

Useful Free Booklets Series

Donald Trump's War on Truth

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This booklet has been created to encourage open discussion, thoughtful study and careful critical enquiry. It is intended as a resource that invites readers to question, reflect and explore ideas deeply, rather than accept them without consideration. Permission is given to reproduce the content of this booklet for any purpose.

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Why this matters

Political lies are not a novelty. They are as old as politics itself, and most people have learned to expect a certain level of exaggeration from anyone seeking power. What is different with Donald Trump is not simply the frequency of false statements, but how they have been elevated from a flaw into a feature. Lies are not incidental. They are not mistakes made in haste or slips of the tongue. They are central to the performance, repeated even after public exposure, and wielded as proof of strength rather than a reason for shame. This transformation of dishonesty from a weakness to a weapon is the reason for this record. If the standard of truth is abandoned by someone in high office, and the public shrugs or cheers, the damage is not confined to one man's reputation. It spreads into the very foundations of civic life.

The purpose of this booklet is not to analyse Trump's psychology, his upbringing, or his inner motives. Such speculation is entertaining for talk shows, but irrelevant to the practical matter at hand: the content and consequences of his words. Every statement will be approached in the same way. First, what was claimed. Then, what the evidence shows. Finally, what happened as a result. This is not a partisan exercise. It is not an attempt to contrast him with political opponents. It is a factual accounting, designed so that any fair-minded reader, whether they like Trump or loathe him, can verify the record for themselves.

Some will protest that every politician lies. This is true, and no honest writer would deny it. However, the defence collapses when one examines the sheer scale and frequency here. It is the difference between a pickpocket and an organised burglary crew. Ordinary political spin seeks to put a gloss on awkward facts or nudge perception in a preferred direction. Trump's approach is to bulldoze facts entirely and replace them with a story that serves his personal image in the moment. The story may contradict what he said yesterday. It may contradict what he will say tomorrow. The point is not to create a coherent narrative over time, but to dominate the present moment and leave his supporters with the feeling that he is winning.

This tactic has a corrosive effect on public discourse. Truth becomes negotiable. Disagreement is no longer about competing interpretations of facts, but about the very existence of facts. Supporters, having defended one falsehood, feel compelled to defend the next, until the defence of the man outweighs any regard for accuracy.

Opponents, faced with an endless supply of misleading claims, spend their time debunking instead of proposing ideas. The public is left in a permanent state of noise and fatigue.

This is not merely about damaged reputations or hurt feelings. Lies have measurable costs. False claims about public health can lead to illness and death. False claims about elections can undermine faith in democratic institutions and even incite violence. False claims about the economy can distort markets, waste resources, and encourage policy that harms those it claims to help. Lies can start wars. They can bankrupt companies. They can destroy lives. To dismiss them as “just words” is to ignore history and common sense.

The decision to document these falsehoods systematically is a choice to confront this culture of indifference. The method will be simple: direct quotes, dated and sourced, placed alongside verifiable facts from reputable, independent bodies. Readers will be shown not only what is untrue, but how to check it themselves. The aim is to restore some personal responsibility to the act of listening. You do not need to rely on pundits or fact-checking sites if you know how to use basic tools and common sense.

There is also a secondary aim. By seeing the patterns, how certain words recur, how certain exaggerations are recycled, and how entire narratives are built from thin air, readers will become better at recognising the same tactics elsewhere. Trump is the subject of this record, but the methods he uses are not unique to him. They can be adopted by any politician, any influencer, any public figure who discovers that truth is optional so long as the audience is loyal. Forewarned is forearmed.

The task ahead is not to moralise but to measure. A claim is either supported by evidence or it is not. If it is not, we will see what happens when the falsehood is repeated, defended, and expanded. By the end, the reader should be able to see not only the scale of dishonesty in this one case but also the broader lesson: a society that stops caring whether its leaders tell the truth is a society that has already begun to fail itself. The record matters because the habit of lying, once normalised, never stays with just one man. It spreads. And when it spreads far enough, the truth itself becomes just another political position, to be chosen or discarded according to convenience. That is when a democracy stops being one.



Evidence and verification

Any project that seeks to challenge false statements must begin with a clear set of rules for what counts as a lie, what counts as an exaggeration, and how each will be tested. Without this discipline, the whole exercise risks becoming a matter of opinion rather than fact. In this record, a lie will be defined as a statement that is provably false according to reputable, independent evidence available at the time it was made. An exaggeration will be a statement that contains a factual core but distorts its scale, importance, or certainty. The difference matters, but not as much as some might think. In politics, both are used to mislead. Both erode trust.

