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POLITICAL DEBATES ON AMERICAN TV

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of research. The study of political debates on American television holds significant relevance for contemporary society due to their profound impact on political discourse, public opinion, and the democratic process. Televised debates have become a cornerstone of election cycles, shaping the way voters perceive candidates, their policies, and their leadership potential. Analyzing this phenomenon offers valuable insights into the intersection of media, politics, and society.

First, televised debates play a critical role in voter education. They provide a platform for candidates to present their policies and values while engaging in direct comparison with their opponents. This enables voters to make more informed decisions, especially for those who may not actively follow political news outside of major election events.

Second, research in this area sheds light on how media framing, presentation styles, and visual rhetoric influence public perception. The visual and performative aspects of televised debates often rival the importance of policy content, impacting how candidates are judged based on charisma, body language, and speaking style.

Third, televised debates highlight the role of television as a medium in the political process. Examining these debates helps researchers understand how technological advancements, such as real-time fact-checking and social media interactions, amplify or distort the messages presented during debates.

Finally, understanding the evolution and effectiveness of political debates on TV provides critical lessons for fostering a more informed electorate. It offers recommendations for improving debate formats, ensuring equitable candidate

representation, and mitigating the influence of entertainment-focused media dynamics.

By exploring the multifaceted impact of televised debates on American politics, this research addresses broader questions about the relationship between media and democracy, emphasizing the need for media literacy in an increasingly visual and digital age.

The goal of the research is to analyze the influence of televised political debates, as a component of the US political discourse, on the democratic process, focusing on their role in voter education, candidate image-building, and the broader interaction between media and politics.

Tasks of the Research:

- to study the historical development and evolution of political debates on American television;
- to examine the role of media framing and presentation styles in shaping public perception of debates;
- to analyze the rhetorical and non-verbal strategies employed by candidates during televised debates;
- to investigate the influence of televised debates on voter decision-making and public opinion;
- to explore the integration of new media technologies (e.g., social media) in amplifying the impact of televised debates.

The subject of the study involves the mechanisms, strategies, and effects of televised political debates, including how they impact public perception, political communication, and media framing of candidates and issues, generally, the phenomenon of political debates broadcast on American television, particularly

their role in shaping political discourse and influencing voter behavior during election cycles.

The object of the study is the English language usage by the candidates, communication and argumentation strategies, rhetorical strategies utilized during the debates.

Research methods include induction, analysis, observation, modeling, formalization, discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, multimodal discourse analysis.

The structure of the work. The work consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a list of used sources.

The practical value of this research lies in its potential to enhance the understanding of how televised political debates influence the democratic process and voter behavior. By analyzing the framing, rhetoric, and presentation techniques used during debates, this study can provide valuable insights into how media strategies affect public perception and candidate image-building. The findings can inform the design of more effective debate formats and media coverage, promoting more informed and engaged voter participation.

The scientific novelty of this work stems from its comprehensive examination of the evolving role of televised political debates within the context of modern media dynamics. By considering the influence of new media technologies - social media platforms and real-time fact-checking - on televised debates, this work offers an innovative perspective on how digital media amplifies or distorts the messages conveyed during debates. Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection of media and democracy, offering original insights into the impact of media performance on voter cognition and behavior.

1.THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

1.1. Modern Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Studies

Political discourse is a central component of democratic societies, as it shapes public opinion, influences decision-making, and facilitates political participation. As political communication has increasingly moved from face-to-face interactions to mediated formats, the study of political discourse has grown in significance, especially within the fields of Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). These disciplines provide essential frameworks for understanding how political language functions, how it reflects power dynamics, and how it is used to construct ideologies and identities [8].

Discourse Analysis, in its broadest sense, refers to the study of language use in communication, focusing on how meaning is created, transmitted, and interpreted within a given context. It considers both spoken and written communication and is interested in the linguistic features, structures, and strategies that enable discourse to function effectively [73]. In the context of political discourse, DA is concerned with understanding how politicians, media outlets, and the public use language to construct political realities, communicate ideologies, and shape the way political events are perceived. [54] Theoretical approaches in DA often emphasize the social context in which discourse is situated, recognizing that language is not merely a neutral tool for transmitting information, but a powerful means for constituting social relations and power structures [13].

Modern Discourse Analysis has been deeply influenced by structuralist, post-structuralist, and sociolinguistic theories, particularly those of Ferdinand de Saussure, Michel Foucault, and Norman Fairclough. Saussure's focus on the relational nature of language has contributed to understanding how political discourse is shaped by cultural and social conventions. Foucault's ideas about power and knowledge have provided critical tools for analyzing the ways in which political discourse constructs and maintains social hierarchies and systems of control. For Norman Fairclough, the study of discourse is inherently connected to the analysis of social structures and power dynamics, which is why his work is central to the development of Critical Discourse Studies [2].

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), as a subfield of discourse analysis, takes a more explicit stance on the relationship between language and power. It is grounded in the belief that discourse is not just a reflection of social realities, but also an active agent in shaping and reinforcing them. CDS argues that language plays a crucial role in the reproduction of social inequalities, the legitimation of power structures, and the construction of ideologies [50]. Researchers in this tradition focus on how language perpetuates ideologies, particularly those related to class, race, gender, and politics. They argue that political discourse often serves to legitimate the interests of dominant groups, presenting them as natural, inevitable, or unquestionable [4].

The focus of CDS is not only on analyzing the content of political language but also on the social practices, institutions, and structures in which discourse occurs. Scholars in this field often adopt a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from linguistics, sociology, psychology, and political science. They seek to uncover the hidden power relations embedded in language, examining how texts, speeches, and media representations contribute to the formation of public opinion and the maintenance of social power. One key feature of CDS is its

commitment to social change. By critically examining the ways in which discourse sustains inequalities and marginalizes certain groups, CDS aims to highlight opportunities for resistance and social transformation [51].

Modern approaches to political discourse analysis often incorporate elements of both DA and CDS, bridging linguistic features with a focus on the sociopolitical context and power relations. (Fig.1.). A central concern is how political figures, such as politicians and media personalities, use rhetorical strategies to persuade and influence public opinion [62]. These strategies include the use of metaphors, framing, polarization, and narratives, which play a key role in constructing political ideologies. Political discourse is not just about conveying information; it is about shaping the worldview of the audience and framing issues in ways that align with particular political agendas [8].

In contemporary political discourse, the media plays a crucial role in framing political events. The language of the media, whether in news reports, opinion pieces, or televised debates, is a powerful tool in constructing political narratives [59]. Political leaders and their advisors carefully craft messages that are intended to resonate with the public, using language that appeals to emotions, values, and beliefs. Critical Discourse Studies help us understand how these media representations not only reflect but also actively shape public opinion and political ideologies [17].

Moreover, modern discourse analysis increasingly incorporates digital and social media into its research, given their prominence in contemporary political communication. Social media platforms, in particular, provide new arenas for political discourse, where individuals and groups can engage in debate, share opinions, and mobilize political action. This development has raised new questions about how political discourse is constructed and consumed in a digital age, with

particular attention to the ways in which algorithms, user-generated content, and echo chambers shape political conversations.



Fig.1. Methodologies in Discourse Analysis and CDS

Overall, the theoretical foundations of Modern Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Studies provide invaluable tools for understanding the complex relationship between language, power, and politics. These frameworks allow researchers to critically examine how political discourse influences public perceptions, constructs political realities, and sustains or challenges dominant power structures. By studying political discourse through these lenses, scholars can uncover the subtle, yet significant, ways in which language operates as a force for social change and political transformation [43].

1.2. Research of Political Discourse in the USA

Political discourse in the United States plays a central role in shaping public opinion, influencing electoral outcomes, and maintaining democratic ideals. [47] The study of political discourse in the U.S. is crucial for understanding how power is constructed and negotiated through language, particularly in a society where political polarization, media influence, and public participation intersect. (Fig.2.). Over the decades, political discourse in the U.S. has evolved, reflecting the country's changing social, economic, and technological landscape. As such, researching U.S. political discourse provides insights into how political narratives are constructed, communicated, and consumed by the public, as well as how these narratives shape the broader sociopolitical environment [16].

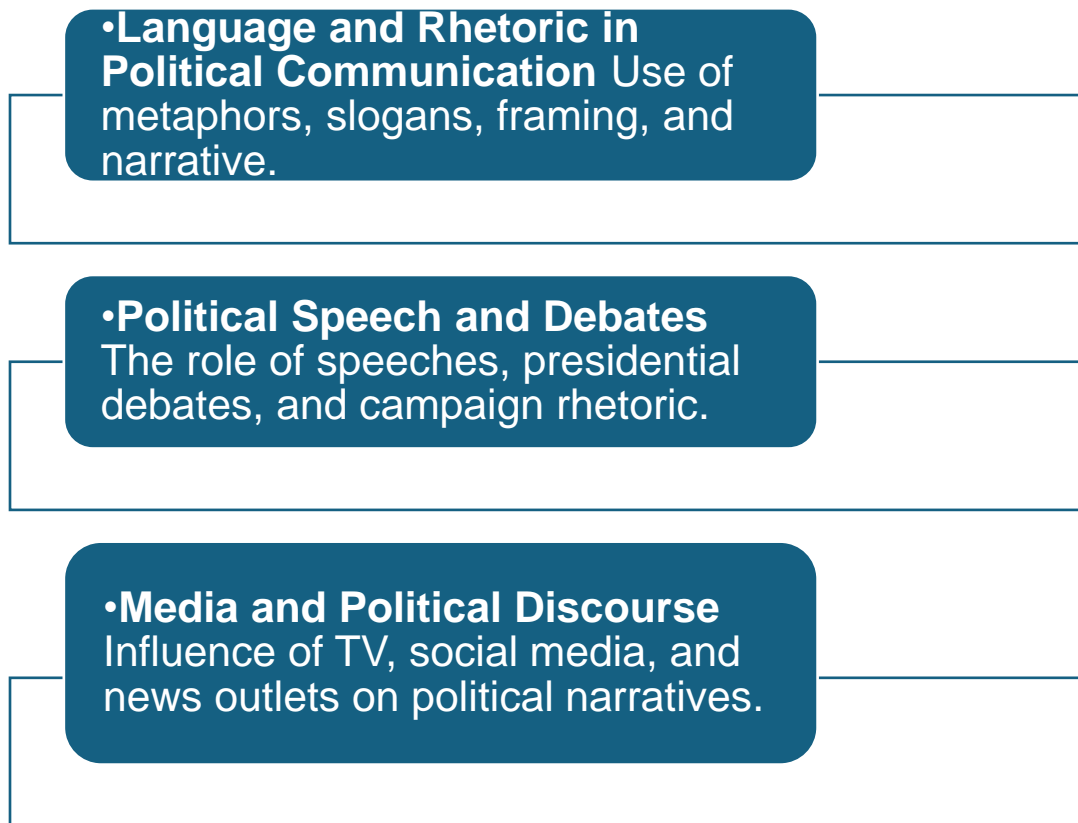


Fig.2. Political Discourse in the USA

Modern discourse analysis explores the structures and functions of language in political communication, focusing on how politicians, media, and institutions use discourse to construct meaning [76]. Critical discourse studies, on the other hand, emphasize the power dynamics within political language, investigating how discourse reflects and reinforces social inequalities. Scholars such as Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak have significantly contributed to this field by developing approaches that analyze the ideological underpinnings of political texts and speeches [79]. Teun van Dijk [74], for instance, focuses on the cognitive aspects of political discourse, examining how mental models shape the way people process political messages. Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach situates political discourse within its historical and socio-political context, highlighting how narratives evolve over time to serve specific agendas [37, 39].

One of the essential components of political discourse is argumentation, which involves structured reasoning and rhetorical persuasion. Politicians use various argumentation strategies to support their claims, attack opponents, or justify policies. Among the most common strategies are logical appeals, emotional appeals, and ethical appeals. Logical appeals rely on evidence and reasoning to construct a convincing argument, while emotional appeals seek to evoke fear, hope, or anger to sway public sentiment. Ethical appeals, on the other hand, attempt to establish credibility and moral authority, often by associating political messages with shared values or national identity [76].

Debates, as a key arena of political discourse, serve as battlegrounds for competing ideologies and policy proposals. They involve strategic use of language to assert dominance, control the narrative, and undermine opponents. One frequently observed technique in political debates is framing, where speakers shape the interpretation of an issue by emphasizing specific aspects while downplaying others. Reframing is another strategy, allowing politicians to shift the focus of a

discussion to a more favorable perspective [70]. Additionally, adversarial discourse in debates often involves techniques such as straw man arguments-misrepresenting an opponent's position to make it easier to refute - or rhetorical questions, which engage the audience while subtly reinforcing a particular viewpoint.

Political discourse is also shaped by intertextuality, where speakers reference past events, historical figures, or cultural narratives to enhance the legitimacy of their claims. This technique is particularly evident in speeches and policy statements that draw on national history or global events to justify contemporary decisions. Furthermore, repetition and slogans are commonly employed to reinforce key messages and ensure memorability among the audience [69].

In analyzing political discourse, it is crucial to consider the role of media as both a platform and an active participant in shaping narratives. Media framing influences public perception of political issues by selecting which aspects of a story to highlight or omit [67]. The language used in news coverage, interviews, and opinion pieces can subtly or explicitly reflect ideological biases, making critical discourse analysis an essential tool for deconstructing media representations [37].

Overall, political discourse is a dynamic and multifaceted domain that reflects power structures, ideological battles, and persuasive tactics. By applying modern discourse analysis and critical discourse studies, scholars can uncover the underlying mechanisms that drive political communication and influence societal attitudes. Through the contributions of theorists like Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak, political discourse analysis continues to evolve, providing valuable insights into the ways language shapes political realities [66].

Teun van Dijk is well known for his cognitive and socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis, where he examines how language structures political thought

and social beliefs. His research focuses on the ways elites, especially politicians and media, use discourse to shape public opinion and maintain power. In works such as *Discourse and Power* (2008) and *Discourse and Racism* (2015), van Dijk [74] explores how political discourse reproduces ideological narratives, particularly in relation to discrimination, exclusion, and the manipulation of public perception. One of his key contributions is the concept of "context models," which explains how individuals interpret political discourse based on personal experiences, societal norms, and power structures. His work on news discourse has also been crucial in understanding how media framing influences political attitudes [37, 39].

A major theme in van Dijk's work is the discursive reproduction of dominance. He argues that political elites construct discourse in ways that serve their interests while maintaining the illusion of neutrality. This is particularly evident in his analysis of parliamentary debates, policy speeches, and media reports, where he identifies how specific linguistic choices reinforce ideological positions. His studies on populist discourse reveal how political leaders use polarization, enemy construction, and emotional appeals to manipulate public opinion [70].

Ruth Wodak, on the other hand, is best known for her discourse-historical approach (DHA), which integrates historical context into the analysis of political language. Her research examines how political discourse evolves over time, adapting to changing social and political conditions. In works such as *The Politics of Fear* (2015) and *The Discourse of Politics in Action* (2009), she analyzes right-wing populism, nationalist rhetoric, and the discursive construction of identity. Wodak's studies on xenophobic and anti-immigrant discourse have been particularly influential in understanding the rise of far-right movements in Europe [79].

One of Ruth Wodak's key contributions is her examination of argumentation strategies in political discourse. She identifies how politicians use strategies such as victimization (presenting themselves or their nation as under threat), positive self-presentation (highlighting national values or achievements), and negative other-presentation (demonizing opponents or marginalized groups). Her research on political speeches, election campaigns, and EU discourse demonstrates how these strategies are deployed to legitimize policies and maintain ideological hegemony [80].

One of the central features of American political discourse is its deep entwinement with the media. Since the early days of broadcast journalism, the media has played a significant role in mediating political communication, shaping political narratives, and framing public discourse. The rise of mass media, from newspapers and radio to television and, more recently, digital platforms like social media, has amplified the influence of political discourse [65]. Today, American political discourse is inextricably linked to these media platforms, and political messaging often adapts to the demands of different forms of communication [64]. For example, the shift from traditional TV broadcasts to social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram has introduced new dynamics in how political messages are crafted and received. Politicians now communicate directly with the public, bypassing traditional news outlets, and their messages are often shaped by the need for brevity and emotional impact to gain attention in an overcrowded digital space [10].

The evolution of U.S. political discourse has also been marked by the increasing use of rhetorical strategies and linguistic techniques designed to appeal to particular constituencies and persuade voters. For instance, political campaigns often rely on strategic framing, where issues are presented in a way that influences how they are understood by the public. A classic example of this is the framing of

economic issues [40]. During periods of economic downturn, politicians may frame issues related to unemployment and poverty as a moral failure of the opposition, or alternatively, as a result of failed governmental policies. These strategic frames are designed to mobilize voters by invoking shared values or emotional appeals, thus reinforcing or challenging specific ideologies [9].

Rhetoric, metaphors, and the art of persuasion are key components of political discourse in the U.S. Historically, U.S. political leaders have employed metaphors to frame their policies and ideals in ways that resonate with voters. Consider the metaphor of the "American Dream," which has been utilized by politicians from both parties to promote the idea of a society in which hard work leads to success. This metaphor has shaped the public's understanding of American values and has been leveraged to justify various economic policies, immigration reform, and national identity [41]. More recently, phrases like "Make America Great Again" have become iconic political slogans, encapsulating a vision of the nation that appeals to specific nostalgic sentiments and a desire for a return to an idealized past. Such metaphors shape political discourse by influencing how voters perceive their identity, their aspirations, and the direction they believe the country should take [7].

The research of political discourse in the United States has also brought attention to the role of ideology and power in shaping political narratives. Political discourse is not neutral; it reflects and reinforces power dynamics within society. For instance, political speeches often embody the dominant ideological beliefs of the time, which are conveyed through language and rhetorical structures. Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), in particular, focuses on uncovering the ways in which political language is used to sustain existing power structures or challenge them. U.S. political discourse, especially in the context of race, class, and gender, has been a site of ideological struggle [42]. Political discourse has historically been

used to justify and legitimize social inequalities, such as slavery, segregation, and discrimination against marginalized groups. However, political discourse has also been a powerful tool for resistance, as demonstrated by the Civil Rights Movement, feminist movements, and the ongoing struggles for LGBTQ+ rights, all of which have employed language as a means of challenging oppressive systems [3].

One notable area of research in U.S. political discourse is the analysis of political debates, particularly during presidential elections. These debates, often broadcast live and widely viewed across the nation, are critical sites where political discourse is put to the test [51]. The rhetoric used by candidates during debates, the issues they prioritize, and the ways in which they engage with one another serve to reveal the broader political and ideological divides in American society. Political debates are not just platforms for presenting policies, but are also spectacles of performance, where candidates engage in strategies of persuasion, aggression, and identity construction [53]. Research into political debates helps uncover the linguistic tools that candidates use to frame themselves as credible leaders, and to position their opponents as threats or failures. This is particularly significant in the age of television and social media, where a candidate's performance in debates can directly influence their public image and electoral success [57].

Moreover, the role of political discourse in shaping voting behavior is another important area of research. Political discourse influences how individuals identify with particular political parties, how they form opinions on key issues, and how they assess candidates' qualifications. The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, for example, highlighted the power of discourse in shaping voter perceptions. The rhetoric employed by Donald Trump, which often relied on populist and nationalist themes, resonated with large segments of the electorate who felt marginalized by traditional political elites. Trump's use of simplistic, direct language and

emotionally charged messaging represented a departure from traditional political discourse and demonstrated the effectiveness of a certain type of rhetoric in appealing to disaffected voters [2].

In addition to the study of political language and messaging, research into political discourse in the U.S. often includes a focus on media literacy and the role of critical thinking in the consumption of political information. Given the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and partisan media outlets, there is an increasing need to understand how political discourse is constructed across different media channels and how it impacts public opinion. Researchers in this field explore the ways in which news outlets, political ads, and social media platforms create echo chambers that reinforce partisan views, and how voters navigate these media landscapes to form their political opinions.

In conclusion, the research of political discourse in the United States provides valuable insights into the dynamics of power, identity, and communication in modern democracy. From the framing of political issues to the strategic use of rhetoric, political discourse shapes how the public engages with politics and influences the trajectory of the nation's policies. As the U.S. political landscape continues to evolve, particularly with the increasing prominence of digital media, understanding the role of political discourse remains an essential endeavor for both scholars and practitioners of politics. Through the study of discourse, we can better understand the forces that drive political polarization, the mechanisms of political persuasion, and the ways in which language and media shape the future of American democracy.

1.3. Political Debates as a Component of Presidential Election

Political debates have become a hallmark of presidential elections in many democracies, particularly in the United States, where they are considered an essential part of the electoral process. [67] The importance of political debates in U.S. presidential elections cannot be overstated, as they serve as a central arena for candidates to present their policies, engage with their opponents, and appeal to the electorate. In this context, presidential debates are more than just discussions about policy—they are high-stakes performances that shape public perception, influence voter decision-making, and sometimes even determine the outcome of the election itself. The evolution of these debates over time reflects broader shifts in political culture, media influence, and the relationship between politicians and the public [1].

The origins of televised presidential debates trace back to 1960, with the famous Kennedy-Nixon debate. This event marked a turning point in the way presidential campaigns were conducted, as it demonstrated the power of television in shaping the image of candidates [72]. Richard Nixon, who had been suffering from illness at the time of the debate, appeared nervous and unkempt, while John F. Kennedy, looking calm, composed, and charismatic, capitalized on the visual medium to present a polished and persuasive image [73]. This was the first time that millions of Americans had been able to witness their candidates in a live, unscripted format. The impact of the debate was significant, with many viewers who listened to the debate on the radio thinking Nixon had performed better, while those who watched it on television overwhelmingly favored Kennedy. This demonstrated the power of televised debates in influencing public perception—not just of candidates' policies, but of their character, demeanor, and leadership potential [20].

Televised presidential debates, since then, have become a defining feature of every general election cycle. These debates are often the most widely watched events of a campaign, with millions of Americans tuning in to see the candidates directly engage with one another on national television. They serve as a platform for candidates to present their policy positions, clarify their positions on key issues, and critique their opponents. The debates are often viewed as a critical opportunity for candidates to establish themselves as competent, credible leaders, and as such, their performance in these debates can significantly impact their political fortunes [49]. The stakes are especially high in presidential debates because they are often the only time in the campaign when the candidates share the same stage and address the nation directly in a highly visible format [59].

In addition to presenting policy ideas, presidential debates also serve as a stage for candidates to define themselves and their opponent in strategic terms. The rhetorical strategies deployed during debates are key to how candidates craft their image. They often employ direct attacks, soundbites, and memorable quotes aimed at framing their opponent in a negative light. A well-executed attack can shift the narrative of the campaign and give a candidate the momentum they need to appeal to undecided voters or solidify support among their base. For instance, in the 1984 presidential debate, President Ronald Reagan famously countered concerns about his age by saying, “I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience.” This quip resonated with voters and became a defining moment in the election, allowing Reagan to maintain his dominant position in the race [15].

The role of debates in shaping voter perceptions cannot be underestimated. Research has shown that presidential debates can significantly impact voters’ decisions, especially for those who are undecided or less engaged in the election process. According to political scientists, debates often serve as a “decisive

moment” in campaigns, where candidates can make their case to the electorate and try to convince voters of their suitability for office. However, the influence of debates on voters varies depending on factors such as media coverage, the candidates' performances, and the issues discussed during the debates. For example, a candidate's strong performance in a debate may garner increased media attention and positive coverage, which in turn can influence public opinion and voter behavior [65]. Conversely, a poor performance can have the opposite effect, damaging a candidate's image and undermining their credibility [12].

It is also important to note that the influence of debates is not just about what candidates say, but how they say it. Debates are not merely platforms for intellectual exchange but are also deeply embedded in the performative aspects of political communication. The candidates' body language, tone of voice, and ability to project confidence all contribute to how they are perceived by voters. These non-verbal cues can sometimes be just as significant as the content of their arguments. A candidate who appears confident, composed, and empathetic may appear more presidential, regardless of the policy positions they articulate. Similarly, candidates who come across as combative, unprepared, or overly defensive may turn voters away, even if they present compelling arguments [55].

Beyond their direct impact on the election, presidential debates also play an important role in the broader political culture. They offer a public space where issues of national importance are discussed, and where candidates can clarify their positions on topics such as the economy, healthcare, foreign policy, and social justice [66]. The issues discussed in debates are often brought to the forefront of national attention, leading to policy debates and public discourse that persist well after the election. For example, the 2008 presidential debates focused heavily on the global financial crisis, pushing economic issues to the forefront of the election. Similarly, debates in 2020 brought issues such as racial inequality and the COVID-

19 pandemic to national attention, influencing public debates about how these issues should be addressed by the next administration [9].

While presidential debates can provide a valuable opportunity for political engagement and information, they are not without their criticisms. Some argue that the format of the debates-the timed responses, limited audience interaction, and structure-can restrict meaningful debate and reduce complex issues to soundbites. Others contend that debates often focus too heavily on style over substance, leading to a focus on personal attacks and superficial rhetoric rather than substantive policy discussions. Furthermore, the media's role in covering debates can also be problematic. Media outlets often emphasize the performance aspect of debates, focusing on the candidates' demeanor and verbal gaffes rather than the policy substance being discussed. This can lead to a distorted perception of the debates, where style trumps substance, and important issues are overlooked in favor of sensationalism [46].

In recent years, there have been increasing calls for reforms to the presidential debate process. Some suggest that debates should be more focused on policy and less on performance, with the format allowing for deeper discussions of substantive issues. Others advocate for more inclusive formats that allow third-party candidates or independent voices to participate, providing a broader range of perspectives for voters. The question of who moderates the debates and how questions are framed is also a contentious issue, as critics argue that moderators can inadvertently skew the discourse by asking biased or leading questions [2].

In conclusion, presidential debates are a vital component of the U.S. electoral process. They provide candidates with an opportunity to present their policies, engage with their opponents, and connect with the electorate. While debates are often seen as a high-stakes performance, their influence on the election outcome can be profound. They shape voter perceptions, highlight important

issues, and contribute to the political discourse that drives democratic decision-making. Despite their limitations, debates remain a powerful tool for political communication and continue to play a central role in the presidential election process. As the political landscape evolves, the format and role of debates may continue to change, but their significance as a defining feature of American democracy is likely to remain unchanged.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

The study of political discourse offers a critical lens through which to understand the intersection of language, power, and politics. The theoretical frameworks of Modern Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) provide essential tools for analyzing the ways in which language shapes and is shaped by social structures, ideologies, and power relations. Through DA, researchers explore how political messages are constructed and communicated, highlighting the importance of context and linguistic strategy in political communication. CDS, with its focus on uncovering the power dynamics embedded in discourse, emphasizes the role of language in perpetuating or challenging existing power structures and ideologies. By applying these frameworks, scholars can gain insight into how political narratives are constructed, how they reflect societal inequalities, and how they contribute to the shaping of public opinion.

In the context of the United States, the research of political discourse reveals the significant role that media plays in shaping political communication. The media's power to frame issues, shape perceptions of candidates, and influence public opinion underscores the need for a critical examination of political language in the U.S. The shifting dynamics of political discourse, particularly in the digital age, have added new complexities to the ways in which political messages are disseminated and consumed. From traditional media platforms like television to social media, the forms and strategies of political communication have evolved, creating new challenges and opportunities for both political figures and voters.

Political debates, as a central component of the presidential election process, stand as a critical arena where discourse is not only presented but contested. These debates are more than just opportunities for candidates to communicate their policy positions; they are high-stakes performances where image, rhetoric, and strategy

come together to influence voter perceptions. The impact of presidential debates on the electoral process cannot be overstated, as they serve as decisive moments in the campaign, often shaping the trajectory of a candidate's public image and, ultimately, their political fortunes. However, the increasing emphasis on performance over substance in these debates, as well as the influence of media coverage, raises important questions about the effectiveness of debates as a tool for informed political decision-making.

In conclusion, the theoretical foundations of political discourse studies, when applied to the context of U.S. politics, provide valuable insights into the ways in which language functions as a tool for political communication, power negotiation, and public persuasion. The research into political discourse, especially within the frameworks of DA and CDS, not only enhances our understanding of the mechanics of political language but also deepens our comprehension of the broader social and political forces that shape democratic participation. Political debates, as a component of the presidential election process, remain a vital platform for political engagement, though the evolving nature of media and political discourse suggests that future reforms may be necessary to ensure that debates remain meaningful and inclusive spaces for democratic dialogue.

In an era of digital media and increasing polarization, understanding political discourse has never been more essential. The study of political language helps us navigate the complexities of modern democracy, empowering both citizens and scholars to critically engage with the messages that shape political reality.

2. RHETORICAL AND PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL TV DEBATES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1. Trump-Clinton Debate (2016): Linguistic Aggression and Rhetorical Framing

The 2016 U.S. presidential debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton marked a significant shift in the nature of political discourse in the United States. While presidential debates have historically been platforms for candidates to articulate policy positions, establish credibility, and appeal to undecided voters, the Trump-Clinton debates took on a markedly more confrontational tone. This was especially evident in Trump's use of linguistic aggression and rhetorical framing to dominate the debate stage and appeal to his base. Hillary Clinton, in turn, employed her own rhetorical strategies to counteract Trump's attacks, emphasizing experience, stability, and preparation. This section examines the role of linguistic aggression and rhetorical framing in the 2016 debates, highlighting how these strategies shaped the public perception of both candidates.

The 2016 U.S. presidential debates generated immense global anticipation, influencing not only domestic politics but also international discourse. In an era dominated by social media and real-time fact-checking, the exchanges between candidates were marked by continuous accusations. As a result, what has been widely referred to as the “*worst election ever*” unfolded in an exceptionally tense atmosphere. We aim to analyze the debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, examining how linguistic choices influenced voter perceptions and ultimately impacted the election outcome.

Televised election debates play a crucial role in political campaigns, serving as one of the most effective platforms for candidates to engage with a vast

audience. These debates offer politicians the opportunity to assert their dominance over their opponents and establish their credibility for holding office. The significance of the 2016 debates was underscored by record-breaking viewership, with the first debate attracting approximately 100 million viewers across major broadcast and cable networks.

Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party's nominee and the first female presidential candidate in U.S. history, stood on the brink of making history by becoming the nation's first woman president. However, Donald Trump, the Republican Party's candidate-an outsider with no prior political experience, a billionaire businessman, and a reality television personality-ultimately secured the presidency as the 45th President of the United States. His victory was fueled by widespread public disillusionment with establishment politicians and the rising wave of populism, which resonated with a significant portion of the electorate.

Linguistic aggression in political debates refers to the use of direct insults, interruptions, belittling language, and personal attacks to undermine an opponent's credibility. Donald Trump's debate strategy was characterized by an overtly aggressive style, which set him apart from traditional presidential candidates. His rhetoric included frequent interruptions, accusations, and the use of pejorative nicknames such as "*Crooked Hillary*." Such tactics were not simply spontaneous outbursts but calculated moves designed to weaken Clinton's authority and portray her as dishonest and untrustworthy.

Trump's approach also reflected his broader campaign strategy: positioning himself as an outsider who would challenge the political establishment. By using dismissive and provocative language, he reinforced the narrative that he was the strong-willed, no-nonsense candidate willing to "*tell it like it is*." This aggressive linguistic style appealed to a segment of the electorate that was disillusioned with

conventional politicians and found Trump's combative tone refreshing and authentic.

A key moment exemplifying Trump's linguistic aggression occurred when he repeatedly interrupted Clinton, a tactic often associated with dominance in political and gendered discourse. His comment, "*Such a nasty woman*," during the final debate became one of the most widely discussed phrases of the campaign. This statement not only reinforced his aggressive rhetorical strategy but also highlighted gendered dimensions of political discourse, where women in positions of power often face different linguistic treatment than their male counterparts.

Beyond linguistic aggression, rhetorical framing played a crucial role in shaping the debates. Rhetorical framing refers to the way candidates present issues, opponents, and themselves to influence public perception. Trump frequently employed populist framing, portraying himself as a champion of the American people against the corrupt elite. His frequent references to the "*rigged system*" framed Clinton as a symbol of Washington corruption, a tactic that resonated strongly with voters skeptical of establishment politicians.

Trump also used strategic vagueness to his advantage. Rather than providing detailed policy answers, he relied on emotionally charged language and broad, sweeping statements. Phrases such as "*We're going to make America great again*" and "*We're losing to China*" were powerful because they framed the debate in a way that evoked strong emotional responses without requiring specific policy details. His rhetoric often painted a dire picture of the nation's state, creating a sense of crisis that positioned him as the solution.

Hillary Clinton, in contrast, framed herself as the rational, experienced candidate. She often highlighted her years in public service and emphasized preparedness and expertise. However, her more measured and traditional rhetorical style sometimes clashed with Trump's unpredictable and aggressive approach,

making it difficult for her to counteract his interruptions and blunt attacks effectively. While she attempted to frame Trump as dangerous and unqualified, his unconventional style often allowed him to control the debate's tone and energy.

Another key difference in rhetorical strategy was the contrast between emotional appeals and policy-oriented discourse. Trump's communication style relied heavily on pathos, appealing to voters' fears, frustrations, and aspirations. He used anecdotal evidence, often citing individuals who had suffered due to issues such as illegal immigration or job losses, even when his statements were not always factually accurate. His direct and emotionally charged language helped establish a strong connection with voters who felt overlooked by the political system. Quote: *"We have some bad hombres here, and we're going to get them out."* Trump used fear-based rhetoric to frame undocumented immigrants as a danger to society. The phrase *"bad hombres"* painted immigration as a security threat, playing on anxieties about crime and public safety. Quote: *"Our jobs are being stolen from us. Our jobs are fleeing the country. They're going to Mexico. They're going to many other countries."* Trump invoked economic insecurity, appealing to working-class Americans who had experienced job losses. He used hyperbolic language (*"stolen," "fleeing"*) to create urgency and emotional impact.

Clinton, on the other hand, relied more on logos and ethos, presenting herself as the logical and competent choice. She frequently cited data, studies, and policy details to support her arguments. However, in a media landscape increasingly driven by soundbites and emotional engagement, her more fact-based approach sometimes struggled to compete with Trump's emotionally resonant messaging. Quote: *"Independent experts have looked at what I've proposed and looked at what Donald has proposed, and basically they've said that if his tax plan goes into effect, we will lose 3.5 million jobs. And maybe have another recession."* Clinton referenced economic studies to argue that Trump's policies would harm

the economy. By citing “independent experts,” she framed herself as a candidate who relied on facts and expert analysis. Quote: *“When I was Secretary of State, I went to 112 countries. I spent 4 years working on diplomacy, security, and economic policies.”* Clinton frequently emphasized her political experience to establish credibility, contrasting herself with Trump, who had no government experience.

The Trump-Clinton debates of 2016 marked a turning point in the evolution of political communication. Trump’s use of linguistic aggression and rhetorical framing demonstrated that political debates had shifted from traditional policy discussions toward entertainment-driven spectacles. His success in leveraging these strategies indicated a changing media landscape where emotional engagement and combative discourse often outweighed substantive policy discussions.

Linguistic aggression involves verbal attacks, dismissive rhetoric, and confrontational strategies to undermine an opponent. Trump, in particular, frequently employed linguistic aggression as a way to challenge Clinton’s credibility and experience. One example is his response to Clinton’s economic plan: *“You’ve been doing this for 30 years. Why are you just thinking about these solutions right now?”* By framing Clinton as ineffective despite her extensive political career, Trump cast doubt on her ability to bring about meaningful change. His use of direct accusations (*“you haven’t done it”*) reinforced the notion that Clinton had failed in her past roles.

Donald Trump also used interruptions and dismissive remarks to assert dominance. For instance, when Clinton mentioned her husband’s record on economic growth, Trump interjected a remark: *“Well, you haven’t done it in 30 years or 26 years.”* By cutting Clinton off, Trump sought to control the conversation and portray her as evasive. Hillary Clinton, on the other hand,

employed linguistic aggression in a more subtle manner, using sarcasm and pointed language to undermine Trump's economic policies: *"I call it trumped-up trickle down."*

Rhetorical framing is a technique used to shape the way an issue is perceived by the audience. Both candidates employed economic metaphors and personal anecdotes to connect with voters. Donald Trump framed international trade and economic policies as a battle in which the U.S. was losing: *"Our jobs are fleeing the country. They're going to Mexico, they're going to many other countries."* *"They're using our country as a piggy bank to rebuild China."* By using aggressive verbs like *"fleeing"* and metaphors like *"piggy bank,"* Trump painted a picture of economic devastation and positioned himself as the savior who would stop this trend.

Hillary Clinton, in contrast, framed economic policies through personal narratives. She began her opening statement by referencing her granddaughter's birthday: *"Today is my granddaughter's second birthday, so I think about this a lot."* This appeal to family values humanized her and positioned her as someone who personally understood the concerns of American families.

Clinton also framed herself as a champion of the middle class, stating: *"The more we can do for the middle class, the more we can invest in you, your education, your skills, your future, the better we will be off."*

This framing positioned Clinton as someone focused on collective progress, contrasting with Trump's more combative economic rhetoric.

In conclusion, the 2016 debates highlighted the effectiveness of linguistic aggression and strategic framing in modern political communication. Trump's rhetorical approach reshaped the norms of presidential debates, while Clinton's more traditional strategy showcased the challenges of responding to an unconventional opponent. These debates not only influenced the outcome of the

election but also set the stage for future political discourse in the United States, where aggressive and emotionally charged rhetoric continues to play a central role.

2.2. Biden-Trump Debate (2020): Chaotic Discourse and Disruption Tactics

The 2020 presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump stands as one of the most contentious and chaotic political events in modern American history. Unlike traditional debates, which prioritize structured discourse and logical argumentation, this debate was characterized by frequent interruptions, personal attacks, and an overall breakdown of coherent political discussion. We analyse the chaotic nature of the debate, examining the rhetorical strategies and disruption tactics employed by both candidates, particularly by Donald Trump, to destabilize his opponent and control the narrative.

From the outset, the debate lacked conventional order. Moderator Chris Wallace struggled to enforce the agreed-upon speaking rules as Trump repeatedly interrupted both Wallace and Biden. The absence of structure made it difficult for policy discussions to unfold in a meaningful way. For example, when asked about the Supreme Court nomination, Trump immediately interrupted Biden's response, forcing the discussion into a fragmented exchange rather than a coherent policy argument. This tactic, while aggressive, served to disorient Biden and reduce the effectiveness of his policy articulation.

One of the most striking features of the debate was Trump's consistent use of interruptions to derail Biden's statements. According to a post-debate analysis, Trump interrupted Biden over 70 times in the 90-minute session. A notable example occurred when Biden attempted to discuss healthcare policy. As Biden outlined his vision for expanding the Affordable Care Act, Trump interjected a

remark repeatedly with statements such as "You're a socialist" and "It's a disaster," preventing Biden from completing his points. This technique disrupted Biden's ability to present his policies clearly, forcing him to defend against ad hominem attacks rather than focusing on substantive policy discussion.

Beyond policy, the debate saw an unprecedented level of personal attacks. Trump frequently used derogatory remarks to undermine Biden's credibility. He referred to Biden as "Sleepy Joe" and questioned his intelligence, saying, "There's nothing smart about you, Joe." (Fig.3). This type of attack was designed to shake Biden's confidence and shift the audience's focus from policy to personality. Biden, for his part, responded with his own barbs, calling Trump a "clown" and telling him to "shut up, man." While Biden's remarks were a reaction to Trump's hostility, they contributed to the debate's overall disorderly nature.



Fig.3. Joe Biden, referred to by Donald Trump as 'Sleepy Joe'

Trump also employed gaslighting tactics, making exaggerated or false claims to confuse both Biden and the audience. For instance, when discussing COVID-19, Trump falsely claimed that he had handled the pandemic better than

any other country, despite the United States leading in infections and deaths at the time. When Biden challenged this assertion, Trump dismissed it as *"fake news,"* a phrase he frequently used to delegitimize any unfavorable facts. This rhetorical move aimed to create doubt in the audience's mind about the reliability of Biden's arguments and the credibility of mainstream media.

Despite Trump's disruptive tactics, Biden attempted to maintain focus on key campaign messages. He directly addressed the camera several times, speaking to the American people rather than engaging in direct confrontation with Trump. When discussing the economy, Biden stated, *"This is about you and your families,"* a strategic move to shift the conversation away from the debate's chaos and toward policy implications for voters. However, Trump's continued interruptions made it challenging for Biden to sustain a clear message throughout the debate.

Chris Wallace, the moderator, faced significant challenges in maintaining control. Despite multiple attempts to enforce time limits and decorum, Wallace was largely unsuccessful in preventing Trump's interruptions. At one point, Wallace directly addressed Trump, saying, *"Mr. President, your campaign agreed to these rules."* Trump, however, dismissed these reminders and continued his aggressive approach. This lack of enforcement further contributed to the debate's disorderly nature, illustrating how a moderator's inability to enforce structure can lead to an ineffective debate.

The chaotic nature of the debate had a significant impact on public perception. Many analysts and voters expressed frustration with the lack of substantive discussion. In post-debate polling, a majority of viewers described the event as "exhausting" and "unproductive." The widespread criticism led the Commission on Presidential Debates to implement new rules for the subsequent debates, including the ability to mute a candidate's microphone to prevent

interruptions. This response underscored the extent to which the debate deviated from standard political discourse.

The first Biden-Trump debate of 2020 serves as a case study in how disruption tactics can overshadow substantive policy discussions. Trump's strategy of interruptions, personal attacks, and gaslighting created an atmosphere of chaos that hindered meaningful dialogue. While Biden attempted to maintain focus, the sheer level of disorder made it difficult for voters to extract clear policy distinctions. The debate highlighted the need for stricter moderation and reinforced the importance of maintaining decorum in political discourse. Ultimately, the debate was less about policy and more about spectacle, leaving voters with a display of confrontation rather than constructive discussion.

Trump interrupts Biden multiple times during his response about the Affordable Care Act (ACA):

- *Trump: "That's not what you said."*
- *Biden: "Well, it is. It is. You're going to end private insurance."*
- *Trump: "No, we're not."*

Trump's frequent interruptions here disrupt Biden's ability to clearly communicate his position on healthcare. By cutting Biden off mid-sentence, Trump seeks to invalidate Biden's argument, assert control over the narrative, and present Biden as inconsistent. This tactic prevents Biden from fully elaborating on his proposal and forces the debate into an unproductive back-and-forth rather than a substantive discussion of policies.

Trump's use of Biden's long tenure in government implies that he is part of the political establishment that has failed the American people. Rather than engaging in a detailed discussion of Biden's policies, Trump resorts to a personal criticism that seeks to delegitimize Biden's qualifications for the presidency. This

is a common tactic used to shift focus away from policy debate and instead target the opponent's character and experience.

Deflection of Blame. Moment: Trump argues that his Supreme Court nomination is justified by his election win.

Trump: "We won the election, and therefore we have the right to choose her [Amy Coney Barrett]."

Trump deflects from the broader issue of whether it's ethical or appropriate to appoint a Supreme Court justice just weeks before an election. Instead of addressing the core debate over whether the nomination is fair or whether it should wait until after the election, Trump frames it purely as a matter of election victory. This rhetorical shift distracts from the concern about the timing and the potential for voter influence on the nomination process. By focusing on the notion of "winning the election," Trump avoids a more nuanced discussion about constitutional precedent and the will of the people.

Emotional Appeal and Health Care Attack. Moment: Biden responds to Trump's attacks on the ACA by discussing the impact of losing healthcare on millions of Americans.

Joe Biden: "The president's made it clear he wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act...which will strip 20 million people from having health insurance."

Biden uses an emotional appeal here, highlighting the human cost of Trump's healthcare policies. By focusing on the potential for millions of Americans to lose health insurance, Biden aims to generate an emotional response from the audience. This tactic seeks to connect the policy discussion to real-life consequences, such as people losing access to care. By framing the debate in terms of the negative impact on American families, Biden effectively positions Trump's stance on healthcare as detrimental to everyday people, thus trying to appeal to voters' empathy.

Shifting Focus. Moment: Trump continually shifts the conversation toward Biden's alleged ties to socialism and the "radical left."

Donald Trump: "Joe, you know that I am the Democratic Party right now. The platform of the Democratic Party is what I, in fact, approved of."

Trump's tactic here is a strategic deflection that shifts attention from the topic at hand (the Supreme Court nomination and healthcare) to an accusation about Biden's association with "socialism" and the "radical left." This is a classic disruption technique-when a candidate is losing ground in one area, they redirect the conversation to a topic that could potentially discredit their opponent. Trump attempts to frame Biden's policies as extreme by invoking the notion of socialism, even though Biden has distanced himself from far-left positions. This rhetorical tactic muddies the focus of the debate and distracts from substantive policy discussion.

Lack of Specific Policy Response. Moment: Chris Wallace asks Trump about his health care plan, questioning why he has failed to present a comprehensive alternative to the ACA.

- Chris Wallace: "You have promised to repeal and replace Obamacare but you have never, in these four years, come up with a plan. What is your health care plan?"
- Trump: "Well, first of all, I guess I'm debating you, not him, but that's okay. I'm not surprised. Let me just tell you something...I'm cutting drug prices..."

When faced with a direct question regarding his healthcare plan, Trump pivots away from the question and begins talking about drug prices instead. Rather than providing a comprehensive plan to replace the Affordable Care Act, Trump deflects by emphasizing actions he's taken on drug prices, which does not directly address the broader issue of health insurance. This strategy of avoiding the direct question shifts the focus from his lack of a clear healthcare policy to more general

accomplishments, creating confusion and diverting attention from his failure to produce a viable alternative to Obamacare.

2.3. Trump–Harris Debate (2024): Assertive Defense and Controlled Rhetoric

The 2024 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris presented a distinct contrast in their debating styles. Trump, known for his combative and often confrontational approach, utilized an assertive defense throughout the debate, while Harris, with her measured and controlled rhetoric, strategically countered Trump’s attacks. The debate exemplified the clash between aggressive political rhetoric and disciplined argumentation, showcasing how each candidate used their style to influence the debate’s direction and appeal to voters.

Donald Trump’s debating style remained rooted in assertive defense, characterized by bold statements and an unapologetic posture. From the onset, Trump framed his responses as direct counterattacks against Harris’s claims, frequently interrupting and dominating the conversation. His approach was designed not only to challenge Harris’s positions but to maintain control of the narrative by positioning himself as a champion of his policies and a defender of American interests.

An example of Trump’s assertive defense can be seen when he directly responded to Harris’s critique of his administration’s economic policies. As Harris discussed the economic inequality exacerbated by Trump’s policies, Trump fired back with strong rhetoric about his administration’s success, particularly focusing on job growth, tax cuts, and deregulation. Rather than acknowledging any shortcomings, Trump framed his policies as highly effective, deflecting blame onto previous administrations and positioning himself as the true advocate for working-

class Americans. His repeated use of the phrase *“I’ve done more for the American people than any other president”* served as both a defense of his record and an attack on the opposition.

Moreover, Trump’s frequent interruptions were a hallmark of his assertive defense strategy. His tactic of talking over Harris, often dismissing her points mid-sentence, was a deliberate move to keep the debate focused on his terms. This style of debate allowed him to present his views without giving Harris the space to elaborate or challenge his assertions fully. By asserting dominance in the debate, Trump aimed to prevent any perceived vulnerability in his stance, making it difficult for Harris to take control of the narrative.

In contrast to Trump’s aggressive approach, Kamala Harris employed controlled rhetoric throughout the debate. Her responses were deliberate, calculated, and aimed at drawing clear distinctions between her policy positions and Trump’s administration. Harris’s ability to maintain composure in the face of Trump’s interruptions and attacks highlighted her strategic approach to debate—one that prioritized reasoned discourse over emotional or combative responses.

A key example of Harris’s controlled rhetoric occurred during a discussion on healthcare. As Trump outlined his criticisms of the Affordable Care Act, Harris calmly responded by emphasizing the importance of expanding healthcare access for all Americans. She focused on the human impact of Trump’s policies, speaking directly to the struggles of families who could not afford essential medical care. Harris’s tone remained steady, and she steered the conversation away from personal attacks or hyperbole, focusing instead on policy and presenting a clear alternative to Trump’s approach. This allowed her to avoid being drawn into a confrontation, positioning herself as a competent and steady leader, in stark contrast to Trump’s more volatile demeanor.

Kamala Harris also made effective use of rhetorical pauses and the repetition of key phrases, such as “*This is what’s at stake*” and “*The American people deserve better.*” These phrases served to reinforce her central arguments while giving her a moment to regain composure and maintain a controlled pace throughout the debate. Harris’s careful balance between direct engagement with Trump’s claims and her emphasis on policies grounded in empathy and unity allowed her to avoid being derailed by Trump’s interruptions and instead remain focused on her broader vision for the country.

Both candidates effectively utilized strategic deflections and counterpunches during the debate, although in different ways. Trump, as previously mentioned, employed a defensive strategy by redirecting attention away from uncomfortable topics, such as his administration’s handling of the pandemic or his controversial policies on immigration. When Harris brought up these topics, Trump quickly pivoted to focus on his successes in the economy, often dismissing criticisms as partisan attacks. This tactic allowed him to avoid addressing more contentious issues directly and instead kept the focus on his perceived achievements.

Kamala Harris, on the other hand, deflected Trump’s personal attacks and shifted the conversation toward broader policy concerns: “*Tim Walz and I are both gun owners. We’re not taking anybody’s guns away.*” “*One does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government—and Donald Trump, certainly—should not be telling a woman what to do with her body.*” When Donald Trump attempted to attack her record as Vice President, Harris responded by focusing on the policies she championed, particularly in regard to criminal justice reform and climate change. Harris’s ability to redirect criticism back to the issues that mattered to voters demonstrated her strategic acumen, ensuring that the debate remained focused on substance rather than personal grievances.

Trump's Economic Defense and Attack on Harris's Policies. Trump fiercely defended his economic record, responding to Harris's remarks about the state of the economy: "*I have nothing to do with project 2025... it makes no difference, I have nothing to do... everybody knows I'm an open book, everybody knows what I'm going to do: cut taxes very substantially and create a great economy like I did before.*"

In this statement, Trump's rhetoric was designed to maintain control of the conversation by dismissing the allegations of poor economic management under his presidency. His phrase "*everybody knows*" is an example of a rhetorical strategy aimed at establishing certainty and reinforcing his image as an open and transparent leader. Trump's tactic here is to steer the debate away from specific criticisms and instead focus on a general, familiar narrative of his past successes. The term "great economy" appeals to his base's sense of nostalgia for his earlier administration's economic conditions, which Trump continuously frames as superior to the current situation.

Trump's Use of Hyperbole and Fear Appeals. Trump escalated the discussion with inflammatory rhetoric, claiming: "*We have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums... They are taking over the towns... they are dangerous... they're at the highest EST level of criminality...*"

This statement is an example of Trump's use of hyperbole and fear-based appeals. By painting a dire and exaggerated picture of immigration and crime, Trump aimed to provoke fear and rally his supporters around the notion of national security threats. His choice of words like "insane asylums" and "dangerous" seeks to elicit strong emotional reactions from his audience, positioning himself as a protector against perceived societal collapse. His rhetoric here is a direct attempt to

demonize his opposition's immigration policies, while positioning himself as a strong, protective figure.

Harris's Rebuttal and Fact-Based Counterargument. Harris responded to Trump's accusations with a more controlled, fact-based approach, saying, "*Donald Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression... the worst public health epidemic in a century... the worst attack on our democracy since the Civil War.*"

Harris strategically used historical references and statistics to counter Trump's claims, grounding her argument in factual evidence and tangible outcomes. Her mention of "the worst unemployment since the Great Depression" directly challenges Trump's narrative of economic success, framing his presidency as disastrous for the economy, particularly for the most vulnerable Americans. The rhetorical effect of invoking the Great Depression and the Civil War is to draw stark comparisons, emphasizing the severity of the crises under Trump's watch, and positioning Harris as a leader capable of restoring stability and progress.

Harris's Call for Unity and Policy Emphasis. In contrast to Trump's divisive rhetoric, Harris stated, "*I believe very strongly that the American people want a president who understands the importance of bringing us together... we have so much more in common than what separates us.*"

Harris employed a rhetoric of unity, focusing on the idea that Americans share common values and concerns despite political divisions. By using the phrase "bringing us together," Harris directly contrasts her approach with Trump's tendency to foster division and polarization. This is a key rhetorical move aimed at appealing to moderate voters and those disillusioned by the partisan climate. Her message is one of healing, inclusivity, and hope for the future, positioning herself as a leader who values collaboration over conflict.

Trump's Defensive Strategy on Immigration and National Security. Trump responded to criticisms of his immigration policies: *"They're taking over the towns... they're taking over buildings... they're going in violently."*

Donald Trump used a narrative of chaos and invasion to underscore his claims that Harris and President Biden's policies had led to a breakdown of law and order. His choice of words like "taking over" and "violently" creates a sense of crisis, positioning himself as the only leader capable of restoring order. The exaggeration of immigrant actions as violent invaders is designed to appeal to fear and support from voters who prioritize national security and strict immigration control. It's a clear example of how Trump frames complex issues in terms of threats and dangers to the American way of life.

This statement reflects Harris's rhetorical commitment to progressive values, focusing on the aspirations and needs of ordinary Americans. The term "opportunity economy" reflects a policy framework that aims to address systemic inequalities and promote upward mobility. By emphasizing "ambitions" and "dreams," Harris appeals to a sense of hope and possibility, presenting herself as a candidate who seeks to empower the American people, particularly the middle class. Her rhetoric contrasts sharply with Trump's fear-driven approach, focusing instead on solutions and optimism.

The 2024 Trump-Harris debate underscored two distinct approaches to political discourse: Trump's assertive defense and Harris's controlled rhetoric. Trump's aggressive style, marked by frequent interruptions and strong self-defense, aimed to assert dominance and paint his record in the best light possible. In contrast, Harris's disciplined approach highlighted her ability to remain composed and focused on policy, avoiding the emotional volatility that often characterized Trump's responses. Both candidates utilized rhetorical strategies effectively, appealing to different voter bases and creating a debate that showcased

the contrasts in their leadership styles. While Trump's forceful rhetoric aimed to secure his base and disrupt Harris's arguments, Harris's composed and policy-focused responses showcased her readiness to lead with empathy and reasoned judgment. Ultimately, the debate provided a clear picture of the two candidates' contrasting approaches to governance and the political process.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

These debates showcase the evolution of debate tactics, with candidates using a variety of rhetorical devices to assert dominance, challenge their opponents, and sway undecided voters.

The *Trump-Clinton Debate (2016)* highlighted the use of linguistic aggression and rhetorical framing, as Donald Trump often resorted to personal attacks, insults, and framing Hillary Clinton as part of the political establishment. His aggressive and combative language sought to undermine her credibility and present himself as the anti-establishment outsider. Hillary Clinton, in contrast, utilized a more composed and policy-focused approach, attempting to ground her arguments in expertise and competence while framing Trump's rhetoric as divisive and harmful to American democracy.

In the *Biden-Trump Debate (2020)*, the discourse became marked by chaotic disruptions and a breakdown of traditional debate norms. Trump employed a strategy of constant interruptions, shouting over his opponent, and using inflammatory language to provoke reactions. Biden, on the other hand, relied on calmer rhetoric, attempting to present himself as the steady, empathetic alternative to the volatility of the Trump administration. The debate illustrated how rhetorical

strategies could be used to either destabilize or stabilize the conversation, influencing the tone and direction of the discourse.

The *Trump-Harris Debate (2024)*, by contrast, showed a more calculated balance between assertive defense and controlled rhetoric. Trump's typical combative style remained evident, particularly in his defense of his economic policies and in his portrayal of immigration as a threat. However, Harris maintained a strategic calm, using fact-based rebuttals and emphasizing unity and policy specifics. She positioned herself as the rational alternative to Trump's chaotic rhetoric, using her language to highlight the contrast in their approaches to governance.

Taken together, these debates demonstrate the power of rhetoric in presidential campaigns. Whether through aggressive attacks, chaotic disruption, or composed policy discussions, the way candidates use language reveals much about their political strategies, their personalities, and their vision for the country. The persuasive strategies employed by the candidates reflect broader trends in American politics, including the rise of populist rhetoric, the increasing polarization of discourse, and the central role of televised debates in shaping electoral outcomes. As such, these debates serve as critical moments in the political process, where rhetoric not only serves as a tool of persuasion but also as a window into the political and social dynamics of the time.

3. PUBLIC AND MEDIA DISCOURSE ON THE DEBATES

3.1. Discursive Features of Social Media Reactions

The impact of political debates extends far beyond the confines of the event itself, with social media platforms acting as key arenas for public discourse. Ordinary people's reactions on social media have become an integral part of the broader discussion surrounding debates, providing a real-time, diverse, and often polarized commentary. We examine the discursive features of social media reactions to three notable U.S. political debates: the Trump-Clinton Debate (2016) (Fig.5.), the Biden-Trump Debate (2020), (Fig.4.) and the Trump-Harris Debate (2024).(Fig.6.). The reactions on social media to these debates illustrate various forms of linguistic aggression, rhetorical framing, and narrative constructions that shape public perceptions of the candidates and the debate process itself. (Fig.4.).

The 2016 presidential debates, particularly the first between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, were marked by sharp exchanges and unfiltered rhetoric. Social media reactions to this debate were, in large part, a direct response to the combative nature of the discourse. Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms were flooded with reactions that ranged from humorous memes to heated political commentary.



Fig. 4. YouTube comments to Biden-Trump Debate (2020)

A key feature of the social media discourse was the prevalence of linguistic aggression. Ordinary people online often adopted a combative tone that mirrored the tone of the debate itself. Many social media users amplified the insults and personal attacks exchanged between the two candidates, using hashtags such as #TrumpTantrum and #HillarysTruth to frame the debate as a battle between integrity and chaos. These hashtags served not only as a means of summarizing the debate’s main themes but also as tools for reinforcing ideological divides.

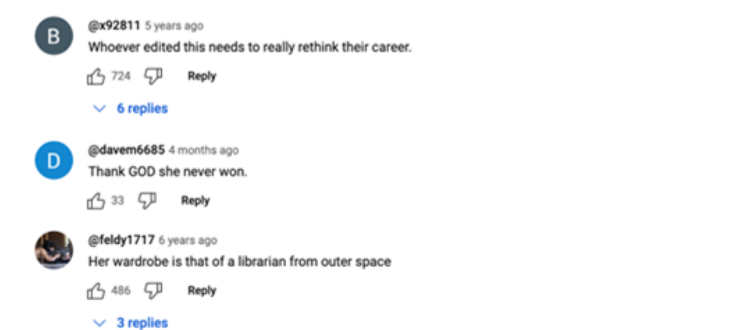


Fig. 5. YouTube comments to Trump-Clinton Debate (2016)

Rhetorical framing also played a significant role in shaping social media reactions. Supporters of both candidates engaged in what can be described as ‘counter-framing’-attempting to reframe their opponent’s actions in a way that suited their narrative. For example, Trump’s supporters frequently framed his aggressive interruptions as a sign of strength and leadership, while Clinton’s supporters framed her more composed demeanor as evidence of professionalism and control. This rhetorical battle in the online sphere mirrored the polarization of the electorate, with social media becoming a space for users to validate their political preferences through discursive practices.

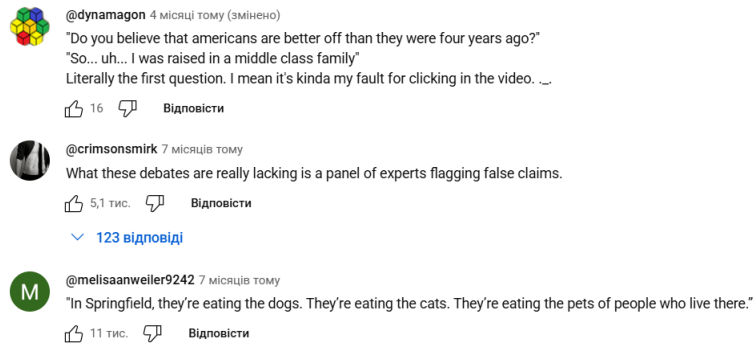


Fig. 6. Trump-Harris Debate (2024)

The 2020 presidential debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden was widely characterized by chaotic discourse and frequent disruptions. The debate was marked by interruptions, cross-talk, and a lack of order, which translated into similarly chaotic reactions on social media. The real-time nature of social media allowed users to share their immediate emotional responses, often highlighting the disorderly nature of the event. (Fig.7.).



Fig.7. Donald Trump and Joe Biden Debates. Comments

One of the discursive features of social media reactions to this debate was the widespread use of disruption tactics in the form of memes and gifs. The online community actively created and circulated content that depicted the debate as a spectacle of chaos. For instance, images of Trump interrupting Biden were paired with text like “Stop interrupting!” or “Can’t get a word in edgewise,” reinforcing

the frustration felt by many viewers. This visual and textual content served as both a critique of Trump’s behavior and a reflection of Biden’s inability to gain control of the conversation. (Fig.8.).

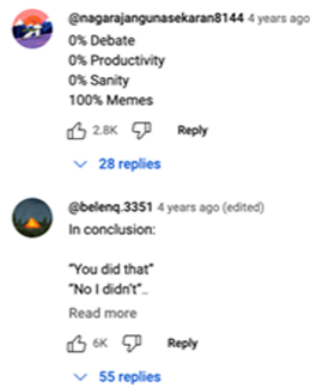


Fig. 8. U.S. Presidential Debate: Trump vs. Biden

Another discursive feature was the use of hashtags such as #DebateNight and #PresidentTrump, which became spaces for users to engage in quick, reactive discourse. (Fig.10.). These hashtags were often accompanied by partisan language, as supporters of Biden and Trump engaged in a form of verbal sparring. (Fig.9.). The public’s social media engagement in the form of direct commentary, tweets, and posts mirrored the debate’s atmosphere—unstructured, contentious, and frequently personal.



Fig. 9. Biden-Trump Debate (2020)



Fig. 10. The use of hashtags #DebateNight and #PresidentTrump

In this instance, social media was a platform for ordinary people to articulate their frustration and dissatisfaction with the format and substance of the debate, leading to the trend of fact-checking in real time. (Fig. 11). As both candidates made claims, social media users swiftly fact-checked and challenged their statements, creating an environment of skepticism and critique. This trend was

further amplified by the presence of media outlets that fact-checked in real time, promoting transparency and accountability but also contributing to a climate of chaos.



Fig. 11. Social media platform for ordinary people to articulate their frustration and dissatisfaction

The 2024 vice-presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris featured a distinctly different tone compared to previous debates. Trump, now a former president running again, was met with a more measured and controlled approach from Harris, who sought to maintain professionalism while defending her record. Social media reactions to this debate demonstrated a shift toward assertive defense and a more refined form of rhetorical strategy, reflecting the evolution of both candidates' public personas. (Fig 12.).



Fig. 12. Debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris

In this context, social media reactions focused heavily on framing Harris as a composed figure of authority, especially in contrast to Trump’s more familiar, brash style. The discourse on platforms like Twitter was rife with comments that praised Harris for her ability to remain calm and composed under pressure. Phrases such as “Kamala’s calm under fire” and “Harris for the win” became viral expressions of approval. On the other hand, Trump’s responses were often dissected and framed as evasive or combative, with hashtags like #TrumpAvoidsTheQuestion and #HarrisGotHim highlighting his tendency to sidestep issues. (Fig. 13.,14.).

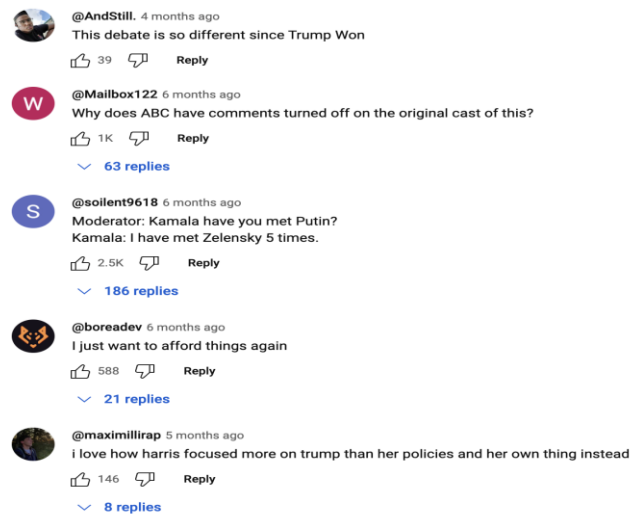


Fig. 13. Trump’s responses were often dissected and framed as evasive or combative, with hashtags like #TrumpAvoidsTheQuestion and #HarrisGotHim

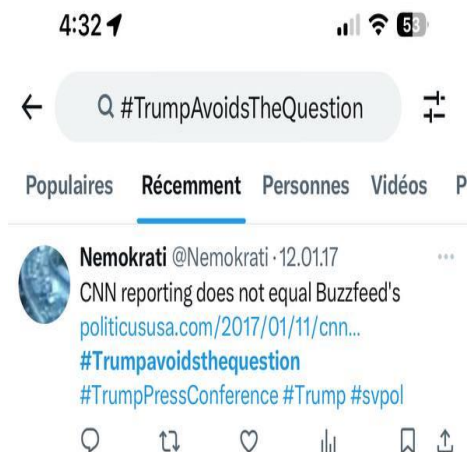


Fig. 14 . Trump’s responses dissected and framed as evasive or combative, with hashtags like #TrumpAvoidsTheQuestion and #HarrisGotHim

Another distinctive feature of the social media discourse around the 2024 debate was the increasing prominence of "cancel culture" and online backlash. (Fig.15.). As Trump made controversial remarks, a significant portion of social media reactions reflected the ongoing discourse surrounding accountability for public figures, with many calling for consequences for his actions. This shift reflected a broader societal trend toward holding leaders accountable for their words and deeds, especially in the digital age.

Moreover, social media users actively engaged in framing the debate within larger social and political contexts. Many online commentators utilized the debate as a platform to argue broader issues such as climate change, healthcare, and systemic racism, often aligning these issues with Harris’s positions. The debate thus became not only a contest between two political figures but also a site for discussing the future direction of U.S. policy, with social media acting as a space for users to engage in politically charged discussions.

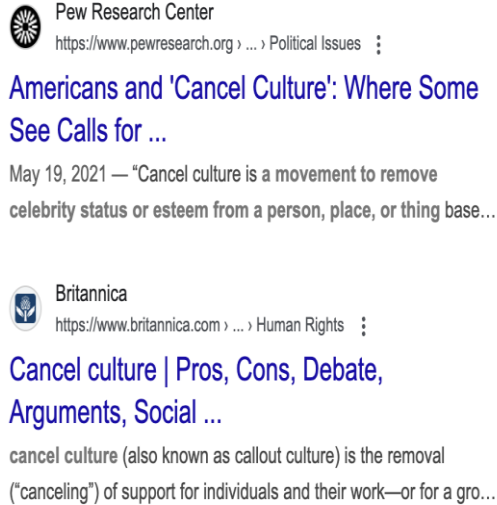


Fig. 15. Social media discourse around the 2024 debate was the increasing prominence of "cancel culture" and online backlash

Social media reactions to political debates provide valuable insights into the discursive practices of the general public. In the cases of the Trump-Clinton debate (2016), the Biden-Trump debate (2020), and the Trump-Harris debate (2024), social media users engaged in a variety of discursive strategies, including linguistic aggression, rhetorical framing, and narrative construction, to express their views on the candidates and the debates themselves. (Fig. 16.).

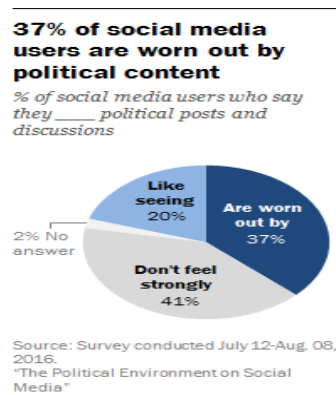


Fig. 16. Social media reactions to political debate 2016

These online reactions are not only a reflection of personal opinions but also a form of collective discourse that shapes public perceptions and influences political engagement. The debates themselves serve as catalysts for social media discussions, where ordinary people can assert their voices and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about politics, power, and representation. As social media continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly remain a critical space for political engagement and a key player in the broader landscape of public discourse.

3.2. Rhetorical and Framing Strategies in Mass Media Coverage

The mass media's coverage of political debates has always played a critical role in shaping public perception, not only through the direct portrayal of events but also through the strategic framing of these events in ways that influence how audiences interpret the actions and words of the candidates. Rhetorical strategies, such as the selection of language, framing devices, and the inclusion of expert opinions, are used to craft narratives that inform and often sway public opinion. This essay explores the rhetorical and framing strategies used in mass media coverage of political debates, analyzing the reactions of politicians, high-ranking officials, and experts in response to the debates, as well as how their voices shape the narrative around these events.

Framing theory, which originated from the work of Erving Goffman and was later expanded by scholars like Robert Entman, emphasizes the idea that the way information is presented by the media can significantly influence the way it is perceived by the public. In the case of political debates, the mass media plays a crucial role in shaping the discourse by selecting which aspects of the debate are

highlighted, how they are portrayed, and what elements are downplayed or ignored.

In the aftermath of each major political debate, media outlets engage in a complex process of framing, wherein they interpret the candidates' performances and offer evaluations based on a set of criteria—such as decisiveness, clarity, and perceived leadership qualities. The strategic use of language, tone, and context in the media narrative helps reinforce particular interpretations of the debate, often aligning with the outlet's political leanings. (Fig. 17.).

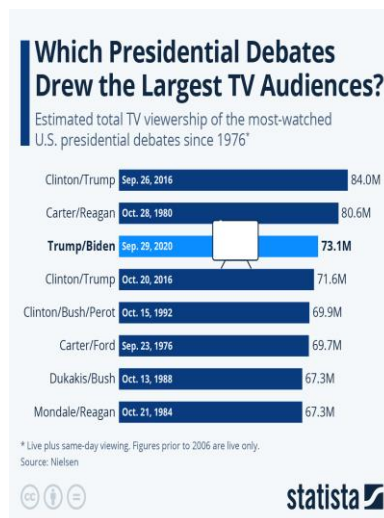


Fig. 17. Public Response on Social Media to U.S. Political Debates

The first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016 was a media spectacle, marked by aggressive exchanges and frequent personal attacks. In the aftermath, media coverage overwhelmingly focused on the stark contrast between the two candidates' styles and personalities, framing the debate as a battle of wills. (Fig.18.). High-ranking officials, political pundits, and experts were quick to offer their assessments, which were often framed along party lines, reinforcing existing partisan narratives.

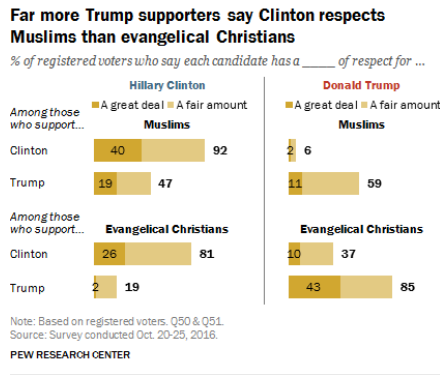


Fig. 18. The first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016

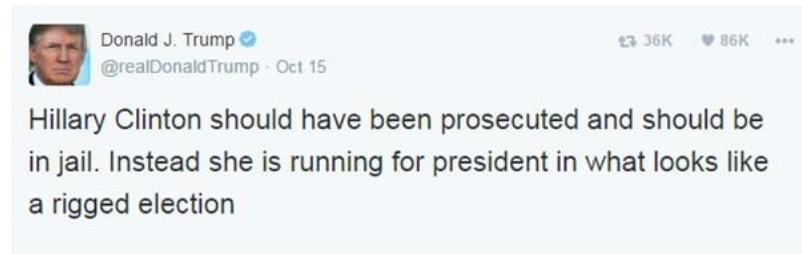


Fig. 19. Constant accusations by Trump against his opponents on social media

One of the most notable rhetorical strategies used in the media was the emphasis on Trump's aggressive interruptions and unorthodox style.(Fig. 19.,20.). Many news outlets, particularly those with a liberal leaning, framed Trump's behavior as a sign of instability, using phrases like "out of control" and "unpresidential" to describe his conduct. On the other hand, Clinton's more composed and polished demeanor was often framed as a reflection of professionalism and experience, with terms like "calm under pressure" and "presidential" being used to characterize her performance.



Fig. 20. Example of Trump's aggressive interruptions and unorthodox style

Interviews with political analysts and high-ranking officials after the debate reinforced these frames. For example, Democratic strategist James Carville described Clinton's performance as "commanding," focusing on her ability to maintain control despite Trump's interruptions. In contrast, Republican commentators like New Jersey Governor Chris Christie praised Trump for being "refreshing" and for challenging the political establishment, framing his unfiltered rhetoric as a strength that resonated with voters disillusioned by traditional politics.

The media also utilized expert opinions to create a narrative around the debate's aftermath. Political analysts were often brought in to dissect the candidates' rhetoric and highlight key moments that could influence voter perceptions. For instance, Clinton's reference to Trump's tax returns was framed by some outlets as a powerful attack, while Trump's critique of Clinton's use of a private email server was presented by others as an effective counterattack. (Fig. 21.). These moments, framed within the context of the candidates' larger strategies, became key talking points that dominated media coverage in the following days.



Fig. 21. Clinton's reference to Trump on social media

The 2020 presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump was characterized by chaotic discourse, with frequent interruptions and a lack of order that made it difficult for either candidate to maintain a clear narrative. Media coverage of this debate reflected the disorder, with headlines focusing on the chaos and lack of decorum rather than the substance of the candidates' arguments. This framing reinforced public perceptions of the debate as an unproductive spectacle.

Mass media outlets employed a variety of rhetorical strategies to highlight the disruptive nature of the debate. For instance, phrases like "a circus," "a shouting match," and "a war of words" were used in the headlines to frame the event as a breakdown in democratic discourse. These words contributed to the perception that the debate was less about policy and more about personal animosity. Cable news networks, in particular, emphasized Trump's frequent interruptions and aggressive behavior, with commentators framing his actions as an attempt to dominate the conversation at all costs. (Fig.22.). These actions were juxtaposed with Biden's visible frustration, particularly when he addressed Trump directly with phrases like "shut up" and "this is not a debate," which the media amplified as a sign of his exasperation.

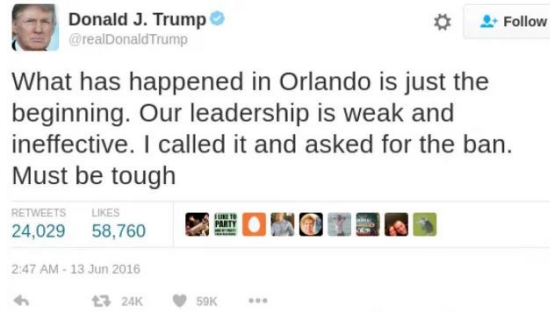


Fig. 22. Media Spotlight on Trump’s Interruptions and Unconventional Style

The post-debate coverage also featured numerous interviews with political figures who framed the debate through the lens of their party’s agenda. Democratic commentators and high-ranking officials, such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, criticized Trump’s behavior, framing it as unpresidential and detrimental to the democratic process.(Fig.23.). Meanwhile, Republican figures like Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell downplayed the chaos, framing it as a natural result of Trump’s confrontational style, which they argued was necessary to challenge the political status quo.



Fig 23. Interview with Nancy Pelosi

In terms of expert opinions, political analysts on both sides were eager to dissect the debate’s impact on key issues such as healthcare, the economy, and the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.(Fig. 24.). Media outlets used these expert

analyses to frame the debate as a missed opportunity for meaningful discussion, emphasizing how the candidates' inability to engage in a civil exchange prevented voters from gaining a clear understanding of their positions.

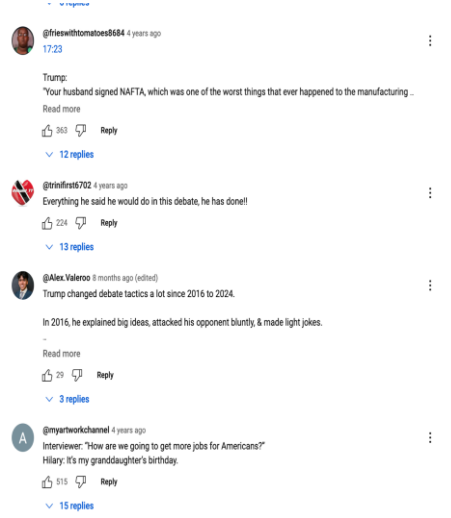


Fig. 24. COVID-19 pandemic in comments

The 2024 vice-presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris showcased a more controlled and strategic rhetoric compared to the previous debates. As Trump, a former president, faced Harris, the media's framing of the debate focused on the contrast between Harris's composed, measured responses and Trump's more combative, assertive rhetoric. The framing strategies in this debate were shaped by the candidates' experience and public personas, with media outlets highlighting their respective performances in a more structured manner.

Media outlets used strategic rhetorical devices to frame Harris's responses as authoritative and presidential. Headlines often described her as "poised" and "composed," emphasizing her ability to stay calm in the face of Trump's aggressive interruptions. In contrast, Trump's performance was framed as combative but effective in articulating his views on issues such as the economy and foreign policy. Many media outlets framed the debate as a battle of narratives, with

Trump pushing a populist agenda while Harris defended the current administration's policies. (Fig.25.).



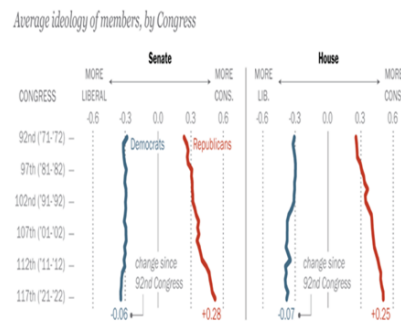
Fig. 25. The emphasis on Trump's aggressive interruptions and unorthodox style

Political interviews and expert commentary further shaped the media's framing of the debate. Democratic politicians, such as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, framed Harris's performance as a demonstration of leadership and competence, underscoring her experience and ability to stand up to Trump's rhetoric.(Fig.26.). Republican pundits, including Fox News commentators, framed Trump's performance as a victory, highlighting his assertiveness and ability to challenge Harris's record.



Fig. 26. One of the most notable rhetorical strategies used in the media was the emphasis on Trump's aggressive interruptions and unorthodox style

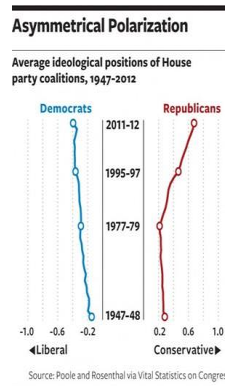
Expert analysts used the debate to discuss broader political trends, such as the increasing polarization of American politics and the growing influence of social media on public opinion. (Fig.27.,28.). Media coverage often incorporated these analyses to frame the debate within a larger political context, offering viewers a way to interpret the candidates' rhetoric beyond the event itself.



Source: Reprinted from Pew Research Center analysis of Voteview DW-NOMINATE data accessed on February 18, 2022. https://www.pewresearch.org/ft_22-02-22_congresspolarization_featured_new/.

Note: Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The opinions expressed herein, including any implications for policy, are those of the author and not of Pew Research Center.

Fig. 27. Rising Political Polarization and the Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion



Source: Poole and Rosenthal via Vital Statistics on Congress

Fig. 28. How Social Media Amplifies Political Polarization in the U.S.

The rhetorical and framing strategies employed by mass media in their coverage of political debates are integral to shaping public perceptions of the

candidates and the broader political landscape. By selecting certain moments for emphasis, using specific language, and presenting expert opinions, the media constructs narratives that influence how voters interpret the debates. Whether through the chaotic discourse of the Biden-Trump debate, the aggressive rhetoric of the Trump-Clinton debate, or the controlled exchanges of the Trump-Harris debate, the media's role in framing these events cannot be overstated.

Mass media coverage is not merely a passive reflection of the debates; it actively contributes to the shaping of political discourse by using strategic rhetorical techniques to guide the interpretation of events. The inclusion of interviews with politicians, high-ranking officials, and experts further reinforces these narratives, providing audiences with a lens through which to understand the political dynamics at play. In this way, the mass media continues to serve as a powerful tool in the political arena, influencing the way debates are perceived and discussed by the public.

3.3. Lexical and Pragmatic Aspects of Political and Expert Commentary

Political debates, particularly those between high-profile candidates, generate significant public discourse in mass media, with political commentators, high-ranking officials, and experts providing in-depth analysis of the events. These individuals utilize specific lexical and pragmatic strategies to convey their views and reactions, shaping the way the debate is perceived by the public. The lexical choices made by commentators, along with their pragmatic use of language, help frame the political narratives surrounding the debates and influence the public's understanding of the candidates' positions, character, and rhetoric. This essay explores the lexical and pragmatic aspects of political and expert commentary in

mass media, focusing on the reactions to political debates, including interviews and opinions expressed by politicians, high-ranking officials, and experts.

The language used by political commentators and experts in the aftermath of a political debate serves as a critical tool for framing the event in a particular light. Lexical choices, including the selection of specific terms, adjectives, and metaphors, are instrumental in shaping the narrative of the debate and influencing how the candidates are perceived by the public. Words are not neutral; they carry connotations and evoke emotional responses that can significantly impact the audience's interpretation of the debate.

In political commentary, the use of adjectives plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of candidates. For example, commentators might describe a candidate's performance using terms such as "aggressive," "commanding," or "unhinged," each of which conveys a different assessment of their behavior. These lexical choices are often aligned with the political orientation of the commentator or the media outlet. For instance, following the 2016 Trump-Clinton debate, many media outlets characterized Trump's interruptions as "aggressive" or "disrespectful," framing his behavior as inappropriate for a presidential candidate. (Fig.29.). In contrast, some conservative outlets used terms like "bold" and "courageous" to describe his approach, framing it as a necessary disruption of the political status quo.



Fig. 29. An example of Trump's rhetoric

Similarly, the use of qualifiers-words such as "possibly," "likely," or "arguably"-adds a layer of nuance to the commentary. Experts often use these qualifiers to hedge their statements, providing room for debate and disagreement. For example, when discussing Biden's performance in the 2020 presidential debate, political analysts might say, "Biden arguably held his ground," signaling that there is some subjectivity in their evaluation of his performance.

Metaphors are another key lexical strategy used in political commentary. These rhetorical devices help simplify complex political dynamics and evoke strong imagery in the minds of the audience. During the 2020 Biden-Trump debate, media outlets frequently used metaphors to describe the chaotic nature of the discourse. Phrases such as "a circus," "a verbal battle," or "a political brawl" were common in headlines and post-debate analyses. These metaphors not only described the disorderly nature of the debate but also helped frame it as an event that deviated from the norm of civil political discourse.(Fig.30.).

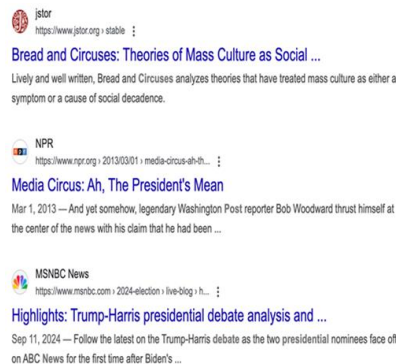


Fig. 30. Common headline such as "a circus"

In interviews with high-ranking officials or political pundits, metaphors also serve to reinforce partisan narratives. For instance, Republican commentators might describe Trump's actions in the 2020 debate as "fighting for the forgotten

voter" or "challenging the establishment," using metaphors to cast his behavior as a form of resistance against the political elite. Conversely, Democratic experts might describe the debate as "a lost opportunity for meaningful dialogue," framing it as a failure of leadership. (Fig.31.).

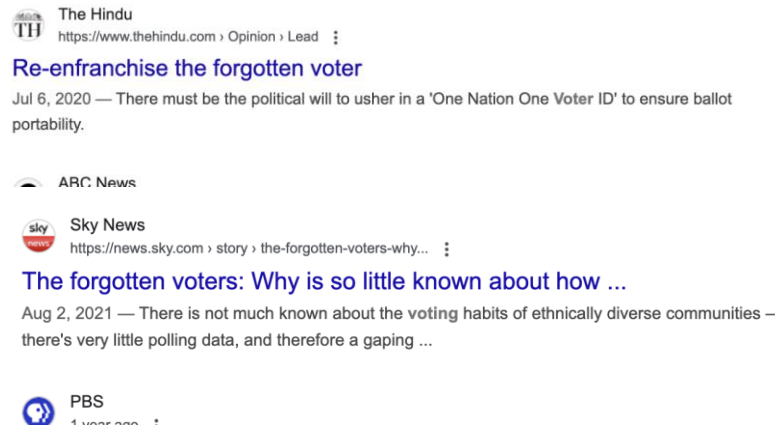


Fig. 31. Common headline such as "the forgotten voter"

While lexical choices are important, the pragmatic aspects of political commentary are equally crucial in shaping the public's understanding of the debate. Pragmatics refers to how language is used in context, focusing on the speaker's intent, the relationships between participants, and the social implications of their utterances. In political commentary, the way language is used can reveal underlying motivations, power dynamics, and strategic positioning.

Pragmatic strategies, such as the use of politeness and face-saving techniques, are particularly important in political and expert commentary. In interviews and analyses, commentators often engage in face-threatening acts (FTAs), where they challenge or criticize the performance of the candidates. However, the use of politeness strategies allows them to mitigate the impact of these criticisms. (Fig.32.). For instance, an expert might preface a critical statement by saying, "With all due respect," or "While it's clear that Trump had a strong base

of support, his actions in the debate were concerning," softening the impact of their critique.

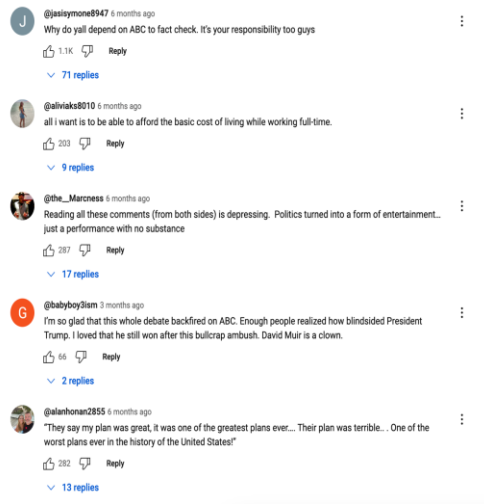


Fig. 32. Comments on social media platform

In contrast, some commentators adopt a more confrontational tone, especially when discussing opposing candidates. These experts might use direct, unambiguous language that confronts the candidates' behavior head-on. In the case of the 2016 Trump-Clinton debate, many Democratic commentators employed face-threatening strategies to criticize Trump's conduct, using terms like "reckless" or "dangerous" to describe his actions. This directness, while harsh, also serves to draw clear lines between the political ideologies of the commentators and the candidates they discuss. (Fig.33.).

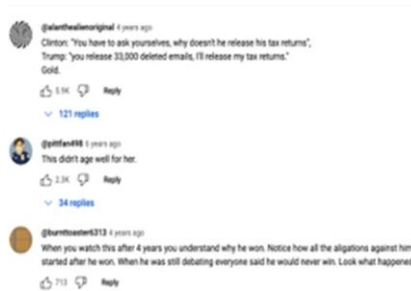


Fig. 33. Comments on the Internet

Political commentary is often infused with irony, sarcasm, and humor, all of which are powerful pragmatic tools that allow commentators to convey criticism without direct confrontation. In the 2020 Biden-Trump debate, for example, some commentators on late-night shows or satirical news programs used humor to point out the absurdity of the debate's chaotic moments. Irony, in particular, is frequently used to highlight contradictions or inconsistencies in a candidate's rhetoric. When Trump repeatedly interrupted Biden during the debate, satirical commentators often used irony to point out the discrepancy between Trump's actions and the expected behavior of a presidential candidate, saying things like, "Well, it seems like Trump has mastered the art of conversation-just not the art of listening."

Sarcasm, too, is often used in political discourse to critique the candidates. For example, a commentator might sarcastically praise a candidate's performance by saying, "Well, that was certainly an interesting debate strategy-if by strategy you mean shouting over your opponent every time they try to speak." This use of sarcasm, while humorous, also serves as a subtle but powerful critique of the candidate's approach. (Fig.34.).



Fig. 34. The use of sarcasm and humor in social media comments

The inclusion of expert opinions in political commentary provides a layer of authority and credibility to the discourse surrounding a debate. Experts, such as

political scientists, communication specialists, or former politicians, are often invited to provide a professional analysis of the candidates' rhetorical strategies and performances. Their pragmatic use of language often serves to frame the debate in a more structured and analytical way.

For example, following the 2020 debate, experts might discuss how Biden's use of pauses and controlled responses served to counterbalance Trump's aggressive interruptions. Experts might frame this as a strategic use of "defensive rhetoric," a term that is both technical and neutral in tone, signaling the importance of Biden's ability to manage the conversational dynamics without resorting to the same combative tactics as his opponent. On the other hand, experts analyzing Trump's performance might focus on his use of assertive language and strategic deflection, framing his behavior as an attempt to dominate the narrative through interruption.

The lexical and pragmatic strategies employed by political commentators, high-ranking officials, and experts in the mass media play a significant role in shaping public discourse surrounding political debates. The words chosen by these individuals-whether adjectives, metaphors, or qualifiers-help frame the candidates' performances and guide public interpretation. At the same time, the pragmatic aspects of commentary, such as politeness strategies, irony, and sarcasm, influence how these critiques are delivered and received by audiences.

In the highly polarized world of political commentary, these lexical and pragmatic strategies serve not only as a means of evaluating candidates but also as a tool for reinforcing or challenging political ideologies. By analyzing the language used in post-debate media coverage, we can gain insight into the ways in which mass media shapes public opinion and influences the broader political landscape. Ultimately, the way in which political and expert commentary is framed and

delivered in the media reflects the broader societal values and power dynamics that underlie political discourse.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

The analysis of public and media discourse regarding political debates reveals the intricate ways in which language and rhetoric are used to shape public opinion. Each section-focusing on social media reactions, mass media coverage, and expert commentary-highlights the powerful influence of discourse in framing political narratives and influencing the perception of candidates.

Discursive Features of Social Media Reactions, we observed that social media platforms serve as a primary arena for public participation in political discourse. The reactions of ordinary people, often spontaneous and unfiltered, reflect a diverse range of opinions and emotions, which are frequently amplified through the viral nature of social media. The use of hashtags, memes, and short-form commentary allows users to rapidly disseminate their views, contributing to the shaping of broader public narratives. However, the unregulated nature of social media also leads to the spread of misinformation and polarized opinions, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing biases. The discursive features of social media, while democratizing political engagement, also pose challenges to maintaining a balanced and informed public debate.

Rhetorical and Framing Strategies in Mass Media Coverage underscores the role of mass media in shaping the narrative of political debates through strategic framing and rhetorical techniques. The selection of key moments, the use of loaded language, and the framing of candidates' actions are all tools used by media outlets to guide public perception. Political commentary in the aftermath of debates often

serves to reinforce partisan narratives, with different media outlets presenting distinct interpretations of the same event based on their political alignment. The strategic use of framing, including highlighting certain aspects of the debate while downplaying others, allows the media to influence how the candidates are viewed by the public, with far-reaching implications for electoral outcomes and political discourse.

Lexical and Pragmatic Aspects of Political and Expert Commentary reveal that both word choice and context-dependent language strategies are central to how political debates are analyzed and critiqued in the mass media. The careful use of language—ranging from specific lexical items such as adjectives to pragmatic tools like metaphor—helps to frame candidates’ performances in specific ways, whether as authoritative, aggressive, or disorganized. Pragmatic strategies, including politeness techniques, irony, and sarcasm, add layers of nuance to commentary, often softening or intensifying the criticism depending on the commentator’s perspective. Expert opinions contribute to the credibility and structure of the narrative, but their language choices also reflect broader societal and political dynamics. These lexical and pragmatic strategies, when combined, form a powerful tool for shaping the public’s understanding of the debates and guiding political discourse.

In conclusion, the public and media discourse surrounding political debates is a multifaceted phenomenon, shaped by a range of rhetorical, lexical, and pragmatic strategies. Social media reactions reflect the raw, emotional responses of the public, while mass media coverage and expert commentary frame these reactions through carefully constructed narratives. Together, these forms of discourse play a crucial role in shaping political opinion, reinforcing ideological divides, and influencing the broader political landscape. Understanding the

complexities of political communication in the age of social media and mass media is essential for navigating the increasingly polarized and fragmented public sphere.

CONCLUSION

The study of political discourse, particularly in the context of U.S. presidential debates, reveals the complex ways in which language, rhetoric, and media influence political communication. Across the chapters, the examination of discourse analysis, rhetorical strategies, and public reactions demonstrates the centrality of language in shaping political outcomes and public perceptions.

In Chapter 1, the examination of modern discourse analysis and critical discourse studies provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding the role of language in politics. These theoretical approaches highlight how political discourse is not just a means of communication, but a tool of power, persuasion, and ideological construction. The research on political discourse in the U.S. further underscored the specific ways in which language is used strategically by political figures, media, and the public. The examination of political debates as a component of presidential elections illuminated how debates serve as critical moments for candidates to present their platforms, engage with adversaries, and influence voter perceptions. The theoretical fundamentals provided in this chapter set the stage for understanding the deeper dynamics of political discourse in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 2, the analysis of rhetorical and persuasive strategies in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential debates offered a detailed exploration of how candidates use language to achieve their goals. The 2016 Trump-Clinton debate highlighted the use of linguistic aggression and rhetorical framing, where both candidates employed aggressive tactics to undermine each other's credibility. The 2020 Biden-Trump debate demonstrated the chaotic nature of discourse, marked by disruptive tactics and frequent interruptions, reflecting the polarized and combative atmosphere of modern politics. The 2024 Trump-Harris debate, on the other hand,

exemplified a more controlled and assertive use of defensive rhetorical strategies, where candidates strategically framed their rhetoric to appeal to their respective bases. The discussion in this chapter provided rich insights into how candidates tailor their language to the unique dynamics of each debate, making rhetoric a crucial tool in political campaigns.

We delved into the role of public and media discourse in shaping perceptions of political debates. The analysis of social media reactions illustrated how ordinary people engage with political debates online, often through spontaneous, emotional, and polarized responses. Social media platforms serve as both a reflection and an amplifier of public opinion, contributing to the shaping of the broader political narrative. The role of mass media in framing political debates through selective coverage and rhetorical strategies was explored. Media outlets use framing to highlight specific aspects of debates, shaping the way the public perceives the candidates' performances. *Lexical and Pragmatic Aspects of Political and Expert Commentary* emphasized how the language used by experts and commentators, including their lexical choices and pragmatic strategies, significantly influences the interpretation of debates. Through a careful selection of words, metaphors, and critical analyses, media experts frame debates in ways that align with their political orientations and contribute to the shaping of public opinion.

Taken together, the chapters provide a comprehensive examination of political discourse, emphasizing the interplay between language, rhetoric, and media in shaping political debates and public opinion. From the theoretical foundations of discourse analysis to the practical application of rhetorical strategies in televised debates, the study demonstrates the power of language as a tool for persuasion and ideological construction. The reactions of the public and the media's framing of political debates further underscore the impact of discourse in

shaping political narratives and influencing electoral outcomes. Understanding the complexities of political discourse is essential for navigating the increasingly polarized and mediated political landscape, where language plays a central role in shaping both public perceptions and political power.

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APPENDICES

Trump-Clinton Debate (2016)

00:05

Good evening from Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. I'm Lester Holt, anchor of *NBC Nightly News*. I want to welcome you to the first presidential debate.

The participants tonight are Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. This debate is sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. The commission drafted tonight's format, and the rules have been agreed to by the campaigns.

The 90-minute debate is divided into six segments, each 15 minutes long. We'll explore three topic areas tonight: Achieving Prosperity; America's Direction; and Securing America. At the start of each segment, I will ask the same lead-off question to both candidates, and they will each have up to two minutes to respond.

00:38

From that point until the end of the segment, we'll have an open discussion. The questions are mine and have not been shared with the commission or the campaigns. The audience here in the room has agreed to remain silent so that we can focus on what the candidates are saying. I will invite you to applaud, however, at this moment, as we welcome the candidates: Democratic nominee for president of the United States, Hillary Clinton, and Republican nominee for president of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

01:07

however, at this moment, as we welcome the candidates: Democratic nominee for president of the United States, Hillary Clinton, and Republican

nominee for president of the United States, Donald J. Trump. How are you, Donald? Good luck to you. Well, I don't expect us to cover all the issues of this campaign tonight, but I remind everyone, there are two more presidential debates scheduled. We are going to focus on many of the issues that voters tell us are most important, and we're going to press for specifics. I am honored to have this role, but this evening belongs to the candidates and, just as important, to the American people.

Candidates, we look forward to hearing you articulate your policies and your positions, as well as your visions and your values. So, let's begin. We're calling this opening segment: Achieving Prosperity. And central to that is jobs. There are two economic realities in America today. There's been a record six straight years of job growth, and new census numbers show incomes have increased at a record rate after years of stagnation. However, income inequality remains significant, and nearly half of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck.

02:40

Beginning with you, Secretary Clinton, why are you a better choice than your opponent to create the kinds of jobs that will put more money into the pockets of American workers? Well, thank you, Lester, and thanks to Hofstra for hosting us. The central question in this election is really what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we'll build together. Today is my granddaughter's second birthday, so I think about this a lot. First, we have to build an economy that works for everyone,

03:09

not just those at the top. That means we need new jobs, good jobs, with rising incomes. I want us to invest in you. I want us to invest in your future. That means jobs in infrastructure, in advanced manufacturing, innovation and technology, clean, renewable energy, and small business, because most of the new jobs will

come from small business. We also have to make the economy fairer. That starts with raising the national minimum wage and also guarantee, finally, equal pay for women's work.

03:44

I also want to see more companies do profit-sharing. If you help create the profits, you should be able to share in them, not just the executives at the top. And I want us to do more to support people who are struggling to balance family and work. I've heard from so many of you about the difficult choices you face and the stresses that you're under. So let's have paid family leave, earned sick days. Let's be sure we have affordable child care and debt-free college. How are we going to do it? We're going to do it by having

04:16

the wealthy pay their fair share and close the corporate loopholes. Finally, we tonight are on the stage together, Donald Trump and I. Donald, it's good to be with you. We're going to have a debate where we are talking about the important issues facing our country. You have to judge us, who can shoulder the immense, awesome responsibilities of the presidency, who can put into action the plans that will make your life better. I hope that I will be able to earn your vote on November 8th.

Secretary Clinton, thank you. Mr. Trump,

04:54

the same question to you. It's about putting money — more money into the pockets of American workers. You have up to two minutes. Thank you, Lester. Our jobs are fleeing the country. They're going to Mexico. They're going to many other countries. You look at what China is doing to our country in terms of making our product. They're devaluing their currency, and there's nobody in our government to fight them. And we have a very good fight. And we have a winning fight. Because they're using our country as a piggy bank to rebuild China, and

05:25

many other countries are doing the same thing. So we're losing our good jobs, so many of them. When you look at what's happening in Mexico, a friend of mine who builds plants said it's the eighth wonder of the world. They're building some of the biggest plants anywhere in the world, some of the most sophisticated, some of the best plants. With the United States, as he said, not so much. So Ford is leaving. You see that, their small car division leaving. Thousands of jobs leaving Michigan, leaving Ohio. They're all leaving. And we can't allow it to

05:57

happen anymore. As far as child care is concerned and so many other things, I think Hillary and I agree on that. We probably disagree a little bit as to numbers and amounts and what we're going to do, but perhaps we'll be talking about that later. But we have to stop our jobs from being stolen from us. We have to stop our companies from leaving the United States and, with it, firing all of their people. All you have to do is take a look at Carrier air conditioning in Indianapolis. They left — fired 1,400 people.

06:30

They're going to Mexico. So many hundreds and hundreds of companies are doing this. We cannot let it happen. Under my plan, I'll be reducing taxes tremendously, from 35% to 15% for companies, small and big businesses. That's going to be a job creator like we haven't seen since Ronald Reagan. It's going to be a beautiful thing to watch. Companies will come. They will build. They will expand. New companies will start. And I look very, very much forward to doing it. We have to renegotiate our trade deals, and we have to stop

07:04

these countries from stealing our companies and our jobs. Secretary Clinton, would you like to respond? Well, I think that trade is an important issue. Of course, we

are 5% of the world's population; we have to trade with the other 95%. And we need to have smart, fair trade deals. We also, though, need to have a tax system that rewards work and not just financial transactions. And the kind of plan that Donald has put forth would be trickle-down economics all over again. In fact, it would be the most extreme

07:37

version, the biggest tax cuts for the top percent of the people in this country than we've ever had. I call it trumped-up trickle-down, because that's exactly what it would be. That is not how we grow the economy. We just have a different view about what's best for growing the economy, how we make investments that will actually produce jobs and rising incomes. I think we come at it from somewhat different perspectives. I understand that. You know, Donald was very fortunate in his life, and that's all to his benefit. He started his business with \$14 million,

08:12

borrowed from his father, and he really believes that the more you help wealthy people, the better off we'll be and that everything will work out from there. I don't buy that. I have a different experience. My father was a small-businessman. He worked really hard. He printed drapery fabrics on long tables, where he pulled out those fabrics and he went down with a silkscreen and dumped the paint in and took the squeegee and kept going. And so what I believe is the more we can do for the

08:42

middle class, the more we can invest in you, your education, your skills, your future, the better we will be off and the better we'll grow. That's the kind of economy I want us to see again. Let me follow up with Mr. Trump, again. You've talked about creating 25 million jobs, and you've promised to bring back millions of jobs for Americans. How are you going to bring back the industries that have

left this country for cheaper labor overseas? How, specifically, are you going to tell American manufacturers

09:10

that you have to come back? Well, for one thing — and before we start on that — my father gave me a very small loan in 1975, and I built it into a company that's worth many, many billions of dollars, with some of the greatest assets in the world, and I say that only because that's the kind of thinking that our country needs. Our country's in deep trouble. We don't know what we're doing when it comes to devaluations and all of these countries all over the world, especially China. They're the best, the best ever at it.

09:37

What they're doing to us is a very, very sad thing. So we have to do that. We have to renegotiate our trade deals. And, Lester, they're taking our jobs, they're giving incentives, they're doing things that, frankly, we don't do. Let me give you the example of Mexico. They have a VAT tax. We're on a different system. When we sell into Mexico, there's a tax. When they sell in — automatic, 16%, approximately. When they sell into us, there's no tax. It's a defective agreement. It's been defective for a long time, many years, but the

10:09

politicians haven't done anything about it. Now, in all fairness to Secretary Clinton — yes, is that OK? Good. I want you to be very happy. It's very important to me. But in all fairness to Secretary Clinton, when she started talking about this, it was really very recently. She's been doing this for 30 years. And why hasn't she made the agreements better? The NAFTA agreement is defective. Just because of the tax and many other reasons, but just because of the fact... Let me interrupt just a moment, but... Secretary

10:38

Clinton and others, politicians, should have been doing this for years, not right now, because of the fact that we've created a movement. They should have been doing this for years. What's happened to our jobs and our country and our economy generally is — look, we owe \$20 trillion. We cannot do it any longer, Lester. Back to the question, though. How do you bring back — specifically bring back jobs, American manufacturers? How do you make them bring the jobs back? Well, the first thing you do is don't let the jobs leave. The companies are leaving. I could

11:10

name, I mean, there are thousands of them. They're leaving, and they're leaving in bigger numbers than ever. And what you do is you say, fine, you want to go to Mexico or some other country, good luck. We wish you a lot of luck. But if you think you're going to make your air conditioners or your cars or your cookies or whatever you make and bring them into our country without a tax, you're wrong. And once you say you're going to have to tax them coming in, and our politicians never do this, because they have special interests and the

11:37

special interests want those companies to leave, because in many cases, they own the companies. So what I'm saying is, we can stop them from leaving. We have to stop them from leaving. And that's a big, big factor. Let me let Secretary Clinton get in here. Well, let's stop for a second and remember where we were eight years ago. We had the worst financial crisis, the Great Recession, the worst since the 1930s. That was in large part because of tax policies that slashed taxes on the wealthy, failed to invest in the middle

12:11

class, took their eyes off of Wall Street, and created a perfect storm. In fact, Donald was one of the people who rooted for the housing crisis. He said, back in

2006, “Gee, I hope it does collapse, because then I can go in and buy some and make some money.” Well, it did collapse. That’s called business, by the way.

Nine million people — 9 million people lost their jobs. Five million people lost their homes. And \$13 trillion in family wealth was wiped out. Now, we have come back from that abyss. And it has not been easy. So

12:48

we’re now on the precipice of having a potentially much better economy, but the last thing we need to do is to go back to the policies that failed us in the first place. Independent experts have looked at what I’ve proposed and looked at what Donald’s proposed, and basically they’ve said this, that if his tax plan, which would blow up the debt by over \$5 trillion and would in some instances disadvantage middle-class families compared to the wealthy, were to go into effect, we would lose 3.5 million

13:23

jobs and maybe have another recession. They’ve looked at my plans and they’ve said, OK, if we can do this, and I intend to get it done, we will have 10 million more new jobs, because we will be making investments where we can grow the economy. Take clean energy. Some country is going to be the clean-energy superpower of the 21st century. Donald thinks that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese. I think it’s real. I did not. I did not. I do not say that.

I think science is real. I do not say that. And I think it’s important that we grip

13:58

this and deal with it, both at home and abroad. And here’s what we can do. We can deploy a half a billion more solar panels. We can have enough clean energy to power every home. We can build a new modern electric grid. That’s a lot of jobs; that’s a lot of new economic activity. So I’ve tried to be very specific about what we can and should do, and I am determined that we’re going to get the

economy really moving again, building on the progress we've made over the last eight years, but never going back to what got us in trouble in the first place.

14:30

Mr. Trump? She talks about solar panels. We invested in a solar company, our country. That was a disaster. They lost plenty of money on that one. Now, look, I'm a great believer in all forms of energy, but we're putting a lot of people out of work. Our energy policies are a disaster. Our country is losing so much in terms of energy, in terms of paying off our debt. You can't do what you're looking to do with \$20 trillion in debt. The Obama administration, from the time they've come in, is over 230 years' worth of debt,

15:04

and he's topped it. He's doubled it in a course of almost eight years, seven-and-a-half years, to be semi-exact. So I will tell you this. We have to do a much better job at keeping our jobs. And we have to do a much better job at giving companies incentives to build new companies or to expand, because they're not doing it. And all you have to do is look at Michigan and look at Ohio and look at all of these places where so many of their jobs and their companies are just leaving, they're gone. And, Hillary, I'd just ask you this. You've been

15:40

doing this for 30 years. Why are you just thinking about these solutions right now? For 30 years, you've been doing it, and now you're just starting to think of solutions. Well, actually...I will bring — excuse me. I will bring back jobs. You can't bring back jobs. Well, actually, I have thought about this quite a bit.

Yeah, for 30 years. And I have — well, not quite that long. I think my husband did a pretty good job in the 1990s. I think a lot about what worked and how we can make it work again...Well, he approved NAFTA... million new jobs, a balanced

budget...He approved NAFTA, which is the single worst trade deal ever approved in this country. Incomes went up for everybody. Manufacturing jobs went up

16:18

also in the 1990s, if we're actually going to look at the facts. When I was in the Senate, I had a number of trade deals that came before me, and I held them all to the same test. Will they create jobs in America? Will they raise incomes in America? And are they good for our national security? Some of them I voted for. The biggest one, a multinational one known as CAFTA, I voted against. And because I hold the same standards as I look at all of these trade deals. But let's not assume that trade is the only challenge we have in

16:53

the economy. I think it is a part of it, and I've said what I'm going to do. I'm going to have a special prosecutor. We're going to enforce the trade deals we have, and we're going to hold people accountable. When I was secretary of state, we actually increased American exports globally 30%. We increased them to China 50%. So I know how to really work to get new jobs and to get exports that helped to create more new jobs. Very quickly...But you haven't done it in 30 years or 26 years or any number you want to...Well, I've been a senator, Donald... You haven't done it. You haven't done it. And I have been a secretary of state...

17:27

Excuse me. And I have done a lot... Your husband signed NAFTA, which was one of the worst things that ever happened to the manufacturing industry. Well, that's your opinion. That is your opinion. You go to New England, you go to Ohio, Pennsylvania, you go anywhere you want, Secretary Clinton, and you will see devastation where manufacture is down 30%, 40%, sometimes 50%. NAFTA is the worst trade deal maybe ever signed anywhere, but certainly ever signed in

this country. And now you want to approve Trans-Pacific Partnership. You were totally in favor of it.

17:56

Then you heard what I was saying, how bad it is, and you said, I can't win that debate. But you know that if you did win, you would approve that, and that will be almost as bad as NAFTA. Nothing will ever top NAFTA. Well, that is just not accurate. I was against it once it was finally negotiated and the terms were laid out. I wrote about that in... You called it the gold standard. You called it the gold standard of trade deals. You said it's the finest deal you've ever seen. No. And then you heard what I said about it,

18:26

and all of a sudden you were against it. Well, Donald, I know you live in your own reality, but that is not the facts. The facts are — I did say I hoped it would be a good deal, but when it was negotiated... Not. ... which I was not responsible for, I concluded it wasn't. I wrote about that in my book... So is it President Obama's fault?... before you even announced. Is it President Obama's fault? Look, there are differences... Secretary, is it President Obama's fault?

There are... Because he's pushing it. There are different views about what's good for our country, our economy, and our leadership in the world.

18:58

And I think it's important to look at what we need to do to get the economy going again. That's why I said new jobs with rising incomes, investments, not in more tax cuts that would add \$5 trillion to the debt. But you have no plan.

But in — oh, but I do. Secretary, you have no plan. In fact, I have written a book about it. It's called "Stronger Together." You can pick it up tomorrow at a bookstore... That's about all you've... Folks, we're going to...

... or at an airport near you. We're going to move to... But it's because I see this — we need to have strong growth, fair growth, sustained growth.

19:31

We also have to look at how we help families balance the responsibilities at home and the responsibilities at business. So we have a very robust set of plans. And people have looked at both of our plans, have concluded that mine would create 10 million jobs and yours would lose us 3.5 million jobs, and explode the debt which would have a recession. You are going to approve one of the biggest tax cuts in history. You are going to approve one of the biggest tax increases in history. You are going to drive business out. Your regulations are

20:03

a disaster, and you're going to increase regulations all over the place. And by the way, my tax cut is the biggest since Ronald Reagan. I'm very proud of it. It will create tremendous numbers of new jobs. But regulations, you are going to regulate these businesses out of existence. When I go around — Lester, I tell you this, I've been all over. And when I go around, despite the tax cut, the thing — the things that business as in people like the most is the fact that I'm cutting regulation. You have regulations on top of regulations, and new companies

20:37

cannot form and old companies are going out of business. And you want to increase the regulations and make them even worse. I'm going to cut regulations. I'm going to cut taxes big league, and you're going to raise taxes big league, end of story. Let me get you to pause right there, because we're going to move into — we're going to move into the next segment. We're going to talk taxes... That can't — that can't be left to stand. Please just take 30 seconds and then we're going to go on. I kind of assumed that there would be a lot of these charges and claims, and so... Facts. So we have taken the home page of my website,

21:07

HillaryClinton.com , and we've turned it into a fact-checker. So if you want to see in real-time what the facts are, please go and take a look. Because what I have proposed... And take a look at mine, also, and you'll see. ... would not add a penny to the debt, and your plans would add \$5 trillion to the debt. What I have proposed would cut regulations and streamline them for small businesses. What I have proposed would be paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy, because they have made all the gains in the economy. And I think it's time that the wealthy and

21:44

corporations paid their fair share to support this country. Well, you just opened the next segment. Well, could I just finish — I think I... I'm going to give you a chance right here... I think I should — you go to her website, and you take a look at her website. ... with a new 15-minute segment... She's going to raise taxes \$1.3 trillion. Mr. Trump, I'm going to... And look at her website. You know what? It's no difference than this. She's telling us how to fight ISIS. Just go to her website. She tells you how to fight ISIS on her website. I don't think General Douglas MacArthur would like that too much. The next segment, we're continuing... Well, at least I have a plan to fight ISIS. Achieving Prosperity... No, no, you're telling the enemy

22:16

everything you want to do. No, we're not. No, we're not. See, you're telling the enemy everything you want to do. No wonder you've been fighting — no wonder you've been fighting ISIS your entire adult life. That's a — that's — go to the — please, fact checkers, get to work.OK, you are unpacking a lot here. And we're still on the issue of achieving prosperity. And I want to talk about taxes. The fundamental difference between the two of you concerns the wealthy. Secretary

Clinton, you're calling for a tax increase on the wealthiest Americans. I'd like you to further defend

22:46

that. And, Mr. Trump, you're calling for tax cuts for the wealthy. I'd like you to defend that. And this next two-minute answer goes to you, Mr. Trump. Well, I'm really calling for major jobs, because the wealthy are going to create tremendous jobs. They're going to expand their companies. They're going to do a tremendous job. I'm getting rid of the carried interest provision. And if you really look, it's not a tax — it's really not a great thing for the wealthy. It's a great thing for the middle class. It's a great thing for companies to expand. And

23:13

when these people are going to put billions and billions of dollars into companies, and when they're going to bring \$2.5 trillion back from overseas, where they can't bring the money back, because politicians like Secretary Clinton won't allow them to bring the money back, because the taxes are so onerous, and the bureaucratic red tape, so what — is so bad. So what they're doing is they're leaving our country, and they're, believe it or not, leaving because taxes are too high and because some of them have lots of

23:40

money outside of our country. And instead of bringing it back and putting the money to work, because they can't work out a deal to — and everybody agrees it should be brought back. Instead of that, they're leaving our country to get their money, because they can't bring their money back into our country, because of bureaucratic red tape, because they can't get together. Because we have — we have a president that can't sit them around a table and get them to approve something. And here's the thing. Republicans and Democrats agree that

24:09

this should be done, \$2.5 trillion. I happen to think it's double that. It's probably \$5 trillion that we can't bring into our country, Lester. And with a little leadership, you'd get it in here very quickly, and it could be put to use on the inner cities and lots of other things, and it would be beautiful. But we have no leadership. And honestly, that starts with Secretary Clinton. All right. You have two minutes of the same question to defend tax increases on the wealthiest Americans, Secretary Clinton. I have a feeling that

24:38

by, the end of this evening, I'm going to be blamed for everything that's ever happened. Why not? Why not? Yeah, why not? You know, just join the debate by saying more crazy things. Now, let me say this, it is absolutely the case... There's nothing crazy about not letting our companies bring their money back into their country. This is — this is Secretary Clinton's two minutes, please. Yes. Yeah, well, let's start the clock again, Lester. We've looked at your tax proposals. I don't see changes in the corporate tax rates or the kinds of proposals you're referring

25:13

o that would cause the repatriation, bringing back of money that's stranded overseas. I happen to support that. Then you didn't read it. I happen to — I happen to support that in a way that will actually work to our benefit. But when I look at what you have proposed, you have what is called now the Trump loophole, because it would so advantage you and the business you do. You've proposed an approach that has a... Who gave it that name? The first I've — who gave it that name? Mr. Trump, this is Secretary Clinton's two minutes. ... \$4 billion tax benefit for your family. And when you look at what you are proposing... How much? How much for my family? ...it is... Lester, how much? ...as I said, trumped-up trickle-down. Trickle-down did not work. It got us into

25:56

the mess we were in, in 2008 and 2009. Slashing taxes on the wealthy hasn't worked. And a lot of really smart, wealthy people know that. And they are saying, hey, we need to do more to make the contributions we should be making to rebuild the middle class. I don't think top-down works in America. I think building the middle class, investing in the middle class, making college debt-free so more young people can get their education, helping people refinance their — their debt from college at a lower rate. Those are the kinds of things

26:32

that will really boost the economy. Broad-based, inclusive growth is what we need in America, not more advantages for people at the very top. Mr. Trump, we're... Typical politician. All talk, no action. Sounds good, doesn't work. Never going to happen. Our country is suffering because people like Secretary Clinton have made such bad decisions in terms of our jobs and in terms of what's going on. Now, look, we have the worst revival of an economy since the Great Depression. And believe me: We're in a bubble right now. And the only thing that looks good is

27:12

the stock market, but if you raise interest rates even a little bit, that's going to come crashing down. We are in a big, fat, ugly bubble. And we better be awfully careful. And we have a Fed that's doing political things. This Janet Yellen of the Fed. The Fed is doing political — by keeping the interest rates at this level. And believe me: The day Obama goes off, and he leaves, and goes out to the golf course for the rest of his life to play golf, when they raise interest rates, you're going to see some very bad things happen,

27:42

because the Fed is not doing their job. The Fed is being more political than Secretary Clinton. Mr. Trump, we're talking about the burden that Americans have

to pay, yet you have not released your tax returns. And the reason nominees have released their returns for decades is so that voters will know if their potential president owes money to — who he owes it to and any business conflicts. Don't Americans have a right to know if there are any conflicts of interest? I don't mind releasing — I'm under a routine

28:12

audit. And it'll be released. And as soon as the audit's finished, it will be released. But you will learn more about Donald Trump by going down to the federal elections, where I filed a 104-page essentially financial statement of sorts, the forms that they have. It shows income — in fact, the income — I just looked today — the income is filed at \$694 million for this past year, \$694 million. If you would have told me I was going to make that 15 or 20 years ago, I would have been very surprised. But that's the kind of thinking that our

28:45

country needs. When we have a country that's doing so badly, that's being ripped off by every single country in the world, it's the kind of thinking that our country needs, because everybody — Lester, we have a trade deficit with all of the countries that we do business with, of almost \$800 billion a year. You know what that is? That means, who's negotiating these trade deals? We have people that are political hacks negotiating our trade deals. The IRS says an audit... Excuse me. of your taxes — you're perfectly free to release your taxes during an audit.

29:21

And so the question, does the public's right to know outweigh your personal... Well, I told you, I will release them as soon as the audit. Look, I've been under audit almost for 15 years. I know a lot of wealthy people that have never been audited. I said, do you get audited? I get audited almost every year. And in a way, I should be complaining. I'm not even complaining. I don't mind it.

It's almost become a way of life. I get audited by the IRS. But other people don't. I will say this. We have a situation in this country that has to be taken care of. I

29:52

will release my tax returns — against my lawyer's wishes — when she releases her 33,000 e-mails that have been deleted. As soon as she releases them, I will release. I will release my tax returns. And that's against — my lawyers, they say, "Don't do it." I will tell you this. No — in fact, watching shows, they're reading the papers. Almost every lawyer says, you don't release your returns until the audit's complete. When the audit's complete, I'll do it. But I would go against them if she releases her e-mails.

30:29

So it's negotiable? It's not negotiable, no. Let her release the e-mails. Why did she delete 33,000... Well, I'll let her answer that. But let me just admonish the audience one more time. There was an agreement. We did ask you to be silent, so it would be helpful for us. Secretary Clinton? Well, I think you've seen another example of bait-and-switch here. For 40 years, everyone running for president has released their tax returns. You can go and see nearly, I think, 39, 40 years of our tax returns, but everyone has done it. We know the IRS has made clear there is no prohibition on

30:59

releasing it when you're under audit. So you've got to ask yourself, why won't he release his tax returns? And I think there may be a couple of reasons. First, maybe he's not as rich as he says he is. Second, maybe he's not as charitable as he claims to be. Third, we don't know all of his business dealings, but we have been told through investigative reporting that he owes about \$650 million to Wall Street and foreign banks. Or maybe he doesn't want the American people, all of you watching tonight, to know that he's paid

31:35

nothing in federal taxes, because the only years that anybody's ever seen were a couple of years when he had to turn them over to state authorities when he was trying to get a casino license, and they showed he didn't pay any federal income tax. That makes me smart. So if he's paid zero, that means zero for troops, zero for vets, zero for schools or health. And I think probably he's not all that enthusiastic about having the rest of our country see what the real reasons are, because it must be something really

32:11

important, even terrible, that he's trying to hide. And the financial disclosure statements, they don't give you the tax rate. They don't give you all the details that tax returns would. And it just seems to me that this is something that the American people deserve to see. And I have no reason to believe that he's ever going to release his tax returns, because there's something he's hiding. And we'll guess. We'll keep guessing at what it might be that he's hiding. But I think the question is, were he ever to

32:43

get near the White House, what would be those conflicts? Who does he owe money to? Well, he owes you the answers to that, and he should provide them. He also — he also raised the issue of your e-mails. Do you want to respond to that? I do. You know, I made a mistake using a private e-mail. That's for sure. And if I had to do it over again, I would, obviously, do it differently. But I'm not going to make any excuses. It was a mistake, and I take responsibility for that. Mr. Trump? That was more than a mistake.

33:20

That was done purposely. OK? That was not a mistake. That was done purposely. When you have your staff taking the Fifth Amendment, taking the Fifth

so they're not prosecuted, when you have the man that set up the illegal server taking the Fifth, I think it's disgraceful. And believe me, this country thinks it's — really thinks it's disgraceful, also. As far as my tax returns, you don't learn that much from tax returns. That I can tell you. You learn a lot from financial disclosure. And you should go down and take a look at that. The other thing, I'm extremely underleveraged.

33:52

The report that said \$650 — which, by the way, a lot of friends of mine that know my business say, boy, that's really not a lot of money. It's not a lot of money relative to what I had. The buildings that were in question, they said in the same report, which was — actually, it wasn't even a bad story, to be honest with you, but the buildings are worth \$3.9 billion. And the \$650 isn't even on that. But it's not \$650. It's much less than that. But I could give you a list of banks, I would — if that would help

34:19

you, I would give you a list of banks. These are very fine institutions, very fine banks. I could do that very quickly. I am very underleveraged. I have a great company. I have a tremendous income. And the reason I say that is not in a braggadocious way. It's because it's about time that this country had somebody running it that has an idea about money. When we have \$20 trillion in debt, and our country's a mess, you know, it's one thing to have \$20 trillion in debt and our roads are good and our bridges

34:48

are good and everything's in great shape, our airports. Our airports are like from a third world country. You land at LaGuardia, you land at Kennedy, you land at LAX, you land at Newark, and you come in from Dubai and Qatar and you see these incredible — you come in from China, you see these incredible airports, and

you land — we've become a third world country. So the worst of all things has happened. We owe \$20 trillion, and we're a mess. We haven't even started. And we've spent \$6 trillion in the Middle East, according to a report that I just saw. Whether it's 6 or 5, but it looks like it's 6, \$6 trillion in the Middle East,

35:20

we could have rebuilt our country twice. And it's really a shame. And it's politicians like Secretary Clinton that have caused this problem. Our country has tremendous problems. We're a debtor nation. We're a serious debtor nation. And we have a country that needs new roads, new tunnels, new bridges, new airports, new schools, new hospitals. And we don't have the money, because it's been squandered on so many of your ideas. We'll let you respond and we'll move on to the next segment. And maybe because you haven't paid any federal income tax for a lot of years. And the other thing I think is important... It would be squandered, too, believe me. ... is if your — if your main claim to be president of the United States is your business, then I think we should talk about that. You know, your campaign manager said that you built a lot of businesses on the backs of little guys. And, indeed, I have met a lot of the people who were stiffed by you and your businesses, Donald. I've met dishwashers, painters, architects, glass installers, marble installers, drapery installers, like my dad was, who you refused to pay when they finished the work that you asked them to do. We have an architect in the audience who designed one of your clubhouses at one of your golf courses. It's a beautiful facility. It immediately was put to use. And you wouldn't pay what the man needed to be paid, what he was charging you to do... Maybe he didn't do a good job and I was unsatisfied with his work... Well, to... Which our country should do, too.

Do the thousands of people that you have stiffed over the course of your business not deserve some kind of apology from someone who has taken their labor, taken

the goods that they produced, and then refused to pay them? I can only say that I'm certainly relieved that my late father never did business with you. He provided a good middle-class life for us, but the people he worked for, he expected the bargain to be kept on both sides. And when we talk about your business, you've taken business bankruptcy six times. There are a lot of great businesspeople that have never taken bankruptcy once. You call yourself the King of Debt. You talk about leverage. You even at one time suggested that you would try to negotiate down the national debt of the United States. Wrong. Wrong.

Well, sometimes there's not a direct transfer of skills from business to government, but sometimes what happened in business would be really bad for government.

Biden-Trump Debate (2020)

00:00:01 Good evening from the Health Education Campus of Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Clinic. I'm Chris Wallace of Fox News and I welcome you to the first of the 2020 presidential debates between President Donald J. Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden. This debate is sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The Commission has designed the format, six roughly 15-minute segments with two-minute answers from each candidate to the first question, then open discussion for the rest of each segment. Both campaigns have agreed to these rules. For the record, I decided the topics and the questions in each topic.

00:00:37 I can assure you none of the questions has been shared with the Commission or the two candidates.

This debate is being conducted under health and safety protocols designed by the Cleveland Clinic, which is serving as the health security advisor to the

Commission for all four debates. As a precaution, both campaigns have agreed the candidates will not shake hands at the beginning of tonight's debate. The audience here in the hall has promised to remain silent. No cheers, no boos, or other interruptions so we,

00:01:09 and more importantly you, can focus on what the candidates have to say. No noise except right now, as we welcome the Republican nominee, President Trump, and the Democratic nominee Vice President Biden. How you doing, man? How are you doing? I'm well. Gentlemen, a lot of people have been waiting for this night, so let's get going. Our first subject is the Supreme Court. President Trump, you nominated Amy Coney Barrett over the weekend to succeed the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Court. You say the Constitution is clear about your obligation and the

00:02:06 Senate's to consider a nominee to the Court. Vice President Biden, you say that this is an effort by the President and Republicans to jam through on an appointment in what you call an abuse of power. My first question to both of you tonight, why are you right in the argument you make and your opponent wrong? And where do you think a Justice Barrett would take the court? President Trump, in this first segment, you go first. Two minutes. Thank you very much, Chris. I will tell you very simply. We won the election.

00:02:39 Elections have consequences. We have the Senate, we have the White House, and we have a phenomenal nominee respected by all. Top, top academic, good in every way. Good in every way. In fact, some of her biggest endorsers are very liberal people from Notre Dame and other places. So I think she's going to be fantastic. We have plenty of time. Even if we did it after the election itself. I have a lot of time after the election, as you know. So I think that she will be outstanding. She's going to be as good as anybody that has served on that court.

00:03:16 We really feel that. We have a professor at Notre Dame, highly respected by all, said she's the single greatest student he's ever had. He's been a professor for a long time at a great school. And we won the election and therefore we have the right to choose her, and very few people knowingly would say otherwise. And by the way, the Democrats, they wouldn't even think about not doing it. The only difference is they'd try and do it faster. There's no way they would give it up. They had Merrick Garland,

00:03:44 but the problem is they didn't have the election so they were stopped. And probably that would happen in reverse, also. Definitely would happen in reverse. So we won the election and we have the right to do it, Chris.

President Trump, thank you. Same question to you, Vice President Biden. You have two minutes. Well, first of all, thank you for doing this and looking forward to this, Mr. President. Thank you, Joe. The American people have a right to have a say in who the Supreme Court nominee is and that say occurs

00:04:16 when they vote for United States Senators and when they vote for the President of United States. They're not going to get that chance now because we're in the middle of an election already. The election has already started. Tens of thousands of people already voted and so the thing that should happen is we should wait. We should wait and see what the outcome of this election is because that's the only way the American people get to express their view is by who they elect as President and who they elect as Vice President.

00:04:44 Now, what's at stake here is the President's made it clear, he wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. He's been running on that, he ran on that and he's been governing on that. He's in the Supreme Court right now trying to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, which will strip 20 million people from having health insurance now, if it goes into court. And the justice, I'm not opposed to the justice, she seems like a very fine person. But she's written, before she went in the bench,

00:05:18 which is her right, that she thinks that the Affordable Care Act is not Constitutional. The other thing that's on the court, and if it's struck down, what happens? Women's rights are fundamentally changed. Once again, a woman could pay more money because she has a pre-existing condition of pregnancy. They're able to charge women more for the same exact procedure a man gets.

And that ended when we, in fact, passed the Affordable Care Act, and there's a hundred million people

00:05:48 who have pre-existing conditions and they'll be taken away as well. Those pre-existing conditions, insurance companies are going to love this. And so it's just not appropriate to do this before this election. If he wins the election and the Senate is Republican, then he goes forward. If not, we should wait until February. There aren't a hundred million people with pre-existing conditions. As far as a say is concerned, the people already had their say. Okay, Justice Ginsburg said very powerfully, very strongly,

00:06:20 at some point 10 years ago or so, she said a President and the Senate is elected for a period of time, but a President is elected for four years. We're not elected for three years. I'm not elected for three years. So we have the Senate, we have a President. He's elected to the next election. During that period of time, during that period of time, we have an opening. I'm not elected for three years. I'm elected for four years. Joe, the hundred million people is totally wrong. I don't know where you got that number.

00:06:50 The bigger problem that you have is that you're going to extinguish 180 million people with their private health care, that they're very happy with.

That's simply not true. Well, you're certainly going to socialist. You're going to socialist medicine. Gentlemen, we're now into open discussion.

Open discussion. Open discussion, yes, I agree. Go ahead, Vice President.

Number one, he knows what I proposed. What I proposed is that we expand Obamacare and we increase it. We do not wipe any. And one of the big debates we had with 23 of my colleagues trying to win the nomination that I won, were saying that Biden wanted to allow people to have private insurance still. They can. They do. They will under my proposal.

00:07:31 That's not what you've said and it's not what your party is saying.

That is simply a lie. Your party doesn't say it. Your party wants to go socialist medicine and socialist healthcare.

The party is me. Right now, I am the Democratic Party. And they're going to dominate you, Joe. You know that. I am the Democratic Party right now.

Not according to Harris. The platform of the Democratic Party is what I, in fact, approved of, what I approved of. Now, here's the deal. The deal is that it's going to wipe out pre-existing conditions. And, by the way, the 200,000 people that have died on his watch,

00:08:02 how many of those have survived? Well, there's seven million people that contracted COVID. What does it mean for them going forward if you strike down the Affordable Care Act?

Joe, you've had 308,000 military people dying because you couldn't provide them proper healthcare in the military. So don't tell me about this.

I'm happy to talk about this. And if you were here, it wouldn't be 200, it would be two million people because you were very late on the draw. You didn't want me to ban China,

00:08:29 which was heavily infected. You didn't want me to ban Europe.

All right, gentlemen, Mr. President. You would have been much later, Joe, much later. Mr. President. We're talking about two million people. You're not going to be able to shut him up. Mr. President, as the moderator, we are going to talk about COVID in the next segment. But go ahead. Let me finish. The point is that the

President also is opposed to Roe V. Wade. That's on the ballot as well and the court, in the court, and so that's also at stake right now. And so the election is all.

You don't know what's on the ballot. Why is it on the ballot? Why is

00:09:00 it on the ballot? It's not on the ballot. It's on the ballot in the court.

I don't think so. In the court. There's nothing happening there. Donald would you just be quiet for a minute. You don't know her view on Roe V. Wade? You don't know her view. Well, all right. All right. Let's talk. We've got a lot to unpack here, gentlemen. We've got a lot of time. On healthcare, and then we'll come back to Roe V. Wade. All right. Mr. President, the Supreme Court will hear a case a week after the election in which the Trump Administration, along with 18 state Attorney Generals

00:09:35 are seeking to overturn Obamacare, to end Obamacare.

That's right. You have spent the last week. Because they want to give good healthcare. If I may ask my question, sir. Good healthcare.

Over the last four years, you have promised to repeal and replace Obamacare, but you have never in these four years come up with a plan, a comprehensive plan, to replace Obamacare. Yes, I have. Of course, I have. The individual mandate.

[crosstalk] when I finish I'm going to give an opportunity. Excuse me. I got rid of the individual mandate, which was a big chunk of Obamacare. That's not a comprehensive place. That is absolutely a big thing. That was the worst part of Obamacare. I didn't ask, sir. Chris, that

00:10:08 the worst part of Obamacare. You're debating him not me. Let me ask my question. Well, I'll ask Joe. The individual mandate was the most unpopular aspect of Obamacare. Mr. President. I got rid of it. And we will protect people.

Mr. President, I'm the moderator of this debate and I would like you to let me ask my question and then you can answer. Go ahead.

You, in the course of these four years, have never come up with a comprehensive plan to replace Obamacare, and just this last Thursday you signed a largely symbolic Executive Order to protect people with pre-existing conditions five days before this debate. So my question, sir, is what is the Trump healthcare plan?

00:10:48 Well, first of all, I guess I'm debating you, not him, but that's okay. I'm not surprised. Let me just tell you something. There's nothing symbolic. I'm cutting drug prices. I'm going with Favored Nations, which no President has the courage to do because you're going against big pharma. Drug prices will be coming down 80 or 90%. You could have done it during your 47-year period in government, but you didn't do it. Nobody's done it. So we're cutting healthcare. What about pre-existing conditions? All of the things that

00:11:15 we've done. He has not done healthcare. I'll give you an example. Insulin, it was destroying families, destroying people, the cost. I'm getting it for so cheap it's like water, you want to know the truth. So cheap. Take a look at all of the drugs that what we're doing. Prescription drug prices, we're going to allow our Governors now to go to other countries to buy drugs because when they paid just a tiny fraction of what we do. Okay, like I say, this is open discussion. This is big stuff.

Sir, you'll be happy. I'm about to pick up on one of your points to ask the Vice President, which is, he

00:11:46 points out that you would like to add a public option to Obamacare. Yes. And the argument that he makes and other Republicans make is that that is going to end private insurance. It is not. If I start asking the question. That's not what your party says, by the way. And it will end private insurance and create a government takeover of healthcare. It does not. It's only for those people who are so poor they qualify for Medicaid they can get that free in most States, except Governors who want to deny people who are poor Medicaid. Anyone who qualifies

00:12:19 for Medicaid would automatically be enrolled in the public option. The vast majority of the American people would still not be in that option. Number one. Number two. Joe, you agreed with Bernie Sanders, who's far left, on the manifesto, we call it. And that gives you socialized medicine. Look, hey. Are you saying you didn't agree? I'm not going to listen to him. The fact of the matter is I beat Bernie Sanders. Not by much. I beat him by a whole hell of a lot. Not by much.

I'm here standing facing you, old buddy. If Pocahontas would have left two days early you would have lost every primary. All he knows how to do. On Super Tuesday, you got very lucky.

00:12:53 Look he's the deal. I got very lucky. I'm going to get very lucky tonight as well. With what? And tonight, I'm going to make sure.

With what? Because here's the deal, here's the deal. The fact is that everything he's saying so far is simply a lie. I'm not here to call out his lies. Everybody knows he's a liar. But you agree. Joe, you're the liar. You graduated last in your class, not first in your class. God, I want to make sure. Mr. President, can you let him finish, sir?

No, he doesn't know how to do that. you'd be surprised. You'd be surprised. Go ahead, Joe.

00:13:22 The wrong guy, the wrong night, at the wrong time. Listen, you agreed with Bernie Sanders and the manifesto. There is no manifesto, number one. Please let him speak, Mr. President. Number two. He just lost the left. Number two. You just lost the left. You agreed with Bernie Sanders on a plan that you absolutely agreed to and under that plan [crosstalk], they call it socialized medicine. Mr. President. I'll tell you what, he is not for any help for people needing healthcare. Who is, Bernie? Because he, in fact, already has cost 10 million people their healthcare that they had from their employers

00:14:01 because of his recession. Number one. Number two, there are 20 million people getting healthcare through Obamacare now that he wants to take it away. He won't ever look you in the eye and say that's what he wants to do. Take it away. No, I want to give them better healthcare at a much lower price, because Obamacare is no good. He doesn't know how. He doesn't know how to do that. I've already fixed it. He has never offered a plan. We've already fixed it to an extent. Obamacare, as you might know but probably don't, Obamacare is no good. Gentlemen, you realize if you're both speaking at the same time. Let the President. Go ahead, sir. Obamacare is no good. We made it better and I had a choice to make very early on. We took away the individual mandate. We guaranteed pre-existing conditions, but took away the individual mandate. Listen, this is the way it is. And that destroyed... They shouldn't even call it Obamacare, then I had a choice to make, do I let my people run it really well or badly? If I run it badly, they'll probably blame him, but they'll blame me. But more importantly, I want to help people. Okay. I said, "You've got to run it so well." And I just had a meeting with them. They said the problem is, no matter how well you run Obamacare, it's a disaster. It's too expensive.

00:15:35 Premiums are too high, that it doesn't work. So we do want to get rid of it. Chris, we want to get rid of that and give something that's cheaper and better. I understand that, sir. But I have to give you roughly equal time.

Go ahead. Please let the Vice President talk, sir. Good .He has no plan for healthcare. Of course, we do.

Please.

He sends out wishful thinking. He has Executive Orders that have no power. He hasn't lowered drug costs for anybody. He's been promising a healthcare plan since he got elected. He has none, like almost everything else he talks about.

00:15:40 He does not have a plan. He doesn't have a plan. And the fact is this man doesn't know what he's talking about. All right, I have one final question for you. Sure.

Mr. Vice President, if Senate Republicans, we were talking originally about the Supreme Court here, if Senate Republicans go ahead and confirm Justice Barrett there has been talk about ending the filibuster or even packing the court, adding to the nine justices there. You call this a distraction by the President.

00:16:12 But, in fact, it wasn't brought up by the President. It was brought up by some of your Democratic colleagues in the Congress. So my question to you is, you have refused in the past to talk about it, are you willing to tell the American people tonight whether or not you will support either ending the filibuster or packing the court?

Whatever position I take on that, that'll become the issue. The issue is the American people should speak. You should go out and vote. You're voting now. Vote and let your Senators know how strongly you feel.

00:16:40 Are you going to pack the court? Vote now. Are you going to pack the court? Make sure you, in fact, let people know, your Senators. He doesn't want to answer the question. I'm not going to answer the question.

Why wouldn't you answer that question? You want to put a lot of new Supreme Court Justices. Radical left. Will you shut up, man? Listen, who is on your list, Joe? Who's on your list? Gentlemen, I think we've ended this.

This is so un-Presidential. He's going to pack the court. He is not going to give a list. We have ended the segment. We're going to move on to the second segment.

That was really a productive segment, wasn't it? Keep yapping, man.

The people understand, Joe. They sure do. 47 years, you've done nothing. They understand.

00:17:13 All right, the second subject is COVID-19, which is an awfully serious subject. So let's try to be serious about it. We have had more than seven million cases of coronavirus in the United States and more than 200,000 people have died. Even after we produce a vaccine, experts say that it could be months or even years before we come back to anything approaching normal. My question for both of you is, based on what you have said and done so far, and what you have said you would do starting in 2021, why should the American

00:17:54 people trust you more than your opponent to deal with this public health crisis going forward? In this case, the question goes to you first, sir. Two minutes, uninterrupted. Good luck. 200,000 dead. As you said, over seven million infected in the United States. We, in fact, have 4% of the world's population, 20% of the deaths. 40,000 people a day are contracting COVID. In addition to that, about between 750 and 1000 people a day are dying. When he was presented with that number,

00:18:31 he said, "It is what it is." Well, it is what it is because you are who you are. That's why it is. The President has no plan. He hasn't laid out anything. He knew all the way back in February how serious this crisis was. He knew it was a deadly disease. What did he do? He's on tape as acknowledging he knew it. He said he didn't tell us or give people a warning of it because he didn't want to panic the American people. You don't panic. He panicked. In addition to that, what did he do? He went in and we were insisting that the people

00:19:07 we had in the ground in China should be able to go to Wuhan and determine for themselves how dangerous this was. He did not even ask Xi to do that.

Wrong. He told us what a great job Xi was doing. He said we owe him a debt of gratitude for being so transparent with us. And what did he do then? He then did nothing. He waited and waited and waited. He still doesn't have a plan.

Wrong. Sir, it's his two minutes.

It's so wrong. I laid out back in March, exactly what we should be doing. And I laid out again in July, what we should be doing. We should be providing all the protective gear possible.

00:19:41 We should be providing the money the House has passed in order to be able to go out and get people the help they need to keep their businesses open. Open schools cost a lot of money. You should get out of your bunker and get out of the sand trap in your golf course and go in the Oval Office and bring together the Democrats and Republicans and fund what needs to be done now to save lives. So, if we would have listened to you. Wait, wait. You have two minutes, sir.

If we would've listened to you, the country

00:20:09 would have been left wide open, millions of people would have died, not 200,000. And one person is too much. It's China's fault. It should have never happened. They stopped it from going in, but it was China's fault. And, by the way, when you talk about numbers, you don't know how many people died in China. You don't know how many people died in Russia. You don't know how many people died in India. They don't exactly give you a straight count, just so you understand. But if you look at what we've done, I closed it and you said, "He's xenophobic. He's a racist and he's xenophobic," because you didn't think I should have closed our country. Wait a minute.

00:20:33 Sir, it's his two minutes. You didn't think we should have closed our country because you thought it was terrible. You wouldn't have closed it for another two months. By my doing it early, in fact, Dr. Fauci said, "President Trump saved thousands of lives." Many of your Democrat Governors said,

00:21:00 "President Trump did a phenomenal job." We worked with the Governor. Oh really, go take a look. The Governors said I did a phenomenal job. Most of them said that. In fact, people that would not be necessarily on my side

said that, “President Trump did a phenomenal job.” We did. We got the gowns. We got the masks. We made the ventilators. You wouldn’t have made ventilators. And now we’re weeks away from a vaccine. We’re doing therapeutics already. Fewer people are dying when they get sick. Far fewer people are dying. We’ve done a great job. The only thing I haven’t done a good job, and that’s because of the fake news,

00:21:32 no matter what you say to them, they give you a bad press on it. It’s just fake news. They give you good press, they give me bad press because that’s the way it is, unfortunately. But let me just say something. I don’t care. I’ve gotten used to it. But I’ll tell you, Joe, you could never have done the job that we did. You don’t have it in your blood. You could’ve never done that, Joe. I know how to do the job. I know how to get the job done. Well, you didn’t do very well in Swine Flu. H1-N1, you were a disaster. Your own Chief of Staff said you were a disaster.

00:21:58 14,000 people died, not 200,000. A far less lethal disease, by the way. Sir, you made a point. Let him answer it. And there was no one ... We didn’t shut down the economy. This is his economy he shut down. The reason it’s shut down is because, look, you folks at home. How many of you got up this morning and had an empty chair at the kitchen table because someone died of COVID? How many of you are in a situation where you lost your mom or dad and you couldn’t even speak to them, you had a nurse holding a phone up

00:22:29 so you could in fact say goodbye? We would have lost far more people, far more people. You would have been months late. You’re months behind me, Joe. His own CDC Director says we could lose as many as another 200,000 people between now and the end of the year. And he said, if we just wear a mask, we can save half those numbers. Just a mask. And by the way, in terms of the whole notion of a vaccine, we’re for a vaccine, but I don’t trust him at all. Nor do you. I know you don’t. What we trust is a scientist.

00:22:59 You don't trust Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer?

Okay, gentlemen, gentlemen. Let me move on to questions about the future because you both have touched on two of the questions I'm going to ask. Focusing on the future first, President Trump, you have repeatedly either contradicted or been at odds with some of your governments own top scientists. The week before last, the Head of the Centers for Disease Control, Dr. Redfield said it would be summer before the vaccine would become generally available to the public. You said that he was confused and mistaken.

00:23:32 Those were your two words. But Dr. Slaoui, the head of your Operation Warp Speed, has said exactly the same thing. Are they both wrong?

Well, I've spoken to the companies and we can have it a lot sooner. It's a very political thing because people like this would rather make it political than save lives.

God.

It is a very political thing. I've spoken to Pfizer, I've spoken to all of the people that you have to speak to, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and others. They can go faster than that by a lot.

00:24:03 It's become very political because the left... Or I don't know if I call them left, I don't know what I call them. So you're suggesting that the head of your Operation Warp Speed, Dr. Slaoui. I disagree with him. No, I disagree with both of them. And he didn't say that. He said it could be there, but it could also be much sooner. I had him in my office two days ago. He talked about the summer, sir, before it's generally available, just like Dr. Redfield. Because he said it's a possibility that we'll have the answer before November 1st. It could also be after that. I'm talking about when it's generally available, not. Well, we're going to deliver it right away. We have the military all set up.

00:24:30 Logistically, they're all set up. We have our military that delivers soldiers and they can do 200,000 a day. They're going to be delivering- This is the same man who told you. It's all set up. ... by Easter, this would be gone away. By the warm weather, it'd be gone. Miraculous, like a miracle. And by the way, maybe you could inject some bleach in your arm, and that would take care of it. This is the same man. That was said sarcastically, and you know that. That was said sarcastically. So here's the deal. This man is talking about a vaccine.

00:24:59 Every serious company is talking about maybe having a vaccine done by the end of the year, but the distribution of that vaccine will not occur until sometime beginning of the middle of next year to get it out, if we get the vaccine. And pray God we will. Pray God we will. Mr. Vice President, I want to pick up. You'll have the vaccine sooner than that. I want to pick up on this question though. You say the public can trust the scientists, but they can't trust President Trump. In fact, you said that again tonight. Your running mate, Senator Harris, goes

00:25:29 further, saying that public health experts quote, "Will be muzzled, will be suppressed." Given the fact that polls already show that people are concerned about the vaccine and are reluctant to take it, are you and your running mate, Senator Harris, contributing to that fear? No more than the question you just asked him. You pointed out he puts pressure and disagrees with his own scientists. But you're saying you can't. Everybody knows. Or Senator Harris is saying you can't trust the scientist. Well, no, no. You can trust the scientist. She didn't say that. You can trust the...

00:26:00 She said that public health experts quote, "Will be muzzled, will be suppressed." Yes. Well, that's what he's going to try to do, but there's thousands of scientists out there, like here at this great hospital that don't work for him. Their job doesn't depend on him. They're the people... And by the way- We spoke to the scientists that are in charge.

By the way. ... they will have the vaccine very soon. Let him finish. Do you believe for a moment what he's telling you in light of all the lies he's told you about the whole

00:26:31 issue relating to COVID? He still hasn't even acknowledged that he knew this was happening, knew how dangerous it was going to be back in February, and he didn't even tell you. He's on record as saying it. He panicked or he just looked at the stock market. One of the two. Because guess what? A lot of people died and a lot more are going to die unless he gets a lot smarter, a lot quicker. Mr. President? Did you use the word smart? So you said you went to Delaware State, but you forgot the name of your college.

00:27:03 You didn't go to Delaware State. You graduated either the lowest or almost the lowest in your class. Don't ever use the word smart with me. Don't ever use that word. Oh, give me a break.

Because you know what? There's nothing smart about you, Joe. 47 years you've done nothing. Well, let's have this debate.

Let me just tell you something, Joe. If you would have had the charge of what I was put through, I had to close the greatest economy in the history of our country. And by the way, now it's being built again

00:27:30 and it's going up fast. We'll get to the economy in the next segment, sir. It's going up fast. I look forward to talking about it. Okay. When it comes to how the virus has been handled so far, the two of you have taken very different approaches, and this is going to affect how the virus is handled going forward by whichever of you ends up becoming the next president. I want to quickly go through several of those. Reopenings. Vice President Biden, you have been much more reluctant than President Trump about reopening the economy and schools. Why, sir? Because he doesn't have a plan. If I were running it,

00:28:01 I'd know what the plan is. You've got to provide these businesses the ability to have the money to be able to reopen with the PPE, as well as with the sanitation they need. You have to provide them classic. Tell that to Nancy Pelosi. Will he just shush for a minute? Tell that to Nancy Pelosi, and Schumer [crosstalk] Chuck. Nancy Pelosi and Schumer, they have a plan. He won't even meet with them. The Republicans won't meet in the Senate. He sits in his golf course. Well, I mean, literally, think about it. Think about it. You probably play more than I do, Joe. What about this question of reopenings and the fact.

00:28:36 Well, he wants to shut down this country and I want to keep it open, and we did a great thing by shutting it down. You just admitted you'd shut it down. Wait a minute, Joe. Let me shut you down for a second, Joe, just for one second. He wants to shut down the country. We just went through it. We had to, because we didn't know anything about the disease. Now we've found that elderly people with heart problems and diabetes and different problems are very, very vulnerable. We learned a lot. Young children aren't, even younger people aren't. We've learned a lot, but he wants to shut it down. More people

00:29:09 will be hurt by continuing. If you look at Pennsylvania, if you look at certain states that have been shut down, they have Democrat governors, all, one of the reasons they shut down is because they want to keep it shut down until after the election on November 3rd. All right. I want to move onto another.

Because it's a political thing. I want to move onto another subject.

I got to respond to that. I want to move. But those states. Gentlemen, I want to move onto another subject. Those states are not doing well that are shut down right now. I got to respond to that. He wants to shut down the whole country.

President Trump, you have begun to increasingly question the effectiveness of masks as a disease preventer. And in fact, recently you have cited the issue of

waiters touching their masks and touching plates. Are you questioning the efficacy of masks? No, I think masks are okay. You have to understand, if you look...

00:29:49 I have a mask right here. I put a mask on when I think I need it. Tonight, as an example, everybody's had a test and you've had social distancing and all of the things that you have to, but I wear masks. Just like your rally. ... when needed. When needed, I wear masks. Okay. Let me ask. I don't wear a mask like him. Every time you see him, he's got a mask. He could be speaking 200 feet away from him and he shows up with the biggest mask I've ever seen. I will say this. Vice President Biden, go ahead, sir. Look, the way to open businesses is give
00:30:19 them the wherewithal to be able to open. We provided money, the-
But I was asking you, sir, about masks.

Well, masks make a big difference. His own head of the CDC said if we just wore masks between now, if everybody wore a mask and social distanced between now and January, we'd probably save up to 100,000 lives. It matters. It matters.

And they've also said the opposite. They've also said. No serious person has said the opposite. No serious person. Okay. I want to ask you. Dr. Fauci. Dr. Fauci said the opposite. He did not say the opposite. I want to ask you, we've got a little more than a minute left in this segment.

00:30:56 He said very strongly, "Masks are not good." Then he changed his mind. He said, "Masks are good." I want to ask. I'm okay with masks. I'm not fighting masks. I want to ask you both about one last subject because your different approaches has even affected the way that you have campaigned. President Trump, you're holding large rallies with crowds packed together, thousands of people.

Outside. Outside. Yes, sir. Agreed. Vice President Biden, you are holding much smaller events with. Because nobody will show up. ... people with masks.

Well, it's true. Nobody shows up to his rallies. All right. In any case, why you holding the big rallies? Why you not? You go first, sir. Because people want to

hear what I have to say. I mean. But are not worried about us spreading disease?... I've done a great job as a president,

00:31:29 and I'll have 25, 35,000 people show up at airports. We use airports and hangers and we have a lot of people. Are you not worried about the disease issues, sir? Well, so far we have had no problem whatsoever. It's outside. That's a big difference according to the experts. We do them outside, we have tremendous crowds, as you see, and literally on 24 hours notice. And Joe does the circles and has three people someplace.

By the way, did you see one of the last big rallies he had? A reporter came up to him to ask him a question, he said,

00:32:01 "No, no, no. Stand back, put on your mask, put on a mask. Have you been tested? I'm way far away from those other people." That's what he said, "I'm going to be okay." He's not worried about you. He's not worried about the people out there [crosstalk]. We've had no negative effect.

No negative effect. Come on. We've had no negative effect, and we've had 35, 40,000 people at these rallies. All right. Do you want to just quickly finish up? Because I want to move on to our next. Yes, I would. He's been totally irresponsible the way in which

00:32:28 he has handled the social distancing and people wearing masks, basically encouraged them not to. He's a fool on this.

If you could get the crowds, you would have done the same thing. But you can't. Nobody cares. Gentlemen, can we move on to the. Nobody cares. Gentlemen, can we move on to the economy? Yes. The economy is, I think it's fair to say, recovering faster than expected from the shutdown. Much faster. ... in the second quarter. The unemployment rate fell to 8.4% last month. The Federal Reserve says the hit to growth, which is going to be there,

00:33:00 is not going to be nearly as big as they had expected. President Trump, you say we are in a V-shaped recovery. Vice President Biden, you say it's more of a K-shape. What difference does that mean to the American people in terms of the economy? President Trump, in this segment you go first. So we built the greatest economy in history. We closed it down because of the China plague. When the plague came in, we closed it down, which was very hard psychologically to do. He didn't think we should close it down and he was wrong.

00:33:31 Again, two million people would be dead now instead of... Still, 204,000 people is too much. One person is too much. Should have never happened from China. But what happened is we closed it down and now we're reopening and we're doing record business. We had 10.4 million people in a four-month period that we've put back into the workforce. That's a record the likes of which nobody's ever seen before. And he wants to close down the... He will shut it down again. He will destroy this country. A lot of people, between drugs

00:34:01 and alcohol and depression, when you start shutting it down, you take a look at what's happening at some of your Democrat-run states where they have these tough shutdowns. And I'm telling you it's because they don't want to open it. One of them came out last week, you saw that, "Oh, we're going to open up on November 9th." Why November 9th? Because it's after the election. They think they're hurting us by keeping them closed. They're hurting people. People know what to do. They can social distance. They can wash their hands, they

00:34:28 can wear masks. They can do whatever they want, but they got to open these states up. When you look at North Carolina, when you look, and these governors are under siege, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and a couple of others, you got to open these states up. It's not fair. You're talking about almost it's like being in prison. And you look at what's going on with divorce, look at what's going on with

alcoholism and drugs. It's a very, very sad thing. And he'll close down the whole country.

00:34:54 This guy will close down the whole country and destroy our country. Our country is coming back incredibly well, setting records as it does it. We don't need somebody to come in and say, "Let's shut it down." All right. Your two minutes, sir. We're now moved to you. As I said, posing the question, the president says it's a V-shape recovery, you say it's a K-shaped recovery. What's the difference? The difference is millionaires and billionaires like him in the middle of the COVID crisis have done very well. Billionaires have made another \$300 billion

00:35:28 because of his profligate tax proposal, and he only focused on the market. But you folks at home, you folks living in Scranton and Claymont and all the small towns and working class towns in America, how well are you doing? This guy paid a total of \$750 in taxes. That's wrong. Sir, wait. No. Sir.

Yeah, I understand. You've agreed to the two minutes, so please let him have it.

Do I get my time back? The fact is that he has in fact, worked on this in a way that he's going to be the first president of the United States

00:35:58 to leave office, having fewer jobs in his administration than when he became president. Fewer jobs than when he became president. First one in American history. Secondly, the people who have lost their jobs are those people who have been on the front lines. Those people who have been saving our lives, those people who have been out there dying. People who've been putting themselves in the way to make sure that we could all try to make it. And the idea that he is insisting that we go forward and open when you have almost half the states in America with a significant increase in COVID deaths and COVID cases in the United States of America,

00:36:31 and he wants to open it up more. Why is he want to open it up? Why doesn't he take care of the... You can't fix the economy until you fix the COVID

crisis. And he has no intention of doing anything about making it better for you all at home in terms of your health and your safety. Schools. Why aren't schools open? Because it costs a lot of money to open them safely. They were going to give, his Administration

00:37:00 going to give the teachers and school students masks, and then they decided no, couldn't do that because it's not a national emergency. Not a national emergency. They've done nothing to help small businesses. Nothing. They're closing. One in six is now gone. He ought to get on the job and take care of the needs of the American people so we can open safely.

All right. Your time is up, sir. We are going to get to. I have to respond to that.

Well, you both had two minutes, sir. Excuse me, he made a statement. And so did you.

00:37:29 No, people want their schools open. They don't want to be shut down. They don't want their state shut down. They want their restaurants. I look at New York. It's so sad what's happening in New York. It's almost like a ghost town, and I'm not sure it can ever recover what they've done to New York. People want their places open. They want to get back to their lives. People want to be safe. They'll be careful, but they want their schools open. People want to be safe.

I'm the one that brought back football. By the way, I brought back Big Ten football.

00:37:54 It was me and I'm very happy to do it. All right. Let's. ... and people of Ohio are very proud of me. And you know how I found out? When [crosstalk].

Gentlemen, we're going to get to your economic plans going forward in a moment, but first, Mr. President, as you well know, there's a new report that in 2016, the year you were elected president, and 2017, your first year as president, that you paid \$750 a year in federal income tax each of those years. I know that you pay a lot of other taxes, but I'm asking you this specific question.

00:38:29 Is it true that you paid \$750 in federal income taxes each of those two years? I paid millions of dollars in taxes, millions of dollars of income tax. And let me just tell you, there was a story in one of the papers that paid. Show us your tax returns. I paid \$38 million one year, I paid \$27 million one year. Show us your tax returns. You'll see it as soon as it's finished, you'll see it. You know, if you wanted to, go to the Board of Elections. There's 118 page or so report that says everything I have, every bank I have, I'm totally

00:39:03 under leveraged because the assets are extremely good, and I built a great company. Sir, I'm asking you a specific question, which is. But let me tell you. I understand all of that. Release your tax return. I understand all of that. Let me. No, Mr. President, I'm asking you a question. Will you tell us how much you paid in federal income taxes in 2016 and 2017? Millions of dollars. You paid millions of dollars in. Millions of dollars, yes. So not 750? Millions of dollars. And you'll get to see it. And you'll get to see it. When? But let me just tell you. In [crosstalk]?

Chris, let me just say something, that it was the tax laws. I don't want to pay tax.

00:39:37 Before I came here, I was a private developer, I was a private business people. Like every other private person, unless they're stupid, they go through the laws, and that's what it is. He passed a tax bill that gave us all these privileges for depreciation and for tax credits. We built the building and we get tax credits, like the hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. Which by the way, was given to me by the Obama Administration, if you can believe that. Now the man got fired right after that happened, but that's. Vice President Biden, you want to respond? Yeah, I do want to respond.

00:40:09 Look, the tax code that put him in a position that he pays less tax than on the money a school teacher makes is because of him... He says he's smart because he can take advantage of the tax code. And he does take advantage of the

tax code. That's why I'm going to eliminate the Trump tax cuts. And I'm going to eliminate those tax cuts. That's okay. And make sure that we invest in the people who in fact need the help. People out there need help. But why didn't you do it over the last 25 years? Because you weren't president. Why didn't you do it over the last 25 years?

00:40:41 Because you weren't president and screwing things up. You were a Senator and [crosstalk]. You're the worst president America has ever had. Come on. Hey, Joe, let me just tell you, Joe. In 47 months, I've done more than you've done in 47 years, Joe. We've done things that you never even thought of doing.

Okay. Gentlemen? Including fixing the broken military that you gave me, including taking care of your debts. Mr. President, we're talking about the economy. I'd like to ask you about your plans going forward because

00:41:12 Mr. Vice President, your economic plan. He has none. ... if you were to be elected president focuses a lot on big government, big taxes, big spending. I want to focus first on the taxes. You propose more than \$4 trillion over a decade in new taxes on individuals making more than \$400,000 a year. ... and on corporations. President Trump says that that kind of an increase in taxes is going to hurt the economy as it's just coming out of a recession. Well, just take a look at what is the analysis done by Wall Street firms,

00:41:45 points out that my economic plan would create 7 million more jobs than his in four years, number one. And number two, it would create an additional \$1 trillion in economic growth, because it would be about buying American. The federal government spends \$600 billion a year on everything from ships, to steel, to buildings and the like. And under my proposal, we're going to make sure that every penny of that has to be made by a company. But respectfully, sir, I'm talking about

00:42:19 taxes, not spending. By the way, I'm going to eliminate a significant number of the taxes. I'm going to make the corporate tax 28%. It shouldn't be 21%. You have 91 companies federal, I mean, the fortune 500, who don't pay a single penny in tax making billions of dollars. Why didn't you do it before, when you were Vice-President with Obama? Because you in fact passed that, that was your tax proposal. I got it done. And you know what happened? Yeah, you got it done. Our economy boomed like it's never boomed before. The economy.

00:42:50 Mr. President. Let me finish. Mr. President, let me pick up on that. You would continue your free market approach, lower taxes, more deregulation, correct? Not lower tax for the American people. But let me.

Excuse me. You talk about the economy booming. It turns out that in Obama's final three years as president more jobs were created, a million and a half more jobs, than in the first three years of your presidency. They had the slowest economic recovery since 1929. It was the slowest recovery. Also, they took over something that was down here.

00:43:26 All you had to do is turn on the lights and you pick up a lot. But they had the slowest economic recovery since 1929, and let me tell you about the stock market. When the stock market goes up, that means jobs. It also means 401ks. If you got in, if you ever became president with your ideas, you want to terminate my taxes. I'll tell you what, you'll lose. Half of the companies that have poured in here will leave. And plenty of companies that are already here, they'll leave for other places. [crosstalk] They will leave and you will have a depression,

00:43:54 the likes of which you've never seen.

BIDEN: Look. Mr. Vice President. ... we inherited the worst recession, short of a depression in American history. I was asked to bring it back. We were able to have an economic recovery that created the jobs you're talking about. We handed him a booming economy, he blew it. It wasn't booming. He blew it. It wasn't booming.

It was the weakest recovery since 1929. Wait, wait, is it fair to say he blew it when, in fact. When COVID came along. ... when there was record low unemployment before COVID. Yeah, because what he did, even before COVID,

00:44:30 manufacturing went in the hole. Manufacturing went in a hole-

Excuse me, Chris, wait. ... number one. Number two. Chris. Number three.

They said it would take... No, you're on number two. No. Chris, Chris. They said it would take. This guy. ... a miracle to bring back manufacturing. I brought back 700,000 jobs. They brought back nothing. They gave up on manufacturing.

We did not. [crosstalk]. ... standard fare. I'm the guy that brought back the automobile industry. He totally gave up on manufacturing. All right, let him.

I was asked to bring back Chrysler and General Motors. We brought them back right here in the state of Ohio and Michigan. He blew it. They're gone. He blew it.

And in fact, they're gone. Ohio had the best year it's

00:45:04 ever had last year. Michigan had the best year they've ever had. That is not true. Many car companies came in from Germany, from Japan, went to Michigan, went to Ohio and they didn't come in with you. [crosstalk]. Mr. Vice President, go ahead. And so you take a look at what he's actually done. He's done very little. His trade deals are the same way. He talks about these great trade deals. He talks about the art of the deal. China's perfected the art of the steal. We have a higher deficit with China now

00:45:31 than we did before. We have the highest trade deficit. China ate your lunch- [crosstalk]. ... with Mexico. China ate your lunch, Joe. And no wonder your son goes in and, what, he takes out billions of dollars. He takes out billions of dollars to manage. He makes millions of dollars. And also, while we're at it, why is it just out of curiosity, the mayor of Moscow's wife gave your son three and a half million dollars? That is not true. What did he do to deserve it? What did he do with Burisma. None of that is true. ... to deserve \$183,000? Sir, you've asked him a

question, let him answer it. None of that is true. Oh really, he didn't get three and a half million? Mr. President. Is totally. Mr. President, please. You've asked a question- [crosstalk]. Totally discredited. Totally discredited. And by the way. Well wait, he didn't get three and a half million dollars, Joe? Mr. Vice. He got three and a half million dollars. Mr. President. ... dollars. That is not true. Oh, really? Mr. President, it's an open discussion. Please[crosstalk].It's a fact. It is not a fact. Well, you have raised an issue, let the Vice President answer. It's been totally discredited.

Trump–Harris Debate (2024)

00:04:53 We want to welcome viewers watching on ABC and around the world tonight. Vice President Kamala Harris and President Donald Trump are just moments away from taking the stage in this unprecedented race for president.

And I'm Linsey Davis. Tonight's meeting could be the most consequential event of their campaigns, with Election Day now less than two months away. For Vice President Kamala Harris, this is her first debate since President Biden withdrew from the race on July 21st. Of course, that decision followed his debate against President Donald Trump in June.

00:05:19 Since then, this race has taken on an entirely new dynamic. And that brings us to the rules of tonight's debate: 90 minutes with two commercial breaks. No topics or questions have been shared with the campaigns. The candidates will have two minutes to answer questions. And this is the clock. That's what they'll be seeing. Two minutes for rebuttals and one minute for follow-ups, clarifications or responses. Their microphones will only be turned on when it's their turn to speak. No prewritten notes allowed. There is no

00:05:44 audience here tonight in this hall at the National Constitution Center. This is an intimate setting for two candidates who have never met. President

Trump won the coin toss. He chose to deliver the final closing statement of the evening. Vice President Harris selected the podium to the right. So let's now welcome the candidates to the stage. Vice President Kamala Harris and President Donald Trump.

Kamala Harris. Let's have a good debate. Nice to see you. Have fun. Thank you. Thank you. Welcome to you both. It's wonderful to have you. It's an honor to have you

00:06:18 both here tonight. Good evening, we are looking forward to a spirited and thoughtful debate. So let's get started. I want to begin tonight with the issue voters repeatedly say is their number one issue, and that is the economy and the cost of living in this country. Vice President Harris, you and President Trump were elected four years ago and your opponent on the stage here tonight often asks his supporters, are you better off than you were four years ago? When it comes to the economy, do you believe

00:06:44 Americans are better off than they were four years ago? So, I was raised as a middle-class kid. And I am actually the only person on this stage who has a plan that is about lifting up the middle class and working people of America. I believe in the ambition, the aspirations, the dreams of the American people. And that is why I imagine and have actually a plan to build what I call an opportunity economy. Because here's the thing. We know that we have a shortage of homes and housing, and the cost of housing is too expensive for far too

00:07:17 many people. We know that young families need support to raise their children. And I intend on extending a tax cut for those families of \$6,000, which is the largest child tax credit that we have given in a long time. So that those young families can afford to buy a crib, buy a car seat, buy clothes for their children. My passion, one of them, is small businesses. I was actually -- my mother raised my

sister and me but there was a woman who helped raise us. We call her our second mother. She was a small business owner. I love our small businesses.

00:07:51 My plan is to give a \$50,000 tax deduction to start-up small businesses, knowing they are part of the backbone of America's economy. My opponent, on the other hand, his plan is to do what he has done before, which is to provide a tax cut for billionaires and big corporations, which will result in \$5 trillion to America's deficit. My opponent has a plan that I call the Trump sales tax, which would be a 20% tax on everyday goods that you rely on to get through the month. Economists have

00:08:27 said that Trump's sales tax would actually result for middle-class families in about \$4,000 more a year because of his policies and his ideas about what should be the backs of middle-class people paying for tax cuts for billionaires. President Trump, I'll give you two minutes. First of all, I have no sales tax. That's an incorrect statement. She knows that. We're doing tariffs on other countries. Other countries are going to finally, after 75 years, pay us back for all that we've done for the world.

00:09:00 And the tariff will be substantial in some cases. I took in billions and billions of dollars, as you know, from China. In fact, they never took the tariff off because it was so much money, they can't. It would totally destroy everything that they've set out to do. They've taken in billions of dollars from China and other places. They've left the tariffs on. When I had it, I had tariffs and yet I had no inflation. Look, we've had a terrible economy because inflation has - which is really known as a country buster. It breaks up countries.

00:09:28 We have inflation like very few people have ever seen before. Probably the worst in our nation's history. We were at 21%. But that's being generous because many things are 50, 60, 70, and 80% higher than they were just a few years ago. This has been a disaster for people, for the middle class, but for

every class. On top of that, we have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions and insane asylums. And they're coming in and they're taking jobs that are occupied right now by African Americans

00:10:01 and Hispanics and also unions. Unions are going to be affected very soon. And you see what's happening. You see what's happening with towns throughout the United States. You look at Springfield, Ohio. You look at Aurora in Colorado. They are taking over the towns. They're taking over buildings. They're going in violently. These are the people that she and Biden let into our country. And they're destroying our country. They're dangerous. They're at the highest level of criminality. And we have to get

00:10:32 them out. We have to get them out fast. I created one of the greatest economies in the history of our country. I'll do it again and even better. We are going to get to immigration and border security during this debate. But I would like to let Vice President Harris respond on the economy here. Well, I would love to. Let's talk about what Donald Trump left us. Donald Trump left us the worst unemployment since the Great Depression. Donald Trump left us the worst public health epidemic in a century. Donald Trump left us the worst attack on

00:11:07 our democracy since the Civil War. And what we have done is clean up Donald Trump's mess. What we have done and what I intend to do is build on what we know are the aspirations and the hopes of the American people. But I'm going to tell you all, in this debate tonight, you're going to hear from the same old, tired playbook, a bunch of lies, grievances and name-calling. What you're going to hear tonight is a detailed and dangerous plan called Project 2025 that the former president intends on implementing if he were elected again.

00:11:43 I believe very strongly that the American people want a president who understands the importance of bringing us together knowing we have so much

more in common than what separates us. And I pledge to you to be a president for all Americans. President Trump, I'll give you a minute here to respond. Number one, I have nothing to do, as you know and as she knows better than anyone, I have nothing to do with Project 2025. That's out there. I haven't read it. I don't want to read it, purposely. I'm not going to read it. This was a group of

00:12:11 people that got together, they came up with some ideas. I guess some good, some bad. But it makes no difference. I have nothing to do -- everybody knows I'm an open book. Everybody knows what I'm going to do. Cut taxes very substantially. And create a great economy like I did before. We had the greatest economy. We got hit with a pandemic. And the pandemic was, not since 1917 where 100 million people died has there been anything like it? We did a phenomenal job with the pandemic. We handed them over a country where the economy

00:12:40 and where the stock market was higher than it was before the pandemic came in. Nobody's ever seen anything like it. We made ventilators for the entire world. We got gowns. We got masks. We did things that nobody thought possible. And people give me credit for rebuilding the military. They give me credit for a lot of things. But not enough credit for the great job we did with the pandemic. But the only jobs they got were bounce-back jobs. These were jobs, bounce back. And it bounced back and it went to their benefit.

00:13:08 But I was the one that created them. They know it and so does everybody else. Vice President Harris, I'll let you respond. So, Donald Trump has no plan for you. And when you look at his economic plan, it's all about tax breaks for the richest people. I am offering what I describe as an opportunity economy, and the best economists in our country, if not the world, have reviewed our relative plans for the future of America. What Goldman Sachs has said is that Donald Trump's plan would make the economy worse.

00:13:42 Mine would strengthen the economy. What the Wharton School has said is Donald Trump's plan would actually explode the deficit. Sixteen Nobel laureates have described his economic plan as something that would increase inflation and by the middle of next year would invite a recession. You just have to look at where we are and where we stand on the issues. And I'd invite you to know that Donald Trump actually has no plan for you, because he is more interested in defending himself than he is in looking out for you. That's just a sound bite. They gave her

00:14:16 that to say. Look, I went to the Wharton School of Finance and many of those professors, the top professors, think my plan is a brilliant plan, it's a great plan. It's a plan that's going to bring up our worth, our value as a country. It's going to make people want to be able to go and work and create jobs and create a lot of good, solid money for our -- for our country. And just to finish off, she doesn't have a plan. She copied Biden's plan. And it's like four sentences, like run-Spot-run. Four sentences

00:14:49 that are just oh, we'll try and lower taxes. She doesn't have a plan. Take a look at her plan. She doesn't have a plan. Mr. President, I do want to drill down on something you both brought up. The vice president brought up your tariffs you responded and let's drill down on this because your plan is what she calls is a essentially a national sales tax. Your proposal calls for tariffs as you pointed out here, on foreign imports across the board. You recently said that you might double your plan, imposing tariffs up to 20% on good

00:15:17 coming into this country. As you know many economists say that with tariffs at that level costs are then passed onto the consumer. Vice President Harris has argued it'll mean higher prices on gas, food, clothing medication arguing it costs the typical family nearly four thousand dollars a year. Do you believe Americans can afford higher prices because of tariffs. They aren't gonna have

higher prices what's gonna have and who's gonna have higher prices is China and all of the countries that have been ripping us off

00:15:43 for years. I charge, I was the only president ever China was paying us hundreds of billions of dollars and so were other countries and you know if she doesn't like 'em they should have gone out and they should have immediately cut the tariffs but those tariffs are there three and a half years now under their administration. We are gonna take in billions of dollars, hundreds of billions of dollars. I had no inflation, virtually no inflation, they had the highest inflation, perhaps in the history of our country

00:16:12 because I've never seen a worse period of time. People can't go out and buy cereal bacon or eggs or anything else. These the people of our country are absolutely dying with what they've done. They've destroyed the economy and all you have to do it look at a poll. The polls say 80 and 85 and even 90% that the Trump economy was great that their economy was terrible. Vice President Harris I do want to ask for your response and you heard what the president said there because the Biden administration did keep a number of the Trump

00:16:42 tariffs in place so how do you respond? Well, let's be clear that the Trump administration resulted in a trade deficit, one of the highest we've ever seen in the history of America. He invited trade wars, you wanna talk about his deal with China what he ended up doing is under Donald Trump's presidency he ended up selling American chips to China to help them improve and modernize their military basically sold us out when a policy about China should be in making sure the United States of America wins the competition for the 21st century.

00:17:18 Which means focusing on the details of what that requires, focusing on relationships with our allies, focusing on investing in American based technology so that we win the race on A.I. and quantum computing, focusing on what we need to do to support America's workforce, so that we don't end up having

the on the short end of the stick in terms of workers' rights. But what Donald Trump did let's talk about this with COVID, is he actually thanked President Xi for what he did during COVID. Look at his tweet.

00:17:53 "Thank you, President XI," exclamation point. When we know that XI was responsible for lacking and not giving us transparency about the origins of COVID. President Trump, I'll let you respond. First of all, they bought their chips from Taiwan. We hardly make chips anymore because of philosophies like they have and policies like they have. I don't say her because she has no policy. Everything that she believed three years ago and four years ago is out the window. She's going to my philosophy now. In fact,

00:18:24 I was going to send her a MAGA hat. She's gone to my philosophy. But if she ever got elected, she'd change it. And it will be the end of our country. She's a Marxist. Everybody knows she's a Marxist. Her father's a Marxist professor in economics. And he taught her well. But when you look at what she's done to our country and when you look at these millions and millions of people that are pouring into our country monthly where it's I believe 21 million people, not the 15 that people say, and I think it's a

00:18:54 lot higher than the 21. That's bigger than New York state. Pouring in. And just look at what they're doing to our country. They're criminals. Many of these people coming in are criminals. And that's bad for our economy too. You mentioned before, we'll talk about immigration later.

Well, bad immigration is the worst thing that can happen to our economy. They have and she has destroyed our country with policy that's insane. Almost policy that you'd say they have to hate our country. President Trump, thank you. Linsey? I want to turn to the issue

00:19:25 of abortion. President Trump, you've often touted that you were able to kill Roe v. Wade. Last year, you said that you were proud to be the most pro-life

president in American history. Then last month you said that your administration would be great for women and their reproductive rights. In your home state of Florida, you surprised many with regard to your six-week abortion ban because you initially had said that it was too short and you said, "I'm going to be voting that we need more than six weeks." But then the very next day,

00:19:54 you reversed course and said you would vote to support the six-week ban. Vice President Harris says that women shouldn't trust you on the issue of abortion because you've changed your position so many times. Therefore, why should they trust you? Well, the reason I'm doing that vote is because the plan is, as you know, the vote is, they have abortion in the ninth month. They even have, and you can look at the governor of West Virginia, the previous governor of West Virginia, not the current governor, who's doing an excellent job, but the governor before.

00:20:24 He said the baby will be born and we will decide what to do with the baby. In other words, we'll execute the baby. And that's why I did that, because that predominates. Because they're radical. The Democrats are radical in that. And her vice presidential pick, which I think was a horrible pick, by the way for our country, because he is really out of it. But her vice presidential pick says abortion in the ninth month is absolutely fine. He also says execution after birth, it's execution, no longer abortion, because the baby is born, is okay.

00:20:57 And that's not okay with me. Hence the vote. But what I did is something for 52 years they've been trying to get Roe v. Wade into the states. And through the genius and heart and strength of six supreme court justices we were able to do that. Now, I believe in the exceptions for rape, incest and life of the mother. I believe strongly in it. Ronald Reagan did also. 85% of Republicans do. Exceptions. Very important. But we were able to get it. And now states are voting on it. And for the first time you're going to see - look,

00:21:35 this is an issue that's torn our country apart for 52 years. Every legal scholar, every Democrat, every Republican, liberal, conservative, they all wanted this issue to be brought back to the states where the people could vote. And that's what happened, happened. Now, Ohio, the vote was somewhat liberal. Kansas the vote was somewhat liberal. Much more liberal than people would have thought. But each individual state is voting. It's the vote of the people now. It's not tied up in the federal government. I did a great

00:22:07 service in doing it. It took courage to do it. And the supreme court had great courage in doing it. And I give tremendous credit to those six justices. There is no state in this country where it is legal to kill a baby after it's born. Madam vice president, I want to get your response to President Trump. Well, as I said, you're going to hear a bunch of lies. And that's not actually a surprising fact. Let's understand how we got here. Donald Trump hand-selected three members of the United States Supreme Court with the intention that

00:22:36 they would undo the protections of Roe v. Wade. And they did exactly as he intended. And now in over 20 states there are Trump abortion bans which make it criminal for a doctor or nurse to provide health care. In one state it provides prison for life. Trump abortion bans that make no exception even for rape and incest. Which understand what that means. A survivor of a crime, a violation to their body, does not have the right to make a decision about what happens to their body next. That is immoral. And one does not have to abandon

00:23:15 their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government, and Donald Trump certainly, should not be telling a woman what to do with her body. I have talked with women around our country. You want to talk about this is what people wanted? Pregnant women who want to carry a pregnancy to term suffering from a miscarriage, being denied care in an emergency room because the health care

providers are afraid they might go to jail and she's bleeding out in a car in the parking lot? She didn't want that. Her husband didn't want that. A 12 or

00:23:50 13-year-old survivor of incest being forced to carry a pregnancy to term? They don't want that. And I pledge to you when Congress passes a bill to put back in place the protections of Roe v. Wade as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law. But understand, if Donald Trump were to be re-elected, he will sign a national abortion ban. Understand in his Project 2025 there would be a national abortion ban. Understand in his Project 2025 there would be a national abortion -- a monitor that would be monitoring your pregnancies, your miscarriages. I think the American people believe that certain

00:24:29 freedoms, in particular the freedom to make decisions about one's own body, should not be made by the government. Thank you, Vice President Harris. Well, there she goes again. It's a lie. I'm not signing a ban. And there's no reason to sign a ban. Because we've gotten what everybody wanted. Democrats, Republicans and everybody else and every legal scholar wanted it to be brought back into the states. And the states are voting. And it may take a little time, but for 52 years this issue has torn our country apart. And they've wanted it back

00:25:04 in the states. And I did something that nobody thought was possible. The states are now voting. What she says is an absolute lie. And as far as the abortion ban, no, I'm not in favor of abortion ban. But it doesn't matter because this issue has now been taken over by the states. Would you veto a national abortion ban if it came to .Well, I won't have to because again -- two things. Number one, she said she'll go back to congress. She'll never get the vote. It's impossible for her to get the vote. Especially now with a 50-50 -essentially 50-50 in

00:25:35 both senate and the house. She's not going to get the vote. She can't get the vote. She won't even come close to it. So it's just talk. You know what it reminds me of? When they said they're going to get student loans terminated and it

ended up being a total catastrophe. The student loans -- and then her I think probably her boss, if you call him a boss, he spends all his time on the beach, but look, her boss went out and said we'll do it again, we'll do it a different way. He went out, got

00:26:01 rejected again by the supreme court. So all these students got taunted with this whole thing about -- this whole idea. And how unfair that would have been. Part of the reason they lost. To the millions and millions of people that had to pay off their student loans. They didn't get it for free. But they were saying -- it's the same way that they talked about that, that they talk about abortion. But if I could just get a yes or no. Because your running mate JD Vance has said that you would veto if it did come to your desk.

00:26:29 Well, I didn't discuss it with JD In all fairness. JD -- And I don't mind if he has a certain view but I think he was speaking for me but I really didn't. Look, we don't have to discuss it because she'd never be able to get it just like she couldn't get student loans. They couldn't get -- they didn't even come close to getting student loans. They didn't even come close to getting student loans. They taunted young people and a lot of other people that had loans. They can never get this approved. So it doesn't matter what she says about going to congress. Wonderful. Let's go to congress.

00:26:56 Do it. But the fact is that for years they wanted to get it out of congress and out of the federal government and we did something that everybody said couldn't be done. And now you have a vote of the people on abortion. Vice President Harris, I want to give you your time to respond. But I do want to ask, would you support any restrictions on a woman's right to an abortion? I absolutely support reinstating the protections of Roe v. Wade. And as you rightly mentioned, nowhere in America is a woman carrying a pregnancy

00:27:27 to term and asking for an abortion. That is not happening. It's insulting to the women of America. And understand what has been happening under Donald Trump's abortion bans. Couples who pray and dream of having a family are being denied IVF treatments. What is happening in our country, working people, working women who are working one or two jobs, who can barely afford childcare as it is, have to travel to another state to get on a plane sitting next to strangers, to go and get the

00:28:06 health care she needs. Barely can afford to do it. And what you are putting her through is unconscionable. And the people of America have not -- the majority of Americans believe in a woman's right to make decisions about her own body. And that is why in every state where this issue has been on the ballot, in red and blue states both, the people of America have voted for freedom. Vice president Harris . Excuse me, I have to respond. Another lie. It's another lie. I have been a leader on IVF which is fertilization.

00:28:41 The IVF -- I have been a leader. In fact, when they got a very negative decision on IVF from the Alabama courts, I saw the people of Alabama and the legislature two days later voted it in. I've been a leader on it. They know that and everybody else knows it. I have been a leader on fertilization, IVF. And the other thing, they - you should ask, will she allow abortion in the eighth month, ninth month, seventh month?

00:29:18 Come on. Would you do that? Why don't you ask her that question -

Why don't you answer the question would you veto. That's the problem. Because under Roe v. Wade. Answer the question, would you veto-You could do abortions in the seventh month, the eighth month, the ninth month - That's not true. And probably after birth. Just look at the governor, former governor of Virginia. The governor of Virginia said we put the baby aside and then we determine what we

want to do with the baby. President Trump, thank you. We're going to turn now to immigration and border security. We know it's an issue that's important to Republicans, Democrats, voters across the board in this country. Vice President Harris, you were tasked by President Biden with getting to the root causes of migration

00:29:45 from Central America. We know that illegal border crossings reached a record high in the Biden administration. This past June, President Biden imposed tough new asylum restrictions. We know the numbers since then have dropped significantly. But my question to you tonight is why did the administration wait until six months before the election to act and would you have done anything differently from President Biden on this? So I'm the only person on this stage who has prosecuted transnational criminal organizations for the trafficking of guns,

00:30:13 drugs, and human beings. And let me say that the United States Congress, including some of the most conservative members of the United States Senate, came up with a border security bill which I supported. And that bill would have put 1,500 more border agents on the border to help those folks who are working there right now over time trying to do their job. It would have allowed us to stem the flow of fentanyl coming into the United States. I know there are so many families watching tonight who have been personally

00:30:45 affected by the surge of fentanyl in our country. That bill would have put more resources to allow us to prosecute transnational criminal organizations for trafficking in guns, drugs and human beings. But you know what happened to that bill? Donald Trump got on the phone, called up some folks in Congress, and said kill the bill. And you know why? Because he preferred to run on a problem instead of fixing a problem. And understand, this comes at a time where the people of our country actually need a

00:31:18 leader who engages in solutions, who actually addresses the problems at hand. But what we have in the former president is someone who would prefer to run on a problem instead of fixing a problem. And I'll tell you something, he's going to talk about immigration a lot tonight even when it's not the subject that is being raised. And I'm going to actually do something really unusual and I'm going to invite you to attend one of Donald Trump's rallies because it's a really interesting thing to watch. You will see during the course of his rallies he talks about fictional characters like Hannibal Lecter. He will talk about windmills cause cancer. And what you

00:31:45 will also notice is that people start leaving his rallies early out of exhaustion and boredom. And I will tell you the one thing you will not hear him talk about is you. You will not hear him talk about your needs, your dreams, and your, your desires. And I'll tell you, I believe you deserve a president who actually puts you first. And I pledge to you that I will.

00:32:15 Vice President Harris, thank you. President Trump, on that point I want to get your response. Well, I would like to respond. Let me just ask, though, why did you try to kill that bill and successfully so? That would have put thousands of additional agents and officers on the border. First let me respond as to the rallies. She said people start leaving. People don't go to her rallies. There's no reason to go. And the people that do go, she's busing them in and paying them to be there. And then showing them in a different light. So, she

00:32:40 can't talk about that. People don't leave my rallies. We have the biggest rallies, the most incredible rallies in the history of politics. That's because people want to take their country back. Our country is being lost. We're a failing nation. And it happened three and a half years ago. And what, what's going on here, you're going to end up in World War 3, just to go into another subject. What

they have done to our country by allowing these millions and millions of people to come into our country. And look

00:33:07 at what's happening to the towns all over the United States. And a lot of towns don't want to talk -- not going to be Aurora or Springfield. A lot of towns don't want to talk about it because they're so embarrassed by it. In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats. They're eating -- they're eating the pets of the people that live there. And this is what's happening in our country. And it's a shame. As far as rallies are concerned, as far -- the reason they go is they like what I say. They want to bring our country back.

00:33:39 They want to make America great again. It's a very simple phrase. Make America great again. She's destroying this country. And if she becomes president, this country doesn't have a chance of success. Not only success. We'll end up being Venezuela on steroids. I just want to clarify here, you bring up Springfield, Ohio. And ABC News did reach out to the city manager there. He told us there have been no credible reports of specific claims of pets being harmed, injured or abused by individuals within the immigrant community

00:34:10 Well, I've seen people on television. Let me just say here this ...

The people on television say my dog was taken and used for food. So maybe he said that and maybe that's a good thing to say for a city manager. I'm not taking this from television. I'm taking it from the city manager. But the people on television say their dog was eaten by the people that went there. Again, the Springfield city manager says there's no evidence of that. We'll find out. Vice President Harris, I'll let you respond to the rest of what you heard. Talk about extreme. Um, you know, this is I think

00:34:39 one of the reasons why in this election I actually have the endorsement of 200 Republicans who have formally worked with President Bush, Mitt Romney, and John McCain including the endorsement of former Vice

President Dick Cheney and Congressman Liz Cheney. And if you want to really know the inside track on who the former president is, if he didn't make it clear already, just ask people who have worked with him. His former chief of staff, a four-star general, has said he has contempt for the constitution of the

00:35:14 United States. His former national security adviser has said he is dangerous and unfit. His former secretary of defense has said the nation, the republic would never survive another Trump term. And when we listen to this kind of rhetoric, when the issues that affect the American people are not being addressed, I think the choice is clear in this election. President Trump, I'll give you a quick minute to respond. Yeah. Thank you. Because when I hear that -- see, I'm a different kind of a person. I fired most of

00:35:49 those people. Not so graciously. They did bad things or a bad job. I fired them. They never fired one person. They didn't fire anybody having to do with Afghanistan and the Taliban and the 13 people whose, whose, were just killed viciously and violently killed and I got to know the parents and the family. They should have fired all those generals, all those top people because that was one of the most incompetently handled situations anybody has ever seen. So when somebody does a bad job I fire them. And you take a guy like Esper.

00:36:22 He was no good, I fired him. So he writes a book. Another one writes a book. Because with me they can write books. With nobody else can they. But they have done such a poor job. And they never fire anybody. Look at the economy. Look at the inflation. They didn't fire any of their economists. They have the same people. That's a good way not to have books written about you. But just to finish, I got more votes than any Republican in history by far. In fact, I got more votes than any president, sitting president in history by far.

00:36:56 Let me continue on immigration. It was what you wanted to talk about earlier. So let's get back to your deportation proposal that the vice president has

reacted to as well. President Trump, you called this the largest domestic deportation operation in the history of our country. You say you would use the National Guard. You say if things get out of control you'd have no problem using the U.S. military.

With local police. You also said you would use local police. How would you deport 11 million undocumented immigrants? I know you believe

00:37:23 that number is much higher. Take us through this. What does this look like? Will authorities be going door to door in this country? Yeah. It is much higher because of them. They allowed criminals. Many, many, millions of criminals. They allowed terrorists. They allowed common street criminals. They allowed people to come in, drug dealers, to come into our country, and they're now in the United States. And told by their countries like Venezuela don't ever come back or we're going to kill you. Do you know that crime in

00:37:53 Venezuela and crime in countries all over the world is way down? You know why? Because they've taken their criminals off the street and they've given them to her to put into our country. And this will be one of the greatest mistakes in history for them to allow -- and I think they probably did it because they think they're going to get votes. But it's not worth it. Because they're destroying the fabric of our country by what they've done. There's never been anything done like this at all. They've destroyed the fabric of our country.

00:38:23 Millions of people let in. And all over the world crime is down. All over the world except here. Crime here is up and through the roof. Despite their fraudulent statements that they made. Crime in this country is through the roof. And we have a new form of crime. It's called migrant crime. And it's happening at levels that nobody thought possible. President Trump, as you know, the FBI says overall violent crime is coming down in this country, but Vice President the... use me, the FBI - they were defrauding statements. They didn't include

00:38:52 the worst cities. They didn't include the cities with the worst crime. It was a fraud. Just like their number of 818,000 jobs that they said they created turned out to be a fraud. President Trump, thank you. I'll let you respond, Vice President Harris. Well, I think this is so rich. Coming from someone who has been prosecuted for national security crimes, economic crimes, election interference, has been found liable for sexual assault and his next big court appearance is in November at his own criminal sentencing.

00:39:28 And let's be clear where each person stands on the issue of what is important about respect for the rule of law and respect for law enforcement. The former vice president called for defunding, federal law enforcement, 45,000 agents, get this, on the day after he was arraigned on 34 felony counts. So let's talk about what is important in this race. It is important that we move forward, that we turn the page on this same old tired rhetoric. And address the needs of the American people, address what we need to do about the housing shortage,

00:40:07 which I have a plan for. Address what we must do to support our small businesses. Address bringing down the price of groceries. But frankly, the American people are exhausted with the same old tired playbook. Vice President Harris, thank you. Excuse me. Every one of those cases was started by them against their political opponent. And I'm winning most of them and I'll win the rest on appeal. And you saw that with the decision that came down just recently from the Supreme Court. I'm winning most

00:40:37 of them. But those are cases, it's called weaponization. Never happened in this country. They weaponized the justice department. Every one of those cases was involved with the DOJ, from Atlanta and Fani Willis -- to the attorney general of New York and the D.A. In New York. Every one of those cases. And then they say oh, he was -- he's a criminal. They're the ones that made them go after me. By the way, Joe Biden was found essentially guilty on the

documents case. And what happened in my documents case? They said oh, that's the toughest of them all.

00:41:10 A complete and total victory. Two months ago it was thrown out. It's weaponization. And they used it. And it's never happened in this country. They used it to try and win an election. They're fake cases. President Trump, thank you. A really quick response here, Vice President Harris, on this notion of weaponization of the justice department. Well let's talk about extreme. And understand the context in which this election in 2024 is taking place. The United States Supreme Court recently ruled that the former president would

00:41:41 essentially be immune from any misconduct if he were to enter the white house again. Understand, this is someone who has openly said he would terminate, I'm quoting, terminate the constitution of the United States. That he would weaponize the Department of Justice against his political enemies. Someone who has openly expressed disdain for members of our military. Understand what it would mean if Donald Trump were back in the white house with no guardrails. Because certainly, we know now the court won't stop him. We know JD Vance is not going

00:42:17 to stop him. It's up to the American people to stop him. Vice President Harris, thank you. Linsey? Vice President Harris, in your last run for president...

This is the one that weaponized. Not me. She weaponized. I probably took a bullet to the head because of the things that they say about me. They talk about democracy. I'm a threat to democracy. They're the threat to democracy – With the fake Russia Russia Russia investigation that went nowhere. We have a lot to get to. Linsey? Vice President Harris, in your last run for president

00:42:47 you said you wanted to ban fracking. Now you don't. You wanted mandatory government buyback programs for assault weapons. Now your campaign says you don't. You supported decriminalizing border crossings. Now

you're taking a harder line. I know you say that your values have not changed. So then why have so many of your policy positions changed? So my values have not changed. And I'm going to discuss every one -at least every point that you've made. But in particular, let's talk about fracking because we're here in Pennsylvania.

00:43:15 I made that very clear in 2020. I will not ban fracking. I have not banned fracking as Vice President of the United States. And, in fact, I was the tie-breaking vote on the Inflation Reduction Act, which opened new leases for fracking. My position is that we have got to invest in diverse sources of energy so we reduce our reliance on foreign oil. We have had the largest increase in domestic oil production in history because of an approach that recognizes that we cannot over rely on foreign oil. As it relates to my values,

00:43:53 let me tell you, I grew up a middle-class kid raised by a hard-working mother who worked and saved and was able to buy our first home when I was a teenager. The values I bring to the importance of home ownership knowing not everybody got handed \$400 million on a silver platter and then filed bankruptcy six times, is a value that I bring to my work to say we are going to work with the private sector and home builders to increase 3 million homes, increase by 3 million homes by the end of my first term. My work

00:44:26 that is related to having a friend when I was in high school who was sexually assaulted by her stepfather. And my focus then, on protecting women and children from violent crime, is based on a value that is deeply grounded in the importance of standing up for those who are most vulnerable. My work that is about protecting social security and Medicare is based on long-standing work that I have done. Protecting seniors from scams. My values have not changed. And what is important is that there is a president who

00:44:58 actually brings values and a perspective that is about lifting people up and not beating people down and name-calling. The true measure of the leader is

the leader who actually understands that strength is not in beating people down, it's in lifting people up. I intend to be that president. President Trump, your response. Well, first of all, I wasn't given \$400 million. I wish I was. My father was a Brooklyn builder. Brooklyn, Queens. And a great father and I learned a lot from him. But I was given a fraction of that, a tiny fraction, and I built it into many, many billions of dollars. Many, many billions. And when people see it, they are even surprised. So, we don't have to talk about that. Fracking? She's been against it for 12 years. Uh, defund the police. She's been against that forever. She gave all that stuff up, very wrongly, very horribly. And everybody's laughing at it, okay? They're all laughing at it. She gave up at least 12 and probably 14 or 15 different policies. Like, she was big on defund the police. That's not true. [mouthed, not audible] In Minnesota, she went out -- wait a minute. I'm talking now. If you don't mind. Please. Does that sound familiar? Don't lie. [lie is audible] She went out -- she went out in Minnesota and wanted to let criminals that killed people, that burned down Minneapolis, she went out and raised money to get them out of jail. She did things that nobody would ever think of. Now she wants to do transgender operations on illegal aliens that are in prison. This is a radical left liberal that would do this. She wants to confiscate your guns and she will never allow fracking in Pennsylvania. If she won the election, fracking in Pennsylvania will end on day one. Just to finish one thing, so important in my opinion, so, I got the oil business going like nobody has ever done before. They took, when they took over, they got rid of it, started getting rid of it, and the prices were going up the roof. They immediately let these guys go to where they were. I would have been five times, four times, five times higher because you're talking about 3 1/2 years ago. They got it up to where I was because they had no choice. Because the prices of energy were quadrupling and doubling. You saw what happened to gasoline. So, they said let's go back to Trump. But if she won the election, the day after that election, they'll go

back to destroying our country and oil will be dead, fossil fuel will be dead. We'll go back to windmills and we'll go back to solar, where they need a whole desert to get some energy to come out. You ever see a solar plant? By the way, I'm a big fan of solar. But they take 400, 500 acres of desert soil...