

## **Xenophobia and Shift in Immigration Policy Under Trump Administration**

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**Abstract:** Trump's stance towards immigration issue was just rhetoric during the 2016 presidential election campaign but when he took over white house this rhetoric soon turned into realities. The Trump administration's emphasis on anti-immigration policy, where immigrants are being marginalized all over the states, has sparked a backlash among the people for the inhuman actions. The objective of this paper is to examine the rise of xenophobic sentiment in the U.S. in the 21st century, shift in immigration policy, and controversial actions under the Trump Administration. The concept of xenophobia -migration nexus aids a fuller understanding of how migration policy and contemporary racialization are co-constructed. This paper also analyzes the effects of xenophobic phenomena in the US policy sector and economy.

**Key Word:** Immigration, Policy, Xenophobia, Trump Administration, Rhetoric

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The election of Donald Trump released endeavors to vilify outsiders, taking after the stature of xenophobia in the twentieth century. Fear and irrational dislike of people from other countries have a long tradition in America. In the election campaign of President Trump emphasized on taking extraordinary actions to curb immigration and to set stricter standards for immigration. This agenda led him to build the controversial wall on the USA-Mexico border, the Muslim Ban and the deportation of undocumented immigrants. Throughout U.S. history, rather than characterizing refugees and refugee issues in humanitarian terms, white supremacists have used narratives representing refugees as invading parasites. The Trump administration continues to make changes both small and drastic to U.S. immigration policies. Trump has taken on a white nationalist agenda where he is keeping more people out of the land and deporting people who are already in the states. By doing these he has placed an idea of nativism in the minds of the people of the USA which resulted in an unwanted fear from the outside people. Aggressive stance against immigration is not a new phenomenon in the USA. Apparently past presidents of the country have taken some drastic measures to portray the immigrants as a threat to society and Trump is surely not the first one in history.

### **II. XENOPHOBIA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Xenophobia refers to a kind of metaphysical construct of fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers. Here foreigner or stranger means the people who are outside one's native culture or the environment. This fear or hatred results in discriminatory attitudes or behavior and even causes violence, abuses of all types and exhibitions of hatred (Ojedokun 2015, 168). Xenophobia is founded on an attitude of hate or dislike for things, ideas, or phenomena that is quite new to someone. The term is derived from the Greek word Xenos, meaning "stranger" and Phobos, meaning "fear", combined to mean the fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be foreigner or stranger.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the blessings of globalization, everybody is connected and treated equally as a human being, but it is hurtful that phenomenon like Xenophobia and Racism still exist. Going back in American history, nativists and white supremacists have were obsessed with screening out and deporting foreigners from the land perceived as "undesirables." Since 1954, deportation operation, 'operation wetback' has been conducted to deport the Mexicans (Johnson 2005, 10). Then, as now, heightened border security and immigration control coincided with violent anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant sentiment. The political slogan for operation wetback is repeated today, "save jobs for true Americans." Apart from this, the migration timeline from the very beginning includes different violent acts and hate crimes toward Chinese, Japanese, Latinas, Germans as well as Muslims (Head 2018). The ignorance towards these historical repatriation and deportation campaigns is interconnected with the invisibility of civil rights deprivation of immigrants throughout U.S. history (Johnson 2005, 2-3).

An irrational fear, hatred, and hostility toward immigrants have been a defining feature of Americans from the colonial era to the Trump era (Baird 2017). When Donald Trump came to power, his rhetoric consisting of diminishing immigrants from America accelerated the height of xenophobia in the twentieth century. Trump's hatred towards immigrants, especially Mexicans is wrapped around his resentment towards immigration (Pomfret 2018). Trump is just the latest incarnation. Surprisingly, the timing of this wave of xenophobia has heightened tension for immigrants residing in the USA. The rise of xenophobia in today's world strikes hard on the American society that has been slowly forging a more diverse, tolerant, multicultural, and globalized nation (Cohn and Caumont 2016). Xenophobia is as American as the cherry pie, where Trump has dehumanized and condemned the refugees for his nonsensical ideology (Baird 2017). He considers evacuees to be potential fear-based oppressors not as individuals attempting to escape in urgent circumstances. By using rhetoric Trumps has misled the American into having faith in misinterpreted generalization and numbers of immigrants coming to the US which brought widespread controversy for controversial policies of Trump (Martinez Gugerli 2018). Trump has been successful in incorporating the anti-immigration stance into nearly every aspect of the administration.

### **III. XENOPHOBIA UNDER TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**

President Trump has been far more conventional than many dared hopes, he just discarded democracy and human rights as pillars of American foreign policy. On one hand, Trump has increased efforts to complete the wall on the US-Mexico border and on the other hand, the deportation of undocumented immigration has increased (Wang 2016). The first blow on the immigrants was the increased number of raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (Bialik 2018). Trump becoming the president of the USA has increased the number and frequency of hate crimes. In a report submitted by FBI it has been shown that the number of victims in anti-Latino or Hispanic crimes rose over 21% in 2018 where attacks were specifically targeted on people rather than property (Brooks 2019). Donald Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric has signified migration as an issue of national security. In California alone, since 2016 the hate crime against Latinos increased by 50% (Hinojosa 2018).

Another study, by the Anti-Defamation League, shows that counties which hosted a campaign rally for Trump in 2016, saw hate crime rates have doubled compared to similar counties that did not host a rally (Branton, Martinez-Ebers, and Feinberg 2019). After winning the election, supporters of Trump sent handwritten letters to threaten 10 mosques across the country saying "To the children of Satan, you Muslims are vile and filthy people... There's a new sheriff in town—President Donald Trump" (Baldwin 2016). The US Supreme Court upheld an executive order issued by Trump banning travel to the US from several predominantly Muslim countries, which Human Rights Watch and those challenging the ban said was discriminatory (Liptak and Shear 2018). In the presidential campaign Trump focused on exclusion by referring Mexicans as rapists and indicated Muslims by saying "Islam hates us" (Goldstein n.d. 546-554). Right after taking power as President, Trump authorized the first of the three Muslim bans. But these bans were blocked by the courts again and again. Then Trump tried to institutionalize Islamophobia. By ending DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program) around 800,000 people who were brought to the USA as children are now threatened to return to their countries which they are unfamiliar with (Krueger 2019). In amended regulations issued by the Justice Department, mandated that DNA samples will be collected from almost all immigrants and the data will be added to the FBI database which is used to hunt criminals (Trotta 2019). The mission tone of USCIS website which used to be 'America as a nation of immigrant' is now focusing on the 'protection of Americans', 'Securing the homeland', 'accommodating requests for immigrant benefits' (Zilberman 2020, 2-3).

### **IV. MAJOR SHIFTS IN IMMIGRATION POLICY**

Since entering office, the Trump administration has brought out some major changes to federal immigration policy. Trump has always focused on the immigration issue in the election campaign. In his presidential speech to address immigration issues Trump referred to the USA as a dumping ground for everyone else's problems. Trump stated that, he would build a wall at the U.S.- Mexico outskirts, restrict all Muslims from entering the nation, totally take out the resettlement of Syrian displaced people, and extradite a great many undocumented workers who have lived in the inside of the United States for a considerable length of time, if chosen for President.

President Trump has used hatred over immigrants as a potent political weapon. The U.S. immigration policy has undergone a sea change, touching on everything from asylum to deportation policy, increasing arrests, the refugee resettlement program, and banned nationals of many countries from entering the USA. In the first year of taking office, Trump have signed around seven executive orders related to immigration. Individuals who have been allowed under prior administration to stay are being removed and immigration courts are picking up in pace to reduce the backlog of pending cases (Pierce 2019, 21). To accelerate deportations, the Justice Department has set up a case amount necessary for movement judges, disintegrating the fair treatment privileges

of outsiders by compelling adjudicators to hurry through cases. The Trump administration has limited refugee admissions and ended a refugee parole program for the youth in Central America created by Obama (Pierce 2019, 17).

The promise to build a border wall in Trumps' election campaign is one of the most striking proposal of the US president. During 2017, the Dept of Homeland Security (DHS) hosted a bidding process for the model of the border wall. Trump directed DHS to hire 10,000 additional ICE officers and 5,000 border patrol agents. Trump's promise of creating a deportation task force has not been successful but at the end of FY 2017, the administration has removed 61,904 immigrants from its ground. No sanctuary for criminals was the main agenda of the Trump administration and many sanctuary cities have been uprooted by the administration. The termination of DACA introduced by the Obama administration, under which around 690,000 immigrants who were brought to USA as a child was protected (Orozco 2018, 320).

DAPA granted status to some undocumented immigrants who have lived in the U.S. since 2010 and have children who are either American citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States was also uplifted (Pierce 2019, 31-32). The temporary protection status has been uplifted and encouraged countries to comply with vetting. The administration has focused on expanding the 287(g) program under which law enforcement officers will be placed upon to assist in the investigation of unauthorized immigrants (Pierce 2019, 6). The administration has imposed restrictions on nationals from seven countries for 90 days and suspended all refugee admissions for 120 days while a review of the screening process was carried out. From time to time, the Trump administration has tried to set stricter standards for immigration policy and even imposed a travel ban on many countries by Presidential Proclamation. But these administrative changes about travel bans faced restrictions from courts. Trump tried to impose travel ban three times but faced obstacles from courts initially. On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017, Trump issued Executive Order 13769 which suspended the entries of nearly all nationals of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen effective immediately (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018, 14). This order was imposed on the Muslim majority countries to ensure that foreign terrorists can't enter the United States. But this executive order was blocked in the federal courts. During the Syrian refugee crisis, this executive order banned Syrian Refugees from entering the USA.

Trump signed a revised executive order on March 6, 2017, where he removed Iraq from the banned countries and the rules were somewhat reluctant to those who got previous access to the USA (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018, 15). This revised order also was struck down by the court. For the third time, the Trump administration on September 24, 2017, issued visa restriction on individuals from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. But here also the court suspended all the bans for all the listed countries except North Korea and Venezuela (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018, 15). President Trump by taking back to back three attempts proved that he is adamant about the Muslim ban in the USA. Though Trump faced court challenges each time to execute the order, the Supreme court upheld the latest of the three orders and ruled that it did not violate any federal law or the US constitution (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018, 15). The travel ban tried to safeguard the nation from terrorists but primarily targeted Muslim-majority countries. Immigration courts are overwhelmed and moreover there are also long delays for the issuance of Green Cards (Krueger 2019).

The delays are not the only factor, from October 2019 the Department of Homeland Security will be able to deny green cards to immigrants who use basic public benefits, like Snap (food stamps) and Medicaid and who were dependent on the government at any point in their lives. Criminal prosecution and family separation law will be imposed upon those who crossed the southern border illegally. Due to this decision around 2,342 children were separated from their families (Domonoske and Gonzales 2019). This policy is utterly inhumane both for the immediate pain that it inflicts on the families and for the long-term harm, it will cause the children. DHS began separating families to take away parents for their referred prosecution. The Trump administration has ended TPS for several countries in September 2017 which provided relief to the foreign nationals already residing in the USA, if they were unable to safely return to their home countries because of conflict, disaster, or other extraordinary circumstances.

Over the years, the administration's focus on much stricter immigration policies and executive orders lead to the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment which has made life substantially more difficult for all immigrants. The Trump administration has slacked the number of immigrants that could be conceded into the U.S. from 110,000 to 50,000, the administration means to resettle just 18,000 in 2020 (Ibe 2019). The administration is keen to end work approval for life partners of H-1B visa holders. This will probably dissuade individuals from going to the United States to work lawfully and will hurt the ventures that utilize the H-1B visa program (Ibe 2019).

## **V. THE COST OF XENOPHOBIA**

The policy granted by Trump comes with destructive short-term costs suffered by the immigrant families and real damage to American interests. In exchange for feeding xenophobic zealots with a policy that

quenches their hatred for anything immigrant and anybody "foreign," the imminent Trump policy will bludgeon American economic and industrial interests by scaring promising foreign workers away (Beydoun 2018). Restricting the spouses of foreign workers from holding employment is a direct policy extension of the "Buy American and Hire American" executive order (Beydoun 2018).

Immigrants are a big part of the U.S. workforce. The number of Mexican workers has declined over the years in the USA, where unauthorized immigrants made up 5.4% of the labor force in 2007 and have fallen to 4.6% in 2017 (Passel and Cohn 2019). Another Pew study found that without immigrants, the U.S. workforce would decline from 173.2 million in 2015 to 165.6 million in 2035; the workforce is expected to grow to 183.2 million if immigration levels remain steady, according to the report (Passel and Cohn 2017). Apart from all of these, Trump's resentment towards immigrants has bolstered his image in the media. The change in immigration policies has built a multibillion-dollar industry where many private companies are getting benefited. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has made deals with many private contractors who have contributed actively to Trump's Campaign (Luan 2018). The private security corporations have the utmost opportunity to expand business under the Trump administration. Companies like CoreCivic Inc. and GEO Group Inc. provided private prisons to ICE on contractual basis and they earned combined revenue exceeding USD 4bn in FY 2017 (Luan 2018).

The majority of US citizens think the administration is being too careless in handling the immigration issue. A Fox News poll found that, by a 2:1 margin (50-24%), Americans think Trump's enforcement of immigration laws has "gone too far" instead of "not far enough" (Blanton 2019). President Donald Trump in his election campaign repeatedly focused on immigration issues and to build a wall between the USA and Mexico. After taking power, Trump promised to build a wall on a 1,954-mile US-Mexico border (Amadeo 2017). At first Trump wanted Mexico to pay for the wall but for obvious reasons Mexico did not agree. So, now to build this ridiculously massive wall Trump will use the money of US-taxpayers. Till now the total cost is yet to be figured out but it is estimated to be between USD 15bn and USD 25bn (Amadeo 2017). There was already 654 miles of barrier placed on the border and Trump aims to develop these existing walls along with the new ones. In 2019, Trump wanted USD 5.7bn in addition to USD 7bn already allocated by the congress for homeland security (Rodgers and Bailey 2019). This project has turned out to be a white elephant for the USA. Trump also got approval of the US Supreme Court to use USD 2.5bn in military funding for the construction of the wall (Wagtendonk 2019). In addition to that, the Trump administration plans to divert another 6.5bn USD from federal agencies, including the US Treasury and Department of Defense for the purpose of wall construction (Wagtendonk 2019).

## VI. CONCLUSION

Immigration has been a major issue of the U.S. political debate for decades, where policymakers have stressed out economic, security, and humanitarian aspects. The president's rigorous approach and actions on immigration issue indicates a fundamental shift in the policy sector and the American society. With Trump coming to power, the anti-immigrant ideology has gained mainstream acceptance over the states and become a prominent issue in the media. Trump has been able to influence the native American's by embracing his 'America First' policy which is drenched in xenophobia. Trump's consistent stance about building an ineffective and expensive wall will cost the U.S taxpayers a lot of money. His controversial stance upon the immigration issue has appeared to violate the human rights of immigrants and caused unnecessary chaos at the southern border. The increasing arrests, detention and court room trials of migrants will not solve the migration influx in the USA. Trump has used his platform to sway the white supremacists in reviving the xenophobic sentiment in the society and even attacking the migrants and their families. The lack of awareness about the rights of the immigrants creates an environment where xenophobic actions are the straight up violation of human rights. In the 21st century, without any coordinated co-opt from national to international level the magnitude of this problem will remain unnoticed and undermine the rights of migrants.

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