

Presidential Gaslighting and the Assault of the Mind: Rhetoric and Manipulation in the Speech of Trump

التأجيج السياسي والاعتداء على العقل: البلاغة والتلاعب في خطاب ترامب

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Abstract:

This article tackles how offensive is the American political speech and how vulnerable the American mind becomes to gaslighting. It aims at shedding light on the rhetoric of president Donald Trump that is more than manipulating the mobs but also gaslighting them as to realize his political ambitious agenda. It shows how Trump assaulted the mind of his followers considering their paralyzed and confused state. Through Rhetoric Political Analysis, a focus is made on the statements of Trump, his intentions and what techniques and modes he carried in his rhetoric to appeal the *logos*, the *pathos* and *ethos* of his addressees. Rhetorical Political Analysis is to scrutinize the impact of the rhetoric of Trump on his audience. Digging into the psyche of the American and his mind gave the psychological explanation of the assault of the mind of the politicians' speech. That was served by the Critical Discourse Analysis.

Keywords: Rhetoric- Manipulation-Mind Assault- Gaslighting- Donald Trump

ملخص :

تتناول هذه المقالة مدى اعتداء الخطاب السياسي الأمريكي وكذلك مدى ضعف العقل الأمريكي أمام التأجيج السياسي. ويهدف العمل الحالي إلى تسليط الضوء على خطاب الرئيس دونالد ترامب الذي هو أكثر من مجرد تلاعب بالجمهير بل تأجيجا لتحقيق أجنده السياسية الطموحة. المقال يوضح كيف اعتدى ترامب على عقل أتباعه نظرا لحالهم المشلولة والمربكة. من خلال التحليل السياسي الخطابي، يتم التركيز على تصريحات ترامب ونواياه والأساليب التي استخدمها في خطابه لنداء الروح، مشاعر الشفقة ورفع الشعارات لمن يخاطبهم. التحليل السياسي الخطابي يفحص تأثير خطاب ترامب على جمهوره. بالإضافة، يعطى البحث في نفسية وعقل الأمريكي التفسير لاعتداء خطاب السياسيين والتأجيج. وقد خدم ذلك تحليل الخطاب النقدي.

كلمات مفتاحية: البلاغة -التلاعب -التأجيج السياسي -الاعتداء على العقل.

Introduction:

Rhetoric was defined by Aristotle as the ability and the usage of the means of persuasion. Rhetoric is all about discursive manifestations, that is to say the usage of words in the field of politics to vehicle political ideas and convince the community about its efficiency. The rhetorician persuades his audience by appealing their *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* as earlier philosophical classics confirmed. Both Aristotle and Cicero's tackled morals and manipulation when considering studies on rhetoric, emotions, and political morality. Rhetoric is proved to be manipulative actually when political and personal interests become primordial for the rhetorician. Bryant Welch, an American Psychologists, wrote about the state of confusion in the US and the American mind that is politically manipulated as rhetoric becomes assaultive. Unstable, the American mind that is unable to get out psychological and traumatic state is easily gaslighted by the politicians' rhetoric. Psychological traumas agitate the sense of security and devastate the Americans' nervous system. Politicians take advantage of this traumatized state of mind to achieve their political goals and gains. The xenophobic feelings towards foreigners and also the Islamophobic one presented in Trump's speech fuel his followers and legalized violence in the community. The invasion of the Capitol on January the 6th 2021 took place after Donald Trump incited his supporters in a speech to outcry their rights had not only shown a failure and fallacy in democracy but also how his rhetoric is gaslighting the mobs.

1. The Statement of the Problem and Methodology:

Politicians' speeches oscillate between persuasion and gaslighting. Very difficult is the distinction because of the rhetoric that shadows the intent and interest. Donald Trump's rhetoric was that specific and emerges a shaking language in the world of diplomacy. Between official statements and tweets' posting, Trump seemed to have a base that really spread belief in him. His devotee's readiness to back side him gave a populist tendency to his politics as his speeches targeted basically their interests and security. Indeed, Trump more than manipulated his followers, he gaslighted them to accomplish his socio-political agenda.