The only defence against careless or deliberate falsehoods is verification. For that reason, every claim examined here will be tied to a date, a location, and the original source. If Trump made the statement in a speech, a rally, an interview, a tweet, or an official announcement, that source will be cited directly. The verification process will then involve comparing the statement against the most authoritative evidence available. This could mean government statistics, court documents, audited company filings, peer-reviewed research, or contemporaneous reporting from credible outlets. Where possible, multiple independent sources will be used to reduce the risk of relying on flawed data.

A particular problem with Trump's style is the rapid shifting of claims. When a statement is challenged, it may be redefined mid-conversation, reframed as a joke, or replaced with a slightly altered version that is harder to pin down. This is not unique to him, but his frequency of use makes it worth special attention. Verification in this context must be strict. The exact words must be taken as they were spoken or written. The fact that a claim is later "clarified" or "reinterpreted" does not erase its original form. If it was presented as fact it will be tested as such.

It is also important to separate falsehood from opinion. Trump, like any politician, is entitled to opinions on whether a policy is good or bad, whether a decision is wise or foolish. Those will not be the focus here. The concern is when a statement makes an assertion about the world that can be measured. If a claim has numbers, dates, or tangible events attached to it, it can be verified. For example, saying that a rally was the biggest ever is a measurable claim. Saying that it was the best rally ever is an opinion, and while the boast is obvious, it falls outside the scope of factual testing.

Sources themselves must be weighed carefully. Not all evidence is equal. Official

statistics can be manipulated or delayed, media can misreport, and even court filings can contain errors. For that reason, cross-checking is essential. Where data is in dispute, the most consistent and independently verified figures will be used. In cases where there is genuine uncertainty, that uncertainty will be stated openly. It is better to admit a limit than to pretend certainty where there is none.

Another vital element is establishing baselines. Many misleading statements rely on cherry-picking start and end points to create a false impression. For example, claiming a dramatic improvement in the economy by comparing a high point under one's own tenure to a temporary low under a predecessor ignores the longer-term trend. By placing claims in their full context, including what happened before and after, the distortion becomes clear. Readers will see that numbers are not magic. They are tools, and like all tools, they can be misused.

The methodology here will be repetitive, even boring at times, because truth-checking is not glamorous work. That repetition is deliberate. Each section will follow the same pattern: present the claim, show the evidence, and state the conclusion. Over time, the patterns will emerge. The same techniques of distortion will appear again and again, often dressed in slightly different language. Once you have seen them enough times, you will begin to recognise them instantly.

The ultimate goal of setting out this method is to make it portable. Readers should be able to apply the same process to any future claim, whether it comes from Trump, another politician, a commentator, or a friend on social media. The test is simple: can it be checked, and does the evidence support it? If the answer is no, it should not be trusted, no matter how confidently it is delivered or how much it appeals to one's own preferences. The truth is not a matter of loyalty. It is a matter of proof.

Brand inflation

Donald Trump has spent decades constructing an image of himself as a billionaire dealmaker, a master of success whose instincts are flawless and whose fortune is both vast and self-made. This image has been carefully cultivated through books, television, interviews, and a relentless stream of public boasts. The difficulty is that the image often conflicts with the reality documented in legal filings, financial disclosures, and the testimony of those who have worked with him. The purpose of this section is not to mock ambition or to sneer at financial success. It is to examine where the numbers and claims he presents about himself part ways with the evidence.

One of Trump's most enduring tactics is to conflate ownership with association. A building with his name in large gold letters is assumed to be owned by him outright, when in many cases it is merely licensed. The Trump brand is leased to developers who build and maintain the properties, while Trump collects fees for the use of his name. This is legitimate business practice, but it is not the same as owning the building, collecting its rent, or managing its upkeep. Yet when he refers to "my buildings" or "my properties" without qualification, the public impression is inflated far beyond the reality.

Net worth claims are another area of distortion. Trump has often described his net worth as fluctuating based on how he feels about himself that day, an admission that reveals both the subjectivity of his self-assessments and the absence of a fixed, verifiable number. Independent analyses, including those based on court records and mandatory disclosures when he entered politics, place his net worth far below his public boasts. In some cases, his stated wealth has exceeded independent valuations by billions of dollars. Such gaps cannot be dismissed as minor differences of opinion. They represent a deliberate inflation of status.

