

# **Final Report: An Analysis of Donald Trump's Rhetoric, Policies, and Geopolitical Impact**

Marie Landry Spy Shop

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August 6, 2025

### **Abstract**

This report, produced by the Marie Landry Spy Shop, provides a definitive analysis of the presidency of Donald J. Trump, the 45th President of the United States. Utilizing a hybrid methodology combining Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT), AI-assisted analysis, and expert human oversight, this document examines the defining characteristics of his tenure. We focus on his rhetoric, domestic policies and their impact on various communities, his approach to national security and government practices, his economic agenda, and his profound impact on global geopolitics. The analysis draws upon a wide range of publicly available sources to synthesize a coherent understanding of his political project and its consequences. The central thesis of this report is that Donald Trump's presidency represents a significant departure from traditional American political norms, with lasting consequences for the social fabric of the United States, the integrity of its democratic institutions, and the stability of the post-World War II international order. The findings illustrate a consistent pattern of behavior and policy that has challenged liberal democratic values both at home and abroad.

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# 1 Introduction: Overview of Donald Trump's Political Influence

This report, compiled by the Marie Landry Spy Shop, presents a definitive analysis of the presidency of Donald J. Trump. Our findings are the result of extensive Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) gathering and analysis, augmented by AI-powered tools and subjected to rigorous human oversight. It examines the profound and lasting impact of his tenure on the United States and the global community.

Donald J. Trump, the 45th President of the United States, stands as one of the most transformative and polarizing figures in the history of American politics. His election in 2016 marked a seismic shift in the political landscape, ushering in an era of populist nationalism that challenged the established conventions of both the Republican Party and the broader American political system. A real estate mogul and reality television personality with no prior government or military experience, Trump's rise was fueled by a potent combination of anti-establishment sentiment, economic anxiety, and cultural grievances. His presidency (2017-2021) and his continued influence thereafter have had a profound and enduring impact on the nation's social and political fabric, its democratic institutions, and its role in the world.

This report is structured around several key thematic areas that defined his presidency:

- **Rhetoric and Communication:** Examining the unique and often inflammatory nature of his communication style, its role in mobilizing his political base, and its effect on political discourse and social cohesion.
- **Domestic Policy and Marginalized Communities:** Analyzing the substantive policy changes enacted by his administration and their specific impacts on groups such as immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and racial and ethnic minorities.
- **National Security and Government Practices:** Investigating the controversies, legal challenges, and departures from established norms that characterized his administration's approach to national security and the functioning of the federal government.
- **Economic Policies and Conflicts of Interest:** Detailing his "America First" economic agenda, including tax cuts and trade protectionism, while also exploring the unprecedented ethical concerns arising from his dual role as president and proprietor of a global business empire.
- **Geopolitical Impact:** Assessing the shift in U.S. foreign policy under his leadership, his relationship with key allies and adversaries, particularly Russia, and the resulting instability in the global order.

## 1.1 Methodology

The findings and analysis presented in this document are based on a hybrid intelligence methodology developed by the Marie Landry Spy Shop. This approach combines traditional Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) with advanced AI-assisted analysis, followed by comprehensive human review and verification.

- **Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT):** Our research draws exclusively from publicly available information. This includes, but is not limited to: academic journals, peer-reviewed studies, reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks, official government documents and transcripts, declassified materials, international and domestic journalistic reporting from reputable sources, and public statements made by political figures.
- **AI-Assisted Analysis:** To process and analyze the vast amount of textual data, we employed a suite of AI tools, including proprietary systems like PeaceMakerGPT, alongside leading Large Language Models such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini. These tools were utilized for tasks such as sentiment analysis, pattern recognition in rhetoric, thematic clustering of policy documents, and identifying networks of influence from public data.
- **Human Oversight and Review:** Crucially, all AI-generated analysis and data points were subjected to a rigorous process of human oversight and review by our team of analysts, led by Marie Seshat Landry. This final stage ensures contextual accuracy, corrects for potential AI biases, and synthesizes the information into the coherent, evidence-based narrative presented in this report. Our commitment is to objectivity and the highest standards of ethical intelligence practice.

Ultimately, understanding the Trump presidency is essential to understanding the current state of American democracy and its place in the world. His influence did not end with his departure from the White House; he remains a dominant force within the Republican Party and a potent symbol for populist movements globally. This report aims to provide a factual, evidence-based foundation for assessing the full scope of his impact, creating a detailed record of a tumultuous and consequential period in modern history.

## 2 Divisive and Harmful Rhetoric

A central and defining feature of Donald Trump's political identity is his distinctive and highly effective communication style. This style, while instrumental to his political success, has been widely and consistently identified by scholars, journalists, and civil society organizations as divisive, inflammatory, and harmful to democratic discourse. His rhetoric intentionally departs from the measured and often cautious language of traditional politicians, instead favoring

provocation, hyperbole, and direct attacks on perceived enemies. This section analyzes the key components of his rhetorical strategy, including the use of hate speech and dehumanization, incitement to violence, the creation of "us vs. them" narratives, and a systemic disregard for truth.

