

The Return to the American Golden Age

Linguistic Insights into Trump's 2024 Presidential Campaign

Michele Russo

University of Foggia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2539-626X>

Email: michele.russo@unifg.it

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Abstract

The global geopolitical situation has been characterised by numerous crises in recent years, posing new challenges to EU governments and the US. Owing to the ensuing international instability, Trump's inflammatory 2024 presidential campaign turned traditional rhetoric into an attempt to restore what he portrayed as the golden age.

Set against this context, the present work analyses three main issues highlighted by the tycoon during the 2024 US campaign: the deteriorating effects of Biden's administration, transgender people and immigration. To this end, 61 speeches delivered by Trump during the 2024 presidential campaign have been collected into a corpus and examined through the tools provided by Sketch Engine, with the purpose of discussing the semantic and metaphorical aspects of keywords and collocational clusters. Subsequently, drawing on Wodak's (2011) theoretical frameworks, this research dwells on Trump's employment of disclaimers, rhetorical strategies used to justify policies of exclusion in the name of national safety and identity. The identification of a specific lexicon offers insights into Trump's metaphors, examined from the perspective of the conceptual blending theory suggested by Charteris-Black (2018) and developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002). The analysis of linguistic and rhetorical elements builds on Wodak's (2011) theories of discursive strategies to determine how Trump frames American society in dichotomic terms (Fairclough 2003).

Finally, the study aims to demonstrate that, in spite of the tycoon's replication of many rhetorical and linguistic strategies from his first campaign, his 'bombastic' 2024 campaign enabled him to gain momentum as a political celebrity and to be regarded as the forerunner of a return to the golden age.

1. Introduction

Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential election was apparently expected to pave the way for the Democratic victory in the US and, as a result, a more solid alliance between the US and Europe. However, Biden's administration had to deal with unexpected challenges, primarily Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and, a year later, the outbreak of the war in the Middle East. Geopolitical instability escalated all over the world and numerous attempts to end such conflicts proved ineffective. As the 2024 American presidential campaign loomed, Donald

Trump, who had served as the American President from 2017 to 2021, announced his candidacy on November 15, 2022, while Biden, who was in office and had confirmed his race for the election, withdrew on July 21, 2024, due to health problems. Vice president Kamala Harris replaced Biden as the Democratic nominee. As is known, the political duels, first between Trump and Biden, and later between Trump and Harris, addressed different domestic and foreign matters. In particular, Trump's speeches were marked by contemptuous language toward Biden and anti-Trump voters. The Republican leader outlined new political plans intended to 'sanitise' American society by combating the subversive actions of anti-Trump groups.

In light of this brief geopolitical summary, the present work focuses on three main matters highlighted by the then Republican candidate during the 2024 US presidential campaign: the perceived pernicious effects of Biden's administration, transgender people and immigration. Trump's speeches had the purpose of reframing long-debated questions in American society, seeking to persuade the voters of the dangers posed by specific groups of people. To this end, Trump evoked the problems that America had faced in previous years, allegedly caused by his defeat in the 2020 presidential elections. In his depictions of the deteriorating situation in the US, the Republican leader made use of numerous metaphors to infuse his speeches with negative overtones, particularly in his references to targeted social groups. In his evocation of simple and vivid images, constructed through an equally simple language, Trump relied on the persuasive power of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), which served both to emphasise the threat of "*out-groups*" (Wodak 2011, 57, emphasis in original) and to exacerbate the practice of othering: "the expression of dislike and distancing through the use of hateful language towards [...] a group of people perceived in opposition to the speaker's own group" (Zottola 2020, 96).

2. A new epoch: Trumpism

Since his emergence on the political scene, Trump has drawn media attention owing to the populist overtones of his speeches, an unprecedented phenomenon in American politics that has gained him wide support among his audience. Considering his numerous activities in business prior to his political career, Trump, whose name was already well known in the US before his presidency, was familiar with persuasive communication and, consequently, close to celebrity status (Patrick 2022). In recent years, politicians have often been paralleled to celebrities not only because they share similar qualities (Harvey 2017), but also because they are public figures, who strategically leverage marketing principles to achieve success. Many politicians promote "similar myths of individualism," and construct "a public form of subjectivity that expresses freedom and aspiration in a capitalist, democratic society" (Drake and Higgins 2006, 87; Marshall 1997). Following the ideals of individualism and reinvention, Trump announced

megalomaniac plans to restore America's grandeur and revive a so-called golden age. The language he employed in the 2024 presidential campaign, therefore, turns out to be particularly interesting, as it evokes hyperbolic imagery. It also appeals to his audience's emotional sphere, making nostalgic references to an idealized past. His linguistic devices thus aim to construct narratives of greatness that resonate with his supporters, while concealing the complex aspects of the political world.

Linguistic aspects of Trump's speeches have been examined in recent years from different perspectives. Numerous scholars have focused on the Republican leader's speeches delivered during the 2016 US presidential campaign. Conley (2017), for example, highlights how the tycoon leveraged market research to target potential voters and achieve support in remote areas, while Schill and Hendricks (2018) examine the language used by Trump and Hillary Clinton on social media. With regard to Trump's rhetorical style, Charteris-Black's (2018) analysis provides insights into Trump's 2016 campaign from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Specifically, he focuses on the semantic aspects of keywords, using the methods of corpus linguistics analysis. He offers numerous examples from Trump's speeches, pinpointing the main collocational clusters and metaphors. The latter are further examined through different models of analysis, including examples from other politicians and celebrities.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a surge in scholarly attention towards Trump's speeches about government measures, with a focus on post-truth communication. In this regard, Garzone (2020) offers new methodological approaches to analysing the popularization of specialized communication. The process of popularization of scientific language relies on particular linguistic devices to shape public opinion. Charteris-Black (2021) investigates the numerous metaphors used by Trump to frame the Coronavirus, highlighting how these metaphors influenced public perceptions of the health emergency. Trump's speeches delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic were mainly examined in terms of the dissemination of revisited scientific information, often contaminated with populist nuances. Thus, statements inciting the exclusion and discrimination of specific groups of people continued to be frequent in his remarks about the pandemic, leading to an increase in hostile sentiments and social fractures (Milizia 2023). Filmer (2021) provides an interesting analysis of popularized political language, dwelling, among other things, on the hate-laden language that pervaded political speeches, primarily in Italy. More recent studies have focused on Trump's rhetorical style during the latest presidential campaign, emphasising, for instance, his provocative remarks, his populist language and his tendency to simplify complex concepts (McMahon 2024). Moreover, Smith (2025) discusses how the 2024 US presidential campaign represented a cultural milestone in shaping national identity and political discourse, encompassing the communicative styles of Biden, Trump and Harris. The discriminatory language that emerged during the pandemic

proved to be even more pervasive during the tycoon's 2024 campaign, with his communicative style building on several linguistic elements employed in the 2016 campaign.

These studies have cast an important light on Trump's rhetorical strategies, revealing their consistent impact on political communication in the American context. Although Trump's communicative style in the 2016 campaign was largely replicated in the latest one, this work attempts to investigate how unchanged political principles and linguistic devices continued to be effective in the 2024 campaign. To address this issue, it is necessary to re-analyse Trump's keywords and metaphors in light of the new geopolitical events that followed the Covid-19 pandemic. Trump was able to interpret the concerns of American citizens, triggered by new international crises. He re-employed recurrent communicative devices and strategies in his addresses, adapting them to the new social and political context. The ingredients for achieving his goals comprised a practical approach to problems and the ostentation of certain behavioural and rhetorical models that evoked America's grandeur, reminiscent of the golden age. In this regard, for many he embodied the promoter of the American dream, the myth of the self-made individual who reinvented him or herself to gain fame and fortune (McClellan and Gruber 2021).