Trump has also claimed unprecedented success in deal-making, citing "the best ever" contracts, "record" profits, and "historic" transactions. When these deals are examined closely, many prove to be unexceptional, unprofitable, or in some cases outright failures. Casinos have gone bankrupt. University ventures have collapsed under legal challenge. Branding partnerships have been quietly terminated when they no longer served the image. Yet these failures rarely feature in his narrative. Instead, he retells the highlights, removes the low points, and presents a career of uninterrupted triumph. This is not uncommon in the world of self-promotion, but it becomes dishonest when failures are not only omitted but replaced with false claims of victory.

Perhaps the most striking example of brand inflation comes from the valuations of assets submitted to lenders compared with those submitted to tax authorities. When seeking loans, assets were often valued at the highest possible figure to secure favourable terms. When reporting for tax, the same assets were valued far lower to minimise liabilities. Legal proceedings have documented these discrepancies in detail, showing that they were not isolated incidents but part of a pattern. This is more than boastfulness; it is a calculated manipulation of perception for personal gain.

The brand is not just a business tool for Trump. It is armour. The appearance of

great wealth and unbroken success is presented as proof that he is competent, trustworthy, and capable of running a country. When challenged, he returns to this brand as his central defence: if he is rich and famous, then he must know what he is doing. The problem is that much of the brand rests on foundations of exaggeration, selective truth, and outright falsehood. Like a facade on a decaying building, it looks impressive from a distance but does not withstand close inspection.

Brand inflation matters because it shapes public trust. A voter who believes Trump is an unmatched business genius may be more inclined to trust his economic policies. A supporter who believes every property with his name belongs to him may see him as a builder rather than a licensor. When the public image is built on distortions, decisions made on that basis are misinformed. The truth about his brand is not that it is worthless. It is that it is worth far less than he claims, both in money and in meaning.

Crowds and ratings

Donald Trump has an almost compulsive fixation on size. Not physical size in the usual sense, but the size of crowds at his events, the size of television audiences for his appearances, the size of his electoral victories, and the size of his following in general. In his telling, every rally is the biggest ever, every television interview shatters records, and every election result is an overwhelming landslide. When reality does not match these claims, reality is dismissed as wrong. This obsession with scale is not trivial vanity. It is a deliberate tool to create the impression of unstoppable momentum and overwhelming popularity.

The most famous example came on his first day in office. Photographs of the 2017 inauguration clearly showed that the crowd was smaller than Barack Obama's in 2009. This was documented by aerial photography, transit usage numbers, and estimates from the National Park Service and independent media. Yet Trump insisted his crowd was the largest in history, and senior aides were sent out to repeat this claim. The resulting controversy was not about a small difference in numbers, but about the willingness to deny obvious reality in order to defend an image. The episode set the tone for the years to follow.

Trump has made similar claims about the size of his rallies. Venues with fixed seating capacities have been described as overflowing beyond anything ever seen before, even when local officials or photographs confirm otherwise. He has claimed that tens of thousands were turned away from events, without evidence that such

numbers were present or that large groups were denied entry. In many cases, rally attendance figures cited by Trump have exceeded the total capacity of the venue, including standing room. Supporters inside the hall may not question the numbers, but anyone with access to the venue specifications can quickly verify their impossibility.

Television ratings are another recurring theme. Trump has repeatedly boasted about the “historic” ratings for his appearances, from debates to interviews to the State of the Union address. While some events did draw large audiences, his claims often ignore the fact that comparable or even higher ratings were achieved by others, sometimes within the same election cycle. On occasions when ratings declined, he has claimed they were still the highest, or blamed the fall on conspiracies by networks. Ratings data from Nielsen and other industry sources are publicly available, making these exaggerations easy to disprove for anyone willing to check.

The fixation extends beyond his own appearances. Trump has claimed that cable news ratings drop without him, that his opponents cannot draw crowds, and that his political movement commands unmatched energy compared with any other in history. These statements are often based on cherry-picked comparisons, such as comparing a major rally to a small fundraising dinner by an opponent, or comparing the peak moment of his own media coverage to the low point of someone else’s. Such selective framing distorts the true picture and feeds the narrative that his popularity is uniquely massive.

Why does this matter? Crowd size and ratings are not just vanity metrics in Trump’s political world. They are used as evidence of legitimacy. A leader who can point to enormous rallies and record-breaking ratings can claim to speak for “the people” in a way that transcends traditional institutions. The bigger the audience appears, the easier it is to argue that critics are out of touch or part of a small, jealous minority. When the numbers are false, that claim to legitimacy is hollow.