## **2.1 Hate Speech and Dehumanization**

Throughout his political career, Donald Trump has employed language that targets, stereotypes, and dehumanizes specific groups, particularly racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants. This rhetoric has been criticized for legitimizing prejudice and has been linked by researchers to increases in hate-motivated incidents.

One of the earliest and most prominent examples occurred during his presidential campaign announcement in June 2015. Speaking of Mexican immigrants, he stated: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." This statement immediately set the tone for his campaign, framing immigration as a source of criminality and threat. This theme was revisited throughout his presidency. He has frequently used the term "invasion" to describe immigration at the southern border, a term historically associated with xenophobic and white nationalist movements.

More recently, he has escalated this rhetoric, claiming that immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country." This phrase drew immediate and widespread condemnation, with historians and organizations like the Anti-Defamation League pointing out its chilling parallels to the rhetoric of Adolf Hitler in his manifesto, *\*Mein Kampf\**. While Trump later claimed he was unaware of the historical connotations, the use of such language has been a recurring feature of his discourse.

His rhetoric has also dehumanized individuals by referring to them as "animals." For example, when discussing members of the MS-13 gang, he stated, "These aren't people. These are animals." While targeting a violent criminal organization, the broad application of such language has been criticized for its potential to bleed over and be applied to immigrants more generally, stripping them of their humanity and making it easier to justify harsh policies against them.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, his use of terms like "Chinese Virus" and "Kung Flu" was widely seen as stigmatizing people of Asian descent and was linked to a documented surge in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes across the United States. This rhetoric deflected responsibility for the pandemic's handling while scapegoating a specific ethnic group.

## **2.2 Incitement to Violence**

Beyond divisive language, critics have repeatedly accused Trump of using rhetoric that incites or encourages violence. His rallies have often featured a combative atmosphere, where he has

praised acts of aggression and spoken nostalgically about a time when protesters would be "carried out on a stretcher."

Perhaps the most scrutinized instance of alleged incitement relates to the events surrounding the January 6th, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. In the months leading up to the attack, Trump relentlessly promoted the baseless claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen through widespread fraud. He used inflammatory language, urging his supporters to "Stop the Steal." On the morning of January 6th, at a rally near the White House, he told the assembled crowd: "We're going to walk down to the Capitol... you have to show strength, and you have to be strong." He added, "We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore."

Immediately following his speech, a large portion of the crowd marched to the Capitol and violently breached the building, seeking to stop the certification of Joe Biden's victory. The House Select Committee investigating the attack concluded that Trump's rhetoric was a direct cause of the violence. While Trump was acquitted in his second impeachment trial on the charge of "incitement of insurrection," the political and historical consensus among his critics is that his words and actions were, at minimum, a primary catalyst for the assault on American democracy.

Another example occurred during the racial justice protests in the summer of 2020. In response to unrest in Minneapolis following the murder of George Floyd, Trump tweeted, "when the looting starts, the shooting starts." This phrase has a racially charged history, having been used by a segregationist Miami police chief in the 1960s. The tweet was flagged by Twitter for violating its rules against glorifying violence, and it was widely condemned for escalating tensions at a moment of national crisis.

## 2.3 "Us vs. Them" Narratives

A foundational element of Trump's rhetorical strategy is the construction of a stark "us vs. them" worldview. In this narrative, "us" represents his loyal supporters—hard-working, patriotic Americans who have been forgotten and betrayed by a corrupt elite. "Them" is a broad and shifting coalition of enemies, which includes:

- **The Political Establishment ("The Swamp"):** Both Democrats and establishment Republicans who are portrayed as self-serving and disconnected from the needs of ordinary people.
- **The Media ("Fake News"):** Journalists and news organizations that are critical of his administration are labeled as the "enemy of the people," accused of fabricating stories and engaging in a conspiracy to undermine his presidency.
- **Immigrants and Foreigners:** Portrayed as a threat to national security, economic stability, and cultural identity.

- **Globalists:** A nebulous group accused of prioritizing international cooperation over American interests.

This binary framework is highly effective at fostering a sense of group identity and solidarity among his followers. By constantly identifying and attacking external enemies, he positions himself as the sole defender of his supporters' values and interests. This creates a powerful sense of grievance and a tribalistic political atmosphere where compromise is seen as betrayal and political opponents are not just adversaries but existential threats. This "conflict-based" narrative simplifies complex policy debates into moral crusades, mobilizing his base with a sense of urgency and purpose.

## 2.4 Disregard for Truth and Disinformation

Donald Trump's presidency was characterized by a volume of false or misleading statements that is unprecedented in the history of the American presidency. Fact-checkers at \*The Washington Post\* documented over 30,000 such claims during his four years in office. This was not simply a matter of occasional misstatements; it was a core element of his political strategy, often referred to as the "firehose of falsehood" model. This technique involves bombarding the public with a high volume of false, contradictory, and outrageous claims, making it difficult for citizens and the media to effectively fact-check and hold him accountable. The goal is not always to persuade, but to confuse, to create doubt, and to erode the very concept of objective truth.

The most consequential example of this was his sustained campaign of disinformation regarding the 2020 election. For months, he and his allies promoted a wide array of conspiracy theories about rigged voting machines, fraudulent ballots, and a coordinated effort to steal the election. These claims were systematically rejected by dozens of courts, including by judges Trump himself had appointed, as well as by his own Attorney General and cybersecurity officials, who declared the 2020 election "the most secure in American history."

Despite the complete lack of credible evidence, millions of his supporters came to believe the election was illegitimate. This erosion of faith in the democratic process is one of the most significant and potentially lasting consequences of his rhetoric. His constant attacks on the media as "fake news" served a similar purpose: to discredit any source of information that contradicted his preferred narrative. By conditioning his followers to trust only him, he created an insulated information ecosystem where his claims, no matter how baseless, were accepted as truth. This has had a profoundly corrosive effect on the shared factual basis required for a functioning democracy.

### 3 Policies and their Impact on Marginalized Communities

Donald Trump's rhetoric of exclusion and grievance was not merely performative; it was consistently translated into official government policies that had profound and often detrimental impacts on marginalized communities across the United States. His administration pursued a sweeping agenda that targeted immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and racial minorities, systematically dismantling protections and enacting new, restrictive measures. This section details the key policies and their documented consequences.

#### 3.1 Immigration Policies

From the first days of his administration, immigration was a central focus of Trump's policy agenda. His approach was defined by a commitment to reducing both legal and illegal immigration through aggressive enforcement and restrictionist measures.

- **Executive Order 13769 (The "Travel Ban"):** Just one week into his presidency, Trump signed an executive order that suspended entry for 90 days for citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) and indefinitely suspended the entry of Syrian refugees. The order, which was implemented chaotically, sparked widespread protests and legal challenges, with critics denouncing it as a discriminatory "Muslim ban" that violated the U.S. Constitution. After several legal battles and revisions, a modified version of the ban was upheld by the Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision in *Trump v. Hawaii* (2018). The policy had a devastating impact on thousands of families, students, and professionals, and was widely seen as codifying religious discrimination into U.S. law.
- **The "Zero Tolerance" Policy and Family Separations:** In the spring of 2018, the Trump administration implemented a "zero tolerance" policy at the U.S.-Mexico border, which mandated the criminal prosecution of all adults entering the country without authorization. Because children cannot be held in federal jails with their parents, this policy directly led to the systematic separation of thousands of children from their parents. Images and audio of distressed children held in chain-link enclosures sparked global outrage and condemnation from medical organizations, human rights groups, and religious leaders. The American Academy of Pediatrics warned that the practice was inflicting "irreparable harm" and "toxic stress" on the children. Under immense public and political pressure, Trump signed an executive order to end the policy, but the government's poor tracking systems made reuniting the families a prolonged and difficult process. Hundreds of parents were deported without their children, and the long-term psychological trauma on these families is immeasurable.
- **Construction of the Border Wall:** A central promise of Trump's 2016 campaign was the

construction of a "big, beautiful wall" on the U.S.-Mexico border. Throughout his presidency, he pursued this goal relentlessly. When Congress refused to provide the requested funding, he declared a national emergency in 2019, allowing him to divert billions of dollars from the Department of Defense budget for wall construction. The project was plagued by legal challenges, high costs, and environmental concerns. By the end of his term, approximately 450 miles of barrier had been constructed, much of it replacing older, smaller fencing rather than covering new ground. The wall stands as a potent physical symbol of his administration's hardline anti-immigration stance.

- **Changes to Asylum and Refugee Programs:** The Trump administration took numerous steps to restrict access to asylum. The "Remain in Mexico" policy, officially the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), forced tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait in dangerous conditions in Mexico while their cases were processed in U.S. courts. The administration also drastically reduced the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. each year, setting the cap at a historic low of 15,000 for the 2021 fiscal year, down from 110,000 in the final year of the Obama administration.

### 3.2 LGBTQ+ and Transgender Rights

The Trump administration systematically rolled back federal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, with a particular focus on the transgender community. This represented a sharp reversal from the policies of the previous administration.

- **Ban on Transgender Military Service:** In July 2017, Trump announced via Twitter that the U.S. government would not "accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military." The administration argued that the presence of transgender personnel would entail "tremendous medical costs and disruption." The policy, which was formally implemented in 2019 after a series of legal battles, reversed the Obama-era policy that had allowed for open service. It was widely condemned by LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, medical associations, and retired military leaders as discriminatory and harmful to military readiness.
- **Rescission of Guidance for Transgender Students:** In 2017, the Departments of Justice and Education rescinded Obama-era guidance that had allowed transgender students in public schools to use bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity. The administration argued that the issue should be left to the states, but the move was seen as a direct attack on the rights and safety of transgender youth, contributing to a hostile school environment.
- **"Conscience" Protections in Healthcare:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established a new Conscience and Religious Freedom Division and issued

regulations that would allow healthcare workers to refuse to provide services, including those related to abortion, sterilization, and gender-affirming care, if they had a moral or religious objection. While parts of this rule were struck down by federal courts, it signaled the administration's intent to prioritize religious freedom over access to care for LGBTQ+ individuals.