3. Aims and methods

The linguistic analysis starts with a selection of Trump's keywords, terms and emblematic expressions. To this end, 61 speeches delivered by the tycoon across the US during the 2024 presidential campaign have been collected. The speeches include those from the primary rallies, delivered between 28 January 2023 and 23 May 2024, and those from the General Election rallies, delivered between 6 June 2024 and 13 September 2024. The list of speeches was retrieved from *Wikipedia*, which provides the date of each rally, the city, venue and names of other speakers participating in Trump's campaign. The transcripts of each speech were obtained from the *Roll Call* website, which covers the news pertaining to Capitol Hill and the US Congress. The speeches were subsequently collected in a Word file. Remarks from other speakers, included in the original transcripts, have been removed. Other elements contained in the original transcripts have been retained in the corpus, such as timespans indicating the duration of each fragment of the speeches, figures showing the signal frequency of the audio and recordings of the audience's chants and cheering. A short heading indicating the date and venue has been added at the beginning of each speech. The speeches were compiled into a corpus using Sketch Engine. The resulting corpus comprises 779,139 words, 1,061,652 tokens and 74,612 sentences. The corpus was examined by employing the different tools provided by Sketch Engine to identify the words and expressions that mostly imbue Trump's speeches with discriminating overtones. To this end, the words and expressions pertaining to Biden's

administration, transgender people and immigrants were investigated through the concordance function. Collocational patterns were examined to determine the way they contribute to the construction of metaphors of othering, along with the dualistic framing of American society.

The collection of the concordance lines is supported by a qualitative analysis aimed at identifying the linguistic and semantic functions of selected words and expressions. Following Wodak's (2011) theoretical framework, the analysis firstly focuses on Trump's use of disclaimers, as strategic assertions that political leaders may often use to falsely deny their seemingly immoral behaviour, in response to their attitudes to addressing particular issues. In the context of Trump's campaign, disclaimers are employed explicitly. Hence, they are defined as overt disclaimers in this work. They can be identified in the Republican leader's inflammatory and ironic assertions, whose purpose is to justify the policy of exclusion and distancing, in the name of national safety and identity. After focusing on the vocabulary Trump uses to refer to the Democratic and Republican systems, the work provides insights into the metaphors evoked by some words and expressions listed in the concordance lines, drawing on the conceptual models developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and suggested by Charteris-Black (2018). Through the metaphorical conceptualization of the American political and social reality, the study explores Wodak's (2011) theoretical framework on discursive strategies, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic devices employed to shape public opinion. Finally, the work foregrounds the 'flamboyant' backdrop of Trump's campaign and his 'bombastic' rhetoric, amplified through populist complaints and the ambition to propel America toward regaining global dominance.

4. Semantic analysis

4.1 "Crooked Joe," "sleepy Joe," "MAGAnomics" and "Bidenomics"

It is now an accepted fact that digital devices have enabled non-experts and politicians alike to bypass traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. Laypeople encroach on sensitive domains through straightforward remarks, including slurs and inflammatory assertions (Filmer 2021; Zottola 2020). In addition, particular events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have contributed to decreasing the use of sanitised language in formal or political contexts (Milizia 2023), while also generating unreliable information and changing the communicative style of specialized language. In this regard, Trump was no exception, as he fuelled post-truth communication and often used derogatory words toward certain social categories during the pandemic, including scientists and the Chinese (Milizia 2023). As a result, more so than during the 2016 presidential campaign, he discussed sensitive issues at rallies held across the US between 2023 and 2024, employing contemptuous and ironic remarks to undermine Biden and the opposing party. An

examination of his speeches reveals that, among the numerous derogatory adjectives, “crooked,” often collocated with “Biden,” is especially prominent. The concordance tool provided by Sketch Engine generated 505 hits in the corpus for the phrase “crooked Joe,” in addition to 271 hits for the phrase “crooked Joe Biden.” The following chart shows, in particular, the pervasive occurrence in the corpus of the hits related to “crooked Joe.” The horizontal axis illustrates the positions of the hits within the corpus, while the vertical axis represents the frequency of the hits in various sections of the corpus.

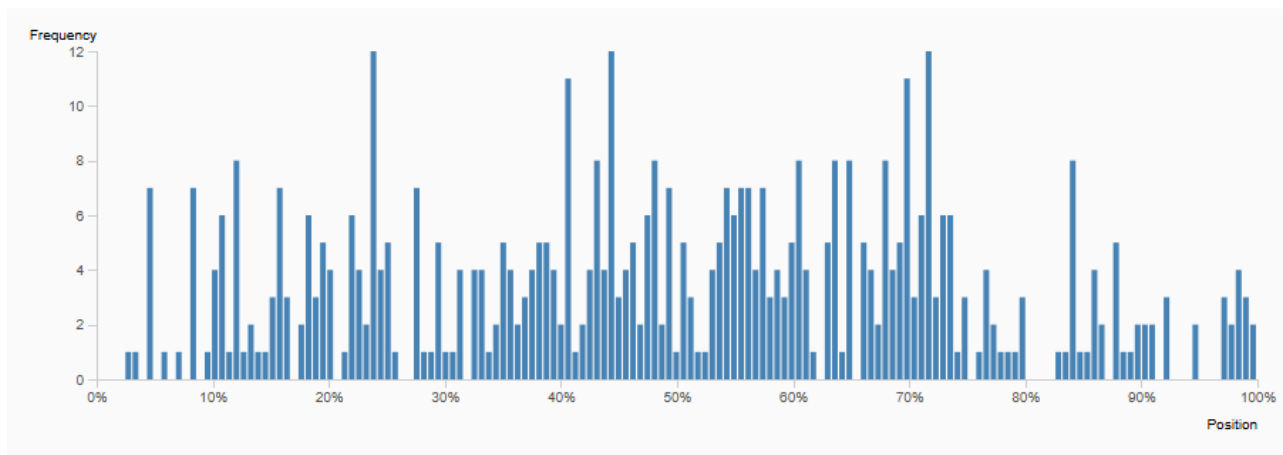


Chart 1: Distribution of the hit “crooked Joe” in the corpus

By collocating “crooked” with both “Joe” and “Joe Biden,” Trump imbues his claims with ironic references to his Democratic opponent. The adjective is often accompanied by the noun “thugs,” reflecting Trump’s intention to emphasise Biden’s and his supporters’ alleged dishonesty. In his speech at Dayton, Ohio, on 16 March 2024, he claimed:

Crooked Joe Biden and his socialist *thugs* are looting trillions and trillions of dollars from the American people and giving it to radical left lunatics and friends. But Biden’s reign of plunder and terror stops the day I take the oath of office. The hardworking American taxpayer will once again have a friend and a fighter and a champion in the White House. (Emphasis added)

In addition to the expressions coined with the adjective “crooked,” the Republican leader makes use of other sarcastic adjectives and nouns referring to both Biden and Democratic supporters. The concordance tool revealed, for instance, 48 hits for “sleepy Joe” in the corpus, while other derogatory adjectives occasionally collocate with “Joe,” such as “dumb” and “incompetent.”

1	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 11 (27) (0.504) And he said, I quote, "I am sitting here with my father Sleepy Joe .</s><s>And we would like to," and by the way, he may not be as sle
2	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 d Joe.</s><s>Donald Trump 08:30-09:10 (40) (0.516) We called him sleepy Joe .</s><s>We had a number of names.</s><s>I like crooked Joe the br
3	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 c it away from Hillary, and we call him Crooked Joe.</s><s>Instead of Sleepy Joe , we call him Crooked Joe.</s><s>I retired it.</s><s>That was a great
4	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 s><s>Think of it.</s><s>[Audience member calls out inaudibly, then " Sleepy Joe "] Donald Trump 48:04-48:07 (3) 45th President of the United States,
5	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 for the autoworkers.</s><s>The head of the pipeline union endorsed Sleepy Joe Biden, endorsed him.</s><s>Now he should be out of a job.</s><s>C
6	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 ald Trump 30:56-31:22 (26) (0.633) How do they do it?</s><s>That's Sleepy Joe or Crooked Joe.</s><s>Which is a better name, Crooked Joe Biden c
7	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 r Crooked Joe.</s><s>Which is a better name, Crooked Joe Biden or Sleepy Joe Biden?</s><s>OK, wait, let's do a free poll.</s><s>Let's do a free pol
8	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 e poll.</s><s>I'll go sleepy first, then I'll go crooked.</s><s>Who likes Sleepy Joe Biden?</s><s>Who likes Crooked Joe Biden?</s><s>Because I retir
9	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 name Crooked Hillary off.</s><s>I've given it to Biden because I had Sleepy Joe Biden.</s><s>I have Crooked Joe Biden.</s><s>I think Crooked Joe
10	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 ming for them.</s><s>We're coming on November 5th Joes, crooked, sleepy Joe .</s><s>Crooked, sleepy.</s><s>I like that.</s><s>I like that.</s><s>
11	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 >But I got rid of sleepy and sleepy was good, but how about crooked, sleepy Joe ?</s><s>You could do a double.</s><s>That's what you got.</s><s>I
12	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 lut, the nicknames are good.</s><s>What do you like better?</s><s> Sleepy Joe ?</s><s>They're both accurate.</s><s>What do you like better?</s><
13	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 You applaud if you like it.</s><s>We'll go sleepy first and then we'll -- Sleepy Joe .</s><s>Crooked Joe.</s><s>[Audience member calls out "That's the
14	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 d it for Joe.</s><s>I thought it was more accurate.</s><s>Then I had Sleepy Joe , and I removed it into Crooked Joe.</s><s>I thought it was slightly m
15	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 09:53 (49) We call her -- because -- what was better Crooked Joe or Sleepy Joe ?</s><s>Okay, let's have a poll.</s><s>I'll change it.</s><s>He's botl
16	<input type="checkbox"/>		doc#0 go Crooked.</s><s>Which is the better name for Joe Biden?</s><s> Sleepy Joe ?</s><s>Or Crooked Joe?</s><s>So in Venezuela, in Venezuela, the

Tab. 1: Concordance lines for “sleepy Joe”

Table 1 shows the first sixteen concordance lines for “sleepy Joe,” often used as a synonym for “crooked Joe” or “crooked,” as it appears in various lines (3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16). In lines 7 and 15, in particular, Trump wonders whether it is better to call Biden “crooked Joe Biden” or “sleepy Joe Biden,” humorously suggesting a free poll. It appears evident that the choice of “crooked” reflects Trump’s intention to emphasise his opponent’s negative qualities by exploiting the double meaning of the adjective. “Crooked Joe” underscores both Biden’s physical limitations, which do not make him fit to serve as a president, and his moral corruption. Consequently, the populist rhetorical style exemplified by Trump builds on the *argumentum ad hominem*, defined as “a verbal attack on the antagonist’s personality and character (of his/her credibility, integrity, honesty, expertise, competence)” (Wodak 2011, 65). Another pre-modifier frequently appearing in Trump’s discourse is “stupid,” an adjective he had already used during the 2016 US presidential campaign, along with “crooked” and “incompetent.” However, it had never been used by American presidents to depict the leaders of the opposing party (Charteris-Black 2018). At first glance, Trump’s sarcastic depictions of Biden represent disclaimers, statements whose implicit contemptuous overtones toward specific social categories serve the purpose of justifying their exclusion for alleged wrongdoing. As Wodak (2011, 65) claims, disclaimers are used in speeches when people “seek to justify the practices of exclusion without employing the related overt rhetoric.” In this case, the Republican leader seeks to persuade his voters of Biden’s inability to serve the country, hinting at alleged health problems. As a result, he presents Biden’s ‘sleepiness’ and incompetence as an undeniable truth which calls for a rapid solution, before the country plunges into an irreversible economic crisis. In line with Wodak’s statement, Trump presents the matter as an objective problem and justifies his assertions by

adducing Biden’s alleged physical and mental inabilities. However, in contrast to Wodak’s definition, Trump uses explicit words to persuade his supporters of his opponent’s inadequacy, portraying the issue as a reality that justifies voting for the Republican candidate. Trump’s positive self-presentation thereby emerges as a result of his negative depictions of Biden’s skills through overt disclaimers, which legitimise the need to solve present-day problems and avert looming threats to American society.

Likewise, the description of the economic programme of the Republican party, which includes, among other things, the introduction of tariffs to boost local businesses, is framed to discredit the opposing party. Trump coins two blended nouns, employed in the previous presidential campaign (McMahon 2024), to contrast his programme with Biden’s: “MAGAnomics” (21 hits) and “Bidenomics” (26 hits). As regards the former, the prefix derives from his slogan “Make American Great Again.” In his speech on 14 February 2024 in North Charleston, Trump claims: “Let’s compare the smouldering records of Bidenomics. How about that name, Bidenomics, with the incredible success we had just three years ago under President Trump on MAGAnomics [...]?” This neologism clearly reflects his aspiration to re-establish the values of the American golden age, leveraging his megalomaniac rhetorical style. Table 2 shows sixteen out of twenty-one occurrences of “MAGAnomics.”

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	ible success we had just three years ago under President Trump on MAGAnomics , do you ever hear that term?</s><s>I just heard it.</s><s>I just hea
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	a really bad term.</s><s>It didn't work.</s><s>And we will reinstate MAGAnomics .</s><s>That's right.</s><s>MAGAnomics.</s><s>You guessed it.<
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	<s>And we will reinstate MAGAnomics.</s><s>That's right.</s><s> MAGAnomics .</s><s>You guessed it.</s><s>[Audience cheers] Donald Trump 1:
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	ics.</s><s>Biden, he thinks that's a good term and we will reinstate Maganomics .</s><s>We want Maganomics, Make America Great Again.</s><s>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	it's a good term and we will reinstate Maganomics.</s><s>We want Maganomics , Make America Great Again.</s><s>Biden wants to give you a \$6 tr
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	it with your vote, we will throw out Bidenomics, and we will reinstate MAGAnomics , MAGAnomics, right?</s><s>[Audience cheers] Donald Trump 52:2
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	3, we will throw out Bidenomics, and we will reinstate MAGAnomics, MAGAnomics , right?</s><s>[Audience cheers] Donald Trump 52:29-52:49 (20) (
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	we will throw out the Bidenomics and we will reinstate a thing called MAGAnomics .</s><s>Donald Trump 42:04-42:26 (22) (0.094) Crooked Joe Bider
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	>With your vote, we will throw out Bidenomics, and we will reinstate MAGAnomics .</s><s>We love MAGA, Make America Great Again.</s><s>Make /
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	re going to throw out Bidenomics and we are going to replace it with MAGAnomics , it's MAGAnomics.</s><s>Donald Trump 38:46-39:12 (27) (0.237) .
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	ut Bidenomics and we are going to replace it with MAGAnomics, it's MAGAnomics .</s><s>Donald Trump 38:46-39:12 (27) (0.237) And upon taking of
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	re, we will throw out Bidenomics, and we will reinstate a thing called MAGAnomics .</s><s>I'll terminate Joe Biden's radical plan to kill Michigan's econ
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	><s>On day one, we will throw out Bidenomics and we will reinstate MAGAnomics , MAGAnomics.</s><s>And we're going to bring manufacturing, tou
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	e, we will throw out Bidenomics and we will reinstate MAGAnomics, MAGAnomics .</s><s>And we're going to bring manufacturing, tourism, and other
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	ne, we're going to throw out Bidenomics and going to replace it with Maganomics like your hats, Maganomics.</s><s>Donald Trump 37:06-37:36 (30)
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0	Bidenomics and going to replace it with Maganomics like your hats, Maganomics .</s><s>Donald Trump 37:06-37:36 (30) (0.169) And I will give you

Tab. 2: Concordance lines for “MAGAnomics” (lines 1-16)

The return to a golden age is evoked by the use of the verbs “replace” and “reinstate” in the left co-texts of every occurrence, except for the first. Thus, Trump’s motto “Make America Great Again,” embedded in the prefix of the word indicating his economic programme, is reinforced by verbs that conjure up change and innovation. “MAGAnomics” is used in clear opposition to

“Bidenomics” (Hatheway 2025), whose occurrences are illustrated in Table 3 (lines 1-16) and Table 4 (lines 21-26; lines 17-20 are not included).

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 m the hell out of government.</s><s>I will end the disaster known as Bidenomics .</s><s>He doesn't even know.</s><s>Two weeks ago, they used th
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 tment of Justice and the FBI.</s><s>I will end the disaster known as Bidenomics .</s><s>Donald Trump 01:17:32-01:18:07 (35) (0.231) You know, the
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 /s><s>Everybody knew that.</s><s>I will stop the disaster known as Bidenomics , which means inflation, taxation, submission, and failure.</s><s>Tha
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 had gasoline at \$1 and 87 cents a gallon.</s><s>After three years of Bidenomics .</s><s>They call it Bidenomics from hell.</s><s>The average montl
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 a gallon.</s><s>After three years of Bidenomics.</s><s>They call it Bidenomics from hell.</s><s>The average monthly mortgage payment has gone
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 e there any Biden fans in this big crowd?</s><s>After three years of Bidenomics , he thinks the term is good.</s><s>No, it's a bad term, not a good te
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 p 04:39-05:04 (25) (0.759) Let's compare the smoldering records of Bidenomics -- how about that name, Bidenomics -- with the incredible success we
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 npare the smoldering records of Bidenomics -- how about that name, Bidenomics -- with the incredible success we had just three years ago under Pres
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 I trucks.</s><s>Now, you say, Let's get a little one.</s><s>Thanks to Bidenomics , a 30-year mortgage rate has hit a 22-year high, the highest in over 2
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 es as \$1.87 a gallon.</s><s>Wouldn't that be nice?</s><s>Thanks to Bidenomics , the three-year mortgage rate has hit a 22-year high, with the averag
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 nflation almost at zero, 62%.</s><s>With your vote, we will vanquish Bidenomics , which is a very negative term.</s><s>Donald Trump 13:34-13:52 (1
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 .0.295) Very corrupt country.</s><s>With your vote, we will throw out Bidenomics .</s><s>Biden, he thinks that's a good term and we will reinstate Ma
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 >Donald Trump 46:18-47:06 (48) You had no inflation.</s><s>Under Bidenomics , the United States has lost 284,000 good full-time jobs in the past ye
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 s>It could be a hundred.</s><s>But with your vote, we will throw out Bidenomics , and we will reinstate MAGAnomics, MAGAnomics, right?</s><s>[At
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 k Joe Biden put them in.</s><s>With your vote, we will throw out the Bidenomics and we will reinstate a thing called MAGAnomics.</s><s>Donald Tru
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 s>Joe Biden squandered everything we did under the catastrophe of Bidenomics .</s><s>He thinks it's a good term.</s><s>It's a horrible term.</s><s>

Tab. 3: Concordance lines for “Bidenomics” (lines 1–16)

21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 t the largest tax cuts in history.</s><s>On day one, we will throw out Bidenomics , and we will reinstate a thing called MAGAnomics.</s><s>I'll termina
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 ns, and we bounced back well.</s><s>On day one, we will throw out Bidenomics and we will reinstate MAGAnomics, MAGAnomics.</s><s>And we're
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 n tax, because it's a tax.</s><s>On day one, we're going to throw out Bidenomics and going to replace it with Maganomics like your hats, Maganomics.
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 t them off the stage.</s><s>Upon my inauguration, we will throw out Bidenomics and replace it with MAGAnomics, MAGA.</s><s>And in less than fou
25	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 n.</s><s>But on day one of my new administration, we will throw out Bidenomics and we will replace it -- we are going to replace it with MAGAnomics.
26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 }-29:35 (27) (0) Isn't that nice?</s><s>On day one, we will throw out Bidenomics and replace it with a thing called MAGAnomics.</s><s>We will quickl

Tab. 4: Concordance lines for “Bidenomics” (lines 21–26)

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the left co-texts include phrases such as “I will end the disaster” (lines 1, 2), “I will stop the disaster” (line 3), “we will vanquish” (line 11), “we will throw out” (lines 12, 14, 15, 21, 22, 24-26), “we’re going to throw out” (line 23). The right co-texts are characterised by expressions like “we will reinstate” (lines 14, 15, 21, 22), “[we’re going to/we will] replace” (lines 23-26), and some negative connotations referring to “Bidenomics,” such as “which means inflation, taxation, submission, and failure” (line 3) and “which is a very negative term” (line 11). “Catastrophe” appears in line 16, in the left co-text. The terms and neologisms used by Trump are often based on metaphors, framing the situation in the US from the perspective of a looming disaster. An attentive look at Tables 3 and 4 reveals that Trump sometimes refers to his economic programme by using a synecdochic term, “thing,” in some utterances, like “we will reinstate a thing called MAGAnomics” (lines 15 and 21) and “we will throw out Bidenomics and replace it with a thing called MAGAnomics” (line 26). At first, the terms “thing” and “MAGAnomics” may appear to belong to two “incongruous domains” (Steen

et al. 2010, 96). “Thing” suggests an entity of modest dimensions, in sharp contrasts to the grandeur and ambition evoked by the prefix “MAGA-”. However, the juxtaposition of the two terms generates an indirect relationship through cross-domain mapping (Steen et al. 2010), in which the euphemistic value of “thing,” the source domain, recalls simplicity, smallness and modesty, making “MAGAnomics” sound like a simple, innovative, feasible and suitable programme. This “thing,” as Trump calls it, evokes a vague meaning which nonetheless conveys a simple and familiar proposal for reinforcing the American economy. The use of “thing,” as a novel metaphor to refer to “MAGAnomics,” enables the tycoon to present the potentially alienating noun, chosen for his economic programme, in a familiar light, avoiding the risk of public confusion resulting from a technical neologism. The semantic vagueness of “thing” is reduced when juxtaposed with the concept of “MAGAnomics,” standing for flexibility and simplicity. The connection to earthly elements evoked by this metaphorical term simplifies the definition of “MAGAnomics,” framing its apparent complexity as a common concept that people are likely to support to strengthen America’s troubled economy.

4.2 “The swamp,” “transgender insanity” and ideological sanitation

While this “thing,” “MAGAnomics,” aims to “Eliminate taxes,” “Help the middle class,” “Boost tariffs and trade,” “Make housing more affordable,” “Invest in US businesses” and “Make health care more affordable” (Lobosco and Luhby 2024), Trump employs other metaphors to portray Biden’s collapsing economic plan, claiming the objective fairness of his own social, economic and political plans. In this regard, “Bidenomics” is repeatedly compared to a swamp. The image of the swamp appears in the recurring phrase “we will drain the swamp,” which he uttered at the rally held in Pickens on 1 July 2023, as well as at other rallies, underscoring the sanitising intent of his programme. Moreover, expressions such as “You have to swamp them,” “We have to swamp them” (both uttered at the rally in Reno on 17 December 2023) and “We got to swamp them” (repeated at the rally in Greensboro on 2 March 2024 and at other rallies) highlight the hyperbolic tone of Trump’s rhetoric and evoke the overwhelming, suffocating campaign he planned in order to defeat his opponents. The analysis of concordances through Sketch Engine revealed 83 hits for “swamp,” which collocates with words related to the Democratic government as well as with deontic and future verbs expressing obligation and planned future actions. Table 5 shows some concordance lines for “swamp” (lines 25-40).

25	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 iech, right?</s><s>But some of them are OK.</s><s>The Washington	swamp	has done everything in its power to take away your voice, but tomorrov
26	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 (0.743) Ask yourselves, who does the radical left and the Washington	swamp	fear more?</s><s>Nikki Haley and Ron DeSanctimonious or Presiden
27	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 <s><s>But it was over very fast.</s><s>And I said, "We must have really	swamped	them to call it that early."</s><s>But I was told that you had to wait till
28	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 <s><s>Nobody else has done what we've done.</s><s>The Washington	swamp	has done everything in his power to take away your voice, but this Tue
29	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 y.</s><s>We will route the fake news media.</s><s>We will drain the	swamp	, and we will liberate our country from these tyrants and villains once a
30	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 way we can fix it.</s><s>We're going to fix it.</s><s>The Washington	swamp	has done everything in its power to take away your voice, but this Tue:
31	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 · run, not the way it's been [Inaudible].</s><s>The corrupt Washington	swamp	has done everything in its power to take away your voice.</s><s>Donk
32	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 g to stop the cheating.</s><s>The one you know you win is when you	swamp	them, not drain the swamp, build up the swamp in this case.</s><s>Tc
33	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 <s><s>The one you know you win is when you swamp them, not drain the	swamp	, build up the swamp in this case.</s><s>Tomorrow we're going to win
34	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 v you win is when you swamp them, not drain the swamp, build up the	swamp	in this case.</s><s>Tomorrow we're going to win New Hampshire and
35	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 untry.</s><s>We will route the fake news media and we will drain the	swamp	.</s><s>We will liberate our country from these tyrants and villains onk
36	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 2:51-43:19 (28) (0.327) Other than that – but we're going to drain the	swamp	.</s><s>We started off, we fired Comey, that fraud </s><s>We got rid
37	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 6:19 (28) We will route the fake news media.</s><s>We will drain the	swamp	.</s><s>We will liberate our country from these tyrants and villains onk
38	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 !) (0.124) We will route the fake news media.</s><s>We will drain the	swamp	, and we will liberate our country from these tyrants and villains once a
39	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 /s><s>What is that about?</s><s>Don't worry.</s><s>You're going to	swamp	them.</s><s>You're going to swamp them.</s><s>It's important that w
40	<input type="checkbox"/>	① doc#0 n't worry.</s><s>You're going to swamp them </l> Cerca 'ou're going to	swamp	them.</s><s>It's important that we do.</s><s>Donald Trump 04:28-04

Tab. 5: Concordance lines for “swamp” (lines 25–40)

The purpose of Trump’s presidential campaign was to exert a significant impact on the public through carefully chosen expressions and imagery. Simple and impactful terms, such as “drain,” “swamp” and “crooked,” serve to reinforce the Republican ideology. The disparaging expressions exacerbate controversial issues and convey the need for an ‘ideological sanitation.’ Trump’s recurrent use of the phrases “drain the swamp” (lines 29, 35-38) and “swamp(ed) them” (lines 27, 32, 39, 40) is intended to filter out the contaminating principles advanced by the opposing party. As a consequence, he means to reframe reality through the filter of ‘ideological sanitation,’ conceived as both social and political cleansing.

As Charteris-Black (2018) notes, numerous metaphorical terms, such as “crooked” and “swamp,” were not new in Trump’s speeches, as they had been extensively used by the tycoon during the 2016 US presidential campaign, when Hillary Clinton was the Democratic nominee. During that campaign, Trump introduced the phrase “drain the swamp,” a novel metaphor that symbolised his ethos and became one of his catchphrases, enhancing his credibility. The phrase was welcomed by the public owing to its evocative effect (it conveyed, as explained earlier, the idea of ‘sanitising’ the government) and its accessibility to laypeople. As Charteris-Black (2018, 12) writes, “by ‘doing it his way’ he [Trump] is also doing it the way that his supporters prefer.” As illustrated in Table 5, Trump used “swamp” both as a noun and as a verb, exploiting the semantic potential of its dual meaning. As a noun, this word stands for the immorality of the government, as in phrases like “drain the swamp” or “the Washington swamp.” As a verb, it means “to inundate,” as in “we have to really swamp them” and “you are going to swamp them.” The linguistic choice of the word “swamp” is justified by the familiarity that many Americans have with swamps and marshlands, especially in the southern area, as well as by the vivid semantic associations that the word evokes. Charteris-Black (2018) suggests the application of Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) conceptual blending theory to analyse the metaphorical

meaning of the noun “swamp,” demonstrating how Trump’s metaphor incorporates a profound message for Americans. This theory analyses metaphors through four imaginary spaces: the generic space (represented by schemata stored in memory), the first input space (the literal meaning of the word), the second input space (the metaphorical meaning of the word) and the blended space (where the two input spaces are integrated). In his analysis of the noun “swamp,” Charteris-Black (2018) argues that the generic space is represented by the schemata that this metaphor conjures up, namely the identification of the source of the problem and the action needed to solve it. With regard to the first input space, the phrase primarily evokes the health risks associated with swamps, mainly located in the southern part of the US, where many of Trump’s voters live. The image of the swamp is likened to political corruption in the second input space. Moreover, the sanitising effects of draining the swamp in the first input space are compared to the idea of eliminating political corruption in the second input space. The application of this theoretical framework is supported, among other things, by the agency that the verb “drain” underlies, which complies with the dynamic structure of the conceptual blending theory. The image of the swamp and the idea of political corruption converge in the blended space, along with the actions of draining the swamp and eliminating corruption, which imply that the removal of the source of the disease leads to the eradication of corruption. As such, the theoretical framework equates the management of both the political world and the environmental world (Charteris-Black 2018). The evocation of the swamp, including the dangerous insects that inhabit it, translates into the political malaise that prevails in Washington. The final meaning conveyed through the application of the conceptual blending theory is that swamps must be drained as soon as possible, because they are sources of disease and toxicity, and that political corruption must be tackled immediately before it infects the country. The successful impact of this metaphor on the public ensured that Trump regained his ethos, as it enabled him to address allegations of political corruption.¹

Likewise, by applying the same theory to the analysis of the verb “swamp,” the generic space is represented by the source of the problem, the political opponents, and the solution to the problem, their defeat. The first input space is dominated by the literal meaning of the verb “swamp” which, in the present context, symbolizes the idea of overwhelming someone with water in order to drown them. The second input space is represented by the presidential

¹ As a result of Trump’s unprecedented approach to politics, characterised by his ambitions of global domination, the 2016 presidential campaign has often been described as suggestive of the atmosphere depicted in Fitzgerald’s famous novel, *The Great Gatsby* (McClellan and Gruber 2021). In this regard, it is worth noting that the metaphorical model discussed in this section has been employed to compare Trump and Gatsby. The two input spaces (Trump, the politician, and Gatsby, the celebrity) originate from a generic space, represented by the concept of reinventing oneself as a means of gaining success. The interaction, within the blended space, between the two input spaces and the generic space discloses different facets of Trump, both as a political leader and as a celebrity (McClellan and Gruber 2021).

campaign, the battleground, and the political defeat of the opponents by means of votes and popular support. As regards the blended space, the message that ensues is the necessity to suffocate opponents. Hence, the “us versus them” dichotomy emerges more explicitly in the phrases containing “swamp” as a verb. The pervasive nuance of the verb “swamp” (evoking flooding) conveys the idea of a change involving a large area, symbolising the broad scope of Trump’s political actions and communicating the message of an irreversible process. While evoking the urgency of collective action to support the Republican candidate, the metaphorical use of the verb “swamp” highlights that the political defeat of the opponents can be accomplished by overwhelming them with a flood. Used as a noun, therefore, “swamp” implies reshaping nature to solve the problem (as in the metaphor of draining the swamp), whereas, used as a verb, it suggests acting on society to secure Trump’s victory. The verb “swamp” conjures up the military sphere as well (the idea of the battleground and two opposing armies) which adds to the aggression needed to achieve the goal. Thus, the metaphorical language is intended not only to facilitate the understanding of “one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 5) and to portray reality by means of terms that are apparently distant yet implicitly connected, but also to “provoke emotional responses, enhance the communicative impact of the message, and avoid blame for unpopular choices” (Paganoni 2023, 313).

With regard to the concept of cleansing, another significant collocation is frequently employed in Trump’s speeches, “transgender insanity.” Such a phrase draws on the domain of disease and mental malaise, echoing the same imagery of contamination and purification recalled, respectively, by the terms “swamp” and “drain.” The collocation of “transgender” with “insanity” in Trump’s speeches is intentionally used to reframe a controversial concept that has fractured public opinion for decades. To concur with Stibbe (2021, 41), the tycoon seeks to provide “a new structure for conceptualising an area of life which has standardly been framed in a particular way.”

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and either racial, sexual, or political content on our children. </s>	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 cut federal funding for any school pushing Critical Race Theory, transgender insanity , and any other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content to	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content upon	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and any other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content o	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content onto c	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 we you even have to say it? </s><s>Pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 o cut federal funding for any school, pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on ou	
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and any other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content o	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content onto t	
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	doc#0 to cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity , and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content onto c	

Tab. 6: Concordance lines for “transgender insanity” (lines 1–16)

While the concordance tool revealed 50 hits for “transgender insanity,” it is noteworthy that, with a few exceptions, identical sentences embedding this phrase are repeated at all the rallies. Trump’s phrases and collocations contain words used to question concepts and certainties that are deeply rooted in the cultural background of society. The social and cultural meanings associated with “transgender” were challenged as the Republican candidate repeatedly asserted that he would “cut federal funding for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content” and that he would “keep men out of women’s sports.” In particular, the idea of separating men and women in sports may have initially puzzled the public, perhaps unable to discern the intended meaning of the term “men.” Owing to the impactful concepts involved in this phrase, it is important to consider the meaning which Trump intended to introduce. Did he mean to reframe social views on gender identity? Did he use the phrase to demonize a specific social group? By collocating “transgender” with “insanity,” the Republican leader is likely to restore harmful stereotypes, fostering the idea that transgender people suffer from mental disorders and that public institutions should not make any efforts to integrate them into society. The association of the two words reinforces the “us versus them” dichotomy, representing transgender people as a threat to social and moral norms. Trump’s rhetoric on this subject vilifies a specific category of people, justifying, under the guise of an overt disclaimer, the exclusion of such people from various fields of life, including sports, following numerous debates about the supposed different physical abilities of transgender female athletes and those who were born female (Debusmann 2025).

4.3 Immigration and the “us versus them” dichotomy

Similar remarks were made at the rallies for the 2024 Presidential campaign with regard to immigrant communities. When Trump delivered a speech in Manchester, New Hampshire, on 27 April 2023, his statements about immigrants were replete with hate: “We’re going to follow the Eisenhower model. [...] He was very tough on illegal immigration. [...] We will use all necessary state, local, federal, and military resources to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.” The phrases and terms that Trump mostly used when addressing the issue of immigration are “deportation,” “border wall” and “strong borders.” The analysis of the concordance lines related to such expressions revealed 79 hits for “deportation,” 43 hits for “border wall,” and 34 hits for “strong borders.” Tables 7, 8 and 9 illustrate the first sixteen occurrences of these expressions.

1	🔍	📄	doc#0 :rease in Border Patrol and a colossal increase in the number of ICE deportation offices.</s><s>We're going to clean up our country.</s><s>We're go
2	🔍	📄	doc#0 cal, federal, and military resources to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Donald Trump 01:13:49-01:14:
3	🔍	📄	doc#0 ncrease in Border Patrol and colossal increase in the number of ICE deportation officers.</s><s>[Audience cheers] Donald Trump 54:43:55:10 (27) v
4	🔍	📄	doc#0 cal, federal, and military resources to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Donald Trump 55:10:55:53 (43
5	🔍	📄	doc#0 local, federal, and military resource to carry out the largest domestic deportation in American history, starting with the criminals, starting with some vei
6	🔍	📄	doc#0 y're almost empty now.</s><s>We will carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>We have no choice.</s><s>An
7	🔍	📄	doc#0 cal, federal, and military resources to carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Donald Trump 01:12:48-01:13:
8	🔍	📄	doc#0 him as that, but he was.</s><s>We'll carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Donald Trump 23:54:24:16 (22
9	🔍	📄	doc#0 oing to get them the hell out.</s><s>We're going to have the largest deportation effort you've ever seen.</s><s>Donald Trump 47:34:48:05 (31) (0.3
10	🔍	📄	doc#0 ers policy of the Biden administration and begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>It's no wonder the far left lunati
11	🔍	📄	doc#0 y of the Biden administration, and we will begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>So sad we even have to talk at
12	🔍	📄	doc#0 the invasion on our southern border and begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>I will immediately restore and e
13	🔍	📄	doc#0 the invasion of our southern border, and begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Now, as soon as we win – And
14	🔍	📄	doc#0 8:49-09:15 (25) (0.237) And we have no choice.</s><s>The largest deportation operation in American history.</s><s>We have no choice.</s><s>Cn
15	🔍	📄	doc#0 rry hard to recover from that, but we're going to start on day one with deportation .</s><s>Donald Trump 41:31:41:56 (25) (0.314) OK?</s><s>Does t
16	🔍	📄	doc#0 open border policy of the Biden administration and begin the largest deportation operation in American history.</s><s>Donald Trump 41:56:42:22 (26

Tab. 7: Concordance lines for “deportation” (lines 1-16)

1	🔍	📄	doc#0 We created the most ure border in US history, built nearly 500 miles a border wall , got Mexico to give us 28,000 soldiers free of charge.</s><s>"Mr. Pre
2	🔍	📄	doc#0 e created the most ure border in U.S. history, built nearly 500 miles of border wall , got Mexico to give us 28,000 soldiers free of charge.</s><s>Donald
3	🔍	📄	doc#0 d the most ure border in U.S. history.</s><s>Built nearly 500 miles of border wall .</s><s>Got Mexico to give us 28,000 soldiers.</s><s>How about the
4	🔍	📄	doc#0 e most ure border in U.S. history.</s><s>We built nearly 500 miles of border wall .</s><s>We got Mexico to give us 28,000 soldiers free of charge.</s>
5	🔍	📄	doc#0 uration Day 2025.</s><s>In 2016, you remember this, I ran on the border wall .</s><s>Donald Trump 04:53:05:20 (26) (0.755) That was a big deal
6	🔍	📄	doc#0 9:19-09:41 (22) (0.878) Just as I promised, I built nearly 500 miles of border wall .</s><s>You know, they like to say, "Oh, it was only 50."</s><s>No.</s>
7	🔍	📄	doc#0 I open-border actions.</s><s>Think of it, 94.</s><s>He canceled the border wall , ordered a virtual shutdown of ICE, implemented nationwide catch ar
8	🔍	📄	doc#0 ed the most ure border in US history, and we built nearly 500 miles of border wall , actually more than that.</s><s>Donald Trump 01:17:02-01:17:20 (1f
9	🔍	📄	doc#0 it's the amount we need to protect our border while we're building the border wall , " which is mostly built actually.</s><s>Donald Trump 01:17:36-01:17
10	🔍	📄	doc#0 the most ure border in U.S. history.</s><s>We built over 500 miles of border wall .</s><s>They like to say, "Oh, it was less."</s><s>It's not.</s><s>It's
11	🔍	📄	doc#0 ieved the most ure border in US history.</s><s>We built 561 miles of border wall and got Mexico to give us 28,000 soldiers free of charge. 28,000.</s>
12	🔍	📄	doc#0 e had the most ure border in US history.</s><s>We built 561 miles of border wall .</s><s>We got Mexico to give us, free of charge, 28,000 soldiers.</s>
13	🔍	📄	doc#0 the most ure border in US history by far.</s><s>We built 561 miles of border wall .</s><s>You know, if there's a little piece -- if there's a nail from a wal
14	🔍	📄	doc#0 hat's rotted out laying on the ground someplace, they say, that's not a border wall .</s><s>Donald Trump 29:39-29:57 (18) Weak (1.29) That's a renov
15	🔍	📄	doc#0 s>They did nothing wrong.</s><s>Likewise, Nikki Haley opposed my border wall .</s><s>Do you know she opposed the wall very strongly?</s><s>Sh
16	🔍	📄	doc#0 rates history.</s><s>Did you know that?</s><s>We built 561 miles of border wall .</s><s>They like to say, "Well, you didn't built -- if there's a piece of f

Tab. 8: Concordance lines for “border wall” (lines 1-16)

1	🔍	📄	doc#0 strong.</s><s>Donald Trump 33:49-34:20 (31) (0.204) We want strong borders .</s><s>We want low taxes.</s><s>We want low interest rates.</
2	🔍	📄	doc#0 mon sense, and you see the level of dishonesty because we want strong borders .</s><s>Donald Trump 01:25:12-01:25:30 (18) (0.372) We want t
3	🔍	📄	doc#0 hell.</s><s>Donald Trump 42:14:42:43 (29) (0.129) We had the strongest borders in history.</s><s>We were doing great.</s><s>We had no inflation
4	🔍	📄	doc#0 ions.</s><s>The rest of it will happen.</s><s>But we need great, strong borders .</s><s>We have the strongest border in the history.</s><s>We n
5	🔍	📄	doc#0 e have the strongest border in the history.</s><s>We need great, strong borders , and we need great elections and fair elections.</s><s>[Audience
6	🔍	📄	doc#0 :.</s><s>That's what the Democrats want.</s><s>So, I give them strong borders .</s><s>I give them good safety.</s><s>I give them a powerful m
7	🔍	📄	doc#0 en want more -- they don't want crime.</s><s>They want to have strong borders .</s><s>They don't want people pouring into their neighborhoods
8	🔍	📄	doc#0 oblem with COVID, but we had a great thing going.</s><s>We had strong borders , nobody coming into it.</s><s>Very few people.</s><s>Drugs we
9	🔍	📄	doc#0 </s><s>Okay?</s><s>Everything's the opposite.</s><s>We want strong borders .</s><s>Everything is the opposite.</s><s>So, you almost wonde
10	🔍	📄	doc#0 ill or high water, you have to stick together.</s><s>We must have strong borders , strong military, strong families, strong cultures, and above all, we
11	🔍	📄	doc#0 out the borders."</s><s>You know why?</s><s>Because we had strong borders .</s><s>Now, we have the weakest borders we've ever had.</s><
12	🔍	📄	doc#0 is means?</s><s>You know, yeah, it means we're going to have strong borders , great education.</s><s>You're going to be able to buy a house.<
13	🔍	📄	doc#0 he party of common sense, the Republican Party.</s><s>You like strong borders , right?</s><s>You don't want people coming in from prisons and
14	🔍	📄	doc#0 y want unity.</s><s>Women want unity.</s><s>They want to have strong borders .</s><s>Donald Trump 35:34:36:16 (42) They don't want to have
15	🔍	📄	doc#0 e border, just about as important it gets.</s><s>We have to have strong borders , but we have to have ure elections and we will ure our elections, I
16	🔍	📄	doc#0 3) (0) Everything else can straighten itself out, but we got to have strong borders so we have to have fair and free elections or we don't have a cour

Tab. 9: Concordance lines for “strong borders” (lines 1-16)

Table 7 shows that “deportation,” an evocative term, mostly collocates with “the largest domestic” in the left co-text (lines 2, 4-8, 10-13) and with “operation in American history” in the right co-text (lines 2, 4, 6-8, 10-14, 16). In Table 8, the verb “built” frequently appears in the left co-text (lines 1-4, 6, 8, 10-13, 16), followed by a figure, 500 miles, which increases to 561 miles in the subsequent lines, while “strong borders,” in Table 9, is mostly employed with deontic phrases in the left co-text: “we want” (lines 1, 2, 9), “we need great” (lines 4, 5), “we must have” (line 10), “we’re going to have” (line 12), “we have to have” (line 15), “we got to have” (line 16). Charts 2 and 3 summarise the occurrences of terms and expressions used by Trump to depict Biden’s administration and immigration. “Crooked” is practically used as a pre-modifier for “Joe” and “Joe Biden.”

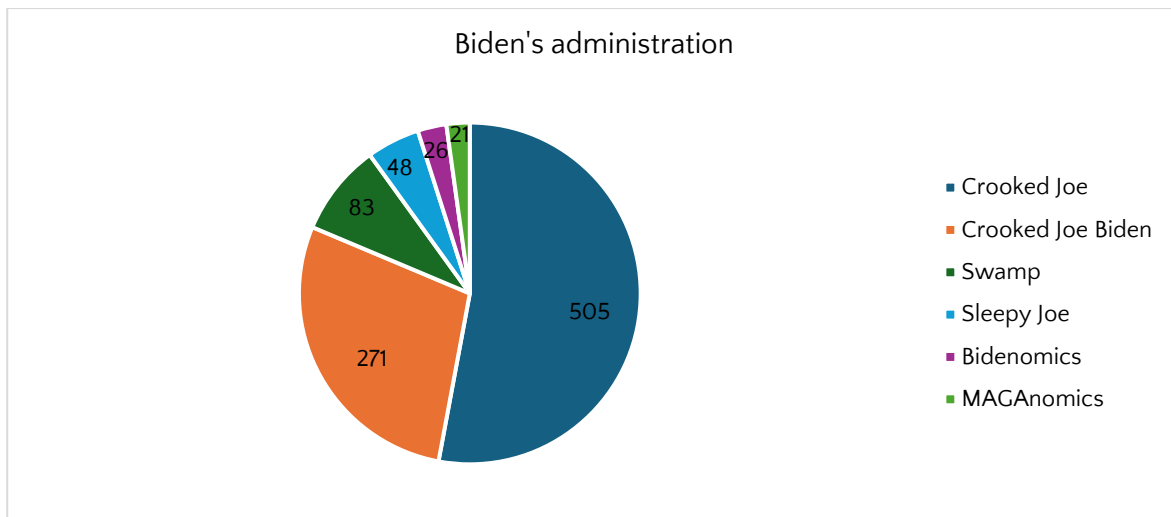


Chart 2: Occurrences of terms and expressions used by Trump to depict Biden’s administration

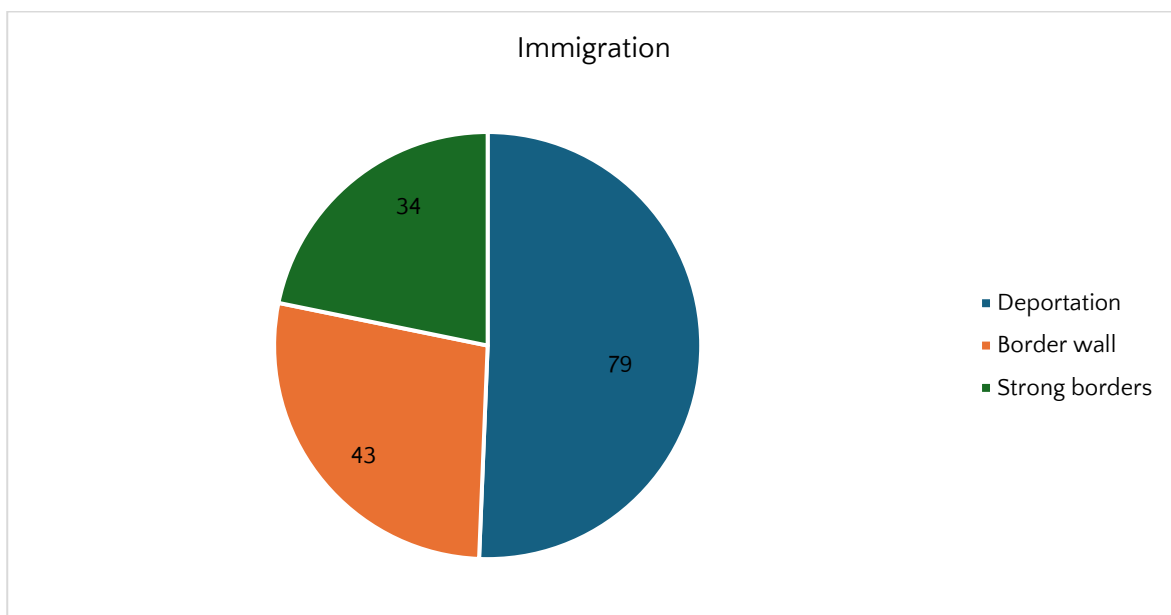


Chart 3: Occurrences of expressions used by Trump to depict immigration

Having underlined the factual problems caused by the Democratic administration, Trump leads his supporters to legitimise the “positive self- and negative other-presentation” (Wodak 2011, 62). Drawing on certain terms and expressions, he constructs a dichotomic representation of society through specific discursive strategies, which lend themselves to being analysed through Wodak’s (2011) classification. Such strategies include discursive practices which are “adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal” (Wodak 2011, 63) and comprise “referential strategies,” “predications,” “argumentation strategies” and “*topoi*,” “perspectivation,” “intensifying strategies” and “mitigation strategies” (Wodak 2011, 63). In light of this classification, the Republican leader designates the actors of the campaign through referential strategies, using metaphors, like “crooked,” to refer to the opposing leader, and “a thing,” a synecdochic element, as previously explained, highlighting the virtuous goals of his political programme. Since the purpose of his speeches is to justify the negative traits of the out-groups, Trump adduces a number of *topoi* when he talks about immigration, particularly cultural differences and the dangers they entail (Wodak 2011).² He warns his audience about the threat posed by immigrants from a cultural perspective. In his speech held in Las Vegas on 28 October 2023, as well as in other rallies, Trump claims: “I’ll also be implementing strong ideological screenings for all immigrants coming in. If you hate America, if you want to abolish Israel, if you sympathize with jihadists, then we don’t want you in our country, and you’re not going to be getting into our country.” In doing so, he implements the strategy of “perspectivation,” belittling the cultural identity of specific aliens through his remarks and points of view (Musolff 2015). The “intensifying strategies” are reinforced by adding epithets, adjectives or prefixes to the nouns he employs to refer to out-groups. Specific pre-modifiers thus serve the function of marking the distance from aliens, highlighting the actions needed to increase the safety and well-being of American society, as illustrated in the following table.

Pre-modifier	Head
border	wall
the largest domestic	deportation operation
strong	borders

Tab. 10: Pre-modifiers used by Trump as intensifying linguistic strategies

To sum up, Trump uses deictic elements marking the opposition between “we” and “them” (Fairclough 2003), such as in “We built 561 miles of border wall,” “We have to really swamp them,” “We will drain the swamp,” “We will throw out Bidenomics” and “We will reinstate MAGAnomics.”

² For the list of the prevailing *topoi* in debates about immigration, see Wodak (2011).

The simple and direct language, combined with his boyish energy, helped Trump to establish a special relationship with his supporters and inspire trust. As Eitelmann and Schneider (2020, 3) claim, “Trump uses simpler language than other politicians” as this is “part of his communicative strategy to appeal to the ‘people.’” As a result, his novel rhetoric, which appealed to his voters, allowed him to be perceived as the protector of Americans, while raising the reaction of previous Democratic presidents, like Barack Obama, who considered this oratory style too reductive and not suitable for addressing the complex issues usually discussed during a campaign (Charteris-Black 2018). As a matter of fact, Trump’s rhetoric is categorical and frames issues in polarized terms, such as good or bad, positive or negative, overlooking the numerous discursive nuances that exist between these extremes. The negative traits ascribed to the Democratic leader and to his supporters represent the rhetorical devices that enable Trump to present his remarks as overt disclaimers, as observed earlier. The continuous references to the problems hindering the American economy increase the public’s perception of the need for change. In this regard, it is worth underlining that one of the most frequent expressions in the corpus is an imperative phrase, “remember that,” which amounts to 104 hits. Many of Trump’s overt disclaimers are constructed through the deontic nuance expressed in this phrase, used both to introduce or end his remarks and as a question. This phrase is reiterated as a refrain at each rally, making the tycoon’s words sound more truthful and imprinting them in the memory of the public. Another exhortative phrase, composed by the future modal auxiliary “will,” is repeated by Trump at the end of each speech, with the purpose of restoring belief in the rebirth of America. The final refrain of each speech is “We will make America,” followed by different adjectives evoking positive emotions, as shown in the following table.

“Will” phrase	Adjective following “we will”
we will make America	powerful again
we will make America	wealthy again
we will make America	strong again
we will make America	proud again
we will make America	safe again
we will make America	great again

Tab. 11: Trump’s pattern “we will make America + adjective + again”

As a result of the simplicity and directedness of Trump’s language, it is not surprising that his lexical variety is limited. The reduced lexical variety of Trump’s language has evidently exerted a strong influence on public opinion, challenging traditional patterns of persuasion in political speeches during presidential campaigns. The TTR, calculated by dividing the number of types

(25,853) by the number of tokens (1,061,652), and then multiplying the result by 100, has generated a value of 2.43. This ratio suggests that the low lexical variety is aimed at facilitating memorization of catchphrases and keywords by the public. Such simple and repetitive vocabulary is intended, among other things, to restore Americans' sense of identity and patriotic feelings. A few impactful expressions remind Americans of the main objectives that they need to pursue, urging them to express their sense of national belonging by redefining borders and isolating subversive groups.

5. The return to the American golden age: conclusions

In his work on Trump's re-election, Klevik (2025, 162) writes that "Trump is more vital than four years ago," while his name emerged as a symbol of power and respect. The semantically charged vocabulary analysed in this work confirms the tycoon's flamboyant rhetorical strategy during the campaign. The evocation of vivid images and the use of an emotive and hyperbolic language introduce a confrontational communicative style, quite uncommon in the history of US presidential campaigns. Trump's vocabulary does not lack vulgar expressions either. The corpus presented in this study contains 37 hits for "bullshit," 8 hits for "son of a bitch" and 200 hits for "what the hell" (at the rally in Wildwood on 11 May 2024, he said "Biden doesn't know what the hell he's doing"). Populist language, however, is not new in many political contexts, such as in Italy, where the rise of some political parties in the late 1990s changed the communicative style (Filmer 2021). Simplicity, informality, repetition, paratactic constructs, specific collocational patterns, deictic elements, intensifiers, inconsistent and non-articulated sentences represent the main linguistic and rhetorical features employed by the tycoon (Feder-Sempach 2022). These features merge to convey the idea that American values are important and that the leader and his people are one family. Emotionally charged terms, used in very simple linguistic constructions, address the public's emotive sphere, amplifying fear and grievance. With his rhetorical strategy, Trump seeks to foster the perception that "the Other" is a threat to the rights of Americans. By appealing to basic rights, like identity, safety, cultural values and prosperity, Trump advocates principles that were long taken for granted, but that were increasingly perceived as faltering in the name of broader international principles. As stated earlier, Trump's rhetoric builds on the style he employed in the 2016 presidential campaign, demonstrating its effectiveness in addressing issues characterizing the contemporary geopolitical context. In addition to dealing with long-standing problems in American society, such as immigration and public welfare, Trump's latest campaign was expected to face new challenges. Therefore, if the tycoon's political stances and communicative style have maintained popularity in the new international scenario, this confirms the paramount importance

Americans place on identity and national values, rooted in patriotism and nostalgia for restoring the golden age of prosperity and social well-being.

Since the onset of his career as a businessman, the name ‘Trump’ has been associated with ambition and exaggeration, consolidating his alleged status as a celebrity. As Longoria (2022, 206) claims, “In Trump’s world everything is big. His bank account, his buildings, his airplane, his crowd size, his love for America, and his ego.” These premises suggest Trump’s long-standing fondness for exaggeration and grandeur, as well as the image of a *nouveau riche* whose ostentatious behaviour is reminiscent of the American golden age. His megalomaniac approach to the campaign, characterised by bizarre claims, parallels his disregard for conventional linguistic politeness. The terms and expressions analysed earlier thus mark the ideological struggle that Trump implemented through language. Considering Fairclough’s (2001, 73) theories on language and ideology, Trump’s ideological struggle does not only occur “*in* language [...], but also *over* language [...] in the sense that language itself is a *stake* in social struggle as well as a *site* of social struggle” (emphasis in the original). His yearning for a glorified past leads the Republican leader to envisage a new social, political and economic context, by repositioning the country within redefined geopolitical relationships (Fairclough 2006).

Bionote

Michele Russo is Associate Professor of English language, translation and linguistics at the University of Foggia, Italy. He received a Ph.D. in English Studies from the University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy (2005). He is the author of three volumes and several articles and book chapters on translation, bilingualism and self-translation. He is a member of numerous scientific associations, such as the Italian Association for the Study of English (Associazione Italiana di Anglistica, AIA), the American Studies Association of Italy (Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani, AISNA), Phrasis – Italian Association for the Study of Phraseology and Paremiology (Associazione Italiana di Fraseologia e Paremiologia), CILM – International Centre of Migrant Literatures (Centro Internazionale Letterature Migranti) and CEA (College English Association). His research interests include translation studies, discourse analysis, English language teaching and phraseology.

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