The irony is that reality would often serve him well enough. Trump’s rallies do attract large and enthusiastic audiences, and many of his television appearances have drawn significant ratings. Yet the truth, however impressive, is never enough. The size must always be exaggerated, the record must always be broken, the margin must always be historic. This compulsion to inflate even genuine achievements undermines the credibility of those achievements. In the end, the pattern becomes predictable: when Donald Trump says something was the biggest ever, the safest

assumption is that it was not.

Economic boasts

Donald Trump presents himself as the architect of the strongest economy in history, claiming record growth, unprecedented job creation, soaring wages, and stock markets breaking new ground because of his leadership. These boasts have been repeated at rallies, in interviews, during official speeches, and on social media. In the telling, the economy before Trump was sluggish and failing, and the moment he took office it surged to heights never seen before. As with so many of his claims, the problem is not that there was no economic growth during his presidency. The problem is that he presents ordinary trends as extraordinary, inherited gains as personal achievements, and favourable snapshots as the complete picture.

One of the most common boasts is that unemployment reached its lowest level in decades under his watch. This is true in the narrowest sense, but the trend began long before he took office. Unemployment had been falling steadily since the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, and by the time Trump was inaugurated, the rate was already near historic lows. The same is true of job creation figures. Monthly job growth during his first three years was slightly lower on average than during the final three years of Barack Obama's presidency. Presenting these numbers as a sudden Trump-era miracle erases the economic momentum he inherited.

GDP growth is another favourite subject. Trump has claimed that his policies triggered unprecedented expansion, often citing quarterly spikes as proof. In reality, GDP growth during his presidency was similar to that seen in the later years of the Obama administration. There were no sustained periods of growth above 3 percent annually, and the brief peaks that did occur were in line with historical averages rather than historic records. Selectively highlighting high quarters while ignoring the rest gives the illusion of transformation where there was continuity.

Wage growth was frequently presented as another sign of Trump's economic brilliance. While wages did rise in nominal terms, real wage growth adjusted for inflation was modest and followed a pattern already in motion before he took office. Moreover, much of the apparent improvement came from low inflation during certain periods rather than from significant policy-driven increases in pay. The claim that American workers saw unprecedented gains under Trump does not hold up when compared to decades of data.

The stock market also featured heavily in his economic boasts. Trump repeatedly linked rising stock indices to his policies, taking personal credit for investor confidence. While markets did rise significantly during parts of his tenure, they were continuing an upward trend that began in 2009. The idea that the markets had never performed so well is misleading when adjusted for inflation and compared to other presidential periods. Furthermore, markets are influenced by a wide range of factors beyond presidential control, including global economic conditions, interest rates, and corporate performance.

Perhaps the most misleading economic claim of all was the idea that the economy before the pandemic was “the greatest in the history of the world.” No serious economic historian supports this statement. While certain indicators were strong, others such as productivity growth, national debt, and wage inequality, painted a more mixed picture. Claiming perfection ignores these realities and replaces them with a fantasy narrative designed to enhance personal prestige.

The danger of these economic boasts is that they distort public understanding of cause and effect. If voters believe that one leader alone can create or destroy an economy through sheer will, they will be more vulnerable to future manipulation. In truth, economies are complex systems influenced by global events, long-term policies, and market forces far beyond the reach of any single president. By taking credit for trends he did not start, exaggerating achievements, and ignoring inconvenient facts, Trump offers a version of the economy that exists only in campaign speeches. It is an economy built not on data, but on applause lines.

Crime and immigration

Donald Trump has long relied on fear as a political tool, portraying the United States as besieged by criminals, migrants, and lawlessness on a scale so vast that only his leadership can contain it. This image is not drawn from the data. It is built from selective anecdotes, inflated statistics, and claims that collapse when tested against official records. Crime and immigration are complex issues, and like all such issues, they are easily reduced to slogans that sound decisive but do not match reality.

One of Trump's most frequent claims is that the country was experiencing a historic crime wave before he took office and that his policies quickly reversed it. In reality, violent crime rates had been falling for decades, with some fluctuations in the years immediately before his presidency. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports show no

unprecedented surge in the period he describes as catastrophic. While certain cities did see temporary increases in violent crime, these were localised spikes, not evidence of a nationwide collapse in law and order.

On immigration, Trump has repeatedly painted a picture of uncontrolled borders with record numbers of illegal crossings. