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**How Donald J. Trump Won the 2016 Election:  
Agenda setting in the age of Political Correctness**

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## 1. Introduction

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States (POTUS). This was and continues to be seen as one of – if not *the* most - shocking electoral results in American electoral history (Goldmacher et al, 2016). Few outlets produced polls and just a hand-full of individuals predicted Trump's victory (Sen, 2016). The few that predicted the victory were not - as one might expect - republicans, but rather scholars of political history or deeply involved in the practice (DeCosta-Klipa, 2016). Polls coming out of Breitbart News, for example, were not given credit by the so-called mainstream media because they were seen as the product of a biased source whose agenda was skewing the results. After the election, and after the appointment of Breitbart personnel to key positions in Trump's campaign, Breitbart News gained new credibility (Malone, 2016). It is worth noting that this seemingly innocuous mistake from the mainstream media is an important symbol of the detachment between working class US citizens and those tasked with informing them. Donald Trump won the US presidency, the most powerful position in any governmental post around the world, and no one expected it. How? A number of explanations have been given for the Trump phenomena (Krieg, 2016), and several of these will be analyzed further to weigh their credibility. This thesis will attempt to give a valid explanation for the election of Donald J. Trump. As with the study of public policy and the policy cycle, the first step to a successful campaign is identifying a problem ('problem identification') that resonates with the target electorate, and subsequently promise to place that problem on top of one's political and electoral agenda. It is this initial but vital step that allows a candidate to start creating a list of priorities that will inform his/her agenda and start drawing consensus. The electorate is called to engage

with the topics that are on the agenda, and those that are not remain outside the discourse. This thesis will argue that it was the issues Donald Trump covered while campaigning, the way in which he presented and spoke of these issues, and those he explicitly left out that lead him to victory. The issues, however, have to be understood in the broader context of the age of “political correctness” (PC) and of the US’s reaction to it. This thesis will argue that Middle America was exasperated with political correctness, which they felt was being imposed on them by so called “progressives.” This rejection of progressive values was what Donald J Trump tapped into, focusing especially - but not exclusively - on the anger experienced by white men (Potts, 2016).

This thesis will be structured in three parts. Firstly, the introduction will cover a brief overview of Trump’s 2016 victory and present some public policy theory to understand it. It will then discuss what political correctness is, where it comes from and review some literature that focuses on reasons outside PC that might explain why Trump won. Secondly, it will cover the different issues that Trump focused on and (crucially) omitted, to understand why a given issue was so important. In parallel to this it will explain why certain issues were not as important as the press expected, and what the implications of this oversight were. The final section will focus on reviewing and weighing which issues held more importance to help Trump win the election and how the context of political correctness sealed his success.

## 1.1 Theory of Framing and Agenda Setting

The process of agenda-setting and the theory behind 'framing' are key to understanding the selection of issues in the electoral campaign, and why the way in which these issues were presented was central to Trump's victory. The two complement each other. On the one hand, selecting appropriate issues is key to drawing in voters, and on the other, the 'correct' framing of these issues is what resonates deeply with them.

Agenda setting is the first phase of the policy cycle (Jann, 2007). A policy cycle is, as the word implies, cyclical. This is important because no policy cycle is insulated from the previous one. In the case of Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton, proposals for what should be on the agenda (what they believed merited the intervention of politics) could not be insulated from the previous eight years of Obama administration. This previous cycle is incredibly important in framing why Donald Trump's approach to many issues was more successful.

Agenda setting is the process by which new social problems are defined and accepted as such. The political brilliance in this process is to understand what social problems actually exist, what the perspective of those experiencing these problems is, and how feasible solutions to these problems are. This process is central to agenda setting and is broken into two steps: problem definition and feasibility analysis (Majone, 2008). Because this thesis focuses on the electoral agenda of Donald Trump, the feasibility analysis part of the agenda setting process will only be touched upon. A feasibility analysis is often carried out when proposing policy solutions even during electoral campaigns, but it will not be taken into consideration here. The reason for this is that while feasibility analyses are sometimes used to determine topics for electoral campaigns, the nature of over-promising during campaigning and agenda setting makes feasibility less of a relevant and interesting

topic of analysis for our purposes. The process of prioritizing certain issues over others and eventually setting an agenda is incredibly tedious: there is a huge array of social problems but a limited scope for public intervention (Zhu, 1992). Therefore, to understand Donald Trump's selection of issues, we will need to analyze the social circumstances more broadly. The issues left out of the Trump agenda hold, at least symbolically, more importance than the ones that were highlighted. Not giving importance to something that is important to many in the US and around the World is a strong act in its own right. Not giving importance to such issues was seen as political suicide (as it was with Donald Trump) until he won the election. In defining a social problem that merits political intervention, the policy maker or up-and-coming politician has to identify where he or she believes the problem originates. In identifying where the problem originates, one restricts the possible solutions. This aspect of problem identification is incredibly important in Trump's agenda setting process because it directs blame, and for the purpose of this thesis, it directly feeds into the idea of 'framing'. Agenda setting is a complicated process because it is not controlled by a single entity. It is a melting pot of popular sentiment, media reporting, journalistic accounts, social media, technicians, politicians, bureaucrats, and all those who have a say in society. To a higher or lesser degree, this includes all of us. The media - which has always played a key role in setting priorities on political agendas - is also one of the topics covered in this thesis's analyses. It is important to keep the media in mind because it was so heavily attacked by Trump that it became an agenda 'issue' in its own right. In the lead up to Donald Trump's election, the media did not play its recognized historic role in setting priorities on the agenda, but rather inadvertently played a key role in enabling the election of Donald Trump.

Framing issues is therefore crucial for a candidate to resonate and connect with the electorate. The 'Theory of Frames' stems from cognitive psychology and the work of Erving Goffman (Johansson, 2007). This theory focused on the role of the media in giving importance to certain events over others and giving these events a 'frame of meaning' (Lorino, 2017). This process is critical for successful political campaigns. It is in the right selection and framing of issues that a campaign achieves its goals. As mentioned above, the media did not influence the framing of Trump's campaign in a standard manner. The media was not able to frame issues according to their own terms, given that they themselves were under scrutiny by the Trump campaign. The first framing stroke of genius from the Trump campaign: painting the media as a bias entity with its own political agenda, one that did not act independently. Framing theory is based on similar principles to Behavioral psychology. It is a cognitive tool that allows individuals to reach the conclusions you want them to reach without appearing to be exerting any power or pressure onto them (Lorino, 2017 and Lundy, 2006). By tapping into subconscious feelings, primordial instincts, or societal stigma, the framing of an idea or issue can have people believing they were on your side all along. Framing a social issue determines the solution the issue warrants. As this thesis will explain in the first part of the 'Issue' section, framing societal problems that people face contextualizes and simplifies the problems themselves. Donald Trump framed the majority of issues facing the US as the result of politically correct and corrupt liberal elite. By connecting issues to one root cause (however far-fetched) the complexity and the solution to the issues at hand simplify dramatically. Once solutions are simple and easy to understand they appeal to people, they give people something to remember and something to transform into slogan, something that can truly represent them. Framing is done mainly through rhetoric



(speeches and debates in the case of a presidential race) but other mediums are also available to candidates today. Framing an issue today takes place in speeches and debates, tweets, photo and video ops, news stories, etc. Information is then presented by the candidate through language, that has often been called “loaded”. “Loaded language” is a framing technique that uses emotive or persuasive terms to influence an audience through deep cultural, stereotypical, or personal connections (Matthews, 2009). This technique was used throughout Donald Trump’s campaign to connect the voter base emotively and viscerally to the Republican candidate. Amongst all the communication mediums that Donald Trump had, this technique strongly contributed to building a strong allied ideological camp based on profound emotive attachment. By choosing and framing issues he cast victims and perpetrators, preparing his electorate for a war against the liberal elites.

Agenda-setting and problem identification, connected to the theory of framing, allow us to understand why choosing or omitting issues was so critical to building a case that would truly resonate with the public. Once the issues were chosen, framing was the key to creating a strong base that understood problems in a similar manner and saw them originating from the same source, therefore demanding similar solutions.

## 1.2 Post-modernism and Political Correctness

Post-modernism is the name of a broad political, philosophical, and artistic movement born in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. As its name states, the movement follows and is in opposition to 'modernism'. Modernism had as its central pillar the belief that the historical phenomena of 'modernity' would bring prosperity through technology and that righteous leaders and countries would defeat the tyrants of our world (Armstrong, 2008). With two world wars and crises looming around the globe, the modernist prediction had clearly failed. With the idea central to modernism debunked, a new movement was needed. Enter 'postmodernism.' This movement centered its belief on the idea that there are an infinite amount of interpretations to a given phenomenon (Toulmin, 1982). This shift resulted in the return of a subjective interpretation of reality in opposition to modernism's objectivity. This emphasis on subjectivity is the starting point from which postmodern thinkers analyze and interpret the world. Postmodern thought, therefore, claims that any given fact can mean different things or be interpreted by different people in different ways. Today, this idea is widely accepted. This elevated role of subjectivity goes in hand in hand with constructivism and social constructivism: the belief that people's interpretation of the world is a product of their environment. Combined, post-modernism and constructivism embrace the idea that a given reality has a set meaning for someone as a result of their social experiences and background. This is widely accepted to be a truism today. The impossibility of objectivity results in the claim that all subjective understandings of a given reality have the same value (Danziger, 1997). A philosophy born with the best intentions quickly appears problematic: equal value can be counterproductive at best and dangerous at worst. Not all interpretations are correct, and

therefore not all interpretations have the same value. Jordan Peterson, a psychologist and Canadian academic, explains this difference of interpretations as a basic fact of life. From the very first days of existence, humans have to make decisions. As we know today, there were many species of humans (Mosley, 2011) and each interpreted the world in a different manner. Evolutions' way to tell humans which interpretation was correct was by killing off all the others. It's crude to think about, but that's exactly what happened. Each humanoid species that understood the world in the wrong manner, died. Post modernism mistakenly puts all interpretations of reality on the same level. These varied interpretations of reality manifest in our opinions, and the fact that reality in a post-modern society can be traced back to a matter of opinion will become crucial to our analysis. Power is also central to explaining interpretations of reality in post-modernism. Power relations are at the basis of how one might interpret the world. Different political philosophies, including postmodernism, create a framework to interpret and explain social dynamics.

The disenfranchisement or alienation of the white middle class due to political correctness happens because power imbalances are redefined in post modernism. While preaching the idea that all interpretations of a given reality have the same value, the postmodernists attribute more value to some interpretations and less to others. The interpretations that are given less value are the ones that are understood to originate from the positions of power in previous hierarchical structures. These are therefore only seen as tools to reinforce or reinstate that old hierarchy. This binary division originates from a classical understanding of Marxism: The oppressor and the oppressed. However, while Marxism centered its struggle on class, the postmodern struggle is centered on social identity, mainly race, gender, or sexuality. People are therefore categorized and eventually

attributed an opinion because of how they look. Identity based on non-changeable factors of biology is not a problem per se. It becomes a problem when that identity defines what beliefs one can hold, and, especially, what beliefs one cannot hold. The exasperation of this phenomenon leads the white middle class to be excluded from conversations a priori. Their being white (especially male) is a demonstration that they come from a past of oppression and that this disallows them from having a say. Not having a say or being labeled something offensive when one does have a say is what pushed this important part of the electorate towards an outspoken and non PC candidate, not caring about his mistakes.

Political correctness has therefore been corrupted. If originally that term was used to identify language that had been modified to seemingly not exclude anyone from it (see Chairman into Chairperson) in an effort to include and respect. Today and in recent decades it has meant the creation of a space where only those who were or have been seemingly oppressed know the truth (and, importantly, people whom belong to social groups that are historically associated with oppression are seen as oppressors). In practical terms, this has meant: the in-validation of the opinions of huge amounts of white middle class voters, the strengthening of social groups based on racial or sexual identity, and the furthering apart of these same groups.

Post modernism and a Marxist framework have therefore been combined to create a political correct space where people can be arbitrarily shut down. Not allowing for confrontation and imposing ones truth on others eventually, and this is what we saw happen with Trump's election, alienates people and leads them to look for non establishment leadership.

### 1.3 The Election of Donald J Trump: Literature Review and Thesis

The election of Donald Trump came as a shock. Explaining how and why it happened is a tedious but incredibly interesting task to undertake. This thesis supports the claim that it was the Issues Donald Trump focused on and the anti-political correct manner in which he spoke about these that led him to victory. However, there are numerous differing explanations for why Trump won. Interestingly, a number of books written *before* Trump's victory hold some of the most compelling answers. This is important. Literature concerning Trump's victory often points out the prolonged series of events that led to Trump winning. Many authors had predicted pre-election that a 'Trump-like figure' (not necessarily Trump himself) was needed to win the presidency. This thesis also points to a combination of long-term phenomena (the rooting of politically correct) and short-term strategies (Trump's 2015 campaign agenda) as having impacted the outcome. Long term cultural, institutional, and social changes must be taken into consideration when analyzing Trumps victory. A number of explanations complement and feed off each other.

One of the principal explanations for Trump's victory is the decade-long failure by the liberals in the Democratic Party to be a voice for middle-class concerns. The over-emphasis on working professionals, the loss of core middle-class democratic values, and the divestment in liberal institutions lead to the collapse of the Democratic Party and everything it stood for. This idea of middle-class disillusionment with the Democratic Party has as its centerpiece deep frustration with political correctness. The overly liberal elite was seen as having abandoned its commitment to the working class and masked its corruption behind the 'progressive' label.

Notable books have been written concerning the failures of the democratic and liberal elites in relation to the middle-class. "Listen, Liberal" by Thomas Frank is a direct attack on liberal elites. The author accuses the Democratic party of having lost touch with their working-class voter base in favor of the "professional-managerial class" (Frank, 2017). Frank presents several examples of the detachment that the party has from the people who vote it. One such example is how the party neglects organized labor on one hand, and on the other supports NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). The reoccurring problem that arises in this politically correct context is the unhinged commitment to 'progressive'/'liberal' policy aimed at furthering multi-ethnicity and a globalized world. Frank sees the Democratic Party as having completely lost touch with working class problems. No factory worker in their right mind would have looked at a deal that entailed furthering competition with countries that have weaker labor laws and therefore cheaper production costs. The NAFTA deal is instrumental in demonstrating how detached the democratic establishment was from its electorate. Importantly, NAFTA was specifically picked up by Trump to attack democrats, attract voters, and ignite conversations around economics and foreign policy.

"The Unwinding" by George Packer is a closer to a novel, but it unravels the story of American institutional decline in the last three decades. It follows the stories of American citizens trying to work within the system to do right by their ideals and do well for themselves and their families (Packer, 2014). These characters find that the loss of investment in what Packer sees as fundamental liberal institutions results in a loss of the liberal values that were at the basis of the Democratic Party. Charter schools, news outlets, and many other institutions that are fundamental to the spread of liberal values and that constituted the 'balance' in our system of 'checks-and-balances' were being replaced by

what Packer calls 'organized money' (Packer, 2014). The pursuit of private interest led by capital investment has captured institutions that were the birthplace of culture and idealism. The loss of value in these institutions permeates to the people that inhabit them, corrupting them to live for themselves and for their personal gain alone. In his narrative, the American dream dies out, as people find that hard work and strong values count for very little: nothing is guaranteed. The book explains, with a different approach to Frank's, that the hard working middle-class, which has always voted for the Democratic Party, all of a sudden, is not represented in its liberal institutions. In losing the institutions they lose themselves, which leads to a search for someone or something else to represent them.

"Hillbilly Elegy," by J.D. Vance, is an autobiography that describes changes in the social fabric of society due to poverty, welfare, and lack of investment in those who need it the most. Vance's family, a group of historically democratic voters, moved from Kentucky to Ohio to follow the trail of investments entering the automotive industry (ARMCO). He recalls his grandfather's pride in working, feeding his family and raising his children. Work was at the center of a person's identity; it gave them a role in the community and made the individual proud. Work was essential to being a proud member of the community. Tragedy struck when factories were relocated and work was replaced with work benefits. Throughout this tragedy, the democrats were seen as simple bystanders. Democratic candidates, such as Mondale, were Northern liberals that had nothing in common with hard working middle-class southerners (Vance, 2016). As with Frank's "Listen, Liberal" and Packer's "The Unwinding", it portrays the combined loss of liberal values at the institutional level and the blind support for liberal economic policies that worsened the life of working class Americans. The book is much more about the unique experience of being a hillbilly than the election of Donald Trump, but it gives deep insight

into the disenchantment that matured in white working class people towards the Democratic Party. The blind support for what is termed 'liberal', 'progressive', 'multicultural', and 'globalized' resulted in a politically correct space that alienated and ignored white Americans from Ohio. In this space it was inadmissible to debate against the aforementioned ideas and not be called a 'nationalist' (in the pejorative sense), a 'racist', a 'homophobe', and more.

In "Death of the Liberal Class" Chris Hedges explores a similar topic: the basic dissolution of the values the Liberal class stood for and the replacement of these with the will of financiers and other powerful groups (Hedges, 2011). Hedges reaches similar conclusions to the other authors. He also makes a very interesting reflection that will be important to understanding the rhetorical methodology used by Trump. Hedges explains that when the liberal class leaves a vacuum, radical governments that predicate against liberal values have historically replaced it. However, Hedges explains that this time around the proposals of populists and neo-fascists would be unrealizable, as history has shown time and time again. Differently from the other authors, Hedges believes the blame populists' put on the liberals is well deserved. Although populists might make outrageous claims, they (and Donald Trump especially) will always fall back onto a basis of truth, that the liberals and their values *are* to blame for the current mess.

"Bullies" by Ben Shapiro addresses the impossibility of having a conversation with a democrat or liberal without being labeled a 'racist' or any kind of generalized pejorative term. His account is important to understanding how white working class men were marginalized from a number of conversations regarding immigration, social rights, and the economy in general. This phenomenon alienated significant parts of the population (as with the Hillbillies) and eventually pushed them towards voting for someone who - in a



number of Trump voters' words - "speaks his mind" (Zurcher, 2016). Shapiro explains that 'the left' believes that debating policy and any other form of political debate is worthless because the truth exists, and they know what it is. Those who do not fall in line with this 'truth' are automatically 'morally deficient human beings' (Shapiro, 2014) who are not worth debating with. It is interesting to note how the implicit pluralism of post-modernism in its acceptance of a multitude of experiences has radicalized against those who do not understand or do not agree with that pluralism, perpetuating the intolerance they so strongly preach against. The biggest problem with these accusations is that they are not always founded. If a Republican does not believe in Obamacare, they are labeled ignorant and racist, resulting in their voice of concern being suppressed. This process furthers the alienation that other books have explained. Shapiro outlines the various types of bullies in different institutional contexts. As described in "The Unwinding," important institutions lose their value in balancing power, proposing alternative views, and creating conversation and debate. This results in bullies crowding governmental institutions, religious institutions, and social justice circles (commonly called social justice workers or SJW). These embody the PC arena that the Trump electorate would eventually vote against. The use of the word "bullies" sheds light, from a Republican point of view, on the impossibility of expressing one's opinion in a space saturated with ultra-liberal politically correct agendas.

Other explanations for why Trump won focus on the campaign itself and the series of events that unfolded between the nomination and the election. Russian intervention (Filipov, 2016), the numerous changes in Trump's campaign staff (Warren, 2016), Hilary's email scandal and Sanders being cheated out of the nomination (Ball, 2016), the Clinton victim stunt and more generally the ferocious campaign (Pollak, 2017), the number of

events each candidate participated in (Terrel, 2017) and many more can all be seen as having played a role in the rollercoaster of events that eventually enabled Trump's victory. Taking into account the possible explanations that have been given for Trump's victory and understanding that none of them are isolated from one another, this thesis will argue that the agenda that Trump presented and the anti-PC way he spoke about the issues on his agenda are the two critical factors that truly enabled his presidential win. The other reasons for Trump's victory are acknowledged and will have complementary value in explaining the effectiveness of Trump and the ineffectiveness of Democratic criticism towards him. As mentioned in the analysis of "Death of the Liberal Class", Trump's absurd statements appeared meager in the eyes of middle-class white America when compared to the huge mistakes that the Democratic Party had made in previous decades. In other words, he could fall, but he'd always fall back onto something real, legitimate, and effective.

## 2. The Issues

### 2.1 Choice of Issues and Analysis Parameters

The issues that will be analyzed in this section have all played a part in allowing Donald Trump to become POTUS. The way in which these issues are addressed and rhetorically framed is also key to understanding why these issues have enabled Trump to win. We will analyze twelve issues, each addressed in six sections.

The issues analyzed are of varying importance and can be broadly categorized into two sections (this will change in the conclusion because, in analyzing them, the Media and PC

issues will be given a new and functional role in helping Donald Trump get elected). The first set of issues was chosen because they are the most defining set of issues in Trump's campaign and agenda. These are covered in his book "Crippled America" (later renamed "Great Again: how to fix our crippled America" after the election), published when Trump announced his candidacy for President. Topics include "America Winning Again". These issues resonated emotively with the Trump base and were readily used by his electorate to defend their candidate. These issues and the way Trump spoke about them was deemed controversial at best, but certainly allowed him to distinguish himself and uphold his anti political-correctness. The way the issues were addressed was demonstrative of his anti political-correctness, but the choice of issues itself was a bold anti PC statement in its own right.

The second and final set of issues were battle cries for the Democratic party and can be conceptualized as directly stemming from the post-modern politically correct world. These include topics such as "Climate change" and "Gender politics and reproductive rights." The thesis will analyze how Donald Trump's opposite approach to the democrats in these areas was his ultimate success, one rooted in anti political rhetoric. "Climate change" is the only one of the issues in this section that Donald Trump addresses directly in a whole chapter called "The Energy debate: a lot of hot air". The other two issues, "Racial and ethnic minorities" and "Gender politics and reproductive rights" have been included because they were seen as deeply important to the population. Therefore, these are key issues to analyze when understanding how Trump won through his anti political correct rhetoric. As said above, Trumps rhetoric was anti PC, but his selection of issues was also anti PC in itself.

The three sub-sections through which the issues will be analyzed were chosen in the hopes of giving the reader a complete understanding of why and how these informed Trump's victory.

The first sub-section will be the "Introduction of issue" in which the reader will learn the context and explanation of the issue's importance to the 2016 election. The second sub-section "Importance of the Issues in Primary and Presidential debates" will zoom in more specifically on the Republican primary debates and the presidential head to head with Hilary Clinton. This analysis is key because a number of voters chose their vote by watching the now infamous televised debates before the 2015/16 campaign. The third sub-section "Issue in context" will be an analysis of how other political forces affected the issue. This is key to understanding what policy options people had when casting their vote. Simply put, an idea cannot have any appeal if it is not compared to others, whether from Democrats or Republicans of the past.

## 2.2 America Winning Again

"Make America Great Again" (MAGA) was not a simple slogan, but the foundational ground laid down to frame all other issues. At the center of Donald Trump's agenda was the idea that "America is losing", and that "We (America) have to start winning again" (Trump, 2015: 1). This apparently vague guiding principle encompassed three of the most fundamental issues that Donald Trump focused on: jobs, the economy, and political correctness. He constantly referred to these issues throughout his campaign. Crucially, his framing of these issues carried a heavy ideologically anti-liberal and anti-globalization sentiment with them. From this perspective, political correctness was heralded as the

reason people were censored when talking about phenomena such as liberalism or globalization. The rhetorical censorship stemming from PC and public shaming of those who held anti-liberal or anti-globalization sentiment were blamed for making America such a “loser” on the current world stage (Mansfield, 1991). Political correctness and the rhetorical bubble it created allowed for ultra-liberal policies to be pushed, liberal trade agreements to be signed, and barriers to entry into markets to be lowered. All of this, compounded by positive rhetoric around openness and multiculturalism, was seen as having masked the terrible effects these policies were having on the middle, working, and lower classes, and not just in the USA (Coburn, 2000). The importance of political correctness in Trump’s campaign cannot be overstated, as it feeds into and frames what is often the most important issue in any political campaign around the world: jobs (Odiorne, 1964). The lack of jobs and a weak economy were both understood as consequences of America not standing up for itself in the international arena, and political correctness was at the heart of this perceived weakness. The blind belief in liberal policies and in fair competition, coupled with old ideas such as self-determination and a the newfound shame in the US’s oppressive and violent history, did not allow the US to keep imposing its rules and maintaining the high moral ground it has historically ‘sold’ to the rest of the world. Donald Trump did not accept the idea that the US was leaning towards a more marginal role in world affairs, and his electorate strongly approved of this refusal. Re-asserting the US as the world hegemon necessitated a redefinition, a re-framing of issues. The first of these was “Making America Great Again”: a dismantling of the politically correct apparatus that was perceived as being the main culprit in concealing the real causes of a weak economy and limited jobs.

### 2.2.1 Introduction of the Issue

Throughout his long Television career Donald Trump was often outspoken about what he thought the US was doing right or wrong. Being a TV host on a program that was all about getting the best deal and ‘winning’, he spoke ‘winning’ a lot (Nunn, 2016). More than once, in the most direct and simple language one could imagine, Donald Trump, before announcing his presidency, claimed, ‘America is loosing’ (Barrett, 1980). His main reason for why America was loosing were incompetent politicians, awful trade deals, and regulation that imposed rules on the global stage that not everyone followed. Donald Trump, when introducing the issue of MAGA, kept bringing up all three points, the last point being of crucial importance. The idea that rules and regulations are enough to ensure the fair and smooth running of things is an idea that has strong politically correct undertones. This, in Donald Trump’s mind, and in the mind of a huge portion of the electorate was simply wishful thinking. If America was loosing, someone else was winning, and that was not ok.

The two most important sources of information that we can analyze to understand how the issue of MAGA was introduced in Donald Trump’s campaign are: “Great Again” (formerly “Crippled America”) the book with which Trump firstly introduced the main issues his agenda would focus on, and his presidential announcement speech with which he announced that he was running for president. An analysis of the language used by Donald Trump to frame the issues will be carried out to then understand why these frames and language were so effective in reaching people.

“AMERICA NEEDS TO START winning again. Nobody likes a loser and nobody likes to be bullied. Yet, here we stand today, the greatest superpower on Earth, and everyone is

eating our lunch. That's not winning." (Trump, 2015: 1). This quote is the opening paragraph in Donald Trump's book. The language is direct, honest, and with no regard for political correct ideology. PC is not criticized directly, but the language subtlety implies that the US needs to retake its place at the center of the world stage by bullying rather than being bullied. The first thing Donald Trump says is directly in opposition with the positive and respectful rhetoric of diplomacy and is de facto an attack against the politically correct clout and a rhetorical return to a real politick conception of international affairs. After criticizing the actions of President Obama, such as the Iran deal and his unwillingness to punish those who transgressed international law, Donald Trump claims that the US and its people "don't need more political rhetoric-we need more common sense. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"- but if it is broke, let's stop talking about it and fix it." (Trump, 2015: 4). His approach to politics and his refusal to acknowledge the importance of political correctness is exemplified in this simple quote. No more need for pretty words and elaborate ideas that stem from PC ideology to complicate a situation that might have not even existed. The realization that the exasperation of PC creates problems and does not solve them is central to the first chapter of his book. And it is this obsession with political correctness that is not allowing the US, in Donald Trump's understanding, to be 'great again' because it creates divisions where there were none and imposes rules that only some follow. The issue of MAGA therefore encompasses the idea that US politicians need to restart actually understanding what problems the US populations actually have. The over imposition of wishful thinking through diplomatic rhetoric and eventually the over focus on identity politics and social policy has eschewed, in Trump's view, the focus of politicians to issues that are secondary in peoples everyday lives. The persistent focus on social policy that exemplifies political correct culture is at the center of this criticism.

Not because it is not important in itself, but because it refocused the political mind away from what was and still is the most important issues for 'normal' people: jobs and the economy.

The first thing that Donald Trump focuses on (after commenting on the crowd, as he does) in the presidential announcement speech is the fact that the US is losing. It is losing to countries such as China, Japan, and Mexico. The fact that Trump chooses to criticize those countries that are considered US trade partners (all three) or even closer economic, political, and military allies (Japan and Mexico) is perfectly in line with the refusal of political correct/diplomatic rhetoric. He criticizes these countries for dumping their products in the US with no barriers to entry while protecting their economies. Most importantly, Trump refocuses on a historic staple of the what the American dream is all about: jobs. "A lot of people up there can't get jobs. They can't get jobs, because there are no jobs, because China has our jobs and Mexico has our jobs. They all have jobs" (Trump, 2015). The importance of this quote cannot be underestimated. This quote is important for two reasons. First, Donald Trump demonstrates that what his agenda will focus on is jobs. Even though this might seem banal, it is not. Secondly, the frame that Donald Trump creates to explain why the US is 'losing' all its jobs refocuses blame towards inept US policy and the illegitimate behavior of countries that profess to be the US's partners. The goal of MAGA necessarily needs to have at its basis an understanding of what made America weak or less competitive in the past. And Donald Trump clearly says whom he believes the blame should be placed on through an incredibly anti political correct rhetoric. The electorate responded because the language was simple, the message direct, and the explanation true. If countries compete unfairly and jobs are lost in the US as a result of this process, these countries should be called out for doing so. Donald Trump



called them out and in the process dismantled the political correct rhetoric that politicians and diplomats had so often used when 'criticizing'/talking about the actions of other countries.

### 2.2.2 Importance of the Issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issue of Making America Great Again through the rejection of political correctness and the focus on jobs and the economy was central to Donald Trump's agenda in both the Republican primary debates and the presidential ones.

In analyzing the Republican primary debates we firstly have to focus our analysis. Some debates can be easily excluded from the analysis, for example Donald Trump did not participate in the seventh debate because of divergences with Megyn Kelly (this aspect will be analyzed later because of its symbolic importance), the FOX news moderator, and therefore can easily be discarded. Of the twelve debates, therefore, the focus on jobs and the economy to MAGA will be analyzed through the first, sixth, and ninth debates while the anti politically correct rhetoric and its effectiveness will be analyzed in the fourth, tenth, and twelfth debates.

The focus on the importance of jobs and an economy that grows and is competitive is clearly not a unique issue to Trump's agenda nor is it a unique issue for the Republicans. However, what the important aspect here is how these issues were understood in relation to their causes. In relation to what can jobs be created and can the economy grow? Therefore it will be the framing of jobs and the economy that will be important to understand why Donald Trump's agenda appealed so vastly to the US electorate. Anti political correctness is always the framework through which Donald Trump introduces

these issues, however the connection of jobs and economic growth to other issues will be key in understanding how his agenda differed from that of others.

In the ninth Republican primary debate Donald Trump clearly framed the problematic realities of jobs and the economy. In terms of jobs, he stated “I’m going to bring jobs back from China. I’m going to bring jobs back from Mexico and Japan, where they’re all- every country throughout the world- now Vietnam, that’s the new one”. The issue of jobs is therefore framed in terms of spreading globalization. Liberal policies and economic theory have combined to outsource all that which is out-source able. Jobs are one of the main factors of production that has, in fact, been outsourced. This is not new, globalization has always led companies to look for cheaper labor. However, Donald Trump unequivocally says that these jobs must come back to the US notwithstanding global economic processes. What he also does is shift the focus of blame to what are often understood as ‘organic’, ‘natural’, and often inevitable processes of progress i.e. liberalization and globalization. Having high unemployment is not only the fault of these processes, but especially of other countries that allow for workers to be often mistreated, and this, in turn, is not unfair because immoral, it is unfair because the process as it is economically hurts the US disproportionately through, in this case, unemployment. In a broader point on the economy Donald Trump states, “We are going to make our economy strong again... We’re going to bring that money back. You take a look at what happened just this week, China bought the Chicago stock exchange, China, a Chinese company. Carrier is moving to Mexico, an air conditioning company”. In a similar manner to the framing of jobs, also broader economic failures are understood as being consequential to other countries attracting American companies through lenient regulation and to the lack of protection that American companies have, also in the US.

In the first Republican primary debate Donald Trump makes a very important and clearly non politically correct point connected to the realities of doing ones job. Donald Trump claims that “I have used the laws of this country just like the greatest people you read about every day in business have used the laws of this country, the chapter laws, to do great for my business, for myself, for my employees, and for my family”. In stating this Donald Trump clearly justifies the behavior of companies that relocate to other countries to become or remain competitive. He is stating that he behaved against the interest of the US because it made sense in terms of economic gain. He therefore relieves blame for his behavior and the behavior of companies, while blaming nonsensical laws of the US and other countries that unfairly attract companies. The sole fact that Trump allows himself to say such a thing is in contrast with a politically correct understanding of what is ok to say and what is not. He behaves in such a manner, again, because he believes it to be ‘common sense’ (with all the important non politically correct implications that such an idea has). The economy is understood by Donald Trump as the crucial weapon in the new geopolitical war for hegemony. Even though the economy has always been central to domination, Trump restates the importance of such a reality and through his direct and non-politically correct rhetoric makes these connections resonate with the electorate.

In the sixth Republican primary debate Donald Trump re-iterates a lot of the things said above. Importantly, the frame with which he understands the issue of making America great again, related to the issue of jobs, is clearly outlined. He says “We’ve (The US) lost anywhere between 4 and 7 million jobs because of China. What I said then was ‘we have very unfair trade with China. We’re going to have a 505 billion trade deficit with China this year.’ A lot of that because they devalue their currency”. This quote epitomizes the framing of the issue in Donald Trump’s understanding of the problem. Jobs are a problem,

unemployment is a problem, and other countries and their unfair practices are to blame. Not only does this redirect blame and changes the understanding of processes such as liberalization and globalization, but also directly contrasts the political correct censorship that did not allow for such harsh criticism and outspoken blame. In turn, it was this non-politically correct rhetoric connected to the issues that people could relate to that made Donald Trump's appeal so vast.

In pin pointing the use of non-politically correct rhetoric in the Republican primary debates by Donald Trump and why this rhetorical tool was so successful one must briefly discuss what can be considered non-politically correct rhetoric. Non-politically correct rhetoric is not simply enclosed in statements against or debating race, gender, sexuality, and other affiliated topics of Identity politics. Non-politically correct rhetoric is also saying something that is not normal to say in the political paradigm one finds him or herself. The example of Donald Trump addressing China as a real enemy and as a malicious world player openly is an example of that. Importantly, also saying things 'as they are' can often be seen as non politically correct if the reality that one is exposing is not an ideal one and therefore does not reflect the values that the US wants to promote throughout the world.

In the fourth Republican primary debate Donald Trump says something that not only is not politically correct, but is not politically correct in the sense that it is intellectually honest and not politically savvy. He says, in relation to Syria, "Assad is a bad guy, but we have no idea who the so-called rebels...are. I spoke to a general two weeks ago, he said- he was very up on exactly what we're talking about. He said. 'you know, Mr. Trump? We're giving hundreds of millions of dollars of equipment to these people, we have no idea who they are'. So, I don't like Assad. Who's going to like Assad? But we have no idea who these people, and what they're going to be, and what they're going to represent. They may be far

worse than Assad.” This quote demonstrates the completely different rhetorical approach to political life Donald Trump has. Although he is de facto saying that he would prefer to keep Assad in Syria even though he has committed atrocities, his main understanding is that Assad can be controlled, he is known. Donald Trump’s understanding seems similar to the famous phrase FDR supposedly said, “he is a son a bitch, but he’s our son of a bitch” (Drum, 2006). This geopolitical understanding is very much anti PC and at the same time very much in line with the MAGA motto. America first, even if some other places might have to suffer, and a vast part of the electorate agreed.

In the tenth Republican primary debate Donald Trump unleashes all his anti political correctness. This time, apart from making fun of Marco Rubio’s hands to then insinuate the size of his own penis, which, I may say, does not warrant an explanation for why it is not politically correct, Donald Trump does not hide the fact that he is running for President not because he strongly believes in Republican values, but because he wants to MAGA. He says “Your lobbyist and your special interest and your donors, because the audience is packed with them, and they’re packed with you. I’ve had an amazing relation with politicians-with politicians both Democrat, Republican...”. Donald Trump clearly states, in one of the last public Republican primary debates, that he supported democrats. But, most importantly, he moulds all politicians together saying that they are controlled by special interest and that he is the only way towards making America great again. Donald Trump therefore embraces the ‘outsider’ tag and rhetorically carpet bombs the whole political establishment. The clear, direct, and non politically correct language used by Donald Trump greatly contrasts the censorship of the progressive diplomatic left and attracted huge parts of the electorate that were disenchanted with the past twenty years of American politics.

### 2.2.3 Issue in context

Making America Great Again was a slogan that addressed three main issues: The economy, jobs, and political correctness. The framing of the three issues, however, was unique, a characteristic that made it appeal to the American electorate because different from others. Ideas exist amongst other ideas, and good, convincing, and better ideas are only classed as such when compared to others. The framing and interpretation of common political campaign issues such as the economy and jobs can only be used to stand out when candidates frame such issues in a different light. Other issues, such as Political correctness, stand out because of the originality of the issue presented to the electorate and because people actually feel strongly about it. To understand the appeal that issues such as economic growth and jobs had in Donald Trump's campaign, it is essential to know how other potential candidates were framing such issues. The issue of political correctness, on the other hand, was embedded in the establishment according to Trump, so this particular issue set him apart. It is crucial to find elements of this political correctness he rallies against to highlight problems arising from the issue and the resulting appeal Donald Trump enjoyed as a result of addressing the issue. The structure of this section and all subsequent sections concerning the "issue in context" will be as follows: Firstly, the general importance of the issue in a politically correct context will be outlined; Secondly, an example will be given of how Obama dealt or addressed the issue in the previous eight years to try and demonstrate a stark contrast at least in the framing of the issue; the Third section will outline Hilary Clinton's contrasting framing of the issue (this will be very brief because already touched upon in the presidential debates); the Fourth will present a news event, if existing, that happened during the campaign and that

helped enhance Donald Trump's framing of a given issue. Lastly, the conclusion will touch upon world political events that paralleled Donald Trump's campaign and reinforced his conception of the issues according to his frames.

The importance of issues such as jobs and the economy and placing them under the fierce slogan of MAGA was the foundation of Donald Trump's campaign. The appeal that issues such as jobs and the economy had was vast and concerned every single person in the country. They are two issues that are central to any political campaign. A growing economy and high unemployment practically guarantee re-election. Having jobs and the Economy as the first issues in the political campaign made the foundations of the campaign solid. From this starting point, Donald Trump could then frame the issues to identify problems that in turn became additional issues he addressed. By attaching the issue of political correctness to jobs and the economy he made this possible. By using an anti political-correct set-up as the main frame through which he understood and presented jobs and the economy, he justified anything he said, while refocusing the topic around anything he wanted. For this reason, while jobs and the economy were important issues in themselves, combining them to the issue of political correctness Donald Trump allowed himself to navigate and reach the more contentious issues he wanted to address. All of this while justifying the reasoning through an anti political-correct lens that could connect any issue to jobs and the economy.

During the Presidency of Barack Obama, Economic and financial reform was essential. Having been elected straight after the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression (Stewart, 2008) Obama spent most of his initial years trying to put Wall street back in place, the banking system under check, and creating a safety net for Americans in crises. President Obama passed regulation such as the *Dodd-Frank Wall street reform* and

*consumer Protection Act* to regulate what the banks could invest and what needed to remain as savings. However, he did not significantly brake down or close the banks that were to blame for the crises. As a result of the crisis, many of these banks had become even bigger thanks to forced mergers (Lieber, 2016). Although Obama is often hailed as a having been a glimpse of hope and a people's fighter, he has been seen as having fallen in line with 'the establishment' of powerful politicians, financiers and bankers. President Obama's most legacy-defining reform was therefore the *Affordable Care Act*, known colloquially as 'Obamacare'. This reform is important for three reasons: One, it is the reform that created the most jobs under the Obama administration; Two, it is a reform based on an ideology of welfare that is very close to a European state centered conception of Healthcare, which sees government as having a more prominent role in people's wellbeing; and, lastly, it was important because Donald Trump did nothing but attack and promise to repeal it (Humer, 2016). What Obamacare did for the people, whether successful and correct or not, is a very interesting topic that required its own analysis, so it will not be covered here. What is important to understand for our purposes is that Obama's main agenda was a reform concerning healthcare to change a broken system and create jobs. If one contrasts the scale of priorities on Obama's agenda with Trump's, it becomes clear how Trump's framing of the issue of economics and job creation was less nuanced, more direct, less contentious, and resulted in a hugely appealing to the US electorate. Creating jobs though healthcare reform is probably more concretely successful than blaming China and Mexico for stealing jobs, but creates less of an emotional response and has significantly less of a power as a rallying cry. Obama's ambitions are also harder to visualize, harder to explain and harder to understand. On the other hand, Trump's direct and easy explanations to very complex problems made his framing more appealing.



To relate the frames back to political correctness and progressive thinking, we see how Obama's focus on healthcare is very much in line with an identity politics and politically correct ideology that focuses on inclusivity and fairness. Using these arguments as the basis for political reform (as valid as they may be) was less appealing and less important to people than what the Obama and Clinton administrations had thought.

Hilary Clinton's understanding of jobs, the economy, and political correctness was in stark contrast to Donald Trump's framing of the issues. In the presidential debates it was made clear that Hilary Clinton focused on ideas such as fairness and inclusivity as benchmarks to evaluate the success of the job market or of the economy. This understanding is clearly in line with progressive, politically correct thinking and resulted in a restricted appeal in the American electorate. The contrasting focus between Donald Trump's framing of the issues and Hilary Clinton's helps us understand why Donald Trump eventually won the election. His ideas were not better *per se*, but they were certainly more appealing when compared to past and possible future options.

Several events happened in terms of jobs and the economy that help us understand why Donald Trump's understanding of the issues was more appealing than others when evaluating lenses that ideas might be framed through. Donald Trump makes a number of examples himself, and a couple are also reiterated by Hilary Clinton. When blaming Mexico and China for the loss of jobs and consequent economic stagnation, he tells the tale of the Ford manufacturing company and how Mexico attracted them to reopen in Mexico because of their loose regulation (Agence, 2016). He then promises that if elected, he will not allow Mexico to behave this way, while vaguely hinting that he will incentives Ford to stay. Donald Trump never blames the company for moving, because the company needs to think about its own business. He uses a news story to make his framing of the idea more

appealing and relatable - a story is easier to grasp than a policy program. Donald Trump tells another important tale of “misbehavior” that lead to economic loss and job loss: China’s dumping of steal product in the US market (Walker, 2017). This is a perfect example that comes up more than once of why countries such as China are to blame for US loss of jobs and stagnant economic growth. The Stories told not only strengthen Donald Trump’s framing of big issues, but they vitally give a visual image to people listening. This ability to give people something to remember makes Donald Trump’s frames more appealing to the electorate, while the content of his stories justify the politically incorrect approach he has towards these issues.

Donald Trump’s strategy was not hatched in a vacuum. It was in contrast to the previous eight years of Obama, in contrast to what Hilary Clinton (and the other Republicans in the Republican primary debates) was proposing, and in sync with a number of world political movements that rebelled against the ideas of liberalism, progressivism, and political correctness that the two embody. The reality of BREXIT and the emergence of populist parties both on the right and the left in Europe are all symptomatic of a general feeling pervading the western world. At its center, the disbelief and mistrust in liberal institutions and principles. Donald Trump was accompanied by an overall world sentiment espoused by other leaders and intellectuals that supported and understood him and his framing of the at hand. Donald Trump’s framing was therefore in line with a broader world understanding of what truly needed change, a stance in stark opposition to other views available to the American electorate.

Foreign policy is a vast and complex issue. It directly feeds into the main MAGA narrative and the need, according to Donald Trump, to reestablish the US's dominant role in political, economic, and military global affairs. The rhetorical focus on Foreign policy covered issues ranging from the infamous 'Iran deal', to US-China, US-Russia relations, trade agreements, and terrorism. All of these were addressed in Donald Trump's campaign and are exemplary to explain how Donald Trump's rhetoric differed from his predecessors and opponents. Donald Trump held and spoke about foreign relations issues in a unique manner, his point of view covered issues such as re-moving the US from the center of International relations and greatly limiting the supra-governmental control exerted by International agencies on the US. His direct attacks on China, his 'love' for Russia, his complete disgust for the Iran deal, and his take on Terrorism were, if not unconventional, profoundly different from what we had been used to seeing and hearing. All these issues fall under the umbrella of "Foreign policy" and "International Relations" which is important to note because of the very non politically correct ways in which Donald Trump addressed a number of these issues when compared to both previous candidates and adversaries. International relations have at their center the diplomatic relations between countries (Sharp, 2002): diplomacy is both its language and form. In a 'diplomatic' context, direct, unsentimental, and unapologetic behavior is very much out of the ordinary. For this reason, Foreign policy is one of the issues through which Donald Trump managed to shock, reach, and awe the most people. In a typical anti politically correct manner and through language that we could call anti-diplomatic, Donald Trump addressed what we would consider very delicate issues. These issues are where words often count more than actions. Trump approached the issues with a deep understanding

of what the previous twenty years of liberal policy and rhetoric had created: resentment. In a similar manner to his approach to the first issue (jobs, the economy, and political correctness) Trump slammed the blind belief in Liberal policies, in effect returning to rhetoric of 'real politick'. Liberalism has been advertised as being the future of International relations and the best ideology to promote peace in the world. This has been taught in political science and International relations now for some time (from my own experience). Theories such as the 'Democratic Peace Theory' that 'prove' the unwillingness of democracies to go to war exemplify this belief. Notwithstanding this theory, states have continued to wage war, continuing their hawkish Bismarkian behavior (Russett et al, 2000). Countries have gone to war in the name of democracy and with the idea that they could 'export democracy'. Donald Trump exposed this incoherent behavior through direct and politically incorrect rhetoric. He blamed those who he believed were not following the rules, and he called out those who hid, and continue to hide, behind liberal rhetoric to behave in a hawkish manner. By exposing the incoherence of those claiming to embrace "liberalism" and "liberal values" he flipped the prevailing paradigm of good and bad actors. In the next section we will see how he introduced each of the delicate issues that enabled him to appeal to great swathes of the population.

### 2.3.1 Introduction of the issue

Speaking about Foreign policy and all the issues that are comprised within it Donald Trump framed what he saw to be the unacceptable status of International Relations. This status saw the United States as a declining power and this process of decline as being inevitable (Garten, 1987). The role of the United States was not that of a legitimate global

hegemon anymore, but was relegated to a historically immoral state that lied to itself and its people by masking its actions behind liberal rhetoric (i.e. exporting democracy). Although the actions and specific military interventions of the US in the past twenty years can be widely criticized and seen as illegitimate based on international law, as Donald Trump also said in the case of the Iraq war (Trump, 2015), completely revising the history of US foreign policy to paint it solely with a brush of cruelty, domination, and injustice is incorrect and a-historical, but recently common. Historic revisionism is a common practice amongst liberals and advocates of political correctness. This historic revisionism completely removes the legitimacy of US actions and consequentially does not justify any future moral, military, or geopolitical centrality of the US. This idea is one that Donald Trump did not accept, especially when understanding how much the US spent and still spends for its military and what that entails for the security of the Western world. The United States was and is the greatest country in recent history under many aspects and its superiority, be it moral, military, economic, social, or political is a fact of life if not something to wish for. This is what Donald Trump did by attaching the foreign policy issue to the simple idea of Making America Great Again. He did not allow for countries whose, for example, human rights records were and are appalling to sit on their high horse and criticize the actions of the US. He encouraged US citizens to believe in the greatness of their country and not be apologetic about their history. He attacked past deals with countries that did not allow the US to control International relations. He unapologetically brought back the rhetoric of real politick, which, in turn, goes directly in contrast with the decades of political correct rhetoric since the 'end' of the war in Iraq.

Donald Trump's take on issues of Foreign policy will be carried out, as with the other issues, by analyzing what he wrote in "Great Again", the book in which he introduced all his main issues, and in his presidential announcement speech.

The first point Donald Trump made is that of military spending and what that entails for the US and the rest of the world. In an international climate rhetorically rigged with talks about 'peace and prosperity' Donald Trump made a u-turn. "My approach to foreign policy is built on a strong foundation: operate from strength. That means we have to maintain the strongest military in the world, by far." (Trump, 2015: 32) The argument was that the US must protect its interests with every mean possible and that this is not only legitimate, but also good for the US and the rest of the western world. However, because of possible budget constraints and because the US, by protecting its interests also protects the ones of Europe, South East Asia, and all other commercial and political partners Donald Trump criticized these partners too. In a very non-diplomatic and non-politically correct manner, Trump says, "if we're (the US) going to continue to be the policemen of the world, we ought to be paid for it" (Trump, 2015: 32). This idea is of utmost importance. While going against politically correct liberal ideas that advocate disinvestment from the military apparatus Donald Trump also calls out US allies that, while rhetorically criticizing US military spending, hugely benefit from US military spending. Donald Trump did not accept the double whammy that US allies were pursuing, and called them out. Through direct language and simple reasoning, Donald Trump legitimized US past hegemony and the will to continue this hegemony. This greatly resonated with the electorate whose history and self-belief had been squashed by political correct ideology. In continuing his views on foreign policy Trump writes about terrorism and the threat from ISIS. He addresses US mistakes in Iraq and the eventual birth of ISIS in Syria and says, "while ISIS is our (the US)

most violent enemy, they ended up with oil in Iraq and Syria that we (the US) should have taken” (Trump, 2015: 37). This honesty and direct approach to how international conflicts work is a novelty, certainly for politicians. If the common critique concerning the Iraq war was that the US intervened solely for the natural resources (oil), Trump says that the US’s mistake was not to retreat, but to not have taken or burned all the oil that was there. For how crude and apparently overly simplistic, it is a tactic that Saddam Hussein used when retreating from Kuwait (Salgado, 2016) and that could have limited the economic solidity of terrorist organization such as ISIS. Saying such a thing and the appeal that a statement such as this one had is therefore the demonstration of the saturation with PC and the need for blunt honesty that the electorate necessitated and was looking for after years of empty rhetorical performances by politicians. In a similar tone, Trump approached the ‘China issue’. Not accepting the rhetoric of the ‘inevitable rise of China’, Trump redefined US-China relations. “There are people who wish I wouldn’t refer to China as our enemy. But that’s exactly what they are.” (Trump, 2015: 43). No hint of partnership or collaboration, just a crude understanding of how geopolitics work. If China rises, the US loses, and this not only is unacceptable, but it must be avoidable. This idea, such as the other foreign policy statements outlined above, greatly appealed to the US electorate (Haverty, 2020). Middle and lower class workers, small businesses and entrepreneurs lived and keep living the reality of having to compete with what Bannon would define a “mercantilist state” (Bannon, 2019). The realization that China’s behavior cannot be accepted if the US wants to compete with it on a level playing field is essential to the appeal that Trump’s approach to China had with the electorate. Donald Trump called China out directly and unapologetically. Notwithstanding diplomatic or politically correct rhetoric was at the bases of why his approach appealed so much to the US electorate.

In his presidential announcement speech Donald Trump reiterates a number of concepts on his electoral agenda that he mentioned in his book. The necessity to be strong in the face of US adversaries and not allow for other countries to take over key economic and political roles in international relations was central to his speech. Trump focused a lot of his attention, as many campaigns do, on what others were not able to do or what, if elected instead of him, will not do. After reiterating the point about US military intervention, ISIS, and the necessity to take the oil from Iraq and Syria when retreating Donald Trump moved to what other candidates are doing or saying about China. "I like them (other candidates). I hear their speeches. And they don't talk jobs and they don't talk China" (Trump, 2015). This is crucial in the process of framing the problem of low employment and 'loosing' in the arena of foreign relations. Trump redirected the attention to the behavior of China that does not allow r US workers and businesses to fairly compete in the world market. Trump, again, calls out China. But, in the process, also calls out all the politicians that for years have seemingly accepted and legitimized the rise of China as the next superpower and understood this rise as being inevitable. This will be discussed more at length in the section "issue in context". However it is important to always keep in mind that ideas don't exist in a vacuum, but that they exist in relation to other ideas and are given value in a context of different ideas. Another incredibly unambiguous position that Donald Trump stated was his support for Israel and his despise for the 'Iran deal' signed by President Obama (Trump, 2015). In the context of political correctness and progressivism Israel was slowly seen more and more as the aggressor in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle (Ayres, 1997). In a typically politically correct/identity politics fashion, Israelis were always seen more at fault because clearly the more powerful in the contest. As mentioned in the introduction the unwillingness by the progressive identity



politics advocates to accept an interpretation of reality that stems from a position of power is exemplified in the slow refusal of Israeli legitimacy. I do not want to give any kind of opinion in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But reiterate the special relationship that the US and Israel have historically had, and that Donald Trump unapologetically wanted to uphold. “Take a look at the deal he’s (Obama) making with Iran. He makes that deal, Israel maybe won’t exist very long. It’s a disaster, and we have to protect Israel” (Trump, 2015). This direct approach to foreign policy appealed to people that understood that the US needed to reaffirm itself on the world stage. Trump’s direct and non-diplomatic statements made it so that his ideas were absorbed very easily by the electorate that not only agreed, but also was liberated of the burden of politically correct censorship that hid ‘ugly’ truths behind the progressive rhetoric of diplomacy.

### 2.3.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issue of Foreign policy and all that it comprised was central to Donald Trump’s campaign. Although the bigger contrast in agendas happened between Trump and Clinton in the presidential debates, and we will tackle that later, there are a number of salient back and forth’s in the Republican primary debates too. To focus the analysis the fourth, sixth, and twelfth debates will be highlighted for they are the most important ones in terms of ‘foreign policy talk’. It is important to realize that similar issues come up in every Republican primary debate and that a reiteration of each candidate’s position on the variety of issues is common. The importance, for example, of the twelfth debate is: firstly, it is the last debate and therefore the last chance for candidates to express their points of

view; secondly, as throughout the chronology of debates, as they move forward candidates drop out and therefore more space is given to single candidates.

The issues under the umbrella of Foreign policy are, as analyzed in the introduction, US-Russia relations, US-China relations and Chinas rise, Iran and the Iran deal, Terrorism, Trade agreements, and, overarching all these issues is Americas role in the world. The issues of China, Trade agreements, and US role in the world connected to Russian actions will be focused on in the analysis of the fourth debate, the issues concerning Iran and Terrorism will be analyzed through the sixth debate, while the twelfth debate will be analyzed to touch upon and reiterate all the issues of foreign policy. The role of the US on the global stage will be focused on at various points of the analysis.

As with all the analysis the importance of the issues is complemented by the way in which they are framed. The non politically correct language used by Donald Trump, the directness of his statements, the novelty (in many cases) of his opinions, and the consequent blame shifting for where these issues originate are all central to the subsequent appeal that Donald Trump's framing of the issues had.

In the fourth Republican primary debate Donald Trump attacked China and its actions head on. He connected international trade agreements that he believes to be bad for the US to Chinese behavior in the international arena. Donald Trump says, "The TPP is a horrible deal. It is a deal that is going to lead to nothing but trouble. It's a deal that was designed for China to come in, as they always do, through the back door and totally take advantage of everyone". The TPP is the Trans Pacific Partnership deal that focused on reducing trade barriers amongst signatories. Notwithstanding the positive or negative effects that the agreement might have had, the quote reported above is important to explain what Donald Trump thought about Chinese behavior. The most important and

clear attack on China is not the fact that Trump believes the deal to be in China's favor, which is a position that can be argued; it is the claim he makes about Chinese behavior. China is framed as a sly and rogue nation that does not respect international law and tries to take advantage of other countries and their citizens. Importantly, China does not behave this way *una tantum*, but they "always do". This direct and harsh attack on China is typical of Trumpian rhetoric and clearly shifts blame towards China for behaving in a way not respectful of international standards. TPP was a trade deal whose main legislation focused around fishing rights. Fishing rights, and therefore navigation and extraction rights have always been and still are central to control trade routes and therefore central in becoming a powerhouse in the world. With this understanding in mind Trump goes on to say that "China is a problem, both economically in what they're doing in the South China Sea, I mean, they are becoming a very major force. So, we have more than just Russia". This quote is of incredible importance because it connects China's actions to Russia and the consequent geopolitical struggle that Trump sees going on in the world. China is seen as a similar if not bigger threat than Russia. As China grows, the US has to replace or re-impose itself on the world stage, and this will also be in relation to its allies and old enemies. Both these takes on China and Russia are somewhat new and certainly not in line with a politically correct understanding of diplomatic geopolitics. A potential candidate for president could not, at least rhetorically, accept for other countries to be abused and wash their hands of it (unless it wasn't the US abusing of them) in the interest of the US. In continuing to talk about Russia and the US position on the world stage, Trump says "I'm all for protecting Ukraine and working- but, we have countries surrounding the Ukraine (he is referring to the EU and specifically Germany) that aren't doing anything. They say 'keep going, keep going, you dummies keep going, protect us". The shift in blame through

Trump's lens is incredibly significant. From an attack on China and its actions, to the connection with the dangers of Trade agreements that wouldn't favor the US, to a discussion about US-Russia relations and the necessity to have other US partners 'step up' and stop asking for hand-outs. All these issues are closely connected and central to Donald Trump's appeal to the electorate. Donald Trump then ends his reasoning by saying that "We (the US) can't continue being the policemen of the world". By ending in such a manner after attacking China, he remains firm on his position about China but allows for Russia to enlarge its scope and geopolitically get closer to the US. This framing is crucial to refocus the fundamental blame for American problems, especially relating to the economy, towards China and the huge military bill that the US pays to protect Western Europe from an old enemy.

In the Sixth Republican primary debate China was again a big focus, but this will not be discussed here as exhausting examples have been given through the analysis of the Fourth debate. The Iran deal and Terrorism are also big issues that are discussed in the Sixth debate. Donald Trump frames these realities, especially the terrorism issue, in a new and incredibly non-PC manner. While with Iran the main focus is economic and specifically the Iran deal, with terrorism, and specifically Islamic terrorism, he alludes to cultural and religious problems. Donald Trump focuses on the Iran deal and his belief that it is an awful deal in every single mention of Iran throughout all the debates. In the sixth debate he says that "Iranian wise guys having guns to their heads (metaphor to say that the US diplomats were cornered). It was a terrible sight. A terrible sight. And the only reason we got them back is because we owed them a stupid deal, \$150 billion. If I'm president, there won't be stupid deals. We will make America great again. We will win on everything we do." Donald Trump clearly blames the American envoys that signed the Iran deal with being

incompetent and with allowing Iran to corner them into signing. Importantly, he connects this to the fact that if he is elected, America will not have this happening anymore. Connected to the critical message about the Iran deal, there is a message of hope for future deals. Donald Trump gives hope to Americans, and as the whole world saw in Obamas presidential campaign, hope is a very powerful tool that more often than not helps win elections. The framing of the Iran deal as being an awful deal and the blame being on the US delegates is something that Donald Trump reiterated an innumerable number of times and that was central to his campaign. The message was clear and simple: Obamas men were incompetent and Iran played the US. But, this will not happen again. The framing of the issue of Terrorism is more complicated and less politically correct. Donald Trump highlights a conversation that had been going on in some academic circles, the rise of academics such as Jordan Peterson, Sam Harris, and Douglas Murray are at the center of this debate. A debate that in many cases was a lived and ordinary experience for people whom live and continue to live in huge Western cities that are melting pots of different cultures and religions. This is what Samuel Huntington called “the clash of civilizations”. Donald Trump, in talking about his ‘Muslim ban’ idea (this will be discussed at greater length in the “immigration” issue) highlights what some would call a fundamental incompatibility of different cultures and religions. He says, “we (the US) have to find out what’s going on. I said temporarily. I didn’t mean permanently. I said temporarily. And I have great Muslim friends. And some of them, I will say, not all, have called me and said ‘Donald, thank you very much; you’re exposing an unbelievable problem and we have to get to the bottom of it’”. Donald Trump therefore elevates a conversation that is completely against progressive identity politics rhetoric and core beliefs. His refusal to acknowledge the fact that some things should not be talked about because ‘simply’ not true is at the

core of his appeal. By speaking about an issue in such a manner he automatically discredits the censorship of the progressive liberal left in terms of social policy and solutions to social issues. No normative judgment concerning Donald Trump's take on the issue will be given but the very important fact that people responded to this claim is significant enough to say that it was an issue that people felt strongly about and that therefore was important to address in an election. Donald Trump therefore connects religious beliefs to propensity to become a terrorist. Violent and subversive religions and cultures that are not compatible with Western values, he claims, should not be allowed to be professed in these Western nations. To top off the anti PC claims and the fight against PC that Trump consciously or unconsciously fights, he then says that many of the things he is saying should be considered 'common sense'. As already mentioned above, the claim to 'common sense' is in itself an attack on the beliefs of identity politics and political correctness.

In the Twelfth Republican primary debate the candidates used the platform to reiterate one last time their main beliefs on the principle issues. Donald Trump was no different. Following will be the key quotes and analysis concerning Donald Trump's beliefs on China, Russia, Iran, and Terrorism. All contoured by the future role of the US on the international stage. Trump clearly reiterates his position on China saying, "China dumps everything that they have over here. No tax, no nothing, no problems, no curfews, no anything. We can't even get into China. I have the best people, manufacturers, they can't get in. When they get in, they have to pay tremendous tax". The quote clearly states that China does not play by the rules and is an aggressive state that cannot be considered an ally, on the contrary, it must be considered an enemy. This is very much in line with Trump's framing of China throughout his primary debates. As mentioned above, Trump spoke about different

geopolitical realities in connection to one another. If China rises as an enemy, Russia declines as one. In line with this reasoning, Trump claims that “As far as Putin is concerned, I think Putin has been a very strong leader for Russia. I think he has been a lot stronger than our leader, that I can tell you”. Trump clearly respects the leadership of Putin. This take is not in line with American historical foreign policy and is certainly not politically correct if one knows how homosexuals and different ethnic minorities are institutionally marginalized in Russia (Spaulding, 2018). In terms of Iran, Donald Trump simply restates what he has been stating in all his campaign. “As far as Iran is concerned, I would have, never made that deal. That is one of the worst deals ever, ever made by this country. It is a disaster. So for Ted (Cruz) to say that I agree with this deal, I mean, it’s a staple in my speeches that this may be the worst single deal I’ve ever seen negotiated”. Trump says it himself, it’s what he has repeated throughout his campaign. The last issue tackled in Foreign policy is Terrorism and in this case ISIS. This last quote is important because it shows Donald Trump’s take on terrorism but, importantly, it reiterates his point concerning the US following international law and the restrictions that these laws impose. Importantly, while other players on the international field do not respect these same laws. This point clearly goes against any understanding of PC. The progressive liberal multicultural belief is cemented in international collaboration and celebrated through international institutions. When Trump claims, “we have to obey laws. Have to obey the laws. But we have to expand those laws, because we have to be able to fight on at least somewhat of an equal footing or we will never ever knock out ISIS and all others that are so bad. We better expand our laws or we’re being a bunch of suckers, and they are laughing at us. They are laughing at us, believe me.” What he is saying is that international laws restrict the aggressiveness that the US can exert on realities such as ISIS. And, in turn,

that fighting a war with an entity that does not respect the same laws of engagement that the US does does not make sense and is counterproductive to the US effort. This honest and direct approach to what he believes to be a solution for fighting terrorism and the cultural and religious incompatibility discussion presented above are certainly not in line with PC rhetoric and are, at the same time, what resulted in appealing vastly to the US electorate.

### 2.3.3 Issue in context

Foreign policy was a key issue when contrasting the frames and views that Donald Trump espoused compared to past leaders, alternative proposals and future possibilities. Global partnerships, trade deals, and perceived misbehavior by other countries were three issues that Donald Trump spoke about extensively and that differentiated him greatly from other politicians. These, however, have been spoken about at length in other sections. For example, Mexico's and China's behavior have already been covered as frames in the section on jobs and the economy and therefore will not be repeated here. This analysis will cover the common thread of the War in Libya and all that it entailed. The sections, as per the issue of MAGA, will be the following: Firstly, the issue in the broader context of political correctness and progressive liberal thought; secondly, a discussion of how the previous eight years of Obama administration framed the issue and how that contrasted; thirdly, a brief discussion of the role Hilary Clinton played and a key incoherence it highlighted in her campaign; finally, the conclusions reflect on how Donald Trump's framing was very much in line with global patterns of cultural upheaval in the western world.



The issue of foreign policy was spoken about by Trump through direct and unapologetic language. He spoke about the role of the USA in real political language, unwary of the diplomatic and politically correct talk that underscores international relations. He attacked previous US actions on the international stage while supporting US centrality in remaining a global hegemon. US relations with countries such as Russia, China, Mexico, Israel, and Iran were all seen through a different frame in Donald Trump's rhetoric. These were in contrast with previous political positions and created a strong appeal for his campaign. Russia was not necessarily portrayed as a lifelong enemy, but the leniency afforded by previous administrations in relation to Russian aggression was deeply criticized. China was reshaped to be the enemy of the future, against which the US had to win its war for world hegemony. Mexico was not understood as an economic ally, but a country responsible for actively downplaying the centrality of the US economy. Iran was unapologetically branded a rogue and radical state and ideas of peaceful relations with the country were discarded. Israel was placed at the center of US interests in the Middle East once again, and unapologetically supported in their stance against the majority Muslim countries surrounding them. These frames were either new or renewed by Trump's political agenda. These frames were also meant for Trump to harshly criticize past operations by the US for not understanding the realities of geopolitics. These frames unapologetically placed American interest at the center of foreign policy strategy, and this resonated with the electorate. Note that it is obvious that all US foreign policy is historically in the interest of the US. However, it was Trump's rhetoric that restated this point without masquerading it behind democratic peace building efforts or international cooperation that won people's approval.

The Obama administration inherited a number of conflicts from the Bush administration. Amongst these were the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the general strategy that followed the 9/11 attacks, coined the 'war on terror'. In taking office, President Obama immediately gave a speech at Cairo University calling for a "new beginning" when addressing US relations with the Muslim world (Tapper and Travers, 2009). This rhetoric can largely be understood under the umbrella of political correctness of which diplomatic talk is a part. The priorities that it set were completely in contrast with Trump's understanding of foreign policy. While President Obama's campaign spoke of cooperation between the US and the Arab world, Trump spoke about the incompatibility of the US and Muslim culture and values. This was mentioned at length when, in the presidential debates between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, Trump claimed that Hilary Clinton could not even mention the US's primary enemy because this was deemed politically incorrect. The enemy he was referencing was "radical Islamic terrorism". This huge rhetorical and strategic difference between President Obama, Hilary Clinton, and Donald Trump highlights why Trump's foreign policy framing was successful. After years of hopeful liberal thinking and empty rhetoric, Donald Trump highlighted issues with foreign policy that were politically incorrect and outside the public discourse. This made his appeal grow immensely. The issue surrounding Libya and the lack of strategy and planning around the toppling of Ghaddafi was the biggest mistake that Obama made – according to the man himself (Karuri, 2016). The intervention reveals an important difference between Obama's rhetoric compared to Trump's. The US claims to have intervened in Libya to establish a fair and just Democratic government. Even though the idea of 'spreading democracy' was already being widely criticized, it was at the center of Obama's foreign policy (Boyle, 2011). The issue to highlight here is the difference between

Trump's understanding of foreign dictators and Obama's, and how these different takes resonated with the US electorate. Libya was a stable country that pushed for African strength, and that had very good - albeit not perfect - relations with some European countries, namely Italy (Mercuri, 2017). Why then, did the US intervene? The correct answer, probably, is that they acted out of principle. However just this undertaken might have been, the intervention did not resonate with the US electorate. Risking American lives to help other people in other countries was not acceptable anymore. The winning slogan MAGA and America first are exemplary of these changing feelings. The contrast can also be seen in what Trump says about another dictator, Assad, in Syria. In the primary and presidential debates Trump clearly states that Assad is not a good guy, but that he could have been on the US's side, and therefore should be supported in the interest of the American people. This contrasting take on foreign policy, having principals be drivers versus self-interest, was what made Donald Trump's rhetoric appealing to the American electorate. Hilary Clinton also had a contrasting agenda to Donald Trump's. This has already been outlined in the presidential debates section, so it will not be analyzed extensively. However, it is worth noting that Hilary's rhetoric on foreign policy was entwined with ideas of cooperation, diplomacy, and fairness. This rhetoric was not appealing to vast sways of the electorate, and backfired when some of Hilary Clinton's actions as Secretary of State were perceived to have been out of line with her own peaceful rhetoric. Hilary Clinton was Secretary of State during the Obama administration and had an active role in the decision to intervene in Libya. The infamous Benghazi terrorist attack lead to an investigation that revealed a number of emails highlighting the motives for intervention. A deep network of consultants with vested interests in Libya and ties to the Clinton Foundation discredited, in the emotive populous response, any

righteous reason to intervene in Libya. This fact is not what put Hilary Clinton in bad light. It was the perceived incoherence, the fact that her actions did not reflect her positive rhetoric that discredited her trustworthiness in matters relating to International relations. Contrasted to Donald Trump's direct and undiplomatic rhetoric, Hilary Clintons appears dishonest. This led a number of people to move away from Hilary Clinton and into the camp of Donald Trump (Dreyfuss, 2015).

Donald Trump's framing of foreign policy was unique. While Donald Trump's blunt rhetoric on foreign policy swept the USA, a number of European Parties focusing on nationalist agendas also gained traction in their respective political systems. Trump's idea of putting American interest above all was very much in line with a new or renewed understanding of national and international policy in European countries such as Italy and France. Donald Trump framed the issue in a way that not only resonated with the American electorate, but that found validation in conservative political phenomenon across the world.

## 2.4 Immigration

Immigration and its impact has been one of, if not *the* main, field of focus in economics, socio-cultural, and political study in recent years. In the US and beyond, immigration has been hailed as increasing gross domestic product (GDP), enhancing multiculturalism, and representing humanitarianism and solidarity throughout the world. All these things that immigration is said to do, it does. However, the effects need to be analyzed objectively rather than aspirationally, to go beyond its role representing what is 'good in the world'. Immigration often fosters economic growth by increasing labor supply and decreasing its

competitive nature, and as a result, its cost. The people hit the hardest by immigration are usually the poor, who are pitted against immigrants of a similar socio economic status against whom they must compete. Immigration fosters multiculturalism, yes. It is easy to understand that if a number of people from different countries migrate to one place, that place will hold a number of nationalities and become by definition multicultural. However, multiculturalism in itself holds no value because it is not synonymous of integration, it is simply a definition of cultural diversity with no true connotation attached to it (Noack, 2015). The concept of multiculturalism is often conflated with Integration, an association which is very much wrong. Integration does not naturally occur in a multicultural setting. Without integration, multiculturalism simply reflects a number of different nationalities and ethnicities living apart from each other in the same city. This has the opposite effect of a truly integrated society. Notwithstanding the ambiguous effects of immigration, the process of accepting and welcoming people who are, on average, less well-off than the locals, is seen as a notable and noble undertaking. While it is a noble practice, “being nice” does not define a country's national identity or the way in which an individual defines him or herself as part of society (Murray, 2014). The issue of immigration in the 2016 Trump campaign was of central relevance. The idea that Western countries have a duty to accept waves of immigration without questioning their impact was beginning to spread. Studies on the impact of immigration result in vastly different results (Dustman, 2016). Furthermore, studies that have drawn negative conclusions regarding the economic, social, and cultural impacts of immigration have rarely been popularized because holding such an opinion is often understood as masquerading malignant intent, such as being racist (The Economist, 2019). This point connects immigration to other issues in the Trump's campaign and makes the rhetoric he used so

poignant and effective. Our past (and to a high degree present) inability to have an honest discussion about the impact of immigration without being labeled a racist, close-minded redneck, allowed Trump's rhetorical approach to be so successful. In Trump's view, liberal values represented incoherence, the blind embrace of 'benevolent' ideas that were leading to the American downfall. The fact that the electorate felt heard by Trump's understanding of their day-to-day experience of immigration allowed him to say offensive, outrageous, and politically incorrect things without distancing his electorate. Steve Bannon, in a number of interviews, calls this distinction "the signal and the noise" (Kirk, 2019). The signal here is understood as Donald Trump's proposed policy, while the noise is the outrageous things he says that are reported in the media. This is of vital importance, because as we will come to understand, the US's general public perception of what Trump said was often different than what the media reported. In the next section we will see how Donald Trump tackled the delicate issue of immigration to greatly appeal to the electorate.

#### 2.4.1 Introduction of the issue

Donald Trump spoke about immigration as he did with every other issue. This was not common anymore. Political correctness created an arena where the impact of immigration was too delicate and sensitive a topic to even be spoken about (Sanandaji, 2018). The rhetoric that Trump used was direct, unapologetic, and often truthful in ways that were seemingly harmful or disrespectful. The issue of immigration is certainly a delicate one, but, as with every other issues, one needs to be able to address it and weigh its impact on the US economy, on US social matters, and on US demographics that potentially alter

cultural traditions and beliefs. These are tough conversations to have without offending people whom you are talking about, and often with. However, not having these conversations has created a significant polarization of opinions because of the inability to confront and therefore develop opinions in every day public conversations (Blankenhorn, 2018). The idea that some things cannot be spoken about or debated because they are 'black and white' (meaning that a truth clearly exists) is an idea that originates from the politically correct progressive left and that, although arguably being thought of with the best intentions, resulted in individuals becoming entrenched in their opinions. Dangerously, subjectivity replaced objectivity in the post-truth society. When an opinion that was imposed as absolute truth is debunked and gotten rid of, then everyone can claim to know the truth notwithstanding the evidence to claim such a thing. This is what the progressive left did and, ironically, the way in which Donald Trump could justify some of his objectively outrageous statements (Chotiner, 2019).

As with the other issues the best sources to examine when analyzing how Donald Trump introduced the issue of immigration are his book "Great Again" and his presidential announcement speech. The rhetoric relating to immigration is often understood as being offensive and it is important to understand that it was, but that this did not matter to Trumps electorate. Therefore the next section will present how the issue of immigration was introduced in a typically non-politically correct manner and how and why the electorate reacted so positively to the framing of the issue in such a manner. Interestingly, in my opinion, many of the statements that Trump made are not contentious or even shocking. What is important to understand is that the statements he made were seen in such a manner and that therefore they had a greater impact and resonance with the electorate than what one might expect.

“A country that doesn’t control its borders can’t survive” (Trump, 2015: 19). This is the quote with which Donald Trump concludes his first paragraph on immigration. The idea is simple and the message direct and truthful. If the conception of nation state still exists, it is the borders of the nation that define its geographical limits. The idea brought forth is that not all ideas associated with ‘openness’ greatly promoted by liberals have a positive impact and result in improving society. This was contentious and in contrast to politically correct ideas because it highlights the negative impacts of immigration and ideologically confronts ideas of multiculturalism. This idea is simple, and as Donald Trump continues in his book, “only makes common sense” (Trump, 2015: 19). Importantly, this is not an attack against immigrants per se, but a reflection on the impact of immigration, not withstanding whom the migrants actually are. The idea of common sense is also one that goes against progressive political correctness. There is no such thing as ‘common sense’ in a society based on subjectivity. ‘Common sense’ is an imposition of truth by those whom want to maintain the social order in the same way that political correctness is an imposition by others whom want to change this order. This idea is profoundly flawed. Political correctness imposed a set of disprovable ideas, while ‘common sense’, in this instance, refers to the experiences of everyday people living with the changes brought forth by immigration. These challenges are real and are exasperated by ILLEGAL immigration. It is this distinction that is of great importance. Donald Trump, when writing about immigration, clearly states that the problem is illegal immigration, and not immigration per se. His family is Irish and made its fortune in the US, why would the son of immigrants (and a husband of one) be against legal immigration? Donald Trump in his chapter on immigration “Good walls make for good neighbors” makes this clear more than once. The introduction of the issue of immigration in his book is therefore much less



contentious than what it was made to be (this will be addressed in the section on “Media reporting on the issue”). The fact that no one was seriously addressing immigration and its negative impact, per se, made it a contentious issue, but that did not mean that it was addressed in a contentious manner. The simple fact, therefore, that there is harm in addressing an issue is exemplary in demonstrating why the issue resonated so strongly with significant parts of the electorate. Donald Trump took the censorship imposed by political correctness head on.

In his presidential annunciation speech Donald Trump addressed immigration directly and was widely criticized for what he said. When addressing immigration at the southern border Donald Trump claimed that when “Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you (pointing at the crowd). They’re not sending you (pointing at the crowd). They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re taking those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people” (Trump, 2015). Notwithstanding how offensive some of these statements may be to Mexican migrants that migrated to the US to find a better life, the fact of the matter is that migrants, the majority of the time, migrate to find a better life. Therefore, by definition, they are often poor. This is, again, common sense. If economic stability and wealth defines the status of people in society, the majority of migrants that enter the US from its southern border are not ‘the best people’ of Mexico. This argument is harsh because it might offend, but it is overwhelmingly true. The willingness to hide this fact and masquerade immigration as the beautiful coming together of different cultures is at best not true, and at worst a curtain behind which other interests lay. Immigration, especially in the short run and in the case of unskilled labor, increases competition for the lowest paid jobs (Ruhs, 2020). Therefore immigration of this sort

disproportionately impacts the middle and lower classes of the US, increasing competition and lowering wages. This, I believe, is what people whom live every day situations at the border took from Donald Trump's statements. No one had addressed this issue head on and with direct and strong language as Donald Trump did. The generalizations in the rest of the quote, as all generalizations, have a fundament of truth but are generally incorrect. However, the importance of this quote cannot be overstated because, again, Donald Trump speaks about the negative impacts of illegal immigration unapologetically and against the overtly positive clout of political correctness. He spoke to peoples guts, and many of his ideas resonated with the realities that people were living, notwithstanding of their ethnicity. Ethnicity was definitely a polarizing aspect of the election and historical affiliations still remained, for example, where the majority of Hispanic voters voted for Hilary Clinton. However, even though the majority of Hispanics voted for Hilary Clinton, the perception of what issues they gave most importance to is significant to understand why some did not. 79% of Hispanic voters said that immigration was a "very important" issue when voting. 72% said that the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities was "very important", and 'only' 50% of Hispanics said that the treatment of gay, lesbian, and transgender people was "very important" (Pew Research center, 2016). What this entails will be discussed further in the section "issue in context". However, it is worth noting that the importance given to issues such as immigration by Donald Trump resonated more deeply with Hispanic voters than the focus on social policy and identity politics in Hilary Clinton's campaign.

#### 2.4.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issue of immigration was central to Donald Trump's electoral campaign. His understanding of it and his portrayal of it were very different from other candidates. He also credits himself, and for the most part this is true, to have been the candidate to have brought the issue up and made it a salient one in the election. In a political arena riddled by political correctness it was, and often still is, impossible to have an honest conversation about the impact of immigration. As we will see both the Republican primary debates and the presidential debates were saturated with progressive political correct rhetoric. As we will see, it is this reality that made the comments of Donald Trump spectacularly stand out from what other candidates said. The issue of immigration was connected to a number of other issues. All issues are interconnected, but immigration stands out as one that is connected to Foreign policy, to security, to jobs and the economy, and, most importantly, to culture and social aspects of life. Culture and social aspects of life are most important, in this context, because not spoken about enough in the past. Donald Trump taps into this sentiment. The past inability to speak about issues such as migration in terms of cultural impact is one of the results, if not the main one, of progressive politically correct censorship. This, importantly, permeated the Republican Party too.

The issue of immigration in the Republican presidential debates will be analyzed in a different manner to the other issues. The first and most important point for the Trump campaign, which eventually became the main talking point related to immigration, was the fact that it was Donald Trump whom made it an issue. This is important because it was used as Donald Trump's main talking point on immigration. Anything he said that was deemed offensive, inappropriate, or right out wrong about immigration was justified by the fact that the conversation wouldn't have even been happening if it wasn't for him. This will therefore be the main focus of analysis, and will touch upon the first, eighth, ninth,

and tenth Republican presidential debates. Following this, the first, ninth, and eleventh debates will also be used to show Donald Trump's connection between immigration and Security policy. The fourth debate will then be briefly analyzed to demonstrate the connection that Trump makes between immigration and the economy (this will be brief also because already touched upon in previous sections). And, finally, a vital analysis of a discussion between Jeb Bush and Donald Trump in the ninth debate will be made to discuss immigration, political correctness, and the permeating progressive positive rhetoric surrounding such a phenomena.

Donald Trump believed and continues to believe that immigration became a salient topic for debate firstly in the primary debates and secondly in the presidential election because of him. It does not really matter if this is true or not, for example, Carly Fiorina told Trump on the debate stage that immigration was already a salient topic in 2008 and 2012. This did not seem to matter to him, and, most importantly, to the electorate. The politically correct veil that had covered or shamed those whom spoke about the negative impacts of immigration was uncovered. Statements such as ones he made, and that have been analyzed in the previous section, about Mexicans also being rapists forced the politicians and the general public to have a conversation. In the first Republican primary debate Donald Trump says, "So, if it weren't for me, you wouldn't even be talking about illegal immigration, Chris (referring to Chris Christie). You wouldn't even be talking about it. This was not a subject that was on anybody's mind until I brought it up at my announcement". In this quote Trump clearly takes credit for opening the Pandora's box of immigration debate and directly linking this happening to his statements in his presidential announcement speech. At the Ninth primary debate he reiterates by saying "when I announced that I was running for President on June 16<sup>th</sup>, illegal immigration wasn't even a

subject. If I didn't bring it up, we wouldn't even be talking". Again, directly linking the fact that immigration has become an issue worth talking about to his presidential announcement speech. At the tenth primary debate, notwithstanding all the other debates in which he reiterated this belief, the interviewer opens the debate by asking Donald Trump a question about his statements on immigration, and, instead of directly answering the question, he says that "as far as coming back in, number one, you wouldn't even be talking, and you wouldn't have asked that as the first question if it weren't for me when in my opening I talked about illegal immigration. It wouldn't even be a subject". This quote exemplifies Trump's belief. Because it is him that introduced the issue, the main focus should be on giving him credit for having raised it. This certainly resonated with the electorate and the amount of times he repeated this point helped. To conclude on the importance of introducing the issue that Trump believed was central to his take on immigration appealing to the electorate at the ninth debate, he says that "now, everybody's coming to me, they're all trying to say, well, he's right, we have to come to him. I hit other things. I talked about Muslims. We have a problem. Nobody else wanted to mention the problem, I brought it up. I took the heat." In a typical Trump-like manner Trump takes the credit for introducing the issue, says that people thanked him for introducing it, and does not hesitate to connect it to another non-PC issue. Immigration is connected to discussions about culture and religion, and as with Foreign policy, Trump sees immigration from Muslim countries as more problematic than other places because of this cultural clash.

Immigration and Security are closely connected and everything that we touch upon concerning immigration is de facto also a security issue. Be it National security, economic security, or any other type of security one can always understand immigration in terms of

security. What was mentioned above concerning Muslims migrating to the US can also be understood as concerning a type of cultural or social security. The type of security that will be discussed below is National security. In the first primary debate Donald Trump reiterates the idea he first presented in his presidential announcement speech. He says that “the fact is, since then (referring to more open and relaxed border controls), many killing, murders, crime, drugs pouring across the border, are money going out and the drugs coming in. And I said we need to build a wall, and it has to be built quickly. I don’t mind having a big beautiful door in that wall so that people can come into this country legally”. Trump therefore reminds the public of the dangers of not controlling the border. This idea certainly resonated with people whom live in the South of the United States and that have experienced the impacts of drug crime in their towns and cities. The direct and unapologetic language can be understood as being exaggerated and unfair, but it is just that that makes it stand out from other statements. The idea of building a door in the infamous Donald Trump wall then gives some ‘sanity’ to his statements. The importance of referring to illegal immigration is also very important because it stands to demonstrate that Donald Trump is not anti immigration, he is anti illegal immigration which, if we did not find ourselves in the era of political correctness, would be simply understood as sensible or common sense. In the ninth debate he reiterates this point by saying, “I want everybody taken care of, but we have to take care of our people in this country. We’re not taking care of our people. We have no border. We have no control. People are flooding across. We can’t have it. We either have a border, and I’m very strongly- I’m not proposing. I will build a wall. I will build a wall”. Even though this quote portrays a very similar point to the one before, there is a bigger emphasis on the government’s responsibility and on the fact that not protecting the border is simply disrespectful towards US citizens. In a

similar manner, in the eleventh debate, he says that “I’m not playing with anybody’s fantasies, I’m playing to the fact that our country is in trouble, that we have a tremendous problem with crime. The border is a disaster; it’s like a piece of Swiss cheese. We’re going to stop it; we’re going to stop people from coming into our country illegally. We’re going to stop it”. The appeal that this direct and non-coated language had in all these three quotes reported above was incredibly effective in getting Donald Trump’s message across.

The connection between the economy and immigration was mentioned more than once throughout other issues such as Foreign policy. In the fourth debate Trump puts everything together by saying, “frankly, we have to stop illegal immigration. It’s hurting us economically. It’s hurting us from every standpoint. It’s causing tremendous difficulty with respect to drugs and what that does to many of our inner cities in particular”. In this quote Trump connects all the points that were mentioned above. The economic problematic impact of immigration, the drug problems that are enhanced by immigration, and, most importantly, the social problems arising in overcrowded inner cities. The statements he makes are very broad and therefore can be interpreted in a number of ways and can be internalized by a number of people. The following point will focus on the political correct liberal understanding of immigration and how much it permeated US politics.

Tackling the issue of immigration in the manner Donald Trump did was of central importance and resonated so deeply with the electorate because no one else dealt with it in such a manner, as discussed above. Other candidates in the Republican Party caught on the bandwagon or already had their opinions about immigration and once Trump opened up the safe, everyone cashed in. However, one candidate and Donald Trump’s interactions with this candidate are exemplary in demonstrating how much the progressive political

correct belief had permeated the political establishment of the USA. This candidate was Jeb Bush. At the ninth Republican primary debate Trump stated that “I don’t often agree with Marco (Rubio), and I don’t often agree with Ted (Cruz), but I can in this case. The weakest person on this stage by far on illegal immigration is Jeb Bush. ‘They come out of an act of love, whether you like it or not’. He is so weak on illegal immigration it’s laughable, and everybody knows it”. This quote is exemplary of how far from a popular understanding of the impacts of immigration the established politicians were. Jeb Bush, son of George H. and brother of George Bush was set to win the nomination. He had the most liberal and politically correct ideas concerning immigration when compared to all other candidates. What is truly important though, is the wishful thinking and naïve understanding that Jeb Bush had when trying to think like the ‘common’ American thought. The quote in itself “They come here out of love” has greatly been distorted but it was bound to. Especially when it came out of the mouth of a Republican candidate, not to mention the most favored candidate of them all. The importance of such a reality cannot be overestimated. Donald Trump hit the nail on the head when he talked about immigration, and this was especially true when his opinion and statements are contrasted with the ones of Jeb Bush. Donald Trump’s ideas and rhetoric was therefore incredibly successful because of the politically correct arena in which they were launched. He connected illegal immigration to crime, to security, to economics, but, most importantly, his take went against the wishy washy political correct wishful thinking that had and to a certain degree still does, permeate American politics and institutions.

#### 2.4.3 Issue in context



The issue of Immigration was one of the more delicate issues to address from a rhetorical perspective. High emotiveness surrounds the issue and speaking about immigration in a direct and frank manner had become impossible in an arena saturated by political correctness (Mounk, 2018). It is also for this reason that Donald Trump's framing stood out as much as it did. Donald Trump, in his typical style, addressed the issue of immigration unapologetically and without regard for the audiences' feelings. This was the main difference between Trump's framing and all other rhetoric surrounding immigration. Everyone else was careful not to offend anyone, while Donald Trump simply did not care. After years of diplomatic approaches, politically correct framing, and positive rhetoric surrounding immigration, a number of American voters had had enough. The experiences of living in neighborhoods impacted by immigration and the changes brought on by it was not all experienced as the positive portrayal Democrats and Progressive liberals made. This reality could not be spoken about in the politically correct society that existed. If one spoke about the negative impacts of immigration, he or she was automatically labeled a xenophobe (Lerner, 2016). If one did not think that multiculturalism only created good outcomes, they would automatically be blacklisted. This created a schism that widened the partisan divide even further. If one believed in Republican principles or wanted to vote for Donald Trump, he or she was automatically labeled a racist. The social realities in the inner cities and elsewhere presented different realities to the ones the Democrats upheld. Yes, there are numerous examples of immigration affecting an area positively, but the truth is that there are as many opposite examples too (Edo, 2018). The incapacity to address and confront this reality was a consequence of the blind celebration of the phenomenon of immigration. In turn, this created an arena where people were not able to say what they thought and felt. When

Trump came along and said exactly what he wanted in the most unapologetic manner, he appealed to people because he existed in a political arena of his own. As with the other issues, immigration in context will be analyzed in the following manner: firstly, we will discuss the previous eight years of Obama's presidency to understand how immigration was framed during his tenure; secondly, a brief discussion of Hilary Clinton's understanding of the issue; Thirdly, an example of how current events (at the time) helped enhance one position or the other and why these types of events are significant; lastly, the conclusion will bring in the broader context of the world's social and political upheaval.

The Presidency of Barack Obama was sympathetic towards the phenomenon of immigration in general and migrants specifically. A number of reforms promoted or passed by the Obama administration can be understood as having been part of a wider vision of the world centered on progressive morality. This politically correct progressive postmodern vision understands the celebration of all foreign cultures while refusing to celebrate national and traditional identity. Obama's immigration policy was centered on integration and multiculturalism. The refusal to 'protect' national cultural values (or redefining what these are), pick-and-choosing which cultures are worth celebrating, and ignoring immigration's challenges exemplifies the politically correct culture that led Donald Trump's appeal (Negrin, 2012 and Meyerson, 2014). President Obama framed the issue of immigration in terms of positivity and multiculturalism. He focused on not disrespecting anyone, while in turn consciously or not, alienating a number of Americans that lived a different experience than the one he was narrating. Like Hilary Clinton, Obama said that he would not support any immigration reform that would not give illegal immigrants the possibility of finding a "path to citizenship" (Sherman, 2016). Obama is talking about illegal immigrants and does not focus on the fact that they are illegal. Illegal

immigrants, who are seen less fortunate minority in the US, must be protected by the advocates of identity politics (these being the Democratic party and Obama during his presidency). For how righteous this belief might be, by embracing this approach the result was twofold. On one hand, the poorer sections of society warranted less attention, for there were other people seen to deserve government help, maybe through benefits. On the other hand, the morality of the action makes it hard to pinpoint the fault of such a choice. For example, it is hard to claim that the State should help the American poor while claiming that immigrants should not be allowed in, if these are as poor if not poorer than their American counterparts. This moral dilemma is key to understand why the progressive fail to appeal to the electorate. Arguing based on morality is not common practice and does not win you practical arguments, because it fails to resonate with those who are suffering. The focus on righteousness and inclusivity while disregarding issues of Nationalism and Citizenship and branding these arguments as immoral, racist, and close-minded is at the heart of Trump's was appeal. Another example of "immigration policy" symptomatic of the politically correct problem occurred in 2007. In June of that year, President Obama voted against declaring English the official language of the Federal Government. The reach of identity politics is clear in this case. The inability of a National government to make the language that has been spoken in the country since its conception the official language of government is symptomatic of the over-emphasis that multiculturalism is given. The eight years of the Obama presidency hold a number of examples that help us understand why Donald Trump's opposite approach generated such a broad appeal. The unwillingness to address issues in their totality by only looking at the positive impacts of immigration, led a number of people to become exasperated: in voting for Donald Trump they refuted this conception of reality.

Hilary Clinton's understanding of the issue of immigration was in coherent with the approach during the Obama years. As reported in the presidential debates section, Hilary too focused on the necessity of creating a "path to citizenship". Her take was even less successful, as people had become weary of the framing during the Obama years. An important and unsuccessful rhetorical tool that Hilary Clintons used was her take on what constituted American identity. She characterizes the USA as a "nation of immigrants" (Farrar, 2016) and makes this feature the most important aspect of American identity. This might be historically problematic, for the US and its identity was built from a number of processes, but it definitely was politically, given the outcome of the election. Claiming that the US is characterized mainly by its past immigrations is emblematic of the focus that Hilary Clinton put on identity politics and progressive policy. This focus contributed to her loss at the election.

Events during the election were especially important. On the issue of immigration, these events could validate or disprove a candidate's position. This could affect issues such as policing practices in certain cities or neighborhoods. Illegal immigrants performing illegal acts was a staple example used by Trump to claim that his take on immigration was more valid and closer to reality than Hilary Clinton's. Donald Trump's campaign zoomed in on the horrible events happening in so-called 'Sanctuary cities'. Sanctuary cities are cities that have chosen to limit their cooperation with national governments specifically pertaining to the implementation and enforcement of immigration policy. San Francisco, New York, and many others have chosen this pathway. If one analyzes which cities choose this course of action, there is usually a correlation with them being more liberal, rejecting stricter immigration laws imposed by the national or federal governments. However, such a choice puts these cities under harsh scrutiny. Donald Trump attacked the Sanctuary city

laws during his presidential campaign by claiming that these laws were the main problem with immigration reform. He did this by using the example of the killing of a 32-year-old woman in San Francisco by a Mexican illegal immigrant who should have been deported (Gass, 2015). While the link between sanctuary cities, immigration policy, and murders is tenuous, the example is important. It raises the issue of why Sanctuary cities exist and what they are the product of. In Trump's portrayal of reality, Sanctuary cities are the demonstration of the entrenchment of liberal progressive ideology in politics and society. The fact that a city can decide to not implement its states immigration policy and that this action is seen as legitimate and maybe also righteous is symptomatic of the broader conception and resulting issues stemming from political correctness. On the other hand, this fact also demonstrates how taboo difficult conversations about immigration are in the context of progressive ideology - anything going against it or threatening it is seen as antagonizing the interests of the establishment.

Donald Trump's framing of the immigration issue was greatly in contrast with President Obama's and Hilary Clinton's. Similar sentiments raising the veil of progressive positivity that covered the reality of immigration were arising throughout the western world, especially in Europe. Steve Bannon's influence in Italy and Hungary with his idea of Economic nationalism greatly influenced leaders to re-establish the centrality of the nation and the protection of national interests. In Europe, this can also be seen in the protection of the borders, a rhetoric pertaining to immigration that was closer to Donald Trump's, far from the liberal positive rhetoric of Clinton and Obama.

## 2.5 The Media

In his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump frequently attacked what he referred to as the 'mainstream media'. Trump attacked the media for not performing, from his perspective, an un-biased role in covering news issues and the campaign itself. It would be naïve to say that media is unbiased. Undeniably, whoever covers the news will carry their own ideas, opinions, and views; they will decide how to cover events, from what perspective to tell the story and what leading narrative to support. Thus, one can understand the impossibility of completely un-biased reporting, but still expect honest and open discussion. The last point concerning 'open discussion' is what is central to Donald Trump's campaign and what feeds directly into the narrow mindedness of eschewed political correctness. The media needs to be a forum where discussion is open, where mistakes can be made and corrected: it is through those that one strives to unveil the truth. This has not been happening on both sides of the political spectrum. Important news stations such as CNN, FOX News, MSNBC, and many others are known to lean on one side or the other of the ideological spectrum. However, Donald Trump was an ex Democrat turned Republican talking about the ills of Liberalism and Globalization. The politically correct liberal rhetoric of most news stations (Schwarz, 2020) resulted in conversations skewed against Donald Trump from the offset, often in an attempt to ridicule his ideas. The media's inability to give an unbiased perspective on Trump's approach to pressing issues and their significant mistakes in polls, predictions, and news stories allowed Donald Trump to make the media's partiality an issue in its own right. As a campaign strategy, this is a genius move. By claiming that the media is corrupt, Donald Trump empowered himself and his electorate to discard anything that was an

'uncomfortable' portrayal of his policy or views as (the now infamous) 'fake news'. The media issue became an extremely powerful tool that could be unleashed whenever necessary on command. While Donald Trump stigmatized the media and painted them all with the same negative brush, he managed to do so also thanks to the media's own mistakes and misreporting. This is why the media will be treated as both an issue onto itself and also as a lens for analyzing other issues. In the next section we will see how Donald Trump introduced his 'anti-media' view and how through his non-PC manners he appealed to a vast portion of the electorate.

### 2.5.1 Introduction of the issue

Donald Trump used the unknowing media at his own liking. He attacked any source of information for its sourcing or bias when the source was against him, and hailed any reporting when it favored him (Stephens, 2017). Donald Trump managed to play this game because there was a base of truth in what he said, but especially because people had had enough of the same type of reporting and homogeneous news reporting. As with other issues that Trump addressed, he was direct, got to the point, and was unapologetically anti politically correct. The media is one of the bedrocks of democratic institutions. It is a fundamental pillar of the division of power and the creation of checks and balances across the democratic paradigm (Anderson Jr, 2008). To attack it, and Donald Trump attacked almost every important news establishment in the US, one is attacking the belief in a just and transparent democracy. This idea, much more profound and possibly significant than

many others resonated with the US electorate. Once you feel that the ideas brought forth in your country do not represent who you are anymore, the messenger whom spreads this information certainly holds part of the blame. This is why Donald Trump's attack on the media is symbolically way more powerful than what it might seem at first. Notwithstanding realities such as fake news and interference by foreign nations or post-truth paradigms which, even though incredibly interesting, would skew the argument, Donald Trump opened another Pandora's vase by taking the media head on. It is worth noting that although the factors mentioned above (fake news, Russian intervention, and the paradigm of post truth) did play a role in getting Donald Trump elected we are analyzing how Trump's rhetorical attacks and framing of the media allowed him to appeal to the electorate and win the election. Interestingly, fake news was functional to Trump's victory because he could pick and choose what information to uphold. But he could only do so because of his blanket attacks that discredited the media and therefore helped give rise to the relevance of fake news. In the same way Russian meddling and a post truth paradigm both are aspects and consequences (the legitimacy of them) of the dismantling credibility of the mainstream media brought forth by Donald Trump.

To understand how Donald Trump introduced the issue of the Media, as with the other issues, we will analyze his book "Great Again" and his presidential announcement speech in which, interestingly, Donald Trump does not directly speak about the media but only gives one or two hints about how he thinks they do their job.

"I'm perhaps a controversial person. I say what's on my mind...I have no problem in telling it how it is" (Trump, 2015: 7). In his chapter on the media, called "Our "unbiased" Political Media", just to make it clear from the outset what his take is, Donald Trump commences by clearly stating why he, compared to other candidates, through the media and (in this



case he is referring to the Republican primary debates) stands out. The fact that Donald Trump begins his chapter on the media by placing the mainstream media outlets and his political adversaries in the same bundle is central to what he thinks about the media. The media is a political player. Not one that guides and informs political debate, but one that decides who should say what in what way and, eventually, who should come on top. This approach is typical in the creation of a populist anti establishment frame. By portraying ‘The career politicians’ and the ‘mainstream media’ as two branches of the same tree Donald Trump distances and portrays himself as the outlier that, not tainted by the corrupt politically correct progressive establishment, can ‘tell it as it is’ and fight for the people. The media is therefore part of the political establishment and works within it to enable their preferred candidate. The media itself frames political candidates to paint them with a negative brush. “The attacks are coming from all directions, because they all know I am the only one talking about really changing this country and making America great again. The moderators read some quote of mine (or misinterpret a quote of mine) and then ask someone else to comment... These exchanges make great TV. Sadly, they’re almost like watching a sporting event” (Trump, 2015: 9). The quote above holds everything that is important for Trump in terms of the media. Firstly, he explains how it is not only the ‘Democratic’ news outlets that are attacking him; he is being attacked across the media spectrum. He then explains why he believes this is happening. Everybody is attacking him because they have an interest in keeping things the way they are and not allowing Trump to carry out the reforms that will MAGA. If this is true, then all the media outlets (and politicians) have a vested interest in distorting the truth about Trump to uphold some other candidate and keep him out. He then goes on to explain how this happens while also commenting on the media methodology. The media quotes Trump incorrectly or

purposely misinterprets a quote to allow for others to criticize him. For how marginal, these brief but direct comments on the modus operandi of the media, and in this case of the moderators at debates, is significant as it directly feeds into the idea that Trump says it 'how it is'. This rhetorical aspect is incredibly important for it resonates with what a number of people throughout the states had been seeing in media reporting, again, across the political spectrum (Lucas, 2020). Finally, Trump actually stands on the moral pedestal. Therefore, not only is Trump criticizing the way in which the media uses its power to eschew public opinion against him for their own gain, but, in doing so, he stands as the moral judge of their actions. This is rhetorically very skillful because he is judging the medias actions while justifying his behavior when debating. He is claiming that the game is rigged while justifying that the only way to win the game is to play by the rigged rules. Ultimately, he is allowing himself to uphold or to criticize the medias reporting at will. And, in turn, allowing himself to make rhetorical mistakes because any reporting on anything that he said might have been maliciously distorted by the media.

In his presidential announcement speech the only mention of the media that Donald Trump makes is to highlight the distorted information that the media, in his opinion, so often portrays. When speaking about estimates that were made about his wealth, Donald Trump says that the media "reported (his wealth) incorrectly" (Trump, 2015). Even though seemingly marginal, the only mention of the media that Trump makes is to state how wrong they often are. Significantly, this will be an essential light motif of his campaign that, again, allowed him to claim truth only when it favored him. Apart from the practical use of this portrayal, the broader symbolic significance of the attack on the media allowed him and his electorate to highlight the significant problem of media bias that

more often than not was tinted if not taken over by politically correct progressive ideology. In specific terms, what is 'ok' to say and what is not.

### 2.5.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issue of the media was central to Donald Trump's agenda in being both an important issue and an important tool. The media is a medium through which the electorate is convinced of something or not. Donald Trump used this power to shift the attention, and therefore the frame, concerning different aspects of his campaign. What this meant was that the content that the media was 'pushing', meaning the news story or the question posed (in the context of the debates), was only acknowledged as being valid if it fit the narrative that Trump wanted to push. If the content was not in line with Trump's agenda, the focus was shifted to the form, meaning how and why the media was pursuing such a news story or why and how a certain question was pursued at the debates. In doing so, Donald Trump permitted himself to always avoid being cornered by a question or any news story. The media, as mentioned above, is a medium through which other information and other issues are talked about. All other issues have therefore something to do with the media, because all other issues have been or are talked about and it is the media that decides how and why these other issues are framed. The importance that the media attributes to different stories therefore is a decision on what people know and will focus on. It is this that makes the media in itself so important. If the media has the power to concentrate attention and frame news stories in a certain way, then this decision must be as detached and a-political as possible. At least it must seem to be. If this does not happen, or if the media seems to have its own agenda, then it loses tremendous credibility and

especially loses its power to influence listeners, readers, or viewers. Therefore, the selection of stories and, in this case, questions that News channels and debate moderators choose to ask candidates at both the Republican primary Debates and presidential debates hold great importance. The media must ask questions that the electorate wants to hear about, questions that are important to know the answers too. However, what we will see in the analysis of the Republican primary debates is an over emphasis on questions relating to personal behavior, whether this behavior was de facto politically correct, and a will to corner candidates at every chance. In the presidential debates a clear double standard arises when analyzing how the media evaluated and followed through concerning the responses that the candidates gave.

To analyze the issue of the media in the Republican primary debates one could go through all the debates. This is because all the debates hold some aspects that could be analyzed because they are all a confrontation between candidates and a news outlet and its representatives. These interactions, however, all hold different significance. As said above, the distinction between form and content is important here. At times, the analysis of interactions between candidates and moderators will be on the content of questions, often to demonstrate a lack of it, while other times, when the content is clearly not to Donald Trump's liking, the analysis will focus on how the form of the debate shifts and with it its content. To carry out such an analysis different aspects will be analyzed relating to the relation between candidates and moderators, in relation to what candidates actually said about the media and how it behaves, in relation to what the candidates thought of the focus of the news broadcasters in some debates, and, finally, what the candidates thought all this distorted focus by the media led to and why this distortion made it clear that the media had its own agenda clearly in line with liberal progressive politically correct

ideology. To carry out such an analysis the first debate will be used to analyze mistaken focus by the media, clash between Trump and moderator, and eventual form change; The third debate will be used to analyze why many republican candidates criticized the content of questions carried out; The fifth debate will be used to extract what Donald Trump thought of media operations and framing of news stories; and, finally, the twelfth debate will be used to analyze what resulted from the medias framing and focus of candidates and issues and why this was seen as pushing an agenda.

The first Republican primary debate was hosted by FOX news on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2015 in Cleveland, Ohio. The debate was the first chance for the general public to see the republican candidates one next to the other debating for a chance to win the republican nomination. The first question and interaction between Donald Trump and FOX TV host Megyn Kelly went as follows:

*Megyn Kelly: "Mr. Trump. One of the things people love about you is you speak your mind and you don't use a politician's filter. However, that is not without its downsides, in particular when it comes to women. You've called woman you don't like fat pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals. Your twitter account consists of several"*

*Donald Trump: "Only Rosie O'Donnel"*

*Megyn Kelly: "No, it wasn't. For the record, it was well beyond Rosie O'Donnel"*

*Donald Trump: "Yes, I'm sure it was."*

*Megyn Kelly: "Your Twitter account has several disparaging comments about women's looks. You once told a contestant on Celebrity Apprentice it would be a pretty picture to see her on her knees. Does that sound to you like the temperament of a man we should elect as president, and how will you answer the charge from Hilary Clinton who is likely to be the democratic nominee, that you are a part of the war on women?"*

*Donald Trump: "I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct."*

There are a number of reflections and conclusion one can draw from this first interaction between Donald Trump and Megyn Kelly. Firstly, the importance given by the moderator to Trump's relation with women and supposed personal beliefs about the opposite sex is one of, if not the most important aspect that can qualify or disqualify him from being a valid President. This belief is very much in line with progressive politically correct ideology and therefore, probably not maliciously, hides a profound belief and therefore an agenda in Megyn Kelly's motive to ask the question. The fact that Megyn Kelly is 'allowed' to ask such a question and that the question is hailed as fighting for the feminist cause is a clear demonstration of how much identity progressive politics has permeated our media and our way of understanding the world. What also helps us demonstrate the above mentioned fact is that Donald Trump does not take issue with the accusations that are being thrown at him, but the very fact that these accuses are being made to imply that he is not a viable candidate. "I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct" shifts the focus of the argument to something different. The issue is not sexism (and this will be argued further in the issue about Gender), but the inability to speak freely and the over importance that Identity politics has taken in our society. What also happens in this brief interaction between Trump and Kelly was him making a joke, by claiming that he only referred to Rosie O'Donnel in those terms. This is significant because of the huge laughs and cheers that the statement arose from the crowd. Not to have a psychological discussion about laughter here, but the instinctive reaction of people was to laugh, was to attribute less importance to the seemingly incredibly grave statements that Trump had made. This is again a demonstration that focusing on the issue of political correctness and the censorship that it lead to was more important in qualifying someone as presidential

than past 'sexist' comments one had made. Once again Trump took refocused and reframed an issue through direct and unapologetic language and the new frames appealed to the electorate more directly and resulted in gaining him more support than what it lost him. This clash with the media, in this case represented by Megyn Kelly, is the first demonstration in the Republican primary debates that Trump, and eventually other candidates, believed that the media has its own agenda and therefore needed to be addressed as an issue in political debate. This belief, in turn, was shared by vast sways of the population (Brenan, 2020).

The third Republican primary debate caused the most controversy as it was attacked and criticized by candidates and pundits alike. The debate was moderated by CNBC that took so much heat for how the debate was run that it was not allowed to moderate the tenth debate for which it had already been chosen. Two interactions will be reported below, one between Trump and the moderator to demonstrate the pettiness of some questions and the consequent distrust the candidates and audiences had in news media; the second between Cruz and the moderator to show that it was not only Trump criticizing the moderators and their modus operandi and how their modus operandi was counterproductive and riddled with apparent motive.

*Harwood: "Mr. Trump, you've done very well in this campaign so far by promising to build a wall and make another country pay for it"*

*Trump: "Right"*

*Harwood: "Send 11 million people out of the country. Cut taxes 10 trillion without increasing the deficit"*

*Trump: "Right"*

*Harwood: "And make Americans better off because your greatness would replace the stupidity and incompetence of others"*

*Trump: "That's right"*

*Harwood: "Let's be honest. Is this a comic book version of a presidential campaign?"*

This interaction is pretentious and offensive. Framing a question to then ridicule a presidential candidate in this manner is something that the media should never even think of doing. Not only does it demonstrate a clear bias against the ideas of Trump but, most importantly, is not politically correct. Ridiculing someone for their ideas while being the pioneers of progressive liberal ideology is like shooting yourself in the foot. This dynamic simply reinforces the mistrust and at times disgust that the electorate had and still has in relation to the media. Therefore, not only is it rude, but it is also self fulfilling and counter productive for the media outlet itself and instead feeds into Trump's idea and framing of the media as part of the liberal progressive establishment. In the interaction between Cruz and the moderator we can observe more or less the same dynamic:

*Cruz: "And nobody watching at home believed that any of the moderators had any intention of voting in the Republican Primary. The questions that are being asked shouldn't be trying to get the people to tear into each other. It should be what are your substantive positions..."*

*Quintanilla: "Ok. I asked you about the debt limit and I got no answer"*

*Cruz: "You want me to answer that question? I'm happy to answer the question...(Interrupted)...Let me tell you how that question...(Interrupted)...Let me tell you how that question...(Interrupted)"*

*Harwood: "Senator Paul, I've got a question for you on the same subject."*

*Cruz: "...so you don't want to hear the answer?. You don't want to hear the answer. You just want to... (Interrupted)"*



*Harwood: "You used your time on something else. Senator Paul?"*

*Cruz: "You're not interested in an answer."*

Exchanges like this one happened throughout the debate. Eventually, as also reported above, the candidates and later also commentators said that it looked like moderators were wishing for candidates to fight against each other and to ridicule themselves by answering very badly phrased and leading questions. The media was therefore called out for being biased in this instance. What this understanding of the media eventually led to was the discrediting of it. The media was therefore called out for playing an active role in trying to shift public opinion in their direction. In turn, this allowed for Donald Trump to discredit the medias reporting at will especially when their behavior, such as Megan Kelly's, was seen as part of the PC establishment but took exception to following 'PC guidelines' when interacting with republican candidates, especially Donald Trump.

In the Fifth Republican primary debate Donald Trump attacks the media for celebrating Americas enemies. When speaking about how ISIS is reported on he says, "You talk about freedom of speech. You talk about freedom of anything you want. I don't want them (ISIS) using our Internet to take our young, impressionable youth and watching the media talking about how they're masterminds- these are masterminds. They shouldn't be using the word "mastermind". These are thugs." This quote is one that holds much more significance than what it superficially shows. The unity around being American that Donald Trump calls for is incredibly important. The media should be on the side of the US, not celebrating the actions of foreign invaders. Be it true or not, this attack is a profound one. It highlights Donald Trump's belief that the media has its own political agenda combined with the belief that one of the medias sole goals is to sell its information with no regard for its impact. This is important because this attack on the media comes from a

different perspective. It is not only the media having a hidden political agenda, but it is also about the general irresponsibility of the media. Not only does the media eschew information and frame news for its own political or economic gain, but it is also irresponsible. Once the electorate agreed that the media played by its own rules, strived for its own goals, and did this with no shred of social responsibility, then it loses all its credibility and its reporting can be picked and chosen at will when it favors a given agenda. Incorrect and biased reporting became such a central focus of the debates and campaigns, and reporting especially concerning Trump was so frequent and often distorted, that it backfired on the media and favored Trump. This was so true that the Republican candidates believed that the media was giving Trump more airtime to favor a Democratic presidential win; this was clearly stated in the twelfth debate. At the twelfth debate, Ted Cruz said: "So for the people at home, if you're one the 60, 70 percent of Republicans who recognize that if we nominate Donald Trump, Hilary wins. That's why the media wants him to be the nominee so much..." By the twelfth debate, the media had lost so much of its credibility that no Republican candidate believed that the media was behaving fairly, at least not the 'mainstream media'. This is symbolic of a situation riddled with political interest and political agendas concerning all actors in the complex mosaic of the American election. The medias intrinsic bias therefore became a key issue on Trump's agenda because of his direct and honest take on what he saw the true problems were in American society, that was: political correctness. The fact that his belief became a staple of other Republican candidates also goes to prove the ultimate distrust that candidates and their electorates had in the information supplied on national media outlets.

### 2.5.3 Issue in context

The media has never been treated as a political issue as much as it has by Donald Trump. The media was seen as part of a bigger corrupt system, warranting it become an issue onto itself. Previous presidents and presidential candidates had often highlighted how some media outlets were more inclined to favor a certain party or political candidate. However, these accusations never warranted a full-blown attack, which is what Trump unleashed against the media. Trump seeded a deep-rooted feeling amongst the American public that media is intrinsically bias, partisan reporting. Sponsored content is an example of the broader phenomena that was increasing mistrust in how information is reported. The issue is important and appealing because unique to Trump, so it will be worth briefly analyzing his take on it. In this case it is not Trump's *framing* of an issue, but his *creation* of an issue that gave created a powerful narrative left completely unchecked. It is easy to see why it was successful in wooing the American electorate: there was no other candidate to oppose his perspective because the issue was not perceived as such by his opponents. It goes without saying that focusing on something doesn't necessarily make it worth focusing on. The issue of the media will be discussed in the following terms: firstly, why it is important in the general context of political correctness; secondly, we will look at Barack Obama's understanding of it; thirdly, and very briefly, we will look at Hilary Clinton's take; the fourth will focus on giving an example that validated Trump's framing of the issue; the last section will conclude by connecting the US phenomenon with broader ones around the world.

An attack on the media and placing the media on one's agenda in a critical manner is very politically incorrect in the age of political correctness. The media, as an institution, is of vital importance to transparency and accountability in democracy, so framing it as

responsible for distorting the truth for its own gain is very controversial. Donald Trump called out all media outlets for being part of the progressive political process. It was not the media in itself that was corrupt according to Trump, but the motives behind the choice of what was being reported that were bias. The media, in his view, had an interest in favoring Hilary Clinton while reporting on her political campaign because she was closer to their liberal ideals. However, interest was so pervasive in the this way of reporting that ideology permeated the news stories too. The difference between this and favoring one candidate over another is the distortion of facts that goes on in the former. Donald Trump called out the media for favoring Hilary Clinton, but also for choosing and framing news stories with the motive of pushing social change and social policy in line with progressive identity politics. It was this fact that made the issue of the media resonate so deeply with the US electorate. Donald Trump was calling out civil society's mistaken focus – embodied here by the media. The issues that were being addressed by the media were not worthy of focus and were chosen with the objective of manipulating outcomes according to Trump. This made the media in itself an entity worthy of the political agenda. Attacking the media and making it an issue was therefore in stark opposition to the politically correct context in which Donald Trump commenced his campaign.

The eight years of Barack Obama were not riddled by this controversial view of the media. As many presidents before and likely after him, President Obama was criticized more on some networks than others, and therefore preferred some networks over others. Media reporting on his campaign in 2008 was seen to be have been balanced and neutral. He was only favored in so far as the media did a lot of negative reporting on John McCain (Pew Research 2, 2008). For this reason, there is not much to compare Donald Trump's statements on the media. However, one topic of focus in Obama's campaign and

presidency was 'the internet'. More specifically, the concept of "net neutrality". Net neutrality is the idea that the Internet is not fair, and that it should be. As with a typical progressive and politically correct take on any issue, the focus is on inclusion and social justice. Whether this policy was actually needed or good is not the point of this analysis. What is important to note for our purpose is that the democratic progressives see a topic such as the Internet as rife with problematic and discriminatory practices. Seeing the world in such a way results in a prioritization that can exasperate an electorate that does not see these issues as problematic or does not feel they are applicable to themselves. Christopher Wolf, Chair of 'Hands off the Internet', a coalition fighting against net neutrality, called it "a solution looking for a problem" (Martinez, 2016). Obama's focus on a policy such as net neutrality explains why Donald Trump's ideas resonated so deeply with the electorate.

Hilary Clinton did not focus on the role of the media in her presidential campaign. As explained in the analysis of the presidential debates, it was only Donald Trump who focused and attacked the media. What is worth noting is that not attacking was probably as much of a tactic as attacking the media. Although Hilary Clinton had a historically tumultuous relationship with the media, she pledged to restart and reboot this relationship when she announced she was running for President. For this reason, she and her campaign were reluctant to criticize the media's doings throughout the campaign. However, the results of the election flipped this approach, as she lashed out at the medias unprofessional coverage. Ironically, she criticized the media for focusing on what would sell the most stories rather than reporting on policy. In doing so, she criticized in the same exact way Donald Trump had during his campaign, even though for different reasons. The context was ripe for the media to be placed under extensive scrutiny, no matter who won.

The events surrounding the behavior of the media during the presidential campaign are extensive. From the way in which the media reported on Russian intervention and possible collusion, to Hilary Clinton's emails being hacked, through to the 24hour fierce coverage of the 'Hollywood access tapes'. These stories would necessitate an analysis of their own to understand why the media outlets behaved as they did, so they will be left aside. As explained in the presidential debates section, the incident concerning Donna Brazille, the Democratic National Convention, and Hilary Clinton, is the most relevant example of media bias that gave Donald Trump's framing of the issue credibility. The context in which Donald Trump was blaming the media was ripe and ready for his attacks. There was proof sitting there waiting for someone to expose it, and Donald Trump did simply that.

Donald Trump attacked the media for its bias in a world that he claimed was exasperated by partisan media reporting. The media was seen as pushing a liberal progressive agenda, and throughout Western Europe especially, one can see the backlash against this ideology and its advocates. Freedom to hold a different opinion was seen as being limited if not in line with liberal progressive thought. Examples are numerous where journalists in liberal democratic countries are ousted from their positions because not celebrating the multicultural status quo. This was and is the bias that Donald Trump fought against and the reason behind his vast electoral appeal.

## 2.6 Climate Change

Climate Change is the apotheosis of the combination of the corrupt political correctness of our time and the idea that objectivity does not exist. This combination disentangled and destroyed the Democratic Party morally and eventually politically. Even though Climate Change used to be a bipartisan issue until the 1990s (Worland, 2017) with the introduction of the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955 and the subsequent Clean Air Act of 1963 and all its amendments', Climate Change today is a Democratic Party issue. Climate Change is therefore, for the Democrats, an absolute truth in a world where all is subjective. The logical and moral conundrum easily follows. How could the Democratic Party appropriate itself of the issue of Climate Change believing it to be absolutely true while at the same time attacking any claim of absolute truth with counter arguments based on Power and Identity Politics. If any 'absolute truth' is actually an imposition of truth from someone whom finds him or herself in a position of power then the same can be said about Climate Change. It is this moral and logical conundrum that did not allow the Democratic Party to legitimately impose what they themselves had to come to understand as a 'point of view'. Once the Democratic Party began believing in the absence of truth and the absolutism of subjectivity they were not logically permitted to impose a belief, notwithstanding how 'true' it might have been. Donald Trump entered this politically correct postmodern arena and said what he thought. Ironically, his subjective understanding had as much value as someone else's subjective understanding, because that was and still is what the politically correct postmodern ideology teaches. He could do so while Climate Change is one of the most important global concerns in our modern era (Hasham, 2020). Governments around the world place it on their agenda and political

parties, see the 'green' parties around the world, have run campaigns solely on this issue. It would have seemed unthinkable to try and become POTUS without at least acceding the fact that Climate Change was a real issue. Donald Trump did just this. He slammed the issue for its politicization; he questioned the science, eventually called it a "hoax" (BBC, 2018), and justified all of this by saying that it was what he thought. The issue of Climate Change was therefore not placed on Donald Trump's electoral campaign and was used to attack his opponents internally and internationally. Climate Change is the biggest issue not placed on the electoral agenda and, as was mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, not placing something on ones electoral agenda can be as big a statement if not a bigger statement than actually placing something on the agenda. Not placing Climate Change on the agenda was symbolically a true break from the politically correct trickle down truth imposed on those whom, or did not believe in it, or, more often, believed it was not as big as a problem as many politicians, especially Democrats, made it out to be. It is therefore vital to analyze how Donald Trump used the idea of Climate Change to win over vast parts of the electorate through rhetoric that was direct, non politically correct, and subjective.

### 2.6.1 Introduction of the issue

Donald Trump spoke about Climate Change in the context of Energy. The two topics were constantly in connection and one could not be completely understood without the other. Donald Trump's basic understanding and framing was one where Climate change, Energy, and jobs could not be untangled. This framing is one that is very powerful and automatically takes away from the importance of Climate Change. By putting Climate



Change in a 'basket of issues' the centrality of Climate Change is removed and because it is understood as not warranting its own platform, less attention and therefore importance is given to it. Donald Trump thought and spoke about the issue of Climate Change in a manner that demonstrated the dubious nature of the US electorate. In arguing in an incredibly basic manner, and, importantly, through personal experience (subjectivity), Donald Trump said and spoke to huge parts of the population that were either skeptical about Climate Change in totum or skeptical towards the huge importance that Climate Change was given by politics and parts of civil society. Personal experience and opinion, and a hint of trolling sense of humor, made Donald Trump's position on the issue appealing and justifiable. The unraveling of the changing definition of what is today Climate Change is one of the most basic examples. More than once Donald Trump claimed that this phenomenon had gone from being called 'Global warming' in the 80s and 90s to later being called 'Climate Change' (Trump, 2015). He claimed that this was because the Earth was not actually getting hotter and that the politically correct narrative backing the idea of Global Warming needed to switch the definition to refit the newly found 'truth'. In the most troll-like fashion, then, Donald Trump claimed that earth was not getting hotter by the day on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2017 because "It could be the coldest New Years eve on record" (Trump, 2017). Although this statement is after his election, during his campaign he used very similar subjective arguments to downplay the significance of Climate Change. It is important to note that this is not banal. His arguments might seem banal, but the response that the electorate gave to such arguments is not. Not giving importance to banal arguments while agreeing with the underlying message of prioritizing certain issues, be it jobs or the economy, over other issues, such as Climate Change, is central to Trump's eventual victory. Being able to claim such outlandish things is also the result of politically

correct censorship that for so many years did not allow for contrasting opinions on issues such as Climate Change. Again, not only if Climate Change is real or not, but also what issues should truly hold a prevalent role in American political debate.

As for the other issues, the introduction of the issue, or the lack of, will be made through an analysis of Donald Trump's chapter in which he refers to Climate Change in his book "Great Again", and his presidential announcement speech.

In the chapter in which Donald Trump addresses the issue of Climate Change called "The Energy debate: a lot of hot air" he first questions the validity of the science and then goes on to question the importance given to such an issue. Questioning the validity of the science by attacking Climate experts and calling them "so called experts" (Trump, 2015: 31) is symptomatic of the rejection of politically correct and liberal 'truths'. As already mentioned a number of times, Donald Trump used his subjective understanding of reality, in the same way the Identity politics advocates do, to claim what he wanted, and then to justify what he said. "I just don't happen to believe they are man made" (Trump, 2015: 62) is a great example of how opinions, even for or especially for Trump, became crucial to make his claims. "...President Obama declared the biggest threat to our planet today is climate change. The biggest threat? We have ISIS troops chopping off the heads of innocent Christian missionaries...We have millions of Americans who have mortgages greater than the value of their property, while middle-class incomes are stagnant and more than 40 million citizens are living at poverty levels" (Trump, 2015: 62). This quote directly promotes the main Trumpian thought on Climate Change while attacking those whom he would be battling for a chance to become POTUS. Trump attacks the detachment of the political class from the issues that people, in his mind, actually value. Jobs and unemployment are more important than Climate Change, he says, and huge parts of the

electorate agree. Connected to this idea is the way in which one can therefore create energy and jobs. In the most anti-politically correct, anti-progressive, and anti-democratic and conservationist fashion, Trump hailed fracking. Trump hails fracking in his book and in his presidential announcement speech. An analysis of the presidential speech will follow to show how the energy debate centered around fracking was connected to other, for Trump more important issues, such as geopolitics and competing with countries such as China.

In his presidential announcement speech Donald Trump speaks about Climate change and environmental regulation that stems from the belief in it as a force to combat. Climate Change is therefore understood as the precursor to the implementations of international laws that then are not imposed on everyone equally. He initially, as mentioned above, hails fracking. Using a very unusual frame, Trump celebrates fracking for liberalizing the oil market. He claims “Saudi Arabia is in big, big trouble. Now thanks to fracking and other things, the oil is all over the place” (Trump, 2015). Donald Trump therefore always parallels what he understands as more important issues to Climate Change. He sees the economic challenges imposed by Climate Change as obstacles that others will not have to deal with and Geopolitical challenges being limited by environmental regulation. Addressing military dominance he says that China is “building a military island in the middle of the South China sea. A military island. Now, our country could never do that because we’d have to get environmental clearance, and the environmentalists wouldn’t let our country” (Trump, 2015). More relevant issues therefore complement the issues of Climate Change and environmental regulation for Donald Trump. This rhetorical return to a real political conception of world politics is greatly in contrast and in opposition to politically correct liberal rhetoric that permeated the political sphere and eventually led to

the Donald Trump populist backlash. The issue of Climate Change was therefore secondary in significance to others. Denying its existence or reducing its significance are both anti political correct and anti progressive ideas that Donald Trump used to appeal to great parts of the American electorate. The PC censorship combined with the celebration of subjectivity that had permeated American life to that point then allowed Donald Trump to claim the 'absurd' (in contrast to PC) and defend it as opinion (in line with celebration of subjectivity).

## 2.6.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issue of Climate Change was and still is one of the most important topics of political debate throughout the world. It was mentioned and asked about a total of six times in the Republican primary debates. Only six times. It was a more significant issue in the presidential debates because the Democrats placed it as one of the most important issues on their political agenda. The fact that the issue of Climate Change was so marginal in the Republican primary debates is significant. As mentioned numerous times, the non-inclusion of something on the agenda is as important as including something. This is because by not including an issue it is not given political importance and therefore it is not deemed to warrant a public policy solution. In turn, it generally takes importance away from the issue. Donald Trump did not see Climate Change as a central issue to US problems, on the contrary. He saw Climate policy as restricting the scope for action, especially in the case of fracking, that the US had. Climate policy was therefore a limitation, not progress. Climate Change, however, was an issue that the whole Republican Party and its potential candidates were not concerned with. It was not solely limited to

Donald Trump; even though none of the six Climate Change questions that were asked throughout the twelve debates were addressed to Donald Trump. The issue of Climate Change was set aside and only understood in terms of complementary to the broader, and for Trump more important, energy debate. As mentioned above in the introduction, there are a number of issues that connect to the Climate Change one, especially Energy and in turn Foreign policy. It is these issues that were concentrated on by Donald Trump and through which he debated and set forth his ideas. In analyzing the presidential debates, the Climate Change issue takes on new relevance but certainly not new importance in the Republican and Trump's mindsets.

### 2.6.3 Issue in context

In 2016, most politicians rhetorically agreed that Climate Change was one, if not the most, important issue facing the future of the world. The politically correct and progressive movements had enshrined the importance of Climate Change in policy and popular circles. No one denying Climate Change was taken seriously, and many therefore did not even attempt to deny it. Climate Change was as important if not more important than any other issue on the political agenda, because it represents the fundamental disconnect between the democrat and the electorate. Claiming that Climate Change should be the number one priority of the governments across the world may be correct, but is still arguable. The fact that the issue exists doesn't automatically make it the number one priority on everyone's agenda. The reasoning is simple. If a person has enough time and resources to be able to think in terms of 'long-term' necessity, then this person will be able to give priority to an issue such as Climate Change. If a person does not have time or resources, their main priority will focus on is getting those resources to have that time. Climate Change would

not be a priority for that person. The second reason why some might not be focused on Climate Change was completely disregarded by the progressive left. The focus on Morality, Social responsibility, and self-pity (blaming our greed or our society's greed for what is happening to Climate) were arguments that exasperated some of the US electorate with an issue such as Climate Change. This exasperation, in turn, was fueled by Donald Trump's take on Climate Change, which attracted vast amounts of people towards his campaign. The issue of Climate Change in context will be analyzed as all the others. Firstly, we will briefly explore the general importance of the issue in the context of the progressive world; Secondly, Obama's take on Climate Change will be presented; Third, we will return to Hilary Clinton's understanding of the issue; Fourth, a brief explanation for why there is no example; Lastly, the conclusion will analyze how the issue of Climate Change was understood around the world and how Trump's take was aided and aided this global perspective.

The issue of Climate Change was a staple of the progressive liberal left (although not regarded with such importance by Hilary Clinton's campaign) and was hailed as undeniable absolute truth. Having a conversation about the validity of Climate Change was therefore taboo. Maybe for this reason Hilary Clinton's campaign did not extensively focus on it. However, the issue of Climate Change is important for our analysis because it is another example of how the liberal progressive left upheld objectivity and truth only when in line with its ideology. Climate Change is de facto undeniable, but 'the left', coming from a postmodern political philosophy that replaces objectivity with subjectivity made it impossible to uphold such a belief without contradicting one's own political philosophy. On the other hand, Climate Change was also an issue similar to immigration, in that any scrutiny and analysis of its merits were completely rejected in principle. The veil of

politically correct censorship led to the impossibility of conversation. This is important for reasons stated at the beginning. A number of people believed in Climate Change because they are not truth deniers, but did not believe the US government's number one priority should have been Climate Change. These two positions differ significantly, and the latter was silenced in the process of imposing an absolute truth on what the electorate should believe. The issue of Climate Change is therefore symbolic of the dogmatic moral imposition of truth that the progressive left brought to US public discourse, and that Donald Trump fought against and won. He attracted millions of voters who were neither deniers nor lunatics, but that had a different scale of priorities. This is not to say that none of the people were deniers, there certainly were some. But these were not representative of the whole group.

Barack Obama extensively focused on Climate Change. He won the Presidency by focusing on the importance of Climate Change and in the first year of his mandate presented the public with a "Presidential Climate Action Plan". The plan focused on reducing carbon emissions, investing in clean and renewable energy, maintaining a steady investment in research to enhance the US's understanding of the phenomenon, while growing the economy (WH2, 2013). The switch or envisioned switch to a greener economy is seen as the precursor of a strong and growing economy. That assumed an economy growing parallel to the reforms that were enacted to make the US economy greener. This framing of the issue is the opposite of what the electorate that voted for Trump believed. The scale of values and the necessity to get the people's priorities right is at the center of winning an election. President Obama captured this sentiment during his time, and so did President Trump. The moods and beliefs of the American electorate changed because of the focus and importance that the issue was given compared to issues such as immigration and

foreign policy. The electorate wanted economic growth and jobs, and was happy to talk about Climate Change as a secondary matter. Together with Obama's Plan was the signing of the "The Paris Agreement". This agreement centered on the willingness of the signatory nations to pledge their support to limit growing temperatures to less than 2 degrees Celsius worldwide. The irony of the agreement is that countries self-monitor, decide their own goals through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and report their own emissions (UNFCCC, 2016). This agreement's rhetoric is drenched in politically correct cooperative diplomatic talk that exemplifies what led to the exasperation of parts of the electorate which gravitated to Donald Trump. Even though the goal might be moral and noble, the language is empty and inconclusive. On the other hand, Donald Trump's rhetoric might not be understood as noble or moral, but it is unapologetically direct and effective. Trump, in his first year in office, discarded Obama's Climate Plan and withdrew the USA from the Paris Agreements. As outlined in other sections of Climate Change, he did so because he believed, correctly, that this agreement was limiting the potential of America's Coal Industry. Unapologetically politically incorrect is definitely the way to define this action.

Hilary Clinton did not focus on Climate Change as much as Barack Obama, the issue was not even discussed in the presidential debates. Her base, however, believed Climate Change to be an absolute truth as she did. The choice of not focusing on Climate Change is odd and a number of commentators have criticized her and the debate moderators for not having included this issue (Schwartz, 2016). However, Hilary Clinton's take was very similar to Barak Obama's. In retrospect, focusing on Climate Change in public forums - especially the ones in which she faced Trump - might have helped her win the election.



The issue of Climate Change was and is a global issue. The birth of Green Parties and of political agendas focusing solely on this issue are representative of the importance of Climate Change in today's world. Donald Trump's refusal to give importance to it was a red flag for many and sparked numerous conversations. Trump left the Paris Agreement because he said it was harming the US economy. It was a US-centric reason. A strong US economy makes the country stand out from economic powers of the world and it is this point that explains the importance of Trump's decision. The ripples of this decision eventually led China to be the focus of the debate, for it was the biggest economy and polluter that was part of the Paris Agreement. Donald Trump, by retreating from the agreement, switched the focus on the hypocrisy and selfishness of other countries, including China. The issue of Climate Change is therefore a complicated one and one riddled with hypocrisy. This global hypocrisy and national taboo led Trump's framing of the issue to appeal to vast parts of the US population.

## 2.7 Racial and Ethnic minorities

The debate around racial and ethnic diversity has already been mentioned above but warrants a great amount of attention. It is a debate that is central to the progressive way of life and that is celebrated as a victory for human progress. Multiculturalism, for example, is an idea that should not have any connotation. It is a reality that different people live in different ways and that should be understood, most times, contextually. The blind belief in openness, at least rhetorically, by the Democratic Party is what allowed for the anti-PC wave pushed by Donald Trump. As for many other themes, the impossibility of

having a conversation regarding certain aspects of life, in this case race, ethnicity, and the impacts of multiculturalism, is what fuelled the backlash. Obama's previous eight years as president had seemingly put a stop to all the debate in favor of the progressive, typically Democratic, debate surrounding race and multiculturalism. This was far from the truth. The politically correct push seen through, for example, the imposition to hire from a diverse pool of potential employees to reach certain quotas in most cases solely to portray a façade of justice, had exasperated people. In a similar manner to the Gender clash that we will analyze later, people stopped buying into the idea that individuals are defined for the ethnic group they belong to. Most employers would hire the most qualified employee, not the whitest (Moss and Tilly, 2003). The issue was therefore an issue of justice and, importantly, of culture. The debate surrounding American culture was important, and still is, because it touches on a number of other issues such as immigration, globalization, social security and healthcare, just to name a few. Defining what it means to be American and what opportunities an American should have the right to have are at the center of this culture argument and define what the issue is and who it is that the electorate should blame. The issue of justice related to racial and ethnic minorities is one that, as we will see in the Gender issue, is central and is at the heart of an understanding of the world through an Identity politics lens. The idea that injustice is due to ethnicity and race and that this injustice is static and cannot be fought is wrong. This is not to say that institutional racism or episodes of racism don't occur, of course they do, but spreading a narrative that traps an individual because of his or her race is not only counterproductive, but also wrong. Defining injustice through racial and ethnic traits puts very similar people against each other. A poor black person has more in common with a poor white person than with a rich black person. American society is mainly divided by social status, not by race and ethnicity

(Bagenstos, 2015). Again, this is not to say that being Black in the US is the same exact thing as being White, but that the distinction made by the advocates of progressive identity politics is not correct, in fact it is so incorrect that it is counterproductive. Donald Trump took the issue and redefined its parameters. As we will see, the redefinition of where injustice comes from is central to blame the correct person and to warrant the correct solutions. In the next section we will see how the incorrect paradigm created by Identity politics gave Donald Trump, again, the possibility of setting his agenda through rhetoric that was crude, direct, and that certainly did not conform to any understanding of political correctness.

### 2.7.1 Introduction of the issue

The introduction of the issues of Ethnic and racial minorities, and more generally of minority rights is non-existent in Donald Trump's presidential announcement speech or in his book "Great Again", through which he introduces all the main issues on his agenda. However, as mentioned above, the broader discussion that ethnic and racial minority rights are a part of, at least seemingly in Donald Trump's understanding of the phenomenon, is one concerned with American values and what it means to be American. This issue is one that should not be overlooked because, in doing so, Donald Trump consciously or unconsciously redefines the divisions in American society. Donald Trump seems to divide society into American hard working people, American non-hard working people, and non-American. As must be clear by now, his main focus rhetorically was helping Americans in general. But, importantly, his societal division upholds certain values that do not exclude anyone for their race or religion, but they celebrate what it

historically means to be American and what values America has stood up for. The introduction of the issue of minority rights, or the non introduction, is significant because of the broader issue that Donald Trump tackles through his portrayal of minority rights, and, significantly, what meaning and impact not including such an issue has on ones campaign. As mentioned repeatedly above, not including something on the electoral or political agenda may have as much if not more significance then actually including something.

The focus of the analysis will still be concentrated on Donald Trump's campaign announcement speech and his "Great again" book. In his speech, specific focus will be given to statements where there is an allusion to minority rights or when Trump is clearly replacing this argument with a broader one concerning values. In analyzing his book, the focus will be on the chapter entitled "Our Values".

In his presidential announcement speech Donald Trump does not mention race, ethnicity, or minorities once. He does not categorize the people of the US in such a manner. What this means is a complete rejection of the issue of Identity politics that is in line with a progressive understanding of problems that the US is facing. How Donald Trump does understand categories of people are those in work and those whom are unemployed. He says, "We have people that aren't working. We have people that have no incentive to work. But they're going to have incentive to work, because the greatest social program is a job" (Trump, 2015). This understanding of society and what it needs has significant implications. In talking about, and this is the only mention in the entire speech, of social programs, Donald Trump does not mention race and he does not mention ethnicity. He does not categorize American society by those standards, and this understanding greatly appealed to huge parts of the electorate. He understands society, as most of society itself

agrees, in people whom are economically capable and people whom are not given the opportunity to be capable. The real problem, he is seemingly saying, is not racism, but the lack of opportunity that would allow every man or woman, notwithstanding of their race, to empower themselves to be a better person and live a better life. This resonated with the electorate that did not see the imposed politically correct categorization of society as being true. As mentioned above, a poor black man has more in common with a poor white man than with a rich black man. To reiterate the point Donald Trump gives the example of how the real problem in American society is the relocation of jobs to countries such as Mexico that eventually erode the social fabric of the place they relocated from. He harshly criticizes Ford. Ford being one of the historically socially conscious multinationals is harshly criticized for wanting to relocate to Mexico. Donald Trump therefore frames the social battle in terms of economic winners and losers; he places in the same bundle the CEO of Ford and Chinese banks, because they don't work for the American wellbeing. Social wellbeing is therefore not based on ethnicity or race, it is based on opportunity notwithstanding who you are or what color your skin is, as long as you are American or are proud of working in or for America. In a more focused discussion on American values, Donald Trump does something similar in his book.

In "Great Again", and more specifically in the chapter called "Our Values", Donald Trump writes about what it means to be American with no mention of race and ethnicity, but, importantly, with a mention to religion. The debate about religion is obviously an important one in the context of social cohesion, but it has already been mentioned extensively through the issue of immigration and foreign policy when speaking about the cultural incompatibility in terms of values between the US and some Muslim countries. The debate will therefore not be repeated but religion will be mentioned because

understood by Trump, and many if not all others, as having a vital role in defining a country's culture and therefore values. The main argument Trump makes about religion is one that is perfectly in line with this thesis's thesis and that argues against politically correct censorship and selective validity. The most significant quote in this respect is Donald Trump saying, "I don't understand why the same people who demand respect for their beliefs often don't show respect for the beliefs of others." (Trump: 2015, 132). This quote is vital to understand where Trump's social understanding of problems, political correctness, and respect for minorities come together. The double standard set by political correctness in which the Marxist paradigm of oppressed vs. oppressor is applied ad hoc to celebrate one's subjectivity or belief only when there is a seemingly historically more powerful player is exemplified by this quote. Donald Trump hits the nail on the head, therefore, when he encompasses the debate surrounding racial and ethnic minorities inside the debate about what society actually needs, how society is actually divided, and how society actually celebrates or downplays different beliefs. This discussion that downplays minority rights and replaces them with a discussion about social problems and what solutions they warrant, in Trump's case: jobs and economic emancipation, directly contrast the progressive politically correct rhetoric that did not allow attributing secondary importance to minority rights. The framing of minority rights in such a manner and the refocus on giving people opportunity was eventually celebrated as correct. Trump winning the election is proof of this being the case.

### 2.7.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issues of race relations, ethnic minorities, or minorities in general are all incredibly delicate issues. Race and ethnic minority issues, together with gender issues, are at the core of the liberal progressive politically correct movement. The focus on social solutions to enhance the livelihoods of Black, Hispanic, or Asian minorities was common, and in truth has become always more common, in today's political arena. Movements such as Black Lives Matter have taken over public debate and therefore also political debate. They demonstrate the salience of issues of race combined with issues of reporting, police brutality, and lack of economic opportunity. The issues of Minority rights were already important in the 2015/16 campaign. Even though, as mentioned in the introduction, the issue of minorities was often placed in a broader discussion about Values, these issues still remained important in the Republican primary debates, and, especially, in the presidential debates. The most important aspects that will be analyzed will be the way in which Donald Trump frames the issues of minority rights. As per other issues, he refocuses the paradigm to change the conversation. Not necessarily maliciously, he shifts the attention to place the issue of race into a larger conversation that he believes is more important.

The analysis of the Republican primary debates will be carried out through three main debates. The eighth debate will be unraveled to analyze how Donald Trump enlarges the scope of the conversation to include other 'minorities'. This debate was and is very relevant in relation to the BLM protests and demands against the police and violent actions of certain police officers. The tenth debate will be presented to analyze how Donald Trump refocuses the debate about minorities in terms of what he thinks is the real problem and why he believes he has and will continue having the support of minorities.

The eleventh debate will then be analyzed in relation to the media. This debate will be analyzed to show how Donald Trump, again, refocuses the attention around those reporting aspects that he sees as being more important than, in this case, trying to accuse him of not defending minorities.

In the eighth Republican primary debate Donald Trump is confronted with the question on race. The moderator confronts Trump with the reality that Policemen and women are being called out for their actions because of social media and that this is refreshing as the police is forced to behave. Donald Trump's answer is striking and incredibly revealing. He says, "Well, there is a divide, but I have to say that the police are absolutely mistreated and misunderstood, and if there is an incident, whether its an incident done purposely-which is a horror, and you should really take very strong action- or if it a mistake, it's on your news casts all night, all week, all month, and it never ends... (the police are) afraid of doing their jobs, they're afraid of the mistreatment they get, and I'm telling you that not only, me speaking, minorities all over the country, they respect the police of this country and we have to give them more respect". This quote packs a lot of information and a number of accusations that Trump makes. Firstly, Trump accepts the fact that "there is a divide" in society supposedly between the police and minority groups that are supposedly oppressed by the police. This point is not clear, the divide could be between good cops and bad cops or between people whom respect the police and that don't. However, what is truly important in the beginning of the quote is that Donald Trump, in answering a question about minorities and race, defends the police. The first thing he says is that the police, which he seemingly categorizes as a minority as any other minority, is "mistreated". He defends the police before defending those whom are supposedly molested, pestered, and, for the media, often killed by the police. His stance is one that



goes against any conception of identity politics and progressive thinking. What is important to note, however, is that this take greatly appealed to the electorate because it is certainly true that policemen and women daily risk their lives on the job. This was and still is the basic argument that huge parts of the population agree with (Sweet, 2020). The most important thing here is that the debate is a nuanced one, it is not black and white. While the claims of the progressives politically correct only set out to defend and uphold the rights of minorities, Donald Trump acknowledges these rights while also acknowledging the broader argument that sees the difficulties and importance of being a police officer. For many, this debate could be termed 'common sense'. Secondly, he acknowledges the fact that police violence is a fact and that, when done on purpose, it is a "true horror". This point is already interesting in itself because Trump specifies "on purpose". This is important because Trump is legitimizing the use of force by the police when this violence is not used in an abusive manner. The fact that Trump feels he must remind the listeners that the police has the right to use force as it is the representation of the State on the streets is something that is strongly against an idyllic liberal conception of society and that directly challenges political correctness. Donald Trump therefore takes a question about race, minority rights, and police brutality and, while acknowledging the problems that power abuse by the police can create for minorities, also, in his direct and unapologetic language, highlights the 'other' side of the argument and the problems that other actors have in this debate.

In the tenth Republican primary debate Donald Trump is again challenged with a question about minorities, specifically Hispanic minorities living in the US. The moderator introduces the question explaining that the Hispanic vote has become crucial to win elections in the US and that recent polls have shown the Donald Trump is not very popular

amongst Hispanics. The answer Trump gives the moderator, apart from being typically exaggerated in its tone, refocuses the frame on what Donald Trump sees as being truly important for everyone, not only for Hispanics. Trump says, "I currently employ thousands of Hispanics, and over the years, I've employed tens of thousand of Hispanics. They're incredible people...I won with Hispanics (the Hispanic vote). And I got 46 percent. Nobody else was close. Because they know I'm going to bring jobs back from China, from Japan, from so many other places". After claiming to be loved by Hispanics because of his employment record, Trump reorders the priority scale. What he says is what he's been saying for almost every issue we have touched upon. The only true social policy that everyone cares for is jobs. He claims that Hispanic voters will be on his side because he will give them a job, not because he will work on some abstract solution to integrate communities (in his understanding a typical modus operandi of the progressives). For every issue, Donald Trump reiterates the scale of values that people, in his mind, actually have. The middle class doesn't care about social policy if they don't have a job. The economy and employment are therefore the new paradigm through which Donald Trump understands the empowerment of racial and ethnic minorities too, and his eventual victory proves that many agreed with him.

In the eleventh Republican primary debate Donald Trump was challenged concerning the supposed presence of Klu Klux Klan members at his rallies. The question and answer are seemingly innocuous and standard procedure. The moderator asks an insinuating question to a candidate, the candidate denies any affiliation with the entity that would make his or her campaign look bad. However, Donald Trump adds a little something to his answer that at first glance may not seem significant, but once one recognizes the strategy, it certainly is. The framing of the issue to refocus the attention on something else is the

strategy referred to. Donald Trump's answer goes as follow, "I totally disavow the Ku Klux Klan. I totally disavow David Duke. I've been doing it now for two weeks, this is your- you're probably the 18<sup>th</sup> person that's asked me the question...And, by the way, if you look on my Twitter account, almost immediately after the program they were disavowed again. You know, it's amazing. When I do something on Twitter, everybody picks it up, goes all over the place. But, when I did this one nobody ever picks it up. Take a look at my Twitter account". In the quote Trump firstly distances himself from the KKK and from David Duke, a former 'grand wizard' of the KKK. Then he goes on to criticize the question as something that he has already addressed which is significant because he is beginning the maneuver of shifting the focus towards the utility of the question. Finally, he accuses the media of not picking up on the fact that he had distanced himself from the KKK and David Duke while picking up on any other tweet that could fuel a controversy or become a story in the news. This is incredibly significant. Donald Trump, confronted with the reality that some KKK members were at his rally and therefore support some of his ideas, turns the story on its head to blame the media for purposely not acknowledging the fact that he had already distanced himself from said story. From a possible accusation of racism against Trump, to a trial against the supposed wrongdoings and the hidden agenda of the media. Donald Trump therefore addresses the issue of Race and Minority rights in a broader context and always shifting the paradigm to include other issues in connection to the issue of race. He re-prioritizes what is important for the US and what, he believes, is also important for Minorities. The main priority for anyone always being: having a job in a strong economy.

### 2.7.3 Issue in context

Race and racial issues were central and prominent issues in the 2016 election. After eight years of the Obama presidency, in which many people hoped America would enter a new post-racial society, racial tensions were at a new high. A number of cases can be listed for why these tensions escalated, and some will be presented below. These incidents resulted in the creation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In progressive and politically correct forums the birth of such an organization was a strong symbol of American social justice. People of all races were uniting to fight the social injustices against Black Americans. However, Obama was not a symbol of a post racist society and BLM was in itself a political organization whose goals and aims should be discussed. The issue of race will therefore be discussed in the following manner: firstly, by explaining what it represented in a politically correct context and what Donald Trump's take on the issue symbolized; secondly, what had happened in the previous eight years of Obama's presidency; thirdly, Hilary Clinton's take will be reiterated to explain the vital divide that existed on the issue in the 2016 election; fourthly, a brief reflection on the birth of BLM and what it represents for American society and for American politics; lastly, the issue will be assessed in parallel with other world events.

Racial issues in a progressive and politically correct world were more contentious than Climate Change. The emotive responses were more legitimate because stemming from lived experience and the examples justifying fighting the fight stronger because often reported on. Notwithstanding the unmistakable legitimacy of fighting for someone's rights, the absence of conversation of what that truly means and how that fight plays out is at the center of the issue. The politically correct and progressive censorship pertaining to conversations around race and race relations are part of Trump's appeal. The delicate

nature of the topic lead to polarization: Being labeled a racist if engaging in race relation debates, reflecting on the racist past of the USA, or disagreeing on whether or not the US was institutionally racist led to an extreme polarization of public opinion. Donald Trump, as he did with other issues, took the politically correct lid off the issue and confronted it. Addressing the issue and not being kicked out of the presidential race was already a demonstration, for many people that it could be worth following Donald Trump's campaign. KKK members supported Donald Trump as already mentioned, but these people were only a minimum fraction of his supporters. However, the Democratic Party and especially Hilary Clinton labeled all of his supporters racists. Famously, Hilary Clinton called Donald Trump supporters the "basket of deplorables" (BBC News, 2016). The issue of race was therefore a staple of the Democratic Party and of Hilary Clinton's campaign. However, as with other issues, the impossibility of having a constructive debate about such issue resulted in the polarization of public opinion and spread incredible amounts of disinformation. What is important to note is that the discussion of race, racism, multiculturalism, and inclusion is not only pertaining to Black Americans, but also to Hispanics and other first or second generation immigrants that come from different cultures. Putting them all together is the first mistake that progressive identity politics advocates made that eventually did not allow for Republicans that did not agree with Donald Trump to shift their vote to the Democrats (Wehner, 2019).

President Obama was the first African American to ever be elected to the post. Symbolically, a lot of people believed that his election would mark a new beginning for American race relations. However, the truth was that Obama could not change everything. Some would claim that in fact he did not change anything (Bryant, 2017). President Obama did a lot for African Americans but was very careful in providing a balanced

evaluation of incidents. Incidents involving abusive power by Police resulted in him calling out the Police. In instances where the police made a mistake, he tried to unify the country. President Obama focused on getting White and Black Americans closer to one another by not arbitrarily tacking sides. Note that Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump, to different degrees of success, did not do this. Famously, after criticizing the actions of a Police officer that arrested a well-known African American scholar who called him “stupid”, President Obama invited the two men involved to the White House and drank a beer with them (Cooper, 2009). This kind of symbolism is one of diplomacy; it worked for a while but did not permeate society as a whole. Symbolism did not work because the cases kept sparking up and justice - in the eyes of the majority of the Black American community - was not being served. The case of George Zimmerman killing Trayvon Martin is exemplary. These cases gave birth to the BLM movement. Racial tensions were incredibly high when Obama left office, and the two candidates competing for the Presidency needed to take a strong stance on the issue.

Hilary Clinton did everything but take a strong stance on the issue of race. She never took sides and insisted that it was cooperation between the police and those being policed that would result in a positive impact in race relations. This neutral stance did not satisfy anyone. The police did not like it because they believed a candidate for President should stand for State institutions, while black communities did not like it because it was an accommodating ‘soft’ stance. In comparison, Donald Trump took a strong stance in favor of the Police force. Whether this was the ‘right’ thing to do does not concern us here. What it does tell us is that the electorate appreciated a strong stance in a time of turmoil. What it also demonstrates is that the one of the problems inherent to the issue was the politically correct ideology. If one did not believe that race relations were as important as things like

the economy, they might be labeled a racist. There was a widespread sentiment amongst the US electorate that this was the case and it remains true to this day (Smith, 2019).

The BLM movement was and remains an organization celebrated for striving to achieve racial equality. Its existence also symbolizes that racism, at least for those who are part of BLM, still exists. The progressive politically correct identity politics camp loves the idea and the existence of BLM (Memoli, 2016). This, however, is problematic for them. The classic moral conundrum of recent democratic politics arises. In supporting the BLM movement, one should support everything this movement represents. The BLM movement, however, is progressive insofar as it fights for racial inclusion, but it comprises diverse factions within it, including some that are very religious. Religion, in this case Christian or Catholic religion, is a big part of the identity of the majority of Black Americans (Gecewicz, 2014). Christianity, for example, does not celebrate or even accept homosexuality, which is a staple of inclusive progressive ideology. By supporting the BLM movement, progressive politicians and social rights advocates can face a moral conundrum that is symptomatic of the identity politics mistaken division and conception of society. The fact that BLM fight for the rights of Black and minority peoples does not result in a default alignment with progressive democratic ideology, and therefore worthy to celebrate and protect. In no way was this brief reflection meant to downplay the significance of BLM. It was, instead, intended to explain the politico-philosophical impossibilities that the democrats encounter when understanding the world through a lens of identity politics.

The issue of race in the 2016 context was a very contentious one. Eight years of President Obama did not create the post racist society as many hoped. The stakes on the issue of race and racism were higher than ever before. On one hand, politically correct censorship

created resentment from the disenfranchised white and the police, and on the other hand, the many shocking events experienced by the black community fostered rage and sadness, which compounded and exasperated the division. In the rest of the world, and especially in Western Europe, something different was happening. In Italy, right wing parties were openly stating that immigrants were second-class citizens and that they should not be let in the country (Pucciarelli, 2016). One could connect the two sentiments because in many aspects they relate to race, but their base is very different. In the US, the 'fight' was amongst Americans, while in Italy, the 'fight' was between Italians and foreigners. The issue of race in the 2016 context was therefore a singular one, exasperated by identity politics and political correctness. This reality led to Donald Trump being immune to disapproval from his voter base, as his unapologetic and outrageous statements only drew his electorate in closer.

## 2.8 Gender politics and Reproductive rights

The 2016 presidential race was a battle of the sexes (Bartash, 2016). For the first time in US history, a woman won the nomination of her party and was set to win the presidency. For a number of pollsters, the fact that Ms Clinton was a woman was enough to make her win. The possibility of voting for a woman would have drawn half of the electorate (the female electorate) to the pollsters in favor of the Democratic candidate. A similar idea was brought forth eight years prior with President Obama, and that prediction resulted to be, for the most part, true. What people would have later realized was that Obama won because he had appeal, charisma, a set of solid ideas that people could but into, not because he was Black.



Gender politics are a subset of Identity politics. The reasoning mechanism is very similar: you are brought up or put down for who you are, meaning depending on what category of people you belong to. Gender politics therefore sees to celebrate all genders except those seen to have oppressed others throughout history. These are mainly men. The celebration of women is therefore central to this practice but flawed, as is identity politics, in its categorization of people by gender. The blind support that Hilary Clinton received solely because she was a woman is exemplary in this. Pundits, academics, and many other public sphere workers were, as was the middle class, trapped in politically correct morality. One cannot be against Hilary Clinton, for she is a woman, and the US has never had a woman president, therefore having one is good. This was literally the main argument in favor of Hilary Clinton, and Donald Trump set to destroy this idea. The issue with believing that a woman would be a good president because she is a woman and therefore would respect other women more and strive for more equality amongst genders and that the electorate desires public policy to focus on gender politics is problematic and puts a person on a moral pedestal. Being on a moral pedestal is not a problem in itself. The problem is that once you fall off your pedestal, you will not be allowed to climb back up. Once you lose your moral high ground, there is no way you can reclaim it. The Gender Politics and Women's Rights issues were therefore central to Hilary Clinton's campaign because they represent the bedrock of the progressive liberal politically correct Democratic Party. Donald Trump could not ignore the importance of the issue, but his focus was to debunk the fake myths that voting for a woman would automatically favor or uphold the rights of other women and that the US electorate believed this issue necessitated center stage in political life. Once the electorate realized the hypocrisy of a campaign that claimed such absolute truths, again, that voting for a woman automatically meant that all women would

increase their status in society, then Donald Trump could address this issue too in his typical non politically correct way. Not only could he be blunt, and at times rude, he could slip and tumble and still jump right back on his feet because the Democrats (Hillary Clinton) had probably done worse, or so he claimed. The issues of Gender Politics and Reproductive Rights were seemingly the most delicate and sensible issues of the campaign but were slowly absorbed by the direct and anti-PC rhetoric of Trump unmasking a wide spread veiled sentiment throughout the US electorate that some 'absolute truths' had gone too far and that certain issues such as the gender one were less important, for a number of reasons, than what numerous players in politics and social society believed.

### 2.8.1 Introduction of the issue

The issue of Gender and Reproductive rights was a non-issue in Donald Trump's campaign, at least in the outset. Donald Trump did not include, as he did not include Minority rights, issues concerning women's rights in the presentation of his agenda. However, there are some remarks that can be connected to issues of women's rights and broader phenomena's. Through this understanding, Donald Trump categorizes women's rights in the broader context of American values. As was done in the previous chapter about Ethnic and Racial minorities, the discussion that will be focused on here will be one that draws conclusions from the absence of direct references to the theme in question. This absence, as mentioned above, is significant. In analyzing the two main sources through which Donald Trump introduced his issues, his presidential announcement speech and his "Great Again" book, the analysis will focus on the implications of not directly mentioning Women's Rights, what that in turn entails, and what it meant to

include a women's rights discussion in a broader discussion about American values, and in particular family.

In his presidential announcement speech, Donald Trump never mentions anything relating to women's rights. The argument here is very similar to the one for minority rights. Not mentioning an issue means that Donald Trump does not find this issue to be mention worthy, and therefore does not warrant an eventual policy solution. This is a strong and powerful statement. The social categorization that the progressive politically correct camp brought forth, based on identity politics, is completely rejected here as was done above with race and ethnicity. What Donald Trump does, again, is to redefine the social categorization in society between those whom are economically empowered and those who are not. The idea that the only true solution to social problems is giving people the opportunity to work and therefore elevate their economic status completely disregards the social problems that identity politics advocates highlight. The only oppression that exists is economic oppression, and the only way to emancipate oneself is to become economically empowered. Notwithstanding if a person is a man or a woman, the only useful social policy is employment. The argument that Trump carries out disregards identity politics but also focuses the conversation around typical or traditional American values. The pursuit of happiness through hard work and economic empowerment is very much in line with traditional American values. It therefore makes sense that when Donald Trump speaks about values in his book, he mentions hard work, family, and religion.

In "Great Again" by Donald Trump, in the chapter called "Our Values" no straightforward mention is written about women's rights or even gender in general. However, in the broader conversation about Values and, in turn, what it means to be American, Donald

Trump mentions aspects of life that certainly relate to women and, most importantly, imply very significant beliefs concerning women. Reported in the opening remarks of the chapter is a conversation about wealth and happiness. Donald Trump claims, and this is a common conception or perceived truth, that money does not buy happiness. He then goes on to say some seemingly innocent things, but that in truth hide a very clear set of values. He writes, "The happiest people I know are those people who have great families and real values...People who have a loving spouse and have children they really love are happy people. Religion also plays a very large factor in happiness. People who have God in their lives receive tremendous amount of joy and satisfaction from their faith." (Trump, 2015: 128) This quote sets the stage for a traditional conservative take on family, religion, and therefore women's rights and women's roles in society. Donald Trump is referring to Christianity when he talks about religion and it is everyone's knowledge that a traditional Christian family sees the woman or mother as care giver and the man or father as provider. This understanding of family, be it bad or good, is certainly against a progressive understanding and politically correct conception of a modern and liberated social order. The effect and impact that a belief like this one has is significant. Rejecting the fierce feminist push is strongly politically incorrect. Donald Trump clearly states that he is for traditional values of family, that he a religious man, and that Values are something important in his life. However, his record does not show this to be true. He has had five children from three wives and therefore must have difficulty in proving to people that he truly believes in what he is preaching. He therefore takes responsibility for his actions and says, "Truthfully, I was a much better father than husband" (Trump, 2015: 129). This admission is an important one and one that appeals to the electorate. Someone that acknowledges his personal mistakes and admits he was wrong. Trump then switches from

talking generally about family and, in his final remarks in the chapter, directly addresses the issue of Women. He says, "My positive feelings about women are reflected in the number of women who have worked in my organization...gave them the opportunity because I knew they could handle it....Talk to any women who worked for me and they will all tell you the same thing- I am tough, demanding boss. I reward success and I penalize failure. I treat women no differently than I treat the men who work for me. I give women the responsibility they earn with their performance, I pay them the same, promote them accordingly, and, when they mess up, fire them the same." This quote is incredibly important. It celebrates equality without imposing any type of double standard for which women should be celebrated or rewarded just because they are women. Donald Trump says what the silent majority that believes in feminism wants. Equality of opportunity and of treatment, no special regards or grandmaster plan to overthrow every single man in a powerful position. Donald Trump gets past all the extreme politically correct progressive identity politics demands while acknowledging the value of women. This take on the women's rights combined with a celebration of traditional American values is what truly appealed to the general public. Donald Trump appealed to people because he celebrated American values of opportunity and of family, that are often based on religious beliefs, while also saying that equal treatment is essential, and that everyone should have it. This combination of ideas is what made his take on women's rights appealing and, on the other hand, the extremism of the progressive identity politics advocates allowed him rhetorical slip-ups throughout the campaign.

## 2.8.2 Importance of the issue in Primary and Presidential debates

The issues of Gender politics, reproductive rights, and women's rights are all very delicate issues. As mentioned in the Racial and Ethnic minorities' section these issues were not talked about head on in the Republican primary Debates. Although sexism and women's rights certainly had a bigger role to play in the primary debates when compared to Racial and Ethnic minority rights. In the presidential debates, both these issues had renewed importance and held center stage in the discussions. In the Republican primary debates we find some mentions concerning the relation that each candidate has to women, there is a brief indirect discussion about the objectification of women, an important discussion about Planned Parenthood, and two important frames that Donald Trump sets up when talking about women: one is the contextualization of how women are treated in different cultures, and the other is concerned with what priorities women actually have.

To unravel all this a number of quotes, exchanges, or events will be extracted from the debates. The first debate will be taken to analyze the interaction between Megyn Kelly and Donald Trump in terms of what that meant in terms of the role of women and the treatment of women; The second debate will be unraveled to analyze how the issue of women's rights was used to downplay other political candidates and how political correctness seemingly played a role in defining what could and could not be said; The ninth and tenth debates will be helpful to have a discussion about Planned Parenthood and why Donald Trump's take on it was seemingly more appealing and sensible; and, finally, quotes from the tenth and twelfth debates will be presented to understand how the framing of the issue by Donald Trump changed the paradigm that was being analyzed and

how, in turn, the changing paradigm meant that other values or issues gained more importance in comparison to straight forward women's or gender rights.

In the first Republican primary debate the initial interaction between Megyn Kelly and Donald Trump set the stage for a fierce debate on women's rights and the treatment of women by Donald Trump. The quote is reported in the "Media" issue of this thesis because it is relevant for the way moderators interacted with candidates. It was also very significant because of the conversation and comments it sparked after the debate. The language that was used by Donald Trump in an interview following the debate commenting on Megyn Kelly's question is representative of the non-politically correct approach that Donald Trump had in relation to this issue. What is even more significant is that although his comments sparked indignation from a number of commentators these comments were not enough to sidetrack Donald Trump's campaign. In a phone interview with CNN after the debate Donald Trump said, "You know, you could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever. In my opinion, she was off base" (CNN, 2015). This comment is clearly disparaging Megyn Kelly for seemingly being angry while asking the question, and Donald Trump attributes this anger to her being a woman, suggesting that she might have been on her period and that that was what made her angry. As mentioned in the media issue, the question in the debate was followed by Donald Trump claiming that the problem with the US is political correctness. It is this connection that makes these comments not worthy of discrediting him. He allows himself sexist comments and justifies them by blaming the sensibility of the politically correct camp. Claiming that this outrage is unjustified and bias therefore downplays the following media outrage to these comments. Although the statement did receive criticism, the fact that Donald Trump then went on to win the nominee shows that the focus on women's

rights and in this case sexist comments is not what the electorate really cared about, and that the electorate had other priorities and that fighting for women's rights was of secondary importance.

In the second Republican primary debate it was clear that Republican candidates attempted to use the censorship and the idea of rhetorical etiquette to criticize their opponents. This is significant to highlight to demonstrate how deep political correct benchmark had pervaded the political arena. This is not to say that language was not important before 2016, of course it was. But what is interesting is how Donald Trump could simultaneously be attacked and attack others for the use of inappropriate language or rhetorical slip ups. The two interactions that are seemingly equal are, firstly, Donald Trump attacking Jeb Bush for something he said about women's health, and, secondly, Donald Trump being quoted by the moderator in a seemingly sexist observation about Carly Fiorina. In the first statement Trump says, "And I said, wow, I can't believe it. I will take care of women. I respect women. I will take care of women. You said you're going to cut funding for women's health. You said it." The second quote is, "Quote, "Look at that face. Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?" Mr. Trump later said he was talking about your persona, not you appearance. Please feel free to respond..." The two 'attacks' or confrontations are understood as being very similar because pertaining to women and to rhetorical observations or statements that might have discredited, at least partly, a candidate. Notwithstanding the fact that Jeb Bush reformulated what he meant and Donald Trump eschewing the meaning of what he said, the statements are actually very different. Jeb Bush made a mistake, in his words, about policy. Donald Trump made an observation relating to a candidate's esthetic. Bush's mistake is a significant one; Trump's statement is an impulsive one. What is important to



understand here, as stated above, is that people had had enough with language being riddled by political correctness and therefore Trump's statements not holding that much weight. The other vitally important thing here is that the two statements should not be categorized as similar. The only reason that they are is because they both relate to women. In turn, this is exactly the same type of categorization that advocates of identity politics make, and it is incorrect. Although both interactions have something to do with women, they are very different and they resonate with women in a very different manner. In one case, Donald Trump's, some women might have been offended; in the other case, Jeb Bush's, some of the welfare pertaining to women's health might have been cut, which would have affected women way more significantly. Therefore some statements, although seemingly relating to women, are much less impactful than others. The past exasperation of political correctness allowed Donald Trump to make certain statements without affecting or downplaying his campaign.

In the ninth and tenth debate Donald Trump has two brief discussions about Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is a public health provider that allows women accessible essential healthcare services such as STD tests, birth control, cancer tests, and a whole range of services. The Republican Party harshly criticizes it at large because seen as incentivizing sexual irresponsibility and immorally providing abortion treatment. Donald Trump, not being a classic Republican, has a different take on it and does not discard it all together. This is typically Donald Trump. Even in this case he is not 'politically correct' per se because to support Planned Parenthood and to be a Republican is very politically incorrect. In a similar but opposing way, also Republicans have their taboos, such as abortions. These taboos are more ideological and therefore are not properly termed politically correct here, but the umbrella idea and the conclusion is very similar: Donald

Trump appeals to a broader sector of the population. In this first squabble between Trump and Cruz, this is what is said:

*Cruz: You supported it when we were battling over defunding Planned Parenthood. You went on...*

*Trump: That's a lot of lies.*

*Cruz: You said, "Planned Parenthood does wonderful things and we should not defund it."*

*Trump: It does do wonderful things but not as it relates to abortion.*

In the tenth debate Trump reiterates his point and says, "As far as Planned Parenthood is concerned, I'm pro life. I'm totally against abortion, having to do with Planned Parenthood. But millions and millions of women- cervical cancer, breast cancer- are helped by Planned Parenthood. So you can say whatever you want, but they have millions of women going through Planned Parenthood that are helped greatly." These two quotes see Donald Trump conceding the core reason for which Planned Parenthood is bad, abortion, but then, as in most cases, refocusing the attention to other positive and more relevant realities for people, in this case women. It is an important realization for a political campaign to shift the focus on what truly matters for the electorate concerned. This broader understanding and appeal then resulted in Donald Trump also being largely in favor of what Planned Parenthood did and being able to say it at his liking.

In the tenth and twelfth Republican primary debates Donald Trump shifts the paradigm and focus of conversations to re establish and highlight what is truly important to people. Again, this also allowed him to slip up and say outrageous things, while maintaining the support he had. The two instances are incredibly important. In the twelfth debate, while talking about Foreign policy (remember that the 12<sup>th</sup> debate is the last one therefore candidates tried to have broad arguments connecting their issues) Donald Trump touches

upon Arab countries, Terrorism, and connects this to values and culture. He says, "There is tremendous hate (In Arab countries). There is tremendous hate. Where large portions of a group of people, Islam, large portions want to use very, very harsh means. Let me go a step further. Women are treated horribly. You know that. You know that. Women are treated horribly, and other things are happening that are very, very bad." This quote is significant because it refocuses attention on what Donald Trump believes to be more important than anything. A conscious realization that the majority of Muslims have values which are completely different from Western ones especially in terms of women's rights. The focus is unapologetically shifted towards what the real, for Donald Trump, problem is. Political correctness wants everyone to respect each other. The cultural difference between different nations does not allow this to be a reality. This anti politically correct, anti progressive, and anti identity politics take then greatly resonated with the electorate and allowed Donald Trump to make outrageous statements because these were backed by a solid focus on what the electorate truly saw as a problem, again, profound cultural difference. In the tenth debate the conversation about minorities is touched upon. Already mentioned in the Racial and Ethnic minorities section, Donald Trump claims to have the support of most if not all minorities, including women, because he focuses on what people want, not some vague application of social inclusion policy. He says, "They know, and the reason I won in Nevada, not only won the big one, but I also won subs, like, as an example, I won with women...Because they know I'm going to bring jobs back from China, from Japan, from so many other places." Donald Trump believed he had the support of Women, as of minorities in general, because he focused on what people really wanted and needed: jobs. This understanding of popular priorities resulted in being incredibly effective and broadly correct. The role of women's rights and more general gender issues in the

Republican primary debates therefore played a number of roles. Most importantly, they helped highlight the hypocrisy of political correctness and its rhetoric and demonstrate that Women, as many other minority groups and the population at large, had very different priorities to the ones that the progressive politically correct camp expected and believed they had.

### 2.8.3 Issue in context

The issue of Women's rights is one that is central to the progressive, Feminist, and Gender studies agenda. It is a topic central to what this thesis has defined as the politically correct progressive left, and has been a topic that has gained so much importance that it has warranted its own discipline. In fact, academia is the clearest area in which women's rights issues have been internalized and are celebrated as essential to the future of humanity. College campuses in the US are exemplary of the foothold that progressive identity politics advocates have on US culture and its discourse. Ideas such as 'safe spaces', where marginalized people or students come together to share their experiences, are symbolic of the importance that identity politics has in American culture. An idea that helps understand the impact of the Women's rights movement in the anti-PC outcry is the concept of 'rape culture'. Gender studies literature, Feminist literature, and Postmodern literature all discuss this issue in American society. 'Rape culture' is a culture that "condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm" (Fletcher et al. 1993: vii). Anyone who argues that rape is not a cultural problem (despite evidence to the contrary), or who does not view rape culture as an important issue in society, will be cast as perpetuating it. The issue here is that anyone looking to engage in a conversation who does not bring the politically correct view to the table is disqualified from engaging in the

conversation, a conversation that might be critical in building consensus and common ground. The fundamental issue here is that, in excluding opposing voices, the politically correct movement misses an opportunity to diminish differences, creating resentment and antagonism in its place. This issue can be compared with people being called racists when arguing that institutionalized racism is less of a problem than we think, or being called idiots when arguing that climate change is not as much of a priority as what some people think. This veil of politically correct, progressive, and identity politics censorship is what Donald Trump attacked head on. If one believed that American College campuses were the mirrors of society at large, or that the future should have to mirror these campuses, the election of Donald Trump proved this belief to be wrong. Not to say that people don't mistreat women or that sexism is a reality that does not still exist, the issue here is the inability to have a conversation or debate about these issues. Not having a conversation led people with moderate understandings of the issue to not being able to identify with the progressive left and eventually led them to side with Donald Trump. The importance that the issue of Women's and LGBTQ+ rights in the politically correct progressive world is therefore the epitome of identity politics. Protecting a seemingly oppressed or marginalized group in society from the oppressive existing paradigm is a staple of progressive postmodern politically correct ideology. The analysis of the issue in context will therefore go as follows: firstly, a discussion of what Obama did pertaining to the issue; secondly, a brief reiteration of Hilary Clinton's take on the issue; thirdly, events during the 2016 campaign will analyze how these enabled and encouraged the Trump campaign; Lastly, the conclusion will connect the issue of Women's rights in the US with happenings around the world.

From day one, President Obama set out to empower Women and Girls. Extensive programs were set in place to assure equal opportunity, equal pay, affordable healthcare, and many other things deemed necessary for the empowerment of Women. Following these actions President Obama has led the conversation around the fair treatment of women in the US. He has extensively put the issue of Women's rights at the center of many of his programs and has ensured that a Women's rights approach was included and considered in each and every policy program he pursued (WH, 2016). Whether this approach was rightful or not, it is very much in line with the progressive left that eventually lead to the exasperation of the electorate. This belief has not left the ex-President or the Party for which he was elected or the new incumbents, in this case Hilary Clinton. At a recent private event in Singapore, President Obama exemplified all that is wrong with politically correct culture and the postmodern double standard that is enforces. At the event, while speaking to the Female portion of the audience, Obama said, "now Women, I just want you to know, are not perfect, but what I can say pretty indisputably is that you are better than us men" (Asher, 2019). The simplicity with which an individual can criticize and downplay Men is representative of the double standard that postmodern identity politics advocates and all the disciplines that they comprise represent. This double standard and apologetic self-pity is what led numerous Men and Women, not to vote Democratic and to be attracted to the unapologetic and celebratory rhetoric that Trump brought forth.

Hilary Clinton was the personification of what politically correct progressive advocates believed was right for society and, actually, all that was wrong with the conception of progress these same people and had. Hilary Clinton was seen as the savior and pioneer of Women's rights because she is a woman. Her possible election was seen as a watershed

moment for the empowerment of Women across the USA (Foran, 2016). This was not necessarily true. As per the example of racial and ethnic minorities not all embodying perfectly liberal beliefs, the same is true of Hilary Clinton. Hilary Clinton's record was not a perfect record of liberal progressive values, exemplifying the mistaken categorization of society that identity politics advocates pursue. For example, Hilary Clinton did not believe in gay marriage until 2013 (LaCapria, 2016). Although this has nothing to do with Women's rights, it has everything to do with Gender rights and the normalization of homosexuality in US society that is certainly another benchmark of the progressive left. In no way is the statement above meant to judge Hilary Clinton's moral fiber or her fitness to become President, it is simply to highlight the mistaken understanding of society that the liberal progressives have. Once this categorization is understood to be wrong, then it is easy to understand why focusing on Gender or Women's rights as isolated issues is counterproductive at best. As said numerous times for the issue of race, 'poor women have more in common with poor men than with rich women'. The categorization by social status is one that makes more sense in terms of social policy and political strategy. In turn, the mistaken appeal, the non-immaculate record, and Donald Trump's completely different take on the issue, made numerous parts of the electorate move towards the Republican camp and eventually vote for Donald Trump.

The 2016 campaign relating to the issue of Women's rights was a smearing and defamatory campaign. Each candidate, as many others did before them, tried to downplay the eligibility of their adversary by highlighting his or her personal flaws and therefore their un-presidential personal figure. As discussed above, the discovery of the 'Hollywood access tapes' was probably the most important event that happened in relation to Women's rights, in conjunction with the statements that followed the First primary debate

questions with Megyn Kelly. The importance of the Hollywood tapes must be looked at in conjunction with the decision to invite the accusers of Bill Clinton to the presidential debate, who had also been accused and harassed by Hilary. What is important to note here is that while Donald Trump was not claiming to base his campaign on morals and righteousness, Hilary Clinton was continuously stating that the right and moral thing to do was vote for her. These different claims led events such as the ones above to affect Hilary Clinton much more than Donald Trump.

The issue of Women and Gender rights was therefore a key and contentious issue. It is the representation, as with other issues such as race, of the mistaken categorization of society on the part of the politically correct identity politics progressive left. While this was unraveling in the US, toned down but similar realities were being discussed in Europe. Although a number of countries already had Women as heads of state and may be seen as ahead of the US on this issue, the EU in general focused on said issue in its public policy decisions. The UK, strongly influenced by US culture, had similar things happen in terms of College campuses and general academia. Although to a lesser degree, Europe focused on these issues too but with a lesser degree of hypocrisy when understanding the differences between men and women, and the importance of categorizing society by class and not race, ethnicity, or gender.



### 3. Conclusion

#### 3.1 Weighing the issues: Setting a successful Agenda through the right Frames

Donald Trump won the 2016 elections because he chose the right issues for his campaign and framed them in a manner that appealed to voters. The seven issues analyzed in this thesis all were essential pieces of the puzzle that allowed Donald Trump to be successful in 2016. The seven issues, however, can be understood as belonging to distinct categories. These categories then had a different functional role when compared to each other.

The issues comprised in the slogan “Make America Great Again”, mainly the economy, jobs, and political correctness can be categorized with the issues comprised in “Foreign Policy”, mainly China, Russia, Terrorism, Iran, and the US’s role on the global stage. These issues can be bundled together because they represent the base from which Donald Trump commenced his campaign. They are issues that any politician in any country would have to address (with the exception of political correctness that also had another role, which will be later discussed) if he or she is hoping to win an election. The economy, jobs, and foreign policy are therefore the starting point and the bedrock from which Donald Trump’s campaign commenced. They are important because they are issues that touch upon every American and therefore have the potential to attract any type of voter.

The issues of political correctness and the media, apart from being fundamental issues in Trump’s campaign that enabled the process of highlighting a lot of things that were wrong with the so called ‘establishment’, they were also functional issues; tools, in other words. By making the media an issue Trump was able to cherry pick what he believed, and wanted, to be understood as the truth. Because the media was attacked for being corrupt

and self interested, any media report could be discarded simply based on this claim. Donald Trump, and his electorate, therefore had the power of disregarding any fact or new story that was not in line with their ideology or with what went in their favor at the time. Political correctness was very important as an issue in itself because it highlighted a lot of hypocrisy and mistaken focus in the political process and by political actors. However, political correctness was especially important as a tool. The fact that political correctness was an issue made it possible for any complaint in relation or response to what Trump said to be discarded because labeled as politically correct. Any critique made against Trump's rhetoric or Trump's actions could be simply disregarded if it was deemed to stem from an arena of political correctness. As said in the introduction, political correctness started from a righteous and morally just understanding of society. The will to respect and understand those with less privilege is certainly a value to encourage and uphold. However, the exasperation of political correctness allowed for the complete denial that there was anything good stemming from it. In turn, Donald Trump and his electorate could, again, disregard a comment, opinion, or fact, if seen to originate from a political correct point of view.

The issues of immigration (although immigration also has a role to play as a Base issue and therefore could be categorized with MAGA and Foreign Policy, its more important role lies with these issues and in this category), Climate Change, Race relations, and Women's rights can be understood as being Trump's 'brake-through' issues. These were issues that no one else spoke of in the terms Donald Trump did. These issues brought to light a part of the US's electorate sentiment that no one knew was still so strong. The people whom had been forgotten by the establishment had built up years and years of resentment against established politicians and their diplomatic talk that led to nowhere except to people

being poorer and poorer from the 1970s onwards. Addressing these issues in such a manner and in some case simply speaking about these issues in an open and unapologetic manner enabled Donald Trump to vastly appeal to these forgotten citizens of the United States. These issues are also the ones in which political correctness and a postmodern perception of reality was most present. They are therefore the issues that mostly symbolize the breakthrough that Donald Trump led. The sharp division between political life and rhetoric pre Donald Trump versus post Donald Trump is exemplified mainly in these four issues.

The seven issues analyzed in this thesis were therefore all key to attract American voters and eventually enabled Donald Trump's victory. They all had different roles to play in that they were all different and distinct pieces. However, they were all pieces of the same puzzle and once it came together, painted a powerful picture, or electoral campaign. The issues placed on Donald Trump's agenda and the manner in which these were framed and addressed enabled Trump to win the 2016 election.

### 3.2 The Democratic conundrum: Trapped in PC rhetoric

A key aspect of Donald Trump's victory was the inability of the Democratic Party to react and oppose him successfully. Many commentators blame the Democratic debacle on the choice of the wrong candidate. The Democratic National Convention should not have chosen Hilary Clinton and should have chosen Bernie Sanders. These opinions all hold an amount of validity and can be debated. However, a control sample does not exist in this thought experiment, and therefore proving such a thing is impossible. In hindsight, it's easy to say that Bernie Sanders wouldn't have done worse than Hilary, because she lost.

The worst that he could have done was lose too. However, there is one aspect of the Democratic Party that is central to their loss and that has been addressed a number of times in this thesis. This is the fact that the Democratic Party found itself in a politico-philosophical moral conundrum. This was so because of two main beliefs of progressive liberals and therefore the Democratic Party. One aspect of this conundrum was the postmodern belief that all interpretations of reality have the same value, and that therefore they must all be considered and used as equals. The second aspect directly stems from the practical application of this belief through political correctness. Two things happened here too. The first thing that happened was the replacement of objectivity with subjectivity, because objectivity did not exist, it was the rhetorical and scientific reflection of oppressive structures of power and control. The second thing that resulted from the practical application of the postmodern principals was the celebration of minorities that in turn did not believe in liberal values. These two realities taken together, on one hand, did not allow for the progressive Democratic Party to truly uphold those subjective understandings of reality by some minorities without also upholding values that were not liberal. On the other hand, did not allow the Democratic Party to truly attack someone for having his or her own interpretation of reality. In turn, this meant that the Democratic Party could not uphold issues to the status of absolute truth without exposing itself to politico-philosophical attacks blaming them of replicating those same oppressive structures of power that their ideology was concentrated on fighting against. What this also meant, that attacking Donald Trump for what he believed, for his interpretation of a given issue or complex problem, was rhetorically impossible. How can an individual, a political party, or even a political philosophy, pick and choose who is entitled to his or her own interpretation of reality? He, she, or it cannot. Therefore, by claiming that what he,

Donald Trump, was saying was his subjective understanding of a given issue made any interpretation of reality almost immune to piercing political criticism by the Democratic Party. The Democratic conundrum was therefore a political philosophical vortex in which the Democratic party found itself and that, through reason, made any attack against Trump's interpretation of reality an automatic attack on their own political philosophy.

### 3.3 Trump's anti-PC victory

The politically correct social and political climate allowed Trump to win the 2016 election. Combined with a range of reasons that influenced a complex election such as the 2016 one, the politically correct reality permitted Trump's rhetoric and agenda focus to stand out. This was because the rhetoric concerning the issues, the consequent framing of the issues, and the issues in themselves were different from what other politicians or political parties were offering. The vast appeal that Trump had highlights a deep-rooted sentiment amongst the American electorate that the censorship stemming from political correctness had exasperated social and political life. The impossibility of having a conversation, debate, and, importantly, making a mistake when addressing contentious or totemic issues is at the heart of Trump's appeal. Donald Trump therefore won the 2016 election because the public was saturated with politically correct progressive talk and the public policy that this ideology led politicians to focus on. Trump gave the electorate a very different, at times rude and at times sloppy option that, fundamentally, contrasted the hypocrisy and mistaken or exaggerated focus that the progressive politicians and political affiliates believed in.

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### *Primary Debate Transcripts*

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<https://time.com/4224275/republican-debate-transcript-south-carolina-ninth/>

10<sup>th</sup> debate

<https://time.com/4238363/republican-debate-tenth-houston-cnn-telemundo-transcript-full-text/>

11<sup>th</sup> debate

<https://time.com/4247496/republican-debate-transcript-eleventh-detroit-fox-news/>

12<sup>th</sup> debate

<https://time.com/4255181/republican-debate-transcript-twelfth-cnn-miami/>

### *Presidential Debate Transcripts*

1<sup>st</sup> debate

<http://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/tran/transcript-of-the-first-presidential-debate.pdf>

2<sup>nd</sup> debate

<http://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/tran/transcript-of-the-second-presidential-debate.pdf>

3<sup>rd</sup> debate

<https://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/full-transcript-third-2016-presidential-debate-230063>

## Executive Summary

### *Introduction*

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States (POTUS). This was and continues to be seen as one of – if not *the* most - shocking electoral result in American electoral history (Goldmacher et al, 2016). This thesis argues that Donald Trump's success was made possible because political and social life in the USA was saturated with political correctness (PC) and the censorship that PC imposed on American society. The manner in which he spoke about the issues he placed on his agenda, and the issues he chose in and of themselves are the keys to understand how Donald Trump's campaign pierced through the veiled censorship of PC and therefore built the vast appeal that eventually led him to become POTUS.

The thesis is structured in three parts. Firstly, the introduction covers a brief overview of Trump's 2016 victory and presents some public policy theory to understand it. It then discusses what political correctness is, where it comes from and review some literature that focuses on reasons outside PC that might explain why Trump won. Secondly, it covers the different issues that Trump focused on and (crucially) omitted, to understand why a given issue was so important. In parallel to this it explains why certain issues were not as important as the press expected, and what the implications of this oversight were. The final section focuses on reviewing and weighing which issues held more importance to help Trump win the election and how the context of political correctness sealed his success.

### *Agenda setting and Framing*

Agenda setting is the process by which new social problems are defined and accepted as such. The political brilliance in this process is to understand what social problems actually exist, what

the perspective of those experiencing these problems is, and how feasible solutions to these problems are.

The 'Theory of Frames' stems from cognitive psychology and the work of Erving Goffman (Johansson, 2007). This theory focused on the role of the media in giving importance to certain events over others and giving these events a 'frame of meaning' (Lorino, 2017). This process is critical for successful political campaigns. It is in the right selection and framing of issues that a campaign achieves its goals.

### *Post-modernism and Political Correctness*

Post-modernism centered its belief on the idea that there are an infinite amount of interpretations to a given phenomenon (Toulmin, 1982). This shift resulted in the return of a subjective interpretation of reality in opposition to modernism's objectivity. This emphasis on subjectivity is the starting point from which postmodern thinkers analyze and interpret the world. Postmodern thought, therefore, claims that any given fact can mean different things or be interpreted by different people in different ways. Today, this idea is widely accepted. However, while preaching the idea that all interpretations of a given reality have the same value, the postmodernists attribute more value to some interpretations and less to others. The interpretations that are given less value are the ones that are understood to originate from the positions of power in the existing or previous hierarchical structures. The exasperation of this phenomenon leads the white middle class to be excluded from conversations a priori. Their being white (especially male) is a demonstration that they come from a past of oppression and that this disallows them from having a say. Political correctness has therefore been corrupted. If originally that term was used to identify language that had been modified to seemingly not exclude anyone from it (see Chairman into Chairperson) in an effort to include and respect. Today and in recent

decades it has meant the creation of a space where only those who were or have been seemingly oppressed know the truth. In practical terms, this has meant: the in-validation of the opinions of huge amounts of white middle class voters, the strengthening of social groups based on racial or sexual identity, and the furthering apart of these same groups.

The political philosophy of post-modernism has created a political correct space where people can be arbitrarily shut down. Not allowing for confrontation and imposing ones truth on others is what we saw happen with Trump's election, eventually alienating people and leading them to look for a non establishment and non PC leader.

#### *The Election of Donald J Trump: Literature Review and Thesis*

This thesis supports the claim that it was the issues Donald Trump focused on and the anti-political correct manner in which he spoke about these that led him to victory. However, there are numerous differing explanations for why Trump won. Literature concerning Trump's victory often highlights the prolonged series of events that led to Trump winning. Many authors had predicted pre-election that a 'Trump-like figure' (not necessarily Trump himself) was needed to win the presidency. This thesis also points to a combination of long-term phenomena (the rooting of politically correct) and short-term strategies (Trump's 2015 campaign agenda) as having impacted the outcome. Long term cultural, institutional, and social changes must be taken into consideration when analyzing Trumps victory. For example, one of the principal explanations for Trump's victory is the decade-long failure by the liberals in the Democratic Party to be a voice for middle-class concerns. The over-emphasis on working professionals, the loss of core middle-class democratic values, and the divestment in liberal institutions lead to the collapse of the Democratic Party and everything it stood for. Other explanations for why Trump won focus on the campaign itself and the series of events that unfolded between the nomination and the

election. Russian intervention (Filipov, 2016), the numerous changes in Trump's campaign staff (Warren, 2016), Hilary's email scandal and Sanders being cheated out of the nomination (Ball, 2016), the Clinton victim stunt and more generally the ferocious campaign (Pollak, 2017), the number of events each candidate participated in (Terrel, 2017) and many more can all be seen as having played a role in the rollercoaster of events that eventually enabled Trump's victory.

### *The issues*

The issues that are analyzed in this section have all played a part in allowing Donald Trump to become POTUS. These are: America Winning Again, Foreign policy, Immigration, the Media, Climate Change, Racial and Ethnic minorities, and Gender politics and reproductive rights. The issues are analyzed in three sub-sections: Introduction of the issue, Importance of the issues in primary and Presidential debates, and Issue in context.

### *America Winning Again*

"Make America Great Again" (MAGA) was not a simple slogan, but the foundational ground laid down to frame all other issues. At the center of Donald Trump's agenda was the idea that "America is losing", and that "We (America) have to start winning again" (Trump, 2015: 1). This apparently vague guiding principle encompassed three of the most fundamental issues that Donald Trump focused on: jobs, the economy, and political correctness. He constantly referred to these issues throughout his campaign. Crucially, his framing of these issues carried a heavy ideologically anti-liberal and anti-globalization sentiment with them. From this perspective, political correctness was heralded as the reason people were censored when talking about phenomena such as liberalism or globalization. The rhetorical censorship stemming from PC and

public shaming of those who held anti-liberal or anti-globalization sentiment were blamed for making America such a “loser” on the current world stage (Mansfield, 1991).

### *Foreign Policy*

Foreign policy is a vast and complex issue. It directly feeds into the main MAGA narrative and the need, according to Donald Trump, to reestablish the US’s dominant role in political, economic, and military global affairs. The rhetorical focus on Foreign policy covered issues ranging from the infamous ‘Iran deal’, to US-China, US-Russia relations, trade agreements, and terrorism. All of these were addressed in Donald Trump’s campaign and are exemplary to explain how Donald Trump’s rhetoric differed from his predecessors and opponents. Donald Trump held and spoke about foreign relations issues in a unique manner, his point of view covered issues such as replacing the US at the center of International relations and greatly limiting the supra-governmental control exerted by International agencies and International agreements on the US. His direct attacks on China, his ‘love’ for Russia, his complete disgust for the Iran deal, and his take on Terrorism were, if not unconventional, profoundly different from what we had been used to seeing and hearing.

### *Immigration*

Immigration and its impact has been one of, if not *the* main, field of focus in economics, socio-cultural, and political study in recent years. In the US and beyond, immigration has been hailed as increasing gross domestic product (GDP), enhancing multiculturalism, and representing humanitarianism and solidarity throughout the world. All these things that immigration is said to do, it does. However, the effects need to be analyzed objectively rather than aspirationally, to go beyond its role representing what is ‘good in the world’. Immigration often fosters economic



growth by increasing labor supply and decreasing its competitive nature, and as a result, its cost. The people hit the hardest by immigration are usually the poor, who are pitted against immigrants of a similar socio economic status against whom they must compete. Political correct censorship led to the inability of having the above-mentioned conversations, and Trump pierced through this inability.

### *The Media*

In his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump frequently attacked what he referred to as the 'mainstream media'. Trump attacked the media for not performing, from his perspective, an un-biased role in covering news issues and the campaign itself. It would be naïve to say that media is unbiased. Undeniably, whoever covers the news will carry their own ideas, opinions, and views; they will decide how to cover events, from what perspective to tell the story and what leading narrative to support. Thus, one can understand the impossibility of completely un-biased reporting, but still expect honest and open discussion. The last point concerning 'open discussion' is what is central to Donald Trump's campaign and what feeds directly into the narrow mindedness of eschewed political correctness.

### *Climate Change*

Climate Change is the apotheosis of the combination of the corrupt political correctness of our time and the idea that objectivity does not exist. This combination disentangled and destroyed the Democratic Party morally and eventually politically. Even though Climate Change used to be a bipartisan issue until the 1990s (Worland, 2017) with the introduction of the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955 and the subsequent Clean Air Act of 1963 and all its amendments', Climate Change today is a Democratic Party issue. Donald Trump entered this politically correct

postmodern arena and said what he thought. Ironically, his subjective understanding had as much value as someone else's subjective understanding, because that was and still is what the politically correct postmodern ideology teaches. He could do so while Climate Change is one of the most important global concerns in our modern era (Hasham, 2020).

### *Racial and Ethnic minorities*

The debate around racial and ethnic minorities is central to the progressive way of life and that is celebrated as a victory for human progress. Multiculturalism, for example, is an idea that should not have any connotation. It is a reality that different people live in different ways and that should be understood, most times, contextually. The blind belief in openness, at least rhetorically, by the Democratic Party is what allowed for the anti-PC wave pushed by Donald Trump. As for many other themes, the impossibility of having a conversation regarding certain aspects of life, in this case race, ethnicity, and the impacts of multiculturalism, is what fuelled the backlash. The politically correct push seen through, for example, the imposition to hire from a diverse pool of potential employees to reach certain quotas in most cases solely to portray a façade of justice, had exasperated people.

### *Gender politics and Reproductive rights*

The 2016 presidential race was a battle of the sexes (Bartash, 2016). For the first time in US history, a woman won the nomination of her party and was set to win the presidency. For a number of pollsters, the fact that Ms Clinton was a woman was enough to make her win. The possibility of voting for a woman would have drawn half of the electorate (the female electorate) to the pollsters in favor of the Democratic candidate. A similar idea was brought forth eight years prior with President Obama, and that prediction resulted to be, for the most part, true. What

people would have later realized was that Obama won because he had appeal, charisma, a set of solid ideas that people could buy into, not because he was Black. Donald Trump could not ignore the importance of the issue, but his focus was to debunk the fake myths that voting for a woman would automatically favor or uphold the rights of other women and that the US electorate believed this issue necessitated center stage in political life.

### *Conclusion*

#### *Weighing the issues: Setting a successful Agenda through the right Frames*

Donald Trump won the 2016 elections because he chose the right issues for his campaign and framed them in a manner that appealed to voters. The seven issues analyzed in this thesis all were essential pieces of the puzzle that allowed Donald Trump to be successful in 2016. The seven issues, however, can be understood as belonging to distinct categories. These categories then had a different functional role when compared to each other.

The issues comprised in the slogan “Make America Great Again”, mainly the economy, jobs, and political correctness can be categorized with the issues comprised in “Foreign Policy”, mainly China, Russia, Terrorism, Iran, and the US’s role on the global stage. These issues can be bundled together because they represent the base from which Donald Trump commenced his campaign. They are issues that any politician in any country would have to address (with the exception of political correctness that also had another role, which will be later discussed) if he or she is hoping to win an election. The economy, jobs, and foreign policy are therefore the starting point and the bedrock from which Donald Trump’s campaign commenced. They are important because they are issues that touch upon every American and therefore have the potential to attract any type of voter.

The issues of political correctness and the media, apart from being fundamental issues in Trump's campaign that enabled the process of highlighting a lot of things that were wrong with the so called 'establishment', they were also functional issues; tools, in other words. By making the media an issue Trump was able to cherry pick what he believed, and wanted, to be understood as the truth. Because the media was attacked for being corrupt and self interested, any media report could be discarded simply based on this claim. Donald Trump, and his electorate, therefore had the power of disregarding any fact or news story that was not in line with their ideology or with what went in their favor at the time. Political correctness was very important as an issue in itself because it highlighted a lot of hypocrisy and mistaken focus in the political process and by political actors. However, political correctness was especially important as a tool. The fact that political correctness was an issue made it possible for any complaint in relation or response to what Trump said to be discarded because labeled as politically correct. Any critique made against Trump's rhetoric or Trump's actions could be simply disregarded if it was deemed to stem from an arena of political correctness. As said in the introduction, political correctness started from a righteous and morally just understanding of society. The will to respect and understand those with less privilege is certainly a value to encourage and uphold. However, the exasperation of political correctness allowed for the complete denial that there was anything good stemming from it. In turn, Donald Trump and his electorate could, again, disregard a comment, opinion, or fact, if seen to originate from a political correct point of view.

The issues of immigration (although immigration also has a role to play as a Base issue and therefore could be categorized with MAGA and Foreign Policy, its more important role lies with these issues and in this category), Climate Change, Race relations, and Women's rights can be understood as being Trump's 'brake-through' issues. These were issues that no one else spoke of in the terms Donald Trump did. These issues brought to light a part of the US's electorate

sentiment that no one knew was still so strong. The people whom had been forgotten by the establishment had built up years and years of resentment against established politicians and their diplomatic talk that led to nowhere except to people being poorer and poorer from the 1970s onwards. Addressing these issues in such a manner and in some case simply speaking about these issues in an open and unapologetic manner enabled Donald Trump to vastly appeal to these forgotten citizens of the United States. These issues are also the ones in which political correctness and a postmodern perception of reality was most present. They are therefore the issues that mostly symbolize the breakthrough that Donald Trump led. The sharp division between political life and rhetoric pre Donald Trump versus post Donald Trump is exemplified mainly in these four issues.

The seven issues analyzed in this thesis were therefore all key to attract American voters and eventually enabled Donald Trump's victory. They all had different roles to play in that they were all different and distinct pieces. However, they were all pieces of the same puzzle and once it came together, they painted a powerful picture, or electoral campaign. The issues placed on Donald Trump's agenda and the manner in which these were framed and addressed enabled Trump to win the 2016 election.

#### *The Democratic conundrum: Trapped in PC rhetoric*

A key aspect of Donald Trump's victory was the inability of the Democratic Party to react and oppose him successfully. Many commentators blame the Democratic debacle on the choice of the wrong candidate. The Democratic National Convention should not have chosen Hilary Clinton and should have chosen Bernie Sanders. These opinions all hold an amount of validity and can be debated. However, a control sample does not exist in this thought experiment, and therefore proving such a thing is impossible. In hindsight, it's easy to say that Bernie Sanders wouldn't have

done worse than Hilary, because she lost. The worst that he could have done was lose too. However, there is one aspect of the Democratic Party that is central to their loss and that has been addressed a number of times in this thesis. This is the fact that the Democratic Party found itself in a politico-philosophical moral conundrum. This was so because of two main beliefs of progressive liberals and therefore the Democratic Party. One aspect of this conundrum was the postmodern belief that all interpretations of reality have the same value, and that therefore they must all be considered and used as equals. The second aspect directly stems from the practical application of this belief through political correctness. Two things happened here too. The first thing that happened was the replacement of objectivity with subjectivity, because objectivity did not exist, it was the rhetorical and scientific reflection of oppressive structures of power and control. The second thing that resulted from the practical application of the postmodern principals was the celebration of minorities that in turn did not believe in liberal values. These two realities taken together, on one hand, did not allow for the progressive Democratic Party to truly uphold those subjective understandings of reality by some minorities without also upholding values that were not liberal. On the other hand, did not allow the Democratic Party to truly attack someone for having his or her own interpretation of reality. In turn, this meant that the Democratic Party could not uphold issues to the status of absolute truth without exposing itself to politico-philosophical attacks. These could blame them of replicating those same oppressive structures of power that their ideology was concentrated on fighting against. What this also meant was that attacking Donald Trump for what he believed, for his interpretation of a given issue or complex problem, was rhetorically impossible. How can an individual, a political party, or even a political philosophy, pick and choose who is entitled to his or her own interpretation of reality? He, she, or it cannot. Therefore, by claiming that what he, Donald Trump, was saying was his subjective understanding of a given issue made any interpretation of

reality almost immune to piercing political criticism by the Democratic Party. The Democratic conundrum was therefore a political philosophical vortex in which the Democratic party found itself and that, through reason, made any attack against Trump's interpretation of reality an automatic attack on their own political philosophy.

### *Trump's anti-PC victory*

The politically correct social and political climate allowed Trump to win the 2016 election. Combined with a range of reasons that influenced a complex election such as the 2016 one, the politically correct reality permitted Trump's rhetoric and agenda focus to stand out. This was because the rhetoric concerning the issues, the consequent framing of the issues, and the issues in themselves were different from what other politicians or political parties were offering. The vast appeal that Trump had highlights a deep-rooted sentiment amongst the American electorate that the censorship stemming from political correctness had exasperated social and political life. The impossibility of having a conversation, debate, and, importantly, making a mistake when addressing contentious or totemic issues is at the heart of Trump's appeal. Donald Trump therefore won the 2016 election because the public was saturated with politically correct progressive talk and the public policy that this ideology led politicians to focus on. Trump gave the electorate a very different, at times rude and at times sloppy option that, fundamentally, contrasted the hypocrisy and mistaken or exaggerated focus that the progressive politicians and political affiliates believed in.