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Senior Seminar

Senior Project Paper

The News of the World vs Trump's isolated America

As citizens are preparing for the summer by getting the COVID-19 vaccine, the world seems like it is finally returning to normal. Now with Donald Trump no longer in office the full scope of his administration's impact on the country can begin to be understood and analyzed. How did the Trump era from 2016-2020 affect America's global reputation? How did it also affect news reporting from not only America's two opposing political parties but from the rest of the world? How were their stories different?

The world seemed to rejoice once it was declared that President-elect Joe Biden defeated 45th President Donald Trump in the 2021 U.S. presidential election. These feelings of rejoicing came from those who have had "tense relations with President Donald Trump". These countries and individuals included "Germany's Angela Merkel, Canada's Justin Trudeau, and France's Emmanuel Macron". During his Presidency, Donald Trump received criticism from both foreign and domestic peoples, with few "approving of his handling of international affairs." (Wike, Richard). In 2020 the Pew Research Center polled 13 countries asking them all various questions about their opinions on Donald Trump and the United States under his administration. When asked about President Trump's handling of international affairs only 16% between all 13 countries "[had] confidence in the American president.". With the highest amounts of distrust

coming from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, and France all above 85% unconfident in the President's ability to “do the right thing”. The Pew Research center even stated that “in many nations where we have survey data for the past three administrations, the lowest ratings we’ve seen for any president have come during Trump’s time in office.”(Wike, Richard, et al.).

Trump’s unpopularity and distrust affected the overall image of America. As reported by The Washington Post, “Under President Trump, global opinion of the United States keeps falling.”(Tharoor, Ishaan.). This claim is not without evidence as “the share of the public with a favorable view of the U.S. is at its lowest point in nearly two decades of polling.”(Wike, Richard). The most significant of these drops in favorable standing being from the UK, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and Australia. (“Global Perception of US Falls to Two-Decade Low.”). Gallup also ran a similar poll to gauge the global position of the U.S. One of the questions asked was, “Do you think leaders of other countries around the world have respect for _____, or do you think they don't have much respect for him?”. When asked about the previous President Barack Obama, the consensus was that people believed that he was on average more respected than Donald Trump.(Gallup. “U.S. Position in the World.”). The results from the Pew Research Center support this as the majority of world leaders said that they view Donald Trump as arrogant, intolerant, and dangerous. Even going further to say that Trump was not qualified for office and that he did not care for the ordinary American citizen.(Wike, Richard)

After reading the research presented by the Pew Research Center, one could come to the quick conclusion that Donald Trump was a poor leader who actively hurt America and damaged its global reputation. However, if one were to instead read American conservative news outlets during his Presidency, they would get an entirely different narrative. A narrative that Donald Trump was a great leader who valued the life of the average hard-working civilian and put

“America First” to “Make America Great Again”. On May 1, 2017, an article was published in the Chicago Tribune with the title, *Conservatism is thriving under President Trump*. In this article author Taylor Budowich claims that “America has seen historic growth among conservatives. It will continue under President Donald Trump.” The evidence presented earlier from the Pew Research Center proves this claim to be incorrect. However, Budowich goes on to believe that under Trump, America will have a strong national defense, robust economic growth, and experience a rise in the confidence of the nation. Even saying that he will easily be re-elected, comparing it to Reagan's "It's morning in America again." campaign that gave him a landslide victory in the 1984 presidential election.(Budowich, Taylor.).

These two narratives of Donald Trump could not be more different from each other. On one side Trump is depicted as a great unstoppable leader who will help conservatism thrive and “Make America Great Again”, while on the other he is depicted as an unfit and destructive leader for the country.

Now how do these two narratives come to exist and what can be learned from each one? The answer to this can be found by analyzing and understanding the political rhetoric of Donald Trump, political news bias, and global reputation. How events during his administration were reported by the Conservative Right-Winged media that supported him versus Democratic news sources and the rest of the world that saw Donald Trump as unfit for office.

The global reputation of Donald Trump and the United States has already been covered, but what about Trump’s political rhetoric? Thankfully, a Historian of American political rhetoric at Texas A&M University, Jennifer Mercieca, wrote an entire book about Donald Trump and his political rhetoric. Titled, "Demagogue For President: The Rhetorical Genius Of Donald Trump.", Mercieca outlines how Trump was able to ingratiate with his followers and isolate them from the

rest of the American population and the rest of the world. A demagogue is simply a “leader of the people”, however, Trump is not a demagogue for good, instead, he is a demagogue of chaos, an “unaccountable leader.” One that is “a heroic demagogue to his followers, and [...] a dangerous demagogue to everyone else.” During his administration, Trump and his supporters were able to frame reality in any way they liked and change the narrative as they saw fit. Trump established that he would fight against not only leaders in his party but the media, as well as “political correctness”. All of this to “make Trump the fulcrum for all political discussion and debate.” If his supporters wanted to know what was going on they don’t need to listen to the world or the media controlled by Democrats, but instead to Trump and the publications that he supported. The ones that fit his narrative that he wanted his followers to believe. Mercieca breaks this down into six rhetorical strategies, Ad populum, paralipsis, American exceptionalism, Ad hominem, Ad baculum, and reification.(Jennifer Mercieca Associate Professor of Communication.)

Ad populum is an appeal to the crowd, taking advantage of one’s popularity. If the metric for popularity is how much people talk about you and know your name, then Donald Trump was and still is one of the most popular people. He has games named after him, he has written books, appeared in Tv shows and movies, and even has a large hotel named after him! This large “fan” base works in Trump's favor as he can use it as a tool against his opponents. Trump and his followers are the best and most trustworthy individuals and publications, the rest are not. This allows Trump to silence his critics and breed distrust in the media and those who are not “American”.(Jennifer Mercieca Associate Professor of Communication.)

This ties into Paralipsis because since Trump has such a large following he believes that he has charisma. The charisma that he can use to say something controversial that he believes in

and then deny responsibility by saying it was a joke or it was not meant to be taken seriously. Without having to be responsible for his words or actions, Trump can take advantage of American exceptionalism and claim that he is “the heroic figure who can make America great again by defeating corruption and conspiracy.”(Jennifer Mercieca Associate Professor of Communication.).

The last three rhetorical strategies all work together to show that Trump means business when he claims he will defeat his competition. Ad hominem means attacking the person, not their argument. If Trump attacks an individual directly he can silence them and claim what he is saying as truth without evidence. Ad baculum is using force or intimidation as another way to silence opposition. Lastly, reification is treating people as objects. If people are objects they can be undermined. If they are undermined it makes it so “Trump’s enemies are easy to dismiss and attack.”. These all allow Trump and the conservative media to tell a different narrative or frame an event in a different light to make Trump look like the winner. That Trump can do no wrong, while the Democrats and the rest of the world say otherwise.(Jennifer Mercieca Associate Professor of Communication.)

In news media there exists bias. No matter how much publications will try to deny it, everyone is biased. To find a diverse range of articles for each event that will be covered the AllSides Media Bias Chart was used as a reference. For the Right, sources that support or speak positively of Donald Trump, there is the Daily Wire, Breitbart, and Fox News. For a center position, a global opinion is the British Broadcasting Corporation(BBC) and the Associated Press(AP). Finally, for the left, those against Trump or speak negatively of him, there is The Washington Post and The New York Times.(“AllSides Media Bias Chart.”)

According to CNBC reporting on another study done by the Pew Research Center in June 2017, “Trump and many of his key policies are broadly unpopular around the globe, and ratings for the U.S. have declined steeply in many nations.”(Bandow, Doug) One of those key policies being Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement which was the second-highest disapproval rate of 66%.(Wike, Richard.) The Paris Climate Agreement is an agreement among various nations to fight climate change. The United States first committed to the Agreement in December of 2015 under Barack Obama. However, one of the major promises made by Donald Trump during his campaign was to take America in a “better” direction than Obama did by undoing the majority of decisions that he made during office. Which Trump did when he withdrew the United States from the accord the moment he became president. The action became final on November 4th of 2020, the same day that the American people decided to not re-elect him. In perfect political irony, Joe Biden put into motion a day-one executive order that made it possible for the United States to re-enter the agreement on February 19, 2021. (Melissa Denchak)

The ultimate goal of the agreement was to “limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels while pursuing the means to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.”. A feat that was going to be achieved by all committed countries cutting their climate pollution. However, Trump had a different view of climate change claiming it to be a “hoax”.(Melissa Denchak)

On November 4th, 2019, The Daily Wire released an article about the Paris Climate Accord titled, *Trump Admin Begins Withdrawal From Paris climate accord*. In this article author, Ryan Saavedra justifies Trump’s reasoning for the withdrawal. Instead of talking about the issue of climate change, the narrative was instead shifted to economics. Quoting a statement

written by the then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who claimed that “President Trump decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement because of the unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers by the U.S. pledges made under the Agreement,”. Insisting that the United States did not need to be part of the agreement because they were already reducing all types of emissions and boosting the economy without the help of the Paris Agreement. In the article, the author even takes a stab at “the media” by saying they are “spinning” the Paris Agreement into a discussion about climate change when instead the focus should be on the American economy. Towards the end of the article, the author even mocks a town hall event on CNN, calling it a “climate hysteria” and then referring to a series of tweets by Donald Trump of him stating “facts” that CNN missed, such as America having “the world’s cleanest and safest air and water.”(Saavedra, Ryan.)

The rhetorical strategy used in this article by the Daily Wire is that of American exceptionalism. That there is no reason the United States needs to be part of the Paris Accord because they are the best. They are the greatest nation when it comes to reducing pollution and they have the best climate and make no mistakes. That instead the Paris Agreement has nothing to do about the climate, it instead is an attack on the American people, that it will take factory jobs away, which account for a majority of the countries pollution, and cripple the economy. But Trump cares for the American people and is saving them from losing their job by pulling out of the Agreement.

The Washington Post two years earlier in June of 2017 had a much more grim reaction. Opening their article, *Trump announces the U.S. will exit the Paris climate deal, sparking criticism at home and abroad*, with the statement that “Trump’s decision set off alarms worldwide...”. A reaction that is more of a panic than a celebration in contrast to the tone of the

Daily Wire article. Including a quote from Donald Trump which is not found in the Daily Wire article where he says “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris,”. Calling the speech he delivered at the Rose Garden of the White House forceful and lengthy, one where Trump rambled in front of his audience. The article even says in direct opposition to the Daily Wire that the United States is the “...world’s second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases...”. The rest of the article goes on to explain that other world leaders and known climate activists denounced Trump’s decision. With a quote from Al Gore calling the decision “reckless and indefensible” and a quote from French President Emmanuel Macron stating that Trump is “making a mistake for the future of his country and his people and a mistake for the future of the planet,”.(Rucker, Philip, and Jenna Johnson.)

This article from the Washington Post serves as a cautionary letter to the American people. Informing them that their leader whom they are supposed to trust has just done something that directly harms them. This in contrast to the message of the Right who wants the people to believe that their president is acting in their best interest.

The world view from the BBC supports the article from the Washington Post, with their headline being that “After a three-year delay, the US has become the first nation in the world to formally withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.”, which on paper does not sound like something that readers should be proud of. The BBC reporting that the U.S. represents around 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions and that their negotiators have been promoting fossil fuels at UN climate talks. The BBC article makes it a point to highlight the sense of disappointment that the rest of the world has towards the decision. Quoting Helen Mountford from the World Resources Institute that "The decision to leave the Paris agreement was wrong when it was announced and it is still wrong today,".(McGrath, Matt)

Donald Trump again sparked controversy around the world when he ordered the U.S. to launch an airstrike that killed an Iranian Commander in Baghdad. The target was Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani. According to the Pentagon, Soleimani was the leader of the Corps-Quds Force, a “U.S. designated terrorist organization”. In their official statement the Pentagon claimed that Qasem Soleimani was “actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region...responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American and coalition service members and the wounding of thousands more.”. In response the United States embassy in Baghdad was attacked and American flags were burned with “the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [vowing] revenge.”.(News, Kyodo)

Another article from The Daily Wire doubles down on the viewpoint held by the Pentagon. The title of their article reads, *State Dept: Iranian General Killed In U.S. Strike Responsible For 17% Of American Deaths In Iraq*. A fairly short article with the sole goal of painting Qasem Soleimani as a terrorist and the worst person imaginable. Not criticizing Trump but instead parsing him for killing someone who harmed American soldiers, which is repeated several times throughout the article. Having data reported by Fox News where “the State Department announced in April 2019 that Iran was responsible for the deaths of 608 U.S. soldiers during the Iraq War” and that “According to the State Department, 17 percent of all deaths of U.S. personnel in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 were orchestrated by Soleimani.”. Towards the end of the article calling the assassination a “decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel...”.(Barrett, James)

When this event was reported by NBC, their take on the story was that of tension between the U.S. and Iran. Fearing that the “deadly airstrike will raise tensions between the U.S. and Iran” and making the main takeaway that by doing so Trump was putting Americans at risk.

They even reported on the destruction that the attack caused, citing that “25 militia fighters were killed in the airstrikes”, a statistic that The Daily Wire chose to ignore.(Helsel, Phil, et al.)

Calling back to the idea of Reification, treating people like objects, which Jennifer Mercieca says “is traditionally a part of war rhetoric or genocide.”(Jennifer Mercieca Associate Professor of Communication.)

After reading reports from both sides of the American political spectrum and the rest of the world, two opposing narratives come into view. On the Right, a narrative where Donald Trump is the savior for the American people, one that acts in their best interests. Either by taking the country out of a climate agreement that he believes will damage the economy and therefore destroy American jobs. Or by taking the life of an Iranian General and thereby saving the American people from a terrorist who murders the proud American soldiers overseas. Whereas, the world’s view, supported by the Left, is that of an irresponsible leader who destroys the environment, puts their country's needs before the world’s, and threatens war with the middle east by assassinating a foreign enemy.

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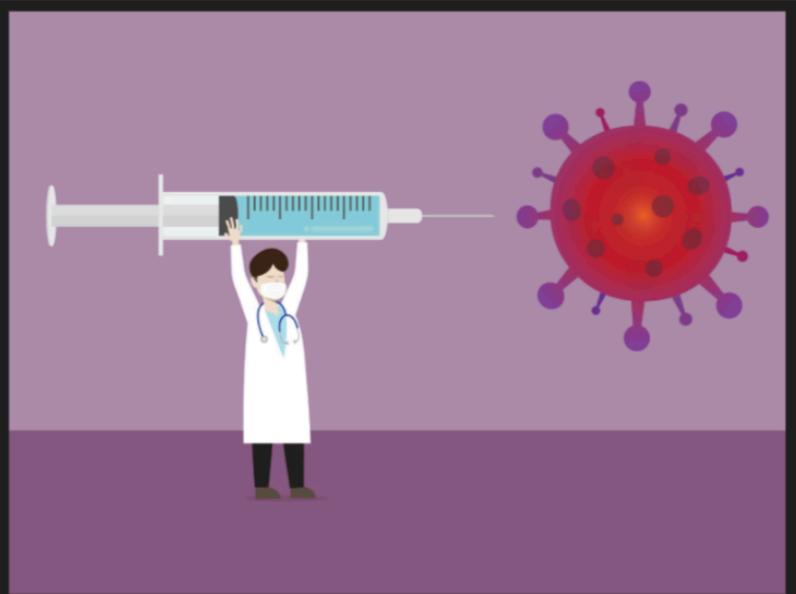
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The News of the World vs Trump's isolated America

Senior Project Report
By Chase Tipton

America in 2021



Trump's America

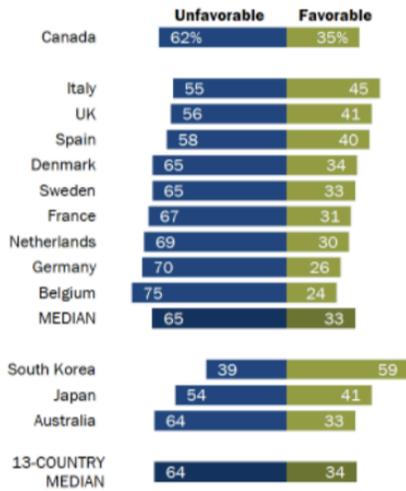
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America's Global Reputation Under Trump

Few have positive opinion of U.S.

% who have a ___ view of the U.S.

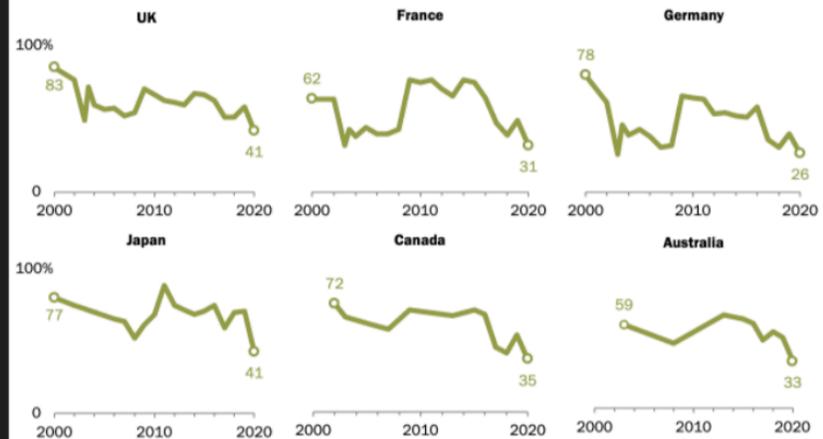


Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
 Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey, Q8a.
 "U.S. Image Plummetts Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly"

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In some countries, ratings for U.S. reached a record low in 2020

% who have a favorable view of the U.S.



Note: 2000 trend is from 1999 or 2000 and provided by U.S. Department of State.
 Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey.

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Donald Trump's Political Rhetoric

- **Ad populum:** appealing to the wisdom of the crowd, using popularity as the measure of value.
- **Paralipsis:** I'm not saying; I'm just saying.
- **American exceptionalism:** This refers to America's unique role in the world, simplified by Trump as "America winning."
- **Ad hominem:** attacking the person instead of their argument.
- **Ad baculum:** threats of force or intimidation.
- **Reification:** treating people as objects.



Media Bias

Click to add text



Trump Withdraws America from the Paris Climate Agreement

- Conserve Right Media: "President Trump made the decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement because of the unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers by U.S. pledges made under the Agreement,"
- Left/World Media: "Trump's decision set off alarms worldwide, drawing swift and sharp condemnation from foreign leaders as well as top environmentalists and corporate titans, who decried the U.S. exit from the Paris accord as an irresponsible abdication of American leadership in the face of irrefutable scientific evidence."

Trump's Assassination of Qasem Soleimani

- Conserve Right Media: "At the direction of the president, the U.S. military has taken decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel abroad by killing Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.
- Left/World Media: "The U.S. strike comes amid heightened tensions between the United States and Iran over rocket attacks in Iraq that U.S. officials had blamed on Iranian-backed forces, as well as the attempted breach of the embassy compound in Baghdad.

Two Opposing Narratives

- On the Right, a narrative where Donald Trump is the savior for the American people, one that acts in their best interests. Either by taking the country out of a climate agreement that he believes will damage the economy and therefore destroy American jobs. Or by taking the life of an Iranian General and thereby saving the American people from a terrorist who murders the proud American soldiers overseas.
- The world's view, supported by the Left, is that of an irresponsible leader who destroys the environment, puts their country's needs before the world's, and threatens war with the middle east by assassinating a foreign enemy.

Thank you.