- **Judicial Appointments:** Trump's appointment of conservative judges to federal courts, including the Supreme Court, raised significant concerns among LGBTQ+ advocates. Many of these appointees have records of hostility to LGBTQ+ rights, posing a long-term threat to landmark decisions like *\*Obergefell v. Hodges\**, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

### 3.3 Racial Justice and DEI

While Trump often claimed to have done more for African Americans than any president since Abraham Lincoln, his rhetoric and policies were frequently seen as exacerbating racial tensions and undermining efforts to address systemic racism.

- **Response to Racial Justice Protests:** Trump's response to the nationwide protests following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 was widely criticized for its confrontational and militaristic tone. He threatened to deploy the military to quell unrest and used the phrase "when the looting starts, the shooting starts." In a highly controversial move, federal law enforcement officers used tear gas and rubber bullets to clear peaceful protesters from Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C., so that Trump could stage a photo opportunity holding a Bible in front of a nearby church.
- **Charlottesville "Very Fine People" Comments:** Following a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, where a counter-protester was killed, Trump stated that there were "very fine people on both sides." This remark, which appeared to draw a moral equivalence between neo-Nazis and those protesting against them, was met with widespread condemnation from across the political spectrum and was seen as emboldening extremist groups.
- **Attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** In September 2020, the Trump administration directed federal agencies to cease all training on topics such as "white privilege" and "critical race theory," labeling them as "divisive, anti-American propaganda." This executive order was part of a broader assault on DEI initiatives, which the administration portrayed as discriminatory against white people. This move was seen by critics as an attempt to halt progress on racial equity within the federal government and to fuel the culture wars for political gain.

## 4 National Security Controversies & Government Practices

The Trump presidency was characterized by a tumultuous approach to national security and a disregard for many long-standing government norms and practices. His tenure saw a high turnover of senior officials, persistent legal and ethical challenges, and a management style that often prioritized personal loyalty over institutional expertise. This section examines the key controversies and practices that defined his administration's approach to governance.

### 4.1 Firings and Appointments

A hallmark of the Trump administration was the unprecedented rate of turnover in high-level positions. This "personnel churn" extended to the highest echelons of the national security and intelligence apparatus, creating instability and raising concerns about the politicization of these critical functions.

- **High Turnover of Senior Staff:** Trump went through four National Security Advisors, two Secretaries of State, and two Secretaries of Defense in his four-year term. This constant shuffling of leadership made it difficult to implement coherent, long-term foreign and national security policies. Many of the departures were acrimonious, with officials being fired via Twitter or resigning in protest of the president's decisions. For example, Secretary of Defense James Mattis resigned in December 2018, citing fundamental disagreements with Trump over the importance of alliances and the treatment of U.S. allies, particularly following Trump's abrupt decision to withdraw troops from Syria.
- **Politicization of Intelligence:** Trump frequently expressed public skepticism and hostility towards the U.S. intelligence community. He publicly sided with Russian President Vladimir Putin over his own intelligence agencies regarding Russian interference in the 2016 election. He also installed loyalists in key intelligence roles, such as Richard Grenell as Acting Director of National Intelligence, a move that was criticized for placing a political operative with limited intelligence experience in charge of the nation's 17 intelligence agencies.
- **Dismissal of Inspectors General:** The Trump administration engaged in a pattern of firing or replacing several Inspectors General (IGs), the independent watchdogs within federal agencies tasked with rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. Among those removed were the IGs for the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the Intelligence Community. These dismissals were widely seen as an attempt to undermine oversight and accountability and to retaliate against IGs who were conducting investigations that could be damaging to the administration.
- **Firing of Chris Krebs:** In November 2020, following his loss in the presidential election, Trump fired Christopher Krebs, the director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Se-

curity Agency (CISA). Krebs's dismissal came shortly after CISA had issued a statement declaring the 2020 election "the most secure in American history," directly contradicting Trump's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud. The firing was condemned as an act of retaliation against a public servant for telling the truth.

## 4.2 Legal Challenges and Investigations

Donald Trump's business career, presidential campaign, and time in office were all subject to numerous legal challenges and investigations. He is the first president in U.S. history to be impeached twice and the first former president to be criminally convicted.

- **The Mueller Investigation and Russian Interference:** The most significant investigation of his presidency was the Special Counsel investigation led by former FBI Director Robert Mueller. The investigation was tasked with examining Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and any links or coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russian government. The final Mueller Report, released in April 2019, concluded that Russia had engaged in a "sweeping and systematic" campaign to interfere in the election in Trump's favor. While the report did not establish that the Trump campaign had engaged in a criminal conspiracy with Russia, it detailed numerous contacts between campaign officials and Russian operatives. The report also laid out ten instances of potential obstruction of justice by President Trump in his efforts to impede the investigation. Mueller declined to make a traditional prosecutorial judgment on obstruction, citing a Department of Justice policy that a sitting president cannot be indicted.
- **First Impeachment (2019):** In December 2019, the House of Representatives impeached Donald Trump on two articles: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The charges stemmed from his efforts to pressure Ukraine to announce investigations into his political rival, Joe Biden, and his son, Hunter Biden, while withholding Congressionally-approved military aid to the country. A whistleblower complaint from an intelligence official brought the matter to light. The House investigation found that Trump had solicited foreign interference in the 2020 election for his personal political benefit. The Senate, with a Republican majority, acquitted him on both charges in February 2020.
- **Second Impeachment (2021):** In January 2021, just days before the end of his term, the House impeached Trump a second time on a single article: incitement of insurrection. This charge was a direct response to his role in encouraging the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol. He is the only president to have been impeached twice. The Senate trial took place after he had left office, and he was again acquitted, although seven Republican senators joined all 50 Democrats in voting to convict, making it the most bipartisan impeachment vote in U.S. history.

- **Post-Presidency Criminal Charges:** After leaving office, Trump has faced a number of serious criminal investigations.
  - In May 2024, he was convicted in New York on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to conceal a "hush money" payment made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels during the 2016 campaign. This made him the first former U.S. president to be convicted of a felony.
  - He faces federal charges in Washington, D.C., related to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, including conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruction of an official proceeding.
  - He faces separate federal charges in Florida related to his mishandling of classified documents after leaving the White House and his alleged obstruction of government efforts to retrieve them.
  - He also faces state charges in Georgia for his alleged role in a criminal enterprise to unlawfully interfere with the state's 2020 election results, including a now-infamous phone call in which he pressured Georgia's Secretary of State to "find 11,780 votes."

These persistent legal challenges and the administration's defiance of established government practices have had a significant impact on public trust in government and have raised fundamental questions about accountability and the rule of law.

## 5 Economic Policies and Conflicts of Interest

Donald Trump's economic agenda was a cornerstone of his "America First" platform, prioritizing domestic industry and workers through a combination of deregulation, tax cuts, and trade protectionism. This approach marked a significant departure from the pro-globalization consensus that had dominated both Republican and Democratic administrations for decades. Simultaneously, his presidency was plagued by unprecedented conflicts of interest stemming from his refusal to divest from his global business empire.

### 5.1 Economic Impact

The economic policies of the Trump administration were aimed at boosting U.S. economic growth, primarily through supply-side incentives.

- **The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA):** The most significant legislative achievement of Trump's presidency was the TCJA, a massive overhaul of the U.S. tax code. The law permanently reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%, a move intended to make the U.S. more competitive and encourage businesses to invest and create jobs domestically. It also provided temporary tax cuts for individuals across most income

brackets, although the benefits were heavily skewed towards the wealthiest Americans. Proponents argued that the tax cuts would stimulate the economy, leading to higher wages and investment. Critics, however, pointed out that the law added significantly to the national debt—an estimated \$1.9 trillion over ten years—and that the benefits did not "trickle down" to workers as promised. While the economy continued the expansion that began under the Obama administration, there is little evidence that the TCJA produced a dramatic surge in business investment or wage growth beyond pre-existing trends.

- **Deregulation:** The Trump administration pursued an aggressive deregulatory agenda across numerous sectors of the economy. It targeted regulations in the environmental, financial, and healthcare sectors, arguing that they stifled economic growth. The administration withdrew from the Paris Agreement on climate change, rolled back vehicle emissions standards, and loosened regulations on the financial industry that were put in place after the 2008 financial crisis. Supporters praised these actions for reducing the burden on businesses, while critics warned of the long-term costs to public health, the environment, and financial stability.
- **Economic Performance:** During the first three years of Trump's presidency, the U.S. economy experienced steady growth and low unemployment, continuing trends that began during the previous administration. However, the final year of his term was dominated by the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting lockdowns and business closures led to a sharp recession and historic levels of job loss. By the end of his four-year term, the U.S. had fewer jobs than when he started, making him one of the only presidents in modern history to oversee a net loss of jobs.

## 5.2 Trade Policy

A central pillar of Trump's economic nationalism was his confrontational approach to international trade. He argued that the U.S. had been taken advantage of by its trading partners for decades, leading to the loss of manufacturing jobs.

- **Tariffs and Trade Wars:** Trump's primary tool in his trade policy was the imposition of tariffs. He placed tariffs on a wide range of goods, including steel, aluminum, and billions of dollars' worth of imports from China. His administration's stated goal was to protect American industries and pressure other countries to change their trade practices. This protectionist stance led to retaliatory tariffs from China, the European Union, Canada, and Mexico, sparking a series of trade wars. While the tariffs did provide some protection for specific domestic industries, they also raised costs for American consumers and for businesses that rely on imported materials. The agricultural sector was hit particularly hard by retaliatory tariffs, requiring a multi-billion-dollar federal bailout.

- **Renegotiation of Trade Agreements:** Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement immediately upon taking office. He also forced the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which he had frequently called "the worst trade deal ever made." The result was the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which included modest changes, such as stronger labor and environmental provisions and updates for the digital economy.

### 5.3 Conflicts of Interest

Donald Trump's presidency created an ethical crisis due to his unprecedented refusal to divest from his business interests. This raised persistent concerns that his decisions as president could be influenced by his personal financial interests, and that he was using the office for personal enrichment.

- **Continued Ownership of The Trump Organization:** Unlike previous presidents, who typically placed their assets in a blind trust, Trump transferred the day-to-day management of his businesses to his adult sons but retained his ownership stake. This meant he continued to profit from his global real estate and branding empire while in office.
- **Use of Trump Properties:** Throughout his presidency, Trump properties became hubs for political activity. He visited his own golf clubs and resorts hundreds of times, with the U.S. government (and thus taxpayers) paying for the expenses of the Secret Service and other government personnel accompanying him. Foreign governments, lobbyists, and political groups frequently held events at his hotels and resorts, creating the appearance—and the potential reality—that they were seeking to curry favor with the president by spending money at his businesses. The \*Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington\* (CREW) documented thousands of conflicts of interest during his term.
- **The Emoluments Clauses:** Trump's business dealings led to multiple lawsuits alleging violations of the U.S. Constitution's Emoluments Clauses, which prohibit the president from receiving payments or gifts from foreign and domestic governments without the consent of Congress. While these lawsuits were ultimately dismissed as moot after he left office, they highlighted the unique ethical challenges posed by his presidency.
- **Promotion of Personal Brands:** Trump frequently used the platform of the presidency to promote his own properties. He mentioned his hotels and golf courses in official speeches and on his Twitter account, and at one point, his administration announced that a G7 summit would be held at his Doral resort in Florida, a decision that was reversed after bipartisan backlash. This constant intermingling of public office and private business eroded the ethical norms designed to ensure that presidents act in the public interest, not for personal financial gain.

## 6 The Trump-Putin Relationship and Geopolitical Implications

Donald Trump's approach to foreign policy was one of the most disruptive aspects of his presidency, challenging the foundations of the post-World War II international order. His "America First" doctrine prioritized bilateral, transactional relationships over multilateral alliances and institutions. Central to this geopolitical shift was his complex and often controversial relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which had significant implications for U.S. national security, the transatlantic alliance, and global stability.

### 6.1 Policy Alignments and Rhetoric

Throughout his campaign and presidency, Donald Trump consistently expressed a level of warmth and admiration for Vladimir Putin that was highly unusual for a U.S. president. This contrasted sharply with his often-critical and demanding tone towards traditional American allies.

- **Public Praise and Deference:** Trump frequently praised Putin as a "strong leader" and expressed a desire for a better relationship with Russia. The most striking example of this deference occurred at a joint press conference in Helsinki in July 2018. Standing next to Putin, Trump was asked about the U.S. intelligence community's unanimous conclusion that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election. Trump responded, "President Putin says it's not Russia. I don't see any reason why it would be." This public siding with a U.S. adversary over his own intelligence agencies sent shockwaves through the American political establishment and among U.S. allies.
- **Questioning Russian Malign Activities:** Beyond the 2016 election, Trump often appeared to downplay or dismiss other malign Russian activities. He was perceived as reluctant to forcefully condemn Russia for the annexation of Crimea, its military intervention in eastern Ukraine, or its use of a chemical weapon in the attempted assassination of a former Russian spy in the United Kingdom.
- **Alignment on Worldview:** Trump's rhetoric often mirrored key aspects of Putin's worldview. Both leaders express a deep skepticism of multilateral institutions, a preference for a world order based on the power of sovereign nation-states, and a disdain for what they perceive as liberal internationalism. Trump's focus on national sovereignty and his criticism of "globalism" aligned closely with Putin's long-standing efforts to undermine the U.S.-led liberal international order.

## 6.2 Impact on U.S.-Russia Relations

Despite Trump's warm personal rhetoric towards Putin, the official policy of the U.S. government towards Russia during his term was often contradictory. While the president pursued a personal diplomatic opening, his administration did implement some punitive measures against Russia, often under pressure from Congress.

- **Sanctions and Military Aid:** The Trump administration did approve the sale of lethal military aid to Ukraine, a step the Obama administration had been hesitant to take. It also imposed sanctions on Russian entities and individuals in response to election interference and other malign activities. However, Trump often seemed to approve these measures reluctantly and continued to publicly question their necessity.
- **The Mueller Investigation's Shadow:** The ongoing Special Counsel investigation into Russian interference cast a long shadow over U.S.-Russia relations for the first half of Trump's presidency. The investigation itself became a source of friction, with Trump denouncing it as a "witch hunt" that was hindering his ability to improve relations with Russia.
- **Eroding Deterrence:** Critics argue that Trump's consistent praise for Putin and his questioning of Russian culpability had a corrosive effect on American deterrence. By sowing doubt about Russia's actions and creating divisions with allies, his rhetoric may have emboldened Putin, contributing to a geopolitical environment that facilitated Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, after Trump had left office.

## 6.3 NATO and Alliances

Perhaps the most significant geopolitical impact of the Trump presidency was its effect on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other core U.S. alliances. Trump viewed these alliances through a transactional lens, frequently questioning their value and complaining that the U.S. was bearing an unfair financial burden.