Two basic questions arise, then:

- What rhetorical techniques did Trump use as he addressed his supporters?
- How did Trump's gaslighting assault the American mind?

To answer these questions, a Rhetorical Political Analysis (RPA) was essentially carried as it comprises reflections on the role of rhetoric in the world of politics and its tie to reason, arguments and emotions. This includes analyzing the *logos*- where reason is prioritized, the *pathos* and *ethos* and how Trump manipulated the mind of the Americans. RPA helps to figure out tools to analyze and scrutinize the arguments of Trump. As per the Speech Act Theory, rhetorical situations are considered deeply where arguments of Trump take place as in the case of the Mexican Wall project to halt the illegal immigration and its troubles, or banning Muslims' entry to the US for instance. Addressees, say the Americans, are reacting for instance deeply to the issue of foreigner's threat because of an islamophobia that rose since September 11th or a xenophobia to a neighboring intruder. Analysis of the 'rhetorical situation' of Trump that is not seemingly democratic is important since the assault of the mind is negating the Americans their choice actually. There are three modes of rhetorical appeals: *ethos*-centric, *pathos*-centric and *logos*-centric mode, and all find their way in the language of Trump (Glynos et al., 2009, p.p. 13-20).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field rose alongside social and political issues; linguistic perspectives are associated with other perspectives in social sciences as psychology and cognitive science. Ruth Wodak described CDA as a multidisciplinary and multi-methodological (as cited in Nonhoff, 2017, p. 2). For Dijk, CDA focuses on discourses reviewing ties of power and dominations. It is 'actor-centered analysis' having focus on elites' as in that articles' case Donald Trump. Norman Fairclough thinks CDA tackles normative social matters. Indeed, it focuses on 'what is wrong with society' as he proclaimed. The article sheds light on Trump's conduct that is shadowed by his rhetoric that is judged to be dangerous and immoral (as cited in Nonhoff, 2017, p. 3).

2. Rhetoric and Manipulation:

Since Aristotle's maxim in *Rhetoric*, persuasion and rhetoric had gone hand in hand in politics. Meaning transmitted via words or behavior of the rhetoricians is meant to convince the hearer about one's ideas (Załęska, 2012 p.4). However, Grow explained that 'the role that rhetoric plays in routinizing communication and delineating channels of social power can be obfuscated by an appeal to aesthetic niceties' (as cited in Załęska, p.6). For Bizzel et al, Rhetoric is effective speechifying where chosen language has a persuasive aim while transmitting knowledge (Eyman, 2015, p.13). As time went by, unconscious rhetorical practices establish a culture in communication and belief

and the politicians and the audiences as well are trapped in a permitted-prohibited legacy; a 'cultural topoi'. Creativity in rhetoric's still though allows a large gate for politicians to scheme their carrier in words without being disintegrated. The use of the *ethos*, *pathos* and the *logos* ⁽¹⁾ in good rhetoric seems quite rewarding in politics. The 'Skeptical Rhetoric', however, brought with complicated speech might be the other face of the coin. 'Insufficient reason' according to Falzer may lead actually to a wish to captivate the others' attention for one's interests in beauty and passionate words (Zaleśka, p.7).

