effectively ending the war.^{xliii}

The American Civil War remains a strange yet bloody event in the history of the U.S., only superseded by the Vietnam War or War in Afghanistan in terms of the American lives lost. Besides, the Union's near dissolution and Lincoln's resilience in restoring it reminds us of the fragility of the Union that provided room for individual states' willingness to secede. Also, the constitution does not hinder or discourage an individual state from doing so.

Given Trump's political psychology and his willingness to go beyond any defined limits, he could possibly become another Davis and may try to "undo" the United States of America. I argue that history is a vital instrument of a nation's collective psychology that was referred to by Carl von Clausewitz as "Primordial Violence."^{xliv} Today, except the states of Georgia and Virginia, almost all other states which once formed the Confederate States of America including South Carolina, North Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, and Louisiana, are won by the Republicans supporting Trump. I assume that Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Stephens' remarks regarding the superiority of the White race are a permanent socio-political aspect of these states, strongly resonating in contemporary times.

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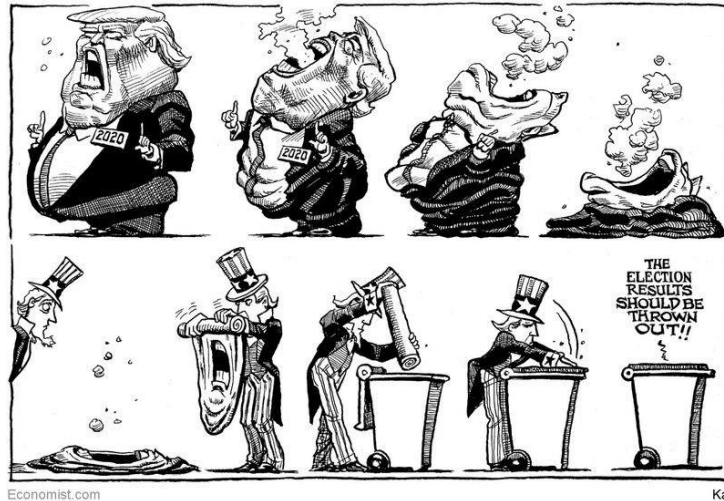
Figure 4: The U.S. Senate election results 2020 (*The Washington Post*).^{xlv}



Trump’s Media Portrayal

President Trump’s first White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer started off a tense relationship with the media just after Trump’s inauguration in January 2016. The relationship turned problematic since in the aftermath of Trump’s controversial Travel Ban, Spicer put all the blame on media for using the term “Travel Ban.” Also, Trump referred to the mainstream media including the *CNN* as “Fake News.” It is worth noting that Trump was perhaps America’s only president who drew momentous media attraction. The American comedy and satirical TV shows such as *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) and *Jimmy Kimmel Live* responded heavily to such inane ravings led by the Trump administration. Figure 3 illustrates a series of Trump caricatures starting from discrediting the election results to being thrown out in the trash.

Figure 5: Trump's caricature (*The Economist*).^{xlvi}



Why Trump Lost: Trump's False Realism

One may argue that the chief reason behind Trump's defeat in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020 is due to fact that he resurrected the Civil War cleavages prevailing in the American society. He effectively revived the North-South divide and brought the American society to the brink of another civil war. The well-thought-out and coordinated attack on the U.S. Capital was among the set of unfortunate events happening on January 6, 2021, which can be interpreted as the manifestation of such intentions. I argue that from the very early advocates of Classical Realism including Sun-Tzu, Kautilya Chanakya, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Carl von Clausewitz, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Hans Morgenthau, to the modern Neo-Realists including Kenneth Waltz, Christopher Layne, John J. Mearsheimer,^{xlvii} Stephen M. Walt^{xlviii}, emphasized and dictated the importance of national cohesion, nationalism, and patriotism. We can well assume that Realism as a philosophical tradition along with all its schools of thought put enormous emphasis on national integrity. On the other hand, Trump in denying the dictates of realism, ruptured national cohesion, exercised distorted nationalism, and patronised unprincipled patriotism. This false interpretation of realism was evident when Trump called his foreign policy orientation "principled

realism”; however, his foreign policy behaviour was quite contrary to the dictates of realism. This false realism ended up making Trump the only U.S. president in history to be impeached twice.

Trump’s Failure to Make America Great Again

Economy is perhaps the only battlefield where Trump performed well; however, most of it was inherited by Obama. The real test of Trump’s economy was the outbreak of Covid-19 and its devastating impact on the U.S. Factually speaking, when Trump took office, the unemployment rate was 4.7 percent and it fell to 3.5 percent in December 2019. Nonetheless, in the wake of Covid-19 in April 2020, unemployment surged to 14.7 percent, “the highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930s.”^{xliv} If the economy was so strong and self-sustaining, then why it could not bear the burden of the global pandemic? Nevertheless, the economy recovered and till September 2020, the unemployment rate fell back to 7.9 percent, and further improved in December by dropping to 6.7 percent.¹ Moreover, Trump’s tenure saw the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with only 0.95 percent increase in relation to his six predecessors. Despite Trump’s rhetoric of “Make America Great Again,” it largely remained limited to vocals, and ground realities were different.

Figure 6: The Unemployment Rate in the U.S. (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).^{li}

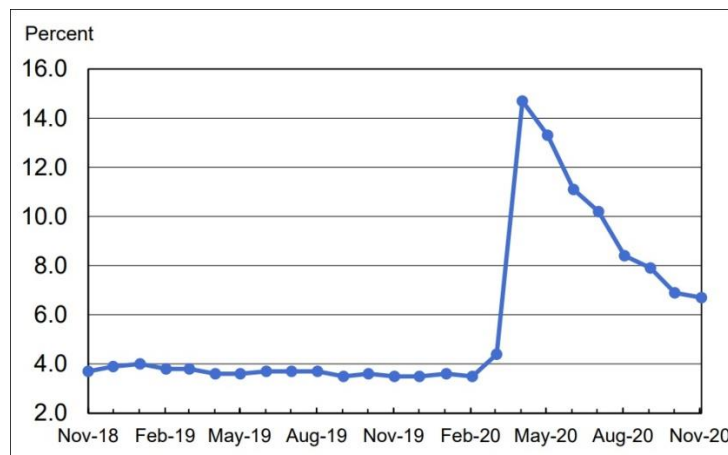
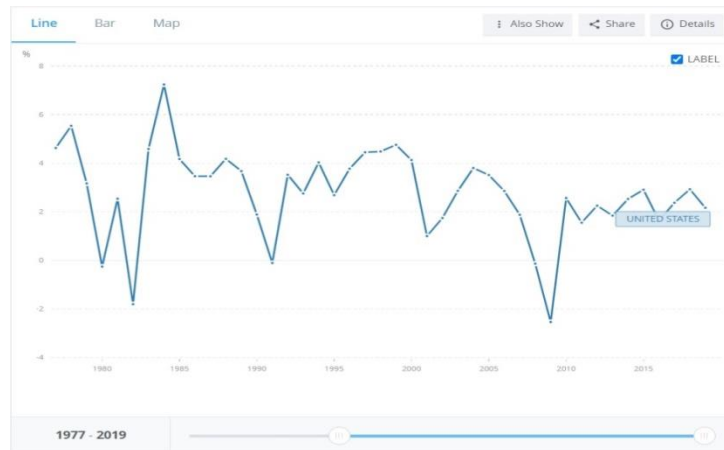


Figure 7: The economy of the United States from 1977 till 2019 (*The World Bank*).^{lii}



Trump's Conspiracy Theories

Arguably, Trump is an utterly unique person who always remained busy in projecting himself as a master of almost everything. During his presidency and even before that, whenever he was asked a question, he replied with utmost confidence, regardless of the inaccuracy of the answer. Such narcissism coupled with cynicism helped him a lot in earning the Republican presidential nomination in 2016. For instance, benefitting from his cynicism, Trump maligned the mainstream media including the *CNN* as 'Fake News'.^{liii} He not only continued such behaviour domestically, but exchanged contemptuous views regarding 'Fake News' with Putin at the Helsinki Summit by saying that such a thing does not exist in Russia and is unique to America. Likewise, Trump greatly mobilised its followers using conspiracy theories including QAnon.^{liv} The latter is a conspiracy theory which dominated the GOP circles and projected Trump as the sole saviour of America. In this regard, the biggest challenge to America and its democratic values is to fight and suppress misinformation and disinformation outlets, for rivals like Russia and China may exploit such structural weaknesses prevailing in the U.S. and

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fuel the resurgence of Trump. It is worthy to note that for people like Michael Moore, Trump's ascent to power was sponsored by Putin's Russia.

Figure 8: Vice President Michael Richard Pence shared a picture on Twitter, where SWAT member Sergeant Matt Patten (Broward County Sheriff Office, Florida) wearing the Q-Patch of QAnon.^{lv}



Trump famously asserted: “I love America. And when you love something, you protect it passionately—fiercely, even. We are the greatest country the world has ever known. I make no apologies for this country, my pride in it, or my desire to see us become strong and rich again.”^{lvi} Trump's patriotism is truly unprecedented. However, for instance, out of his three wives (one current and two former), only one was an American born unlike his predecessors.

Trump's War Hysteria: Hypothetical Attacks on Iran and North Korea

Would Trump have attacked Iran or North Korea? Considering Trump's domestic problems and dwindling power, it seemed unlikely. The history of the world is witness that externalizing internal nuisances is a timeless strategy for a number of reasons. For instance, the said strategy pushes important issues to the background and brings (non)issues or newly created ones to the foreground. Also, it gives renewed and much-needed strength to the weak echelons of power and greatly helps in curbing enemies. However, the operationalization of such a strategy demands structural support from intelligence and

related agencies. The presence or absence of the latter remained highly uncertain in Trump's case.

I argue that Iran's geopolitical landscape is not in its favour, which is causing fear of a possible Israeli-backed American strike. Tehran is relentless in exporting its ideology towards the Middle East. The presence of Iran-backed militants in Syria and Iraq is a testament of its obsession with expanding its ideological boundaries. However, Tehran has repeatedly failed in extending its ideological support to Shiite majority Azerbaijan in the latter's armed conflict with the neighbouring Armenia. Apart from cultural similarities, its relations with Pakistan are not exceptional. Since after the entry of Indian naval officer and spy Kulbhusan Yadav into Pakistan using Iran's territory, many people in Pakistan including officials, have raised the question of Iran's commitment to peace and not allowing its territory to be used for hostile elements and actions against its neighbours.^{lvii} In a nutshell, Iran needs to fear less from Israel and America, and to put more attention to its geopolitical landscape and domestic affairs.

Trump Has Gone—Trumpism Has Not

It was rightly noted that "Trump will be out of Washington. But he will not be gone from politics."^{lviii} On January 20, 2021, just hours before the inauguration of President-Elect Joe Biden, Trump left the White House; however, Trump's legacy is now a permanent aspect of American history and our collective memories. Keeping in view Trump's relentless psychology, it is likely that he will mobilise and launch a barrage of allegations against President Biden. Trump's support in the GOP is considerable and with such a political backing, it will be a matter of time that he unveils his new strategy in putting Biden and American democracy off balance. For instance, Republican New York Representative Elise Stefanik was once a Trump critic; however, she now is his biggest supporter and is holding the House Republican Conference Chair since 2021. We can well imagine Trump's support within the GOP during his Second Impeachment Trial; only 10 Republicans voted in favour of impeachment and hence Trump was acquitted by the Senate. It is worthy to note that Stefanik was poised to replace

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Liz Cheney—a Republican who voted for Trump’s second impeachment.^{lix} On May 7, 2021, Republican Representatives Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene held a rally in Florida in which they repeatedly pitched the question to the crowd: “Tell me, who’s your president?” and the people vehemently replied “Donald Trump.” The Representatives Gaetz and Greene did not stop there and continued to ask whether Joe Biden won the 2020 election, the crowd unanimously replied “No.”^{lx}

Trumpism, in a nutshell, is a developing political philosophy and a self-declared doctrine that desperately endeavours to “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) by putting “America First” in almost every possible way. Trumpism is deeply rooted in conservative practices by promoting illiberal democracy and weakening the constitution and constitutional institutions along with generating scepticism about the viability of the liberal values.^{lxi} Even realists like Barry Posen argued Trump’s grand strategy as “illiberal hegemony.”^{lxii} Further, Trumpism is all about discrediting the mainstream media by labelling it as fake news. Undoubtedly, Trump used social media not only as an instrument of disseminating (dis)information but also as an effective tool in mobilizing his followers. Before his Twitter account was permanently banned, he had almost 90 million followers, most of whom believed almost everything Trump tweeted.^{lxiii} Alternatively, Trump crafted an alternative, reliable news source for his followers. The QAnon conspiracy theory was fundamentally created and propagated using such news sources. Trumpism does not stop there. At the very heart, it intends to invoke “insult politics” by demonizing its political rivals and competitors. For this to accomplish, mobilizing the right-wing factions e.g., the *Proud Boys* and other neo-Nazi-like organizations is an important tool.^{lxiv} This is what we witnessed on January 6, 2021, when Washington D.C. resembled Kabul or Baghdad to some extent.

One adamantly argues that Trumpism has momentarily fuelled radicalization in the U.S. and such narrow-mindedness retains the potential in maximising violent extremism. This is perhaps an underexplored area of research, or such ventures are deterred

by the possible aggression of radicalised strata of the American society and politics. For instance, the ouster of Liz Cheney from the House GOP conference chair in favour of Elise Stefanik is a clear sign “that anyone who refuses to carry water for Trump’s conspiracy theories cannot carry the Republican mantle.”^{lxv} Stefanik was endorsed by Trump for the said position by stating that “Elise Stefanik is a far superior choice, and she has my COMPLETE and TOTAL Endorsement for GOP Conference Chair.”^{lxvi} It is to be remembered here that Liz Cheney is the daughter of former Republican Vice President Dick Cheney and both strongly resisted Trump’s lies and conspiracies about the elections.^{lxvii}

The rightful concerns of 10 former Defence Secretaries

On January 4, 2021, all 10 surviving former defence secretaries including Ashton Carter, Dick Cheney, William Cohen, Mark Esper, Robert Gates, Chuck Hagel, James Mattis, Leon Panetta, William Perry, and Donald Rumsfeld, published an open letter in *The Washington Post*, advising the top U.S. military officials to refrain from acting upon Trump’s unconstitutional orders. Trump’s baseless and remorseless accusations of voter fraud and rigging of elections were very serious, and the defence secretaries were fearful of a possible military intervention on Trump’s instigation.^{lxviii} They argued: “Efforts to involve the US armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory.” It is to be noted here that Trump appointed Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn as his first National Security Advisor who lied under oath before a Congressional hearing. The defence secretaries made it clear and advised the high-ranking office bearers that “Civilian and military officials who direct or carry out such measures would be accountable, including potentially facing criminal penalties, for the grave consequences of their actions on our republic.”^{lxix}

Conclusions

This article has attempted to analyse four major reasons for Trump’s defeat in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020, of which three were domestic and one was of foreign nature. The study contemplated the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic; Trump’s

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Domestic Incompetence; his Racism and Sexism; and more importantly, Trump's defeat in the states including Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona. Trump's incompetence in dealing with the Covid-19 resulted in the deaths of almost half a million Americans and such remorseless indifference was further fuelled by his racist and sexist views. Such apathy impacted the voters' decision in the states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona. Further, it was noted that 'Trump's False Realism' in the articulation of U.S. foreign policy was also reflected in the domestic politics and contributed to his defeat in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020. The study strengthened the analysis by understanding Trump's Political Psychology and Conduct and his subsequent Ascent amid the Global Rise of the Right. The manifestation of these factors was observed in the Strange Relationship between Trump and Putin, and Trump's Unilateral Withdrawal from International Agreements and Organizations, which fuelled An Era of Confusion among the U.S. allies.

The study concluded that while Trump has Gone, Trumpism persists in the form of Trump's vindictiveness. It was noted that Trump's unexpected victory in the U.S. presidential election of 2016 shook the world.^{lxx} The next few months or years may likely bring political agitation and violence to the U.S. if Trumpism continues to flourish.

Although Democrats have majority in both houses, even after the transition of power and Biden's taking of office, Trump's fellow Republicans will create a number of hurdles in legislation and the smooth flow of the Biden administration's work. The biggest challenge for Biden is to undo the things Trump has done and to bring America back on track as previously President Biden aspired for renewed American leadership in the world affairs.^{lxxi} There is little doubt that Trump's presidency will remain a controversial chapter in the American history. However, there is a lot to learn from this most challenging era, the most important of which is to adopt a foreign policy pivoted upon realist principles, not "principled realism" or "false realism."

Although Biden defeated Trump with considerable margin; nonetheless, his ascent to power as the 45th President of the United States sometimes seems like a pyrrhic victory because Biden failed to attract voters from the Southern states including South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Texas, and Louisiana. It is to be remembered here that these states remained part of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War, and they have readily accepted Trump's radical narratives in comparison to Biden's. Indeed, this is a dangerous pattern which could have drastically unfavourable results for the U.S. Most importantly, the results have attested the prevalence of racial and ethno-linguistic rifts within the U.S. and keeping in view the strategic rivalry between and among great powers, such cleavages could be exploited by American adversaries including Russia and China using disinformation campaigns and information (cyber) warfare. Furthermore, these policies resulted in an observable surge in hate crimes and use of excessive force; the death of George Floyd can be taken as an example.

For realists, America has been pursuing a grand strategy pivoted upon the ideals of "liberal hegemony" for many decades. However, it was argued that America under Trump pursued a unique grand strategy known as "illiberal hegemony", and such a strategy lacked many aspects of "liberal" values.^{lxxii} Alternatively, such a grand strategy deteriorated America domestically as well as internationally.

It is clear that even after being defeated, Trump continues to exercise considerable sway within the GOP. It is to be remembered here that he was impeached twice but could not be removed, owing to insufficient number of votes. Arguably, in the foreseeable future, Trump himself, its family, or his close associates (MAGA warriors) will attempt to run for president. It was rightly noted "that anyone who refuses to carry water for Trump's conspiracy theories cannot carry the Republican mantle."^{lxxiii} The most threatening aspect of "Trump's false realism" is the use of the mantra of fake news, disinformation, falsifying facts, and remorselessly defying real events in domestic politics. Such strategies weakened America's global

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standing and projected a negative image; however, certain practices likely will overshadow the U.S. domestic politics in the years to come.

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