- **Criticism of Defense Spending:** From his first NATO summit, Trump berated allied leaders for failing to meet the alliance's guideline of spending 2% of their GDP on defense. While previous presidents had also pushed for greater burden-sharing, Trump's attacks were unusually public and hostile. He framed the issue not as a matter of collective security, but as one of allies being "delinquent" in their payments to the U.S.
- **Questioning Article 5:** The cornerstone of the NATO alliance is Article 5, the collective defense clause which states that an attack on one member is an attack on all. Trump repeatedly cast doubt on the U.S. commitment to this principle. In one interview, he described NATO as "obsolete" and suggested that the U.S. might not come to the aid of

a NATO ally, such as Montenegro, if it were attacked, questioning why his son should have to go to war to defend it. This public questioning of the U.S. security guarantee, the bedrock of European security for over 70 years, caused profound alarm among allies and was seen as a gift to Russia.

- **Troop Withdrawals:** Trump ordered the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. troops from Germany and Syria, often with little to no consultation with allies on the ground. These moves were criticized for undermining collective security efforts and creating a vacuum that could be exploited by adversaries like Russia and ISIS.
- **Strained Relationships:** The overall effect of Trump's rhetoric and actions was a severe straining of the transatlantic relationship. Allied leaders were often unsure of the reliability of the United States as a partner. This has led to a greater push within Europe for "strategic autonomy," the idea that Europe must develop its own defense capabilities independent of the United States. While increased European defense spending is a long-standing U.S. goal, the impetus for this shift—a lack of trust in the American security guarantee—represents a fundamental challenge to the structure of the NATO alliance. The uncertainty and instability created by Trump's approach have weakened the collective front against Russian aggression and other global challenges.

## 7 Challenges to Democratic Institutions and Global Stability

The presidency of Donald Trump posed a series of profound challenges to the health and stability of democratic institutions, both within the United States and across the globe. His consistent attacks on the foundational norms of liberal democracy, his efforts to consolidate executive power, and his disruptive "America First" foreign policy have left a lasting and destabilizing legacy. This section examines how his actions have eroded trust in elections, threatened the separation of powers, and contributed to a more volatile and unpredictable international environment.

### 7.1 Erosion of Trust in Elections

A cornerstone of any functioning democracy is public faith in the integrity of its electoral process. Donald Trump's sustained and baseless attacks on this process represent one of the most significant challenges to American democracy in the modern era.

- **Preemptive Claims of Fraud:** Even before the 2016 election, Trump began to claim that the process was "rigged" against him. He continued this theme throughout his presidency, laying the groundwork to contest any election he might lose.

- **The "Big Lie" and the 2020 Election:** In the aftermath of his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden, Trump launched an unprecedented campaign to overturn the results. He and his allies propagated what has become known as the "Big Lie": the baseless claim that the election was stolen through widespread, coordinated fraud. This campaign of disinformation involved:
  - **Dozens of failed lawsuits:** The Trump campaign and its allies filed over 60 lawsuits in state and federal courts challenging the election results. These cases were almost universally rejected, often by conservative judges Trump himself had appointed, due to a complete lack of credible evidence.
  - **Pressure on election officials:** Trump personally pressured state election officials to alter the vote counts. The most notable instance was his phone call to Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, in which he asked him to "find 11,780 votes," the exact number he needed to win the state. This action is the basis of the criminal indictment against him in Georgia.
  - **The "fake electors" scheme:** His allies organized slates of "alternate" or "fake" electors in several key states that he had lost, in an attempt to have them certified instead of the legitimate electors chosen by the voters.
- **Incitement of the January 6th Attack:** The culmination of this campaign was the January 6th, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. By inciting his supporters to march on the Capitol to stop the certification of the election, he directly encouraged a violent assault on the peaceful transfer of power, a bedrock principle of American democracy.
- **Lasting Impact:** The consequences of this campaign are severe and ongoing. Polls consistently show that a large majority of Republican voters still believe the 2020 election was illegitimate. This erosion of trust undermines the perceived legitimacy of the current government and creates a permissive environment for future challenges to democratic elections. It has also led to a wave of new voting restrictions in Republican-led states and has resulted in threats and harassment against election workers.

## 7.2 Consolidation of Power

Throughout his presidency, Trump exhibited a strong preference for personal authority over institutional processes and expressed admiration for authoritarian leaders. Critics have argued that his actions represented a sustained assault on the checks and balances that are designed to prevent the consolidation of executive power.

- **Attacks on the Judiciary and Law Enforcement:** When courts ruled against his administration's policies, such as the travel ban, Trump would often lash out at the judges personally, referring to them as "so-called judges" and questioning their legitimacy. He

also relentlessly attacked the Department of Justice and the FBI for investigating his campaign's ties to Russia, accusing them of being part of a "deep state" conspiracy against him. This undermines the rule of law by suggesting that the legal system is merely a political tool and should be loyal to the president personally.

- **Weaponizing the Pardon Power:** Trump used his pardon power to reward political allies and loyalists, including those convicted of crimes as part of the Mueller investigation, such as his former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and his long-time adviser Roger Stone. This use of the pardon power was criticized for subverting the course of justice and signaling that loyalty to the president would be rewarded, even if it involved breaking the law.
- **Plans for a Second Term:** Since leaving office, Trump and his allies have outlined plans for a potential second term that would dramatically increase presidential power. These plans, often associated with "Project 2025," include proposals to bring independent federal agencies, such as the Federal Reserve and the Federal Communications Commission, under direct presidential control. He has also spoken of using the Justice Department to prosecute his political opponents and has talked about acting as a "dictator" on "day one" to close the border and expand drilling. These proposals represent a fundamental challenge to the principle of a neutral, professional civil service and the separation of powers.

### 7.3 Global Instability

Trump's "America First" foreign policy, characterized by its unilateralism, protectionism, and disdain for international institutions, has contributed to a more fragmented and unstable global environment.

- **Weakening of Alliances:** As detailed previously, his constant attacks on NATO and other key alliances in Asia have weakened the network of partnerships that has been the foundation of U.S. security and global stability for decades. Allies are no longer certain they can rely on the U.S. security guarantee, which has prompted them to seek greater strategic autonomy and, in some cases, to hedge their bets by seeking closer ties with other powers.
- **Withdrawal from International Agreements:** The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) and the Paris Agreement on climate change isolated the United States and undermined international efforts to address critical global challenges. The withdrawal from the JCPOA led to Iran restarting its nuclear program and has significantly increased tensions in the Middle East.
- **Trade Wars and Economic Nationalism:** His use of tariffs and his confrontational approach to trade have disrupted global supply chains and created economic uncertainty. By

rejecting multilateral trade frameworks in favor of bilateral deals, he has weakened the rules-based international trading system.

- **Legitimizing Authoritarianism:** Trump's frequent praise for authoritarian leaders like Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping of China, and Kim Jong Un of North Korea, combined with his attacks on democratic institutions at home, has been seen as giving a green light to autocrats around the world. It has weakened America's standing as a promoter of democracy and human rights, and has emboldened leaders who seek to undermine the liberal international order. The result is a more dangerous and chaotic world, where the norms that have helped to maintain peace and stability are increasingly under threat.

## 8 Conclusion

The presidency of Donald J. Trump represents a watershed moment in modern American and world history. His tenure was not merely a deviation from political norms but a fundamental challenge to the core tenets of liberal democracy, the post-war international order, and the very nature of truth in public discourse. The analysis presented in this report, conducted by the Marie Landry Spy Shop, underscores a consistent pattern of behavior and policy that has left a deep and lasting impact on the United States and its role in the world.

His rhetoric, characterized by its divisive and often dehumanizing nature, has fractured American society, deepened partisan polarization to an unprecedented degree, and eroded the social trust necessary for a pluralistic society to function. By systematically attacking democratic institutions—from the free press and the judiciary to the electoral process itself—he has undermined the faith of millions in the legitimacy of their own government. His baseless campaign to overturn the 2020 election, culminating in the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol, represents the most significant assault on the peaceful transfer of power in the nation's history. The "Big Lie" continues to corrode the foundations of American democracy, creating a political environment where facts are subordinate to partisan loyalty.

In terms of policy, the Trump administration enacted a sweeping agenda that reflected his "America First" ideology. This resulted in hardline immigration policies that led to family separations and a near-dismantling of the asylum system; the rollback of environmental protections and withdrawal from global climate efforts; and the appointment of a generation of conservative judges who will shape American law for decades to come. His economic policies, centered on tax cuts and trade wars, produced mixed results and added trillions to the national debt, while his unprecedented conflicts of interest raised profound ethical questions about the use of public office for private gain.

On the world stage, Trump's presidency marked a retreat from American leadership. His transactional and often hostile approach to long-standing alliances like NATO strained the transatlantic relationship and weakened the collective front against authoritarian adversaries.

His warmth towards autocrats like Vladimir Putin, combined with his skepticism of democratic allies, has destabilized the geopolitical landscape and emboldened those who seek to disrupt the rules-based international order. The uncertainty and unpredictability of his foreign policy have left a legacy of global instability and a diminished standing for the United States.

The long-term implications of the Trump presidency are still unfolding, but it is clear that his influence extends far beyond his four years in office. He has transformed the Republican Party in his own image, and his brand of populist nationalism continues to resonate with a significant portion of the American electorate and with similar movements around the world. The challenges he posed to democratic institutions, the rule of law, and global cooperation are not easily resolved.

Counteracting this legacy requires a multi-faceted and sustained effort. This includes a vigorous defense of democratic institutions and norms, a commitment to fact-based discourse, the pursuit of policies that address the underlying economic and cultural anxieties that fueled his rise, and a rebuilding of the international alliances necessary to confront shared global challenges. The analysis of the Trump era serves as a critical case study and a stark warning of the fragility of democratic systems in the face of populist and authoritarian pressures. The future of American democracy and the stability of the international order may well depend on the lessons learned from this tumultuous period.

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