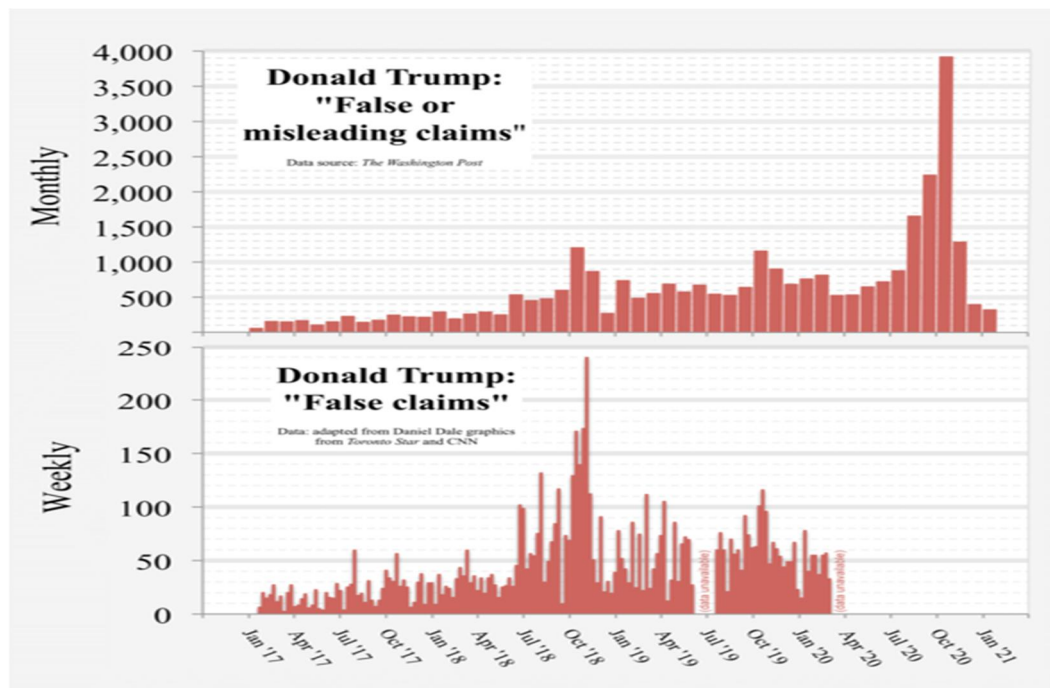
The rhetoric of Trump is deeply awkward for many reasons: the choice of his words "leads to ambiguity, disagreements and confusion" and nobody knows really if he meant what he said. Trump did transcend "overtone window" ⁽²⁾ through continual personal attacks, giving a frightening impression of opting for "fascist themes and styles". The use of logical fallacies ⁽³⁾ is none an exception in Trump's rhetoric. In the language of Trump "using extreme is a method to circumvent or overwhelm reason" as per Jason Stanley author of *How Fascism Works*. Indeed, Trump's rhetoric is extreme, fascistic, vague and incoherent. After his rallies, speeches that are inciting lead to a nationwide violence. Whether it is his erratic personality or deliberate, Trump's messages were never cognized ⁽⁴⁾: Trump aged the country and all those who have been following him fell victim to his extremism, lying and gaslighting (Fig. 1). A rhetorical device Trump uses often is to claim to be an authority in every field; appealing then his audience ethos as making the statements "a totalitarianesque thought-terminating cliché" ⁽⁵⁾. Rolling Stone spoke about the guy-at-the-end-of-the-bar theory of Trump, and that is proving true. His third-grade reading level is summed in terms as: "terrible", "terrific", "fantastic", "horrible", "loser", "yuge", which are "pure hyperboles". That goes too hand in hand with his sentences as "I have a very good brain" and "I went to an Ivy League school" that are really demonstrating 'idiocracy and kakistocracy'. This sort of stuff are well-known persuasive techniques, say repetition persuasion, social proof persuasion and anecdotes persuasion (Rationalwiki).

In spite of different means that emerged by modern times comparing to earlier traditional ones, the universality of rhetoric lies in the fact that its basic aim is first and foremost persuasion. Far from the Platonic belief in absolute truths as rhetorical basis, modern cultural milieus whatever means used to vehicle messages negate such an aspect and reply to the biological dictations of the human (Tracy & Logan, 2008, p.p. 33-34). When politics turn to be 'a private game of personal interests', the rhetorician implements "neuorhetorics"; he

attends the psycho-ontological background of the audience with an influencing aesthetically emotive striking speech. Indeed, 'the ethical commitment of politics, i.e., the common good, is rarely if ever respected'. Politicians rather prefer such a strategy rather than engaging in logics. As arguments and lying become one, pathos overweighs the logos actually (Zaleśka, p.p.7-8).

Fig.1

False and Misleading Claims



Source: https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/File:2017-_Donald_Trump_-_graph_-_false_or_misleading_claims.png

Welch refers to the manipulative means of the American mind as 'gaslighting'. He thinks the Americans are drawn in the world of politics and are becoming vulnerable to face up those political tactics. "America has been gaslighted" (Welch, 2018, p. 22), Welch confirmed. "Gaslighting is an insidious set of psychological manipulations that undermine the mental stability of its victim", he carried on. Gaslighted and manipulated, the Americans are to stick at someone that is to show them the right path and 'clarify' puzzling events. Be they meditative or personal communicative manipulations, the American mind becomes a victim in many ways to what is broadcast as our minds function differently from the way we perceive it. The mind is made up of series of loose symbols and idiosyncratic feelings connected and acting 'chaotically' (Welch,

p.180). Indeed, man is still behaving according to its instinctive primitive feelings of envy and fright and so serves its own interest. Perhaps at that level, I might raise the notion of the Hobbesian fear that is the core of the realists' political analytical theory and that copes with Welch's standpoint. Between the political and the clinical world once in Washington D.C., Welch felt trapped and could not understand that many are looking for understanding when others are obscuring them (Welch, p.p. 180-186).

3. A Malaise at Home with Trump's Rhetoric:

Facing criticism on his rhetoric that is said to be creating secession in the country, Trump replied that "[his] rhetoric ...brings people together". A Pew Research Center survey held in June 2019 had shown that 55% of those asked about Trump rhetoric said that he has reformed "the tone of political debate for the worse". Trump earned a reputation for answering strongly to political attacks; this is something real and perceived. Trump has a combative approach that led even republicans to detest his conduct. His tweets' language was very harsh with democrats as to ask them come back to areas from where they come. He targeted among many democrats as Rep. Ilham Omar who was born in Somalia. Republican Rep. Will Hurd of Texas told CNN that Trump's tweets were 'inaccurate' and "racist and xenophobic." Many Americans thought that his political attacks on Congress woman had "crossed the line". His supporters at a rally in North Carolina sung "Send her back" when referring in his speech to Omar. Trump's claim to have silenced them was a rather four Pinocchio's lie because he did accuse her for being in ties with Al Qaeda (Kiely, 2019, para.1-2).

His rhetoric was not the least hurting even when talking about cities in the US. Trump criticized Democratic Rep. Elijah Cummings and his district in Baltimore depicting it as uninhabitable for humans and "a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess". Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, considered Trump's comments "outrageous and inappropriate." In the morrow, Trump also tweeted that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's district in San Francisco is "not even recognizable lately". The term "invasion" was typically a Trumpian to describe "caravans of Central Americans" who sought asylum in the U.S. and other immigrants who come illegally from the environs and that the authorities are not capable to eradicate such a phenomenon. He said in a rally in Florida: "I mean, when you have 15,000 people marching up, and you have hundreds and hundreds of people, and you have two or three border security people that are brave and great – and don't forget we don't let them and we can't let them use

weapons,” Trump said. “We can’t. Other countries do, we can’t. I would never do that. But how do you stop these people?” (Kiely, para. 3-4). Mia Love, a Utah Republican called the comments of Trump divisive. This is what he said to portray them: “The President[s] comments are unkind, divisive, elitist, and fly in the face of our nation’s values”. “This behavior is unacceptable from the leader of our nation”, he insisted (Kiely, para. 5). Trump opted for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States,” and ordered a “travel ban” on the citizens of seven Muslim countries namely: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen) (Kiely, para. 8).

Welch explained that politicians do take advantage of the trauma the mobs are suffering from to serve their plans and hence nourish their rhetoric accordingly. He calls them gaslighters and they are burning the American mind. In an attempt to flee these, the Americans unconsciously sought refuge in Trumps’ words and promises. He seemed eager to bring relief in their socio-economic and psychological claims. The more Trump was violent towards the others the more the Americans felt relieved and that was the rhetorical Trumpian trick. The reality is that they have fallen victim to his gaslighting and were serving his whims and believing in his fascism instead of democratic ideals. Trump speeches were destroying their mind and character. They were demolishing the American free institutions and unconsciously were manipulated and gaslighting the mobs (Welch, p.p. 16-20).

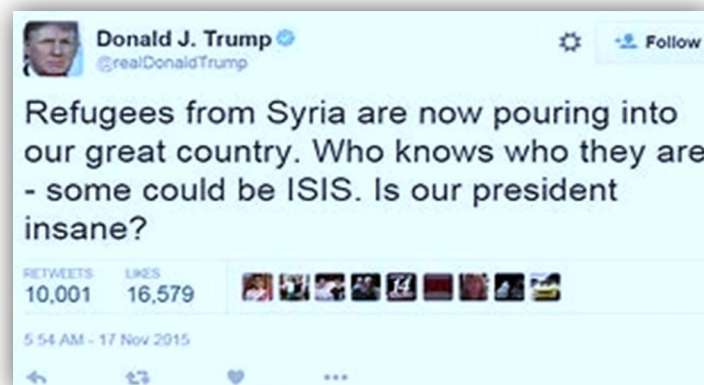
4. Rhetoric Fueling Islamophobia and Xenophobia:

During his campaign as the Republican presidential front-runner, Trump urged for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims’ entry to the US until the country’s representatives can figure out what’s going on. Indeed, this is the “most sweepingly xenophobic statement” ever said by a candidate and many felt such a polarizing rhetoric is really dangerous. Banning the immigration of Muslims is unachievable and it violates the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Trump explained that those Muslims have much hatred for Americans and then: “ [the US] cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life” (Kiely, p.p. 5-6).

Trump objected to the resettlement of the Syrian refugees, as he considered them as a threat to national security (Timm, 2015). Trump’s anti-Muslim political rhetoric on Twitter were very obvious since his first tenure but worsened at the eve of his elections. Indeed, Muslims’ depiction has become a

stereotype since 9/11. The Islamophobic discourse rose since then and media is shaping, indeed, peoples' ideology. Trump used his Twitter base to endorse "anti-Muslim discourse". Trump used Twitter as a medium of communication to vehicle and build his Islamophobic ideology, and influence people's perception all over the world to Islam and Muslims (Khan et al., 2021, p. 2). Since he run for presidency, Trump increased his anti-Muslim rhetoric and called for banning the Muslim immigrants with serious observation of the mosques. However, "What Trump did was make these hidden thoughts public. He gave people permission to speak out loud, he removed the shame associated with being prejudiced. People know that they won't be punished," Ibrahim, a Muslim citizen said. Indeed, Trump rhetoric was bolstering prejudice on Muslims (Fig. 2). Islamophobia took a rise during Trump presidency, indeed (Bayoumy, 2017).

Fig. 2
Prejudice



Source:

<https://th.bing.com/th/id/R.8ab219ff4aabe8fec95a4f8509e17f2a?rik=w%2bDMslf9msGnGA&riu=http%3a%2f%2fwww.barenakedislam.com%2fwfp-content%2fuploads%2f2016%2f05%2ftrump-syrian-refugees-tweet.jpg&ehk=P7qtqENripB76vSrL5qT8BqV64D4bSkTnKC79gSmTUA%3d&risl=&pid=ImgRaw&cr=0&sres=1&sresct=1;>

Still though according to Aristotle, the audience must feel the rhetorician wise and clever, and endowed with much virtue and good intention. Indeed, he cherishes virtues and moral affections in the art of persuasion and speech. These are seen by Socrates as 'manipulative forces' as the 'rhetoric appeals their pathos' and then offers in his speech what is keen to be said and understood. The good will is far from being the aim of the politician who wishes to govern in his way and then coerce the mob if needed. Plato did not differentiate between

persuasion and force in the political arena where democracy and tyranny co-occur (Norris, 2009, p.p. 625- 627).

Cicero called the manipulative speech of the rhetor the *actio* and defined it as the “incredible power” to make “any impression on the unlearned crowd.” In spite of Plato’s tendency towards “directing the soul by means of speech” as the mobs are addressed and their soul transcended, he thought the orator is otherwise as ‘Sophists’; broadening chaos and disarray as carrying a disastrous political career (Hoye, 2019, pp.295-298). For Aristotle, as politics is art, *ethos* together with pathos and logos are but “*entechnic*” proofs of the rhetor to convince the public (Hoye, p.p. 298). Apart from action, the ‘lexis’ is at the core of speech delivered by the politician. ‘The magnanimous’ man i.e.: the virtuous is the smart and wise man who creates a new political order thanks to his *actio* and rhetoric (Hoye, p.p.298 -303).

The Eleventh September’s attacks made the US vulnerable to its ‘paranoid’ retort to the assaulters. The event urged the United States to face up a crisis of national defense but also a psychological disequilibrium and anxiety. Together with sex perplexity and envy, paranoia destabilizes an already difficultly-kept unsteady mind. The Americans became easy recipient of manipulation and gaslighting of the ‘Architects of False Realities’ (Welch, p.115). Much credit is granted to Freud’s ideas today, even rejected earlier, as they comply with new technological advanced studies of the brain and which explain how these Americans are controlled. Television news are inflaming and transmitting what is accepted by the mind as truths and what is making the audiences feel emotionally steady far from any logics and reasoning. This is for Welch a real “disintegration of the American mind” (Welch, p. 201) that urges him forwards an effort to “resurrect the American mind”. Between being paranoiac and making of the pains of the paranoiac a project for self-interest’s realization, politicians are inflaming the Americans who are disconnected from each other and the word of realities. Still though, this mind might be “resurrected” if the Americans see life through their inner experiences, love, understanding and exchange to feel secured, happy and psychologically steady (Welch, p. 224).

Notions as rhetoric, emotions, and political morality emerged with Aristotle and Cicero. On the basis of his cognitive approach, Aristotle did condemn the immorality of emotional manipulation as he considered both beliefs and thought derivatives of emotions and then breaks the reason vs. emotion dichotomy. Cicero, however, confirms emotions prevent cogent

political initiatives and hence morals and ethics in politics are of a great significance. (Remer, 2020, p.p.402-404) Rhetoric turns manipulative for Nathaniel Klemp's when the force and the will of doing so are ubiquitous. The audience is unable -because of the manipulation- to differentiate the good from the beneficial or the politicians. Kant referred to this as a "win[ning] over men's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter . . . rob[bing] the verdict of its freedom" (as cited in Remer, p. 407).

Bryant Welch, an American clinical psychologist and attorney, worked in the American Psychological Association in Washington from 1989 to 2003. He wrote two basic books *State of Confusion* and *State of Confusion: Political Manipulation and the Assault of the American Mind* that shed light on how the American policymakers in America are impacting and manipulating the audience. For Welch politics in the United States led to the American unsteady psychological mind and even an outbreak. Referring to state of confusion, he is unable to understand how Donald Trump could achieve Presidency. For Welch, the American mind was assaulted, and as Professor Laurence Trive noted 'have all but crippled the one- extraordinary mind of America' (as cited in Welch, 2018, p. 2). Manipulation is devastating the American lives and unconscious they are moving towards destruction of humanity and earth. Manipulative means as psychologically charged lies as in the case of terrorism to justify American intervention abroad is destroying the American mind as trauma becomes part of their routine and psyche. Trump seems for them the savior of America, indeed (Welch, p.p.1-6).

Trump rhetoric against Latino immigrants was highly condemned too. He insulted Mexicans when he qualified them as a "rapists" and "criminals" who are crossing the border and calling for all undocumented immigrants to be deported (Bayoumy, 2017). President Trump used extremely rude rhetoric to reiterate his call for a strict immigration law. These people who came into US, being "undocumented immigrants" were considered by Trump as "animals" something that did highly frustrate Mexican officials. Trump said: "We have people coming into the country or trying to come in, we're stopping a lot of them, but we're taking people out of the country. You wouldn't believe how bad these people are...These aren't people. These are animals", he carried. On the "sanctuary city" policies, he added "California's law provides safe harbor to some of the most vicious and violent offenders on Earth, like MS-13 gang members putting innocent men, women, and children at the mercy of these sadistic criminals". Earlier Trump explained that: "When Mexico sends its

people, they're not sending their best", he said then. Harsher is the following: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." (Korte & Gomez, 2018). Trump's "incendiary statements" against Mexican immigrants and US-Mexican trade relations were shocking. His comments were embarrassing for the Mexican government's narratives that was bettering its image regarding diaspora and foreign policy. Through the account of the African- American that was shot by the Mexican member of a gag, Trump tires immigration to crime which is a dangerous narrative and rhetoric. That could have really caused the African-American and Mexican communities' frictions. Perhaps in an intentional effort to win votes, Trump's comments may also agitate existing tensions between the African-American and Mexican communities (Castellanos del Collado, 2015).

Welch explained that Psychological traumas demolish the nervous system and the individual become unable to cognize the realities and falls in an abyss of fears and doubts about surroundings said to be dangerous and terrorist. Trauma is a lasting psychic state of mind that would not disappear after the traumatic events Welch confirmed. It causes a rupture with the surroundings and even the self and the individual trusts no more the 'common sense' and beliefs. Neurosciences had shown how those people impacted by speeches and rhetoric on terror would be moving to "self-defeat". The more the United States is engaging in reminding people about how ontological security is urging them to be aware and conscious to fight endangering strangers, the more the Americans are drown in despair and lose steadiness and peace of mind and soul (Welch, p.p. 7-16).

Trump's rhetoric was deemed inflammatory when talking about the coronavirus, as he insisted it is created in China. Indeed, " Anti-Asian Twitter content [has] perpetuated racist attitudes." Since the commencement of Covid 19, xenophobic feeling rose out of the repeated usage of "China Virus" expression that fueled the mobs against the American Asians. Dr. Yulin Hswen, an assistant professor of epidemiology at UC wrote: "Anti-Asian sentiment depicted in the tweets containing the term "Chinese Virus" likely perpetuated racist attitudes and parallels the anti-Asian hate crimes that have occurred since." Some Chinese were even shot according to the American Journal of Public Health. Dr. John Brownstein, an ABC News Medical Unit contributor explained how dangerous and provocative are such online postings as when you read # Chinavirus. "Oftentimes, the conversations that take place on social media results in real world consequences" he claimed. The first tweet of "Chinese

Virus” (Fig. 3) on March 16, 2020 provoked a speed increase in anti-Asian hashtags and a rise in hate crimes. Experts warned that such inflammatory and racist tweets may engender crime and violence. The World Health Organization wrote in a February 2020 bulletin the following: “Don't attach locations or ethnicity to the disease, this is not a “Wuhan Virus”, a “Chinese Virus” or “Asian Virus”. Jen Psaki, Biden administration Press Secretary, considers such a “damaging rhetoric” from their predecessor is “inaccurate, unfair” and was that threatening for the Chinese Americans. Hsuen wrote: “confirm that nationality, race, or ethnicity should not be attached to disease nomenclature, as these names can carry pejorative connotations that can stigmatize these communities” (Reja, 2021).

Fig.3

China Virus



Source: <https://www.the-sun.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/03/NINTCHDBPICT000571779365.jpg>

For the political scientist, J. Caesar, “speaking is governing”. The politician language and lexis are used to convince the audience about how fitting is their schemes for the public interest. Nowadays’ Presidents’ speeches are becoming simpler than earlier with an apparent tendency of ‘humans and emotional’ words, religious and emblematic expressions’ keen to help achieve the mob’s feelings and comprehension (Savoy, 2017, p.55). Donald Trump rhetoric’s had ever been distinguished with anger and arrogance; a ‘polarizing negative rhetoric’ that has ever frustrated many Americans among proponent and opponents as well. Many consider his ‘hyperbolic rhetoric’ annoying as deeply reinforced by a sense of injustice and victimhood. Political violence seems part

of Trumps' rhetoric when no political philosophy is guiding his schemes. The least to be said is that Trump's populism is said to be a call for "angry populism." (Clabough & Percy, 2018, p. 374).

5. Populism and Rhetoric:

As November 2021 American elections were thought 'rigged' as notes in every tweeter in Donald Trump's account, gaslighting and manipulation of the president, by then, became flagrant. In an article written on the BBC site entitled 'Capitol riots: Did Trump's words at rally incite violence?', it was reported that Donald Trump is to be impeached for inflaming the crowds to invade the Capitol Hill on January the 6th 2021; this unprecedented event was after Trump addressed his supports on behalf of 'Save America' and under justification of stolen elections to attack the Congress the day Joe Biden was declared the President by the Congress members. Professor Garrett Epps' scrutiny highlighted Trump's address and rhetoric and had shown what utters he used to stir up the supporters (Cabral, 2021). For him, Trump incite came with the following words:

We won this election, and we won it by a landslide'... 'We will stop the steal'... 'We will never give up. We will never concede. It doesn't happen' and carried'... 'You don't concede when there's theft involved. Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore'... 'If you don't fight like hell you're not going to have a country anymore'... 'peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard'... 'We're going to walk down to the Capitol and we're going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women, and we're probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them' (as cited in Cabral)

Maggie Haberman, in her Washington Post's article explained that in 'urging his supporters to see the routine act of certifying the election results as an illegal affront against him and against them, Mr. Trump helped set in motion hours of violence and chaos that continued as darkness fell on Wednesday'. And the reported Representative Liz Cheney, Republican from Wyoming words: 'There's no question the President formed the mob'... 'The President incited the mob. The President addressed the mob. He lit the flame.' The mob invasion was that violent and even shooting was heard; the Congress members fled the meeting of Biden's certification as a President. Indeed, inflaming the mob was clear as Trump called the result of the election by being the "egregious assault on our democracy,' He, however, at the Oval office was silent for hours before he

appeared appealing for peace; For Trump the day ended with a tweet that said: “These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long.” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter, too: “Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!” (Haberman, 2021). In history, lines would remember Donald Trump with a particular departure however.

Conclusion:

The state of confusion that started from a smart persuasion turns into coercive manipulation was to make of ‘America First’ a falling symbol of exceptionalism and a handicapped democracy that is failing to recover as the crisis is deepening. Trumpism and fascism seemed raising hand in hand and the gaslighted mobs were burned with mirth at the steps of the capitol and before in the streets. From his tweets to a tweetup, Donald Trump seemed transcending the peaceful and democratic principles and his rhetoric manipulated the mob that turned rather believers on fascism to topple a democratic system that never answered to their relies. The question that might be raised at that aura is then: what had made America come to such a state of mind, where mistrust between the institutions and the Americans gave birth to a real crisis of democracy. Why the crowds who believed in Donald Trump and voted with great numbers did adhere to his speeches and believed he will save America when the Democrats seemed corrupt and inapt to govern? Was Donald Trump, fascist as he is the creation of a failed system and then is gaslighting the community that is under the curse of a socio-economic collapse and the free enterprise failure? It seems that Fukuyama’s end of history theory was to be countered by a rather beginning of the American end and an era that the global world is trying to close since decades when the American freedom rhetoric faded amongst the credible narratives. Counter rhetoric and speeches on sovereignty of the others and a new world order reversed by new economic giants is ending the chess game of the US hegemonic round. Words prevail in politics and politics prevail in ethics and morals; these are vanishing in a thin American air.

Notes:

- (1) Terms of *Ethos*, *Pathos* and *Logos* were Aristotle’s and their meaning is as follows: ethos (appeal to logic), pathos (appeal to emotions) and logos (appeal to values) (Babin et al., n.d).

- (2) The Overton Window is” a concept in political science that describes the range of "acceptable" ideas in public discourse. https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Overton_window
- (3) A logical fallacy is an error in the logic of an argument that prevents it from being logically valid or logically sound *but* need not always prevent it from swaying people's minds. https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Logical_fallacy
- (4) Fear, uncertainty, and doubt (or FUD for short) denotes a deliberate public relations propaganda campaign, most often intended to frighten consumers away from considering alternate products or services. https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Fear,_uncertainty_and_doubt?msclkid=78fdc d75c26411ec8d880883527c0452
- (5) A thought-terminating cliché is a saying, often a tautology, that is repeated in order to relieve the stress of cognitive dissonance by avoiding all further consideration of a matter. [https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/ A thought-terminating cliché](https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/A_thought-terminating_cliché)

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