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Trump's Communication Style and Political Polarization: Twitter and the Incitement to the Capitol Assault

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Summary:
The study sheds light on the key question of how President Trump's rhetorical choices decisively undergirded a hostile discursive buildup against Trump's opponents and hence incite his supporters to walk down the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. The study focuses on the rhetorical devices mobilized by President Trump to encode his allegations, falsehoods, dichotomous views, populist discourse and demagoguery to manipulate the US electorate, impugn doubts about the legality of the electoral process, denounce the alleged corruption of Democrats, pusillanimous Republicans, liberal news media in the so-called "rigged elections" of 2020. The study utilizes a qualitative rhetorical analysis method to analyze Trump's rhetorical devices and construe his communication style. The study concludes that Trump's communication style unwaveringly contributed to accentuating the state of political polarization in the US after 2020 presidential election and inciting his supporters to walk down the Capitol to disrupt the certification of a democratically elected government.

Keywords: Donald J. Trump; political communication; rhetorical devices; political polarization; Capitol assault

INTRODUCTION

I consider myself in a certain way to be a blue-collar worker.
—Donald J. Trump (2016, 42:41)

Being a pervasive and decisive tool to express political, social and economic intentions, the accrued importance of language culminated in the perfect adequation of language and politics in that the latter often draws its

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substance from the former (Schäffner, 1997: 1; Fairclough 1989: 23). Having attained this status, politicians started vying over who would wield the variegated and the miscellaneous choices offered by the lexicogrammatical system of language to enlist the maximum of support and outperform and vanquish their adversaries (Partington, 2010: 9; van Dijk, 1997: 12). The persuasive power of language, according to Aristotelian renderings, hinges on the orator's personality (i.e. ethos), the audience's sentiments (i.e. pathos) as well as (the orator's rationales and reasons (i.e. logos) (Beiner 1999: 745).

For the purposes of this study, focus is placed on President Trump's linguistic choices in the tweets he posted in a period extending from the presidential election of November 3rd, 2020 up until the Capitol Insurrection of January 6th, 2021. The study specifically scrutinizes the ways President Trump expressed complex political issues in binary terms, forged a polarized worldview and recast his political opponents as a lethal jeopardy to the US political, social and cultural values.

President Trump also unleashed an avalanche of unsubstantiated allegations, falsehoods and propaganda that centered on reducing Democrats victory into an election hoax" and a "scam." Indeed, throughout the sixty-seven tweets, which constitute the corpus of this study, President Trump operated a discursive buildup whereby he mounted his discrediting campaign against a diverse set of enemies, ranging from Democrats, Republican in name only (RINOs), liberal-leaning news media, the US Congress, FBI, the Justice Department, the US Supreme Court…etc.

Appeal to informal and simple communication style by the US political elite runs deep in American history (Conway and Zubrod, 2022; Kowal et al., 1997; Lim, 2012, Schneider and Eitelmann, 2020). Being more of a choice rather than a reflection of the president's intellectual limitations, Trump, to reprise the words of Lim (2008), cultivated and promoted one of the most (if not the most) rhetorically unconventional, controversial and divisive communication styles in US presidential history. According to Lim, Trump's never-before-seen mode of expression has not only reinvigorated interest in the study of presidential discourse but it also prompted media experts, political pundits and academic commentators to go to great lengths to construe the bewildering linguistic case posed by Trump's speaking style.

This unprecedented level of "anti-intellectualism" in Trump's language titled the balance in the coverage of his announcements to the president's "lack of stylistic finesse and linguistic complexity" to the detriment of meaning (Chen et

al., 2019, p. 14; Wang et al., 2018; Coutanche and Paulus, 2018), Kayam, 2018, p. 77). In fact, since his nomination by the Republican Party for the presidential election of 2016, Donald Trump was forcefully catapulted to the forefront of media debates not due to his stances but rather owing to the way he expressed them through some specific linguistic choices.

Experts in psycholinguistics, media and political science unequivocally point to the idea that Trump is a "unique politician" with a never-seen-before brand of presidential oratory that leverages a feeling of impregnable political righteousness, pompousness, infallible moral rectitude and untainted invincibility (Sedensky 2017; Coutanche and Paulus, 2018). Opting for a "casual tone" and "straight talk," Trump, to reprise the words of McClay (2017), claims to be always on the same wavelength with his audience and his followers in general (p. 12).

Trump's communication style has drawn such accrued attention due to its clear break from the long-lasting and enduring norms that regulated presidential discourse thencetoforth. One new hallmark of Trump's online communication was his constant usage of informal posts even in comment of some of the most critical and issues and policies. This implies that Trump's novel communication style shied away from customary and more congruous press releases and official statements.

Poising as the US president who refuses to read speeches from podiums and hankers to be genuinely on the same wavelength with the average citizen in terms of what and how to reflect on national issues. Taking more the shape of "off-the-cuff," "reactionary" and "juvenile" accounts to news media announcements, Trump's mode of communication clearly gave precedence to jibing and making fun of his adversaries ranging from Democrats to RINOs (i.e. Republicans in Name Only) passing by the left-leaning liberal news media apparatus. Pithily encapsulating, the prevalent communication trend of the Trump presidency, X Strategies CEO and the manager of the Trump War Room and @Team Trump accounts, Alex Bruesewitz claimed that "it's more natural for us to be fun and witty and clever and a little bit offensive at times" (Maher, 2025, p. 3).

Derogating to all previous and deeply entrenched political traditions, Trump's communication style went beyond the already intriguing innovation of breaking all firewalls between the private, partisan and the official government issues of president Trump. Postings on his accounts culminated in the plain "tik-tok-ification" of initial vocation of social media platforms as images and memes

definitely eclipsed text-based contents rendering social media accounts, to reprise the words of Maher (2025), akin to "troll-ish meme accounts" (p. 4). In her defense to the revolutionary trend in president Trump's communication style, DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin argued that the new mode of expression was dictated by the need to convey truth, skirt hostile and "fake" liberal news media outlets and "straighten out" facts (Dean, 2025, p. 1). The pervasive and manipulative power of presidential discourse was further energized by state-of-the-art digital technology whereby many social media platforms could arrange for different individualized algorithms for different accounts and hence set the stage for some specific contents to go viral.

In a related context, a host of experts opined that Trump's preference of very simple syntactic structures and "anecdotal argumentation" coupled with his tendency to project an image of "folksiness" and "a normal guy ethos" are by and far indicative of populist propensities (Aiolfi, 2022; Heinischi, 2003, pp. 94-95; Kreis, 2017; Ross and Rivers, 2020). Despite his social status as a multimillionaire and a real estate mogul, entrepreneur, reality television start, Trump tended to identify with ordinary people and presumably shared their concerns about a "corrupt" and a "decrepit" establishment and "crooked" politicians (Partington and Taylor, 2017, p. 190). Through his "anti-elitist" and "collectivist" rhetoric, Trump sought to tighten ties with an embattled people against what he considered as an "incompetent" and "uncaring" elite, and hence shake off a the*status quo* imposed by the liberal left (Oliver and Rahn, 2016; Liu and Lei, 2018).

For the sake of enlisting their support, Trump ingratiated himself with the working class in contradistinction from the ruling class. The process was reinforced by his embrace of a "Manichean," "hyperbolic" and "metaphorical" language culminating in his espousal of a firm rhetorical line between "us" and "them" by casting himself and his supporters as outsiders incarnating absolute good struggling against corrupt officials incarnating absolute evil (Abbas, 2029; Çinar et al., 2020; Koth, 2020; Stopfner, 2021; Homolar and Scholz, 2019). Trump's anti-establishmentarian stance, viheculed and laymanized in ways that bluntly and brashly breached "official decorum" and "political correctness" (Trump, 2015, p.31; 2016), was lubricated and marketed by Trump's populist posture. Encapsulating the substance of this synergy, Bischof and Senninger (2018), argued that

> […]linguistic simplicity is a valuable tool for exhibiting the aloofness of the remaining political elite and fosters the impression of a strong bond between the populist and ordinary people. Thereby, simple language should suggest that populists understand the struggle and problems of "ordinary" people's everyday life. (p. 476)

In the light of the above renderings, it is safe to argue that tweets stand out as a hallmark of the Trump presidency as they provide a snapshot of the Commander-In-Chief's thinking and style of communication.

2. Method:

The study utilizes the qualitative rhetorical analysis method of the language used by Donald Trump in his post-November 3rd, 2020 presidential election and in the run up to the January 6th, 2021 Capitol Insurrection in order to probe, scrutinize and address the crucial question of this study. The study at hand tackles the question of how Trump's discourse decisively contributed to inciting his followers to march on the Capitol building and hence foment the ensuing Capitol Insurrection that, *inter alia*, sought to stymie the conduct of a constitutional procedure, sabotage the certification of Biden's victory and endanger US deeply entrenched democratic values.

The analysis of President Trump's tweets will be conducted by emphasising the concurrence of a series of factors that decisively contributed to the empowerment of President Trump's presumptions about his victory in the 2020 elections. The diversity in the factors and shared responsibility for the popularity and virality of his victory claims required the utilization of an eclectic analyical framework combining together the philosophical and political ideas of Machiavelli,Comey,Schopenhaouer, Plato and LeBon. Machiavelli's philosophy is instrumental in demonstrating the fact that politics is deeply entrenched in amoralism. As to the political assumptions of Comey, they highly relevant in bringing to the fore the fact that US politics severed ties with truth and moral values.

Along similar lines,Schopenhauerian philosophy is germane for the purpose of this study in that it centered on tendency of political actors to pin their faults and failures on their adversaries which was exactly how President Trump proceeded in scapegoating his opponents mainly in the Democratic party and

traditional mainstream media. As to Platonian philosophy, it significantly serves the purposes of the study of President Trump's discourse on twitter as it displays how demagoguery and distorted political discourse are not strange to democracies and that they are pertinent manifestations of democratic regimes. Likewise for Lebon's ideas about "psychological crowds" which subsume individual intellect and cognition and awareness into a malleable collectivity that can be easily entices and deluded by manipulative discourses, an aspect which conspicuously distinguished the interaction between President Trump and his followers who blindly trusted and supportively reacted to President Trump's unfounded and implausible claims of victory in the 2020 elections.

The scope of data used in this research is 13 089 words of Trump's tweets which were delivered in the abovementioned time interval. The data for the study were taken from three sources. The data for the English speeches were drawn from two websites, "The American Presidency Project. 2020 Donald J. Trump (1ST Term): 45th President of the United States (2017-2021), website https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-november-6-2020and "The White House: Home Page" website https://www.whitehouse.gov/.

The corpus for the present study was compiled manually. Trump's tweets were collected taking into account their contribution to a discursive anti-Democrats, anti-establishment and anti-liberal media build-up that culminated in the Capitol Insurrection of Jan. 6th, 2021, i.e. all 67 tweets were addressed to American electorates in general and his supporters in particular.

3. Results and Discussion:

3.1. Trump's Dichotomous Discourse and the Othering of his Opponents:

Table 1: Trump's Binary Logic and its Polarizing Implications

Nº	Tweets	Date/Time
01	We are up BIG, but they are trying to STEAL the Election. We will never let them do it. Votes cannotbecastafter the Poles are closed!	*November 4, 2020 05:44:57*
02	So much credit to all of the brave men and women in state houses who are defending our great Constitution. Thankyou!	*November 28, 2020 15:49:03*
03	If you don't vote [i.e. on Dec. 7th]. The socialists and the communists win.	*December 6, 2020 06:17:09*

04	The RINOS that run the state voting apparatus have caused us this problem of allowing the Democrats to so blatantly cheat in their attempt to steal the election, which we won overwhelmingly. How dare they allow this massive and ridiculous Mail-In Voting to occur...	*December 13, 2020 22:15:23*
05	Twitter is going wild with their flags, trying hard to suppress even the truth. Just shows how dangerous they are, purposely stifling free speech. Very dangerous for our Country. Does Congress know that this is how Communism starts? Cancel Culture at itsworst. End Section 230!	*December 24, 2020 22:59:54*
06	Where the hell is the Durham Report? They spied on my campaign, colluded with Russia (and others), and got caught. Read the Horowitz Reports about Comey& McCabe. Even the Fake News @nytimes said bad. They tried it all, and failed, so now they are trying to steal the election!	*December 26, 2020 13:34:06*
07	RT @Lrihendry: It's not election fraud, it's treason!	*December 28, 2020 19:52:48*
08	MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!	*January 2, 2021 14:22:13*
09	RT @SidneyPowell1: This election was stolen from the voters in a massive fraud that you & others are now complicit in. American elections…	*January 3, 2021 15:22:06*
10	We are not acting to thwart the Democratic process, we are acting to protect it.	*January 4, 2021 15:23:50*
11	I am asking for everyone at the U.S. Capitol to remain peaceful. No violence! Remember, WE are the Party of Law & Order – respect the Law and our great men and women in Blue. Thankyou!	*January 6, 2021 20:13:26 [1/6/2024 15:13]*
12	These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so	*January 6, 2021 23:01:04*

	unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long. Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!	*[1/6/2024 18:01]*

President Trump's communication style was highly instrumental in dichotomizing the US electorate, the US political elite, and, to a certain extent, the entire US society into good and bad. Arrogating to himself the moral and legal right to associate himself and his supporters with patriotism, political infallibility and moral rectitude and casting his opponents as traitors, corrupt and dangerous, Trump caricaturized sublime national issues in binary terms. In the immediate aftermath of the November 3rd, 2020 presidential election, tackled a violent discursive buildup that centered on the denigration and the disowning of his political opponents and their alleged aides by deploying an armada of unsubstantiated claims about threat posed by his opponents for the US political, social and economic future.

To accentuate the irreconcilable divide between him and his opponents, President Trump denounced the bad intentions of his opponents and underscored the worth of his stance and that of his supporters. As codified in Table 1, the use of characterizations such as "We are BIG" (excerpt 1) "brave men and women" (excerpt 02), defenders of the Constitution (excerpt 03), "protectors of democratic process" (excerpt 09), "We are the Party of Law & order" (excerpt 11), "great patriots" (excerpt 12), was crucial for President Trump to elevate his camp into the guardians of US democracy and the custodians of legitimate governance. Indeed, instead of substantiating his presumptions about victory in the 2020 presidential election with sufficiently solid evidence, President Trump expanded lengthily on associating his camp positive with attributes as if they were enough for his supporters to declare their candidate (i.e. Donald Trump) triumphant in the election. Although this type of reasoning may sound too simplistic, it was enough to mobilize thousands of Americans to march on the Capitol building to prevent the certification of the victory of Joe Biden.

The adequation of his political choices with patriotism was one of the conspicuous stratagems deployed by President Trump, a technique that falls under the rubric of Machiavellian philosophy. To Machiavelli, princes tend to present themselves as synonymous with their states. Acting along the tenets of this philosophy, President Trump capitalized on tying his own image to the patriotic symbols of the country. Furthermore, President Trump presented the recognition of his victory as an indispensable fact to "save America" "make

America great again", "protect the American dream" and safeguard the US against endless threats comprising, among others, Socialism, Russia, China, …etc. "A vote for me and for the Republican Party is a vote for the America dream," said Trump (Tweet, Nov. 3, 2020). In doing so, a successful prince, to reprise the words of Machiavelli, could turn his political opponents into traitors, and have his supporters fight for him with the same fervor they normally reserve for their country (Lurz, 2025, p. 4). Giving supplementary credit to the validity of this claim, the Democratic strategist James Carville called on Democrats to be more assertive by untangling the web enmeshing Trump with the flag and the Old Glory by telling MAGA Republicans, "it's not your flag" (Lurz, 2025, p. 5).

This positive characterization of the Trump camp was all along juxtaposed with the irrevocably negative portrayal of his opponents. As shown in Table 1, appealing to epithets such as "socialists …and communists" (excerpt 03), "RINOS" (excerpt 04), "very dangerous for our country" (excerpt 08) "suppress truth" (excerpt 05) "purposely stifling freedom of speech" (excerpt 05), "colluded with Russia" (excerpts 03, 05) "COUP supporters" (excerpt 06), constituted an indispensible fodder for Trump's demonizing, criminalizing and deprecatory rhetoric about his opponents. Instead of undergirding his claims about "voter fraud" with solid evidence, President Trump contented himself by studding his accounts with a high frequency of disparaging and derogatory monikers and characterizations such "rigged elections" (44 times), "voter fraud" (61 times), "rigged elections" (44 times), "fraudulent election" (23 times), "steal/stole/stolen" (21 times), "political corruption" (21 times), "voter scam" (6 times), "machine glitches"/"flawed machines" of Dominion Voting System (6 times), "fake signatures" (11 times). Instead of focusing on voter results, President Trump placed the entire onus of his defeat on extraneous factors and unsubstantiated allegations and indictments.

President Trump's capitalization on the demonization and stigmatization of his adversaries was paramount in escalating his presumptions about the "stolen election" and the denunciation of what he regarded as the US unprecedentedly massive fraud. By so doing, President Trump intended to bestow legitimacy upon the popular assault on the Capitol and the interruption of the certification of Biden's victory in the election. For the sake of avoiding any possible legal pursuits against him and his followers, President Trump blamed the exclusion of his party

from the electoral race on procedural details, mainstream media and some allegedly fraudulent acts perpetrated by his opponents which stands out as a pretext to justify and rationalize the obstruction of the election process, the denial of Biden's victory and the legalization of the Capitol assault as an act of patriotism.

Upping the ante of his discrediting and disparaging campaign against his opposition, Trump enmeshed a set of other actors as new targets, including, *inter alia*, the US Congress, the US Supreme Court and mainstream news media, FBI and DOJ. Consolidating his anti-Democrat campaign, Trump underscored the responsibility and even the complicity of “Big Tech” and “Fake News Media” in the suppression of truth and the unconditional support for the establishment and the maintenance of the *status quo*. From the vantage point of Trump, ABC, NBC, Fox News and CNN are not trustworthy or reliable and their reports are pro-establishment. To Trump, a truthful coverage of the proceedings of the 2020 election and its aftermath are available in other impartial and fair news media, such as OANN and Newsmax.

Examined through the lens of Aristotelian philosophy, President Trump's personality (i.e. ethos) as a political leader who is imbued with the unwavering conviction that election was stolen and should be taken back by every means because it was in the best interest of the US to be led by him. President Trump saw himself as an irreplaceable and incomparable political leader who knows how to secure the US against all possible social, economic, political and ideological threats and waylaid the US such as Covid 19, Chinese cut-throat economic competition, Russian ideological threat...etc . By addressing himself to the sources of fear for the US people (i.e. pathos) such way, President Trump stroke the right chord by associating those who allegedly stole his victory even from among members of his party with enemies of US stability, prosperity and supremacy (i.e. logos). This excessive sense of self-confidence drew heavily on presentation of the allegations and the presumptions about his party's victory in the election of 2020.

Briefly put, President Trump subsumed the cause of his campaign in making America great again and brandishing the threat that unless his victory is recognized the future of America is in the balance. Presenting himself as the sole savior of what beset the US during the past few decades owing to what he regarded the pusillanimity and incompetence of “careerist politicians” and their acolytes in “Big Tech” the “fake” news media outlets (excerpt 2), President Trump dismally anticipated the ineluctable and imminent demise of US democracy and its traditional values and principles.

3.2. Trump's Disinformation Campaign and the Denial of the Democrats' Victory:

Table 2: Falsehood Propaganda and Allegations of Voter Fraud

Nº	Tweets	Date/Time
01	They just ignored that, ignored the Constitution. Now we bring it down to the counting houses, and outrageously, observers, who are the sentinels of integrity & transparency, were excluded. Pennsylvania has conducted itself in a horrible lawless way, and....	*November 6, 2020--16:28:41*
02	Tens of thousands of votes were illegally received after 8 P.M. on Tuesday, Election Day, totally and easily changing the results in Pennsylvania and certain other razor thin states. As a separate matter, hundreds of thousands of Votes were illegally not allowed to be OBSERVED...	*November 7, 2020--13:20:18*
03	We believe these people are thieves. The big city machines are corrupt. This was a stolen election. Best pollster in Britain wrote this morning that this clearly was a stolen election…	*November 8, 2020--14:17:33*
04	People are not going to stand for having this Election stolen from them by a privately owned Radical Left company, Dominion, and many other reasons!	*November 14, 2020--20:07:56*
05	Well, it's really quite simple. You just can't have more votes than people!	*November 18, 2020--02:24:59*
06	This is not at all frivolous. It is brought on behalf of one of the most respected members of the United States Congress who is disgusted, like so many others, by an Election that is a fraudulent mess. Fake ballots, dead people voting, no Republican Poll Watchers allowed, & more	*November 22, 2020--01:33:54*
07	Other than politics, how do you lose a case where large numbers of voters, far more than you need to flip Pennsylvania, are disenfranchised? Vote Observers thrown out of counting rooms. People going to vote finding out they have already voted through a fake ballot - go home!	*November 22, 2020--16:56:01*

08	Just released data shows many thousands of noncitizens voted in Nevada. They are totallyineligible to vote!	*December 17, 2020--15:45:04*

For the sake of bolstering his claims about what he labeled the "greatest election fraud in US history," President Trump mobilized an arsenal of unfounded falsehoods and unsubstantiated allegations ranging from violation of the Constitution (excerpt 01), expulsion "of Republican poll watchers, the sentinels of integrity and transparency" (excerpt 01), "votes received beyond legal election time" (excerpt 02), corrupt voting machines" (excerpts 03, 04), "ineligible voters" (excerpts 05, 07), "fake ballots" (excerpts 06, 07) "ineligible voters" (excerpt 08) "disenfranchisement of voters," (excerpt 07) "dead voters," (excerpt 06). Pretending to have largely won the elections, Trump capitalized on directing a steady flow of flimsy claims about the dishonesty of his opponents and the failings of the US public institutions. Instead of buttressing his presumptions of the existence of a massive election fraud, which he characterized as a "hoax" (November 20, 2020) and a "scam" (November 15, 2020) with solid evidence and potent arguments, Trump had no notion of truth.

Its unabashed deployment of "lies" and "falsehoods," Trump's "amoralism" is reminiscent of Machiavellian political thinking and decision making in that, like Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532), Trump's political modus operandi centered on the maintenance and the consolidation of power without regardless of the immorality and the dishonesty of the means and manners deployed. To Machiavelli, no leader could win and hold political power unless he espoused the unflinching readiness "to act outside the moral codes that applied to ordinary citizens (p. xxi). Considering political leaders as standing above the law, Machiavelli contended that they are perpetually enmeshed in a kill-or-get-killed struggle (p. xxii). One major implication of these claims is that, resembling Hobbesian anarchy, ruling a state is a matter of constant struggle for survival and power where might makes right. "As a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast…. ; his methods will always be judged honourable and will be universally praised," asserted Machiavelli (pp. 57-58).

Arguing in the same vein, former FBI Director James Comey, painted a very dismal and disheartening picture of the US political scene during the Trump tenure. To Comey (2018), the US political environment underwent radical and unprecedented shifts consisting especially in the normalization of lying and the conventionalization of unethical conduct (p. 4). Underscoring the lethality of leaders' failure to abide by their commitments to the truth, Comey asserted that these leaders have the ability to shape a culture, by showing their people

dishonesty, corruption, and deception (p. 7). Considering Trump to be "unethical, and untethered to truth and institutional values" and his leadership as "transactional, ego driven, and about personal loyalty," Comey emphasized that the salvation of the US lies in its leaders' abidance by a "higher loyalty" to "lasting values" and to "truth" rather than to persons, parties or any type of grouping (pp. 7, 60).

In parallel with his constant presumption that there had been a "massive election fraud," Trump's promotion and extolment of mottos such as "America First" and "Make America Great Again" mainly in the run up to Capitol Assault emblematized a more or less higher stage in Trump's "amoral Machiavellianism" or what philosopher Leo Strauss called "collective selfishness." (Lurz, 2025, p. 6). Taking the scrutiny of Trump's discourse a step farther, Connolly (2017) emphasized the resemblance between Trump and Hitler's discursive techniques. To him, like Hitler, Trump appealed to an "aspirational fascism" in that he pursued "crowd adulation," "hyperaggressive nationalism," "White triumphalism" and the practice of a rhetorical style that hinges on the concoction and promotion of "fake news," "religious bigotry," "xenophobia" and the stigmatization of opponents to conscript support for his "Big lies (p. 7).

Referring to an assemblage of "Trumpian politics of persuasion" and "shock politics," Connolly underscored that Trump's speaking style, which is deeply mired in "impetuousness" and "narcissism," was never apt to forge and elaborate policy agendas. Poising rather as a "skilled rhetorician" of a "new aspirational fascism" and drawing upon the potent power of "affective contagion" in cultural life, Trump capitalized on transfiguring the grump dissatisfaction of his audience about issues comprising, *inter alia*, and resentment about disindustrialization, race, border issues, immigration, working class insecurities, trade policies, into forceful and uncompromising source of support (pp. 6, 11, 12)

3.3. Trump's Discourse of Demagoguery, Populism and Scapegoating:

Table 3: Trump's Discourse of Demagoguery, Populism, and Scapegoating

Nº	Tweets	Date/Time

01	A vote for me and the Republican Party is a vote for the American Dream! Over the next four years, we will make America into the Manufacturing Superpower of the World, and we will end our reliance on China once and for all.	*November 3, 2020 03:37:14*
02	@FoxNews and the Fake News Networks aren't showing these massive gatherings. Instead they have their reporters standing in almost empty streets. Wenow have SUPPRESSION BY THE PRESS. MAGA!	*November 14, 2020 21:24:15*
03	THE COVID DRUGS NOW AVAILABLE TO MAKE PEOPLE BETTER ARE AMAZING, BUT SELDOM TALKED ABOUT BY THE MEDIA! Mortality rate is 85% down	*November 19, 2020 16:36:58*
04	President Trump has done many great things (biggest tax & regulation cuts in history, Space Force, rebuilding our military, fixing the V.A., the Wall), but perhaps the most important of all will be what he is doing now, exposing the massive corruption in our Electoral Process.	*November 21, 2020 21:20:39*
05	The Dow Jones average surpassed 30,000 for the first time ever! Thanks to President.	*November 26, 2020 00:17:57*
06	The U.S. economy has enjoyed incredible momentum since President @realDonaldTrump took office thanks to his commitment…	*November 26, 2020 00:22:17*
07	Now that the Biden Administration will be a scandal plagued mess for years to come, it is much easier for the Supreme Court of the United States to follow the Constitution and do what everybody knows has to be done. They must show great Courage &Wisdom. Save the USA!!!	*December 11, 2020 13:16:21*
08	Don't the voters have to know what the Federal prosecutor's know. The establishment failed us. The media, congressional leaders, the Democrat Party? No wonder 74 (a pres. record) million Americans voted for Donald Trump, & they still don't believe the outcome of this election...	*December 12, 2020 04:37:08*
09	....Courts are bad, the FBI and Justice didn't do their job,	*December 26,*

	and the United States Election System looks like that of a third world country. Freedom of the press has been gone for a long time, it is Fake News, and now we have Big Tech (with Section 230) to deal with....	*2020 23:23:36*
10	RT @KLoeffler: Georgia, we have a job to do TODAY. We have to STOP socialism. We have to PROTECT the American Dream.	*January 5, 2021 18:14:38*
11	Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify. USA demands the truth!	*January 6, 2021 19:24:22 [1/6/2024 14:24]*

Skillfully diverting the attention of the US public opinion from the true reasons behind his defeat, Trump invested a plenty of his ingenuity and intellectual capital to scaffold his scapegoating strategy. Assigning all the blame for his party's defeat on the responsibility to the opposing party, the Department of Justice, FBI, fake news networks, congressional leaders and the US Constitution, Trump, in the Schopenhauerian style, resorted to skirting the core issue by appealing to techniques such as "homonymy," claiming victory despite defeat, diverting the dispute, focusing on the audience rather than the opponent and becoming personal (Schopenhauer, 2017, pp. 17, 23, 24, 26, 27, 34).

Instead of confining his comments and declarations to the issue of elections, their proceedings and their results, Trump diverted the course of discussions and debates by stretching the proposition to issues that bear too little, if anything, to the matter in question like trying to make the debate over voter results spill over to economic prosperity (excerpt 1), competition with China (excerpt 1), and the failure of mainstream media outlets (excerpt 2), the bias of courts, the FBI and the Department of Justice (excerpt 9).

Additionally, instead of centering his arguments and elucidations on his opponents and their counter-arguments, Trump capitalized on the enlistment of his audience's support to validate his claims of victory. For instance, attempting to swerve the course of the debate from elections and their results, Trump went to great lengths in extolling his achievements in curbing the COVID pandemic

(excerpt (3) and boosting the US economic performance (excerpt 4, 5, 6) as though this would make worthy of presiding the US despite his official defeat.

Equally important in this venue was Trump's persistent and unrelenting attempts to make the recognition of his victory as being tantamount to the safety of the US (excerpt 7), the protection of the American dream (excerpt 10), the securitization of the US against threats posed by socialists (excerpt 10). Trump's energetic escalation against his opponents culminated in bewildering them by bombastically adequating the denial of Trump's victory in the elections with the suppression of truth *per se* (excerpts 2, 11).

Poising as a demagogue par excellence, Trump drew the maximum of dividend from the leverage that he had over the masses by trying to supersede the laws that recognized the victory of the Democrats with the power of the masses that he expected them to support his claim of victory. "Democracy degenerates to demagoguery," argued Aristotle, "whenever the power of the laws is substituted by the power of the masses" (p. 9).

Examined from the perspective of Plato's philosophy, Trump's distorted and twisted political maneuvers originate in the nature of democratic regimes. For Plato, democracies are inherently vulnerable to demagoguery due to their epistemic shortcomings (Kolb, 2017). One major implication of this claim is that all political discourses in democracies are demagogic and Trump's is no exception. In other words, Trump cannot help being a demagogue as this is not specific to him. For a demagogue, the ultimate objective is to ingratiate himself with his audience through flattery all in soliciting the audience's worst instincts. Ironically, the demagogue, who triggers this process, ends up by undergoing the pressure exercised by these instincts (p. 8).

In his renderings on "psychological crowds," Gustave LeBon (1895) contended that the voice and the political weight of crowds has become exceedingly preponderant (p. 8). Underscoring the assertive inception of the reign of the masses, LeBon brought to the fore the "psychological law of the mentality of the crowds" wherein a "collective mind" forcefully surges as an entity wherein its members together act in a starkly different manner from the way its members feel, think and act separately (pp. 9, 11 One major conclusion to be drawn from this line of reasoning is that the vulnerability of the crowd to "atavistic" and "primitive" feelings and savage, destructive instincts resulted into a recalcitrant swell of frenzied anger that demagogues such as Trump tactfully manipulated for the attainment of their political and ideological designs. Encapsulating the bottom

line of the mounting power of the masses, LeBon asserted that "[t]he divine right of the masses is about to replace the divine right of kings (p. 6).

Arguing in similar lines, (Kuklinski and Quirk 1998) contend that politicians have the tendency to wield rhetoric to stimulate the psychological mechanisms that warp judgments and elicit emotional reaction, inhibit rational deliberation by focusing on isolated facts simple slogans and farming issues tendentiously in order to inflame basic emotions like anger, resentment and hatred (p.24). The prioritization of this mode of expression was motivated by and large by the rise of the power of the masses that are by nature disoriented, impulsive and bereft of the slightest sense of rational reasoning and that can be satisfied with "easy arguments" and "simple solutions" (p. 24).

The quasi-total prevalence of the appeal to emotions and personal opinions to the detriment of objective facts, which marked the inception of the "post-truth politics," culminated in the relativisation of science and scientific institutions. This state of "epistemic relativism" mainly generated a situation in which an emotionally charged content can easily and rapidly go viral in comparison with a reasonable content(Berger and Milkman, 2012).

However, it should be conceded that despite the pivotal role played by the masses in the January 6 insurrection, a host of pundits in political science and political sociology affirm that the event could hardly be construed when examined through the lens of protest framework. Indeed, unlike normative and traditional cases of protest where grassroots movements play the most decisive role in the planning and the operationalization of protests, the January 6 insurrection was largely an elite-driven action amplified by an unusual coverage from the right-leaning news media which resulted in enlisting a huge support for the Capitol Assault.

It is equally paramount to emphasize that despite the anti-democratic and "de-democratizing" *modus operandi* of both the instigators and perpetrators of the riot, it would be a gross exaggeration to claim that the US ceased being a democracy. Democracy as a process is neither static nor linear. This implies that democracy is constantly in the making as it is naturally subject to the perpetual ebb and flow of all sorts of movements that strife against any kind of injustice, discrimination, marginalization, inconsistency..etc. In addition, no governance is immune to political and social pathologies. Pithily capturing the gist of this

assumption, de Tocqueville (1835) ably argued that democratic and autocratic systems of governance are Siamese twins in that democratic elections supported by a substantial percentage of population can ultimately bring about tyrannical rulers.

4. Conclusion:

The article has revealed that Trump's communication style, which drew heavily upon his rhetorical choices, decisively contributed to inciting Trump's followers to march on the Capitol building. The specificities pertaining to the utilization of Twitter such as the direct, unfettered and unfiltered interaction with the audience proved to be consequential assets that Trump capitalized on to ingeniously wield the functionalities offered by Twitter in order to have an upper political hand and enlist the maximum of support.

Most importantly, Trump's appeal to twitter as pivotal medium to step up his stigmatization and discrediting campaign against a wide array of targets ranging from Democrats, to RINOs passing by mainstream news media, FBI, MOJ, Congress and the Supreme Court stood out as an incontrovertible evidence of the pathological stage in US democracy and the fallibility of its political system. Above all, the direct implication of a statesman in stirring up an insurrection, breaking by force into the Congress building and impugning doubts about the viability and the validity of the US political system in total impunity was unprecedented. Moreover, the acquittal of Trump after a double impeachment and his return to power in 2024 clearly indicated the creeping political power of the masses and the growth of the credibility of their modus operandi to the detriment of the long-standing institutional democratic system in the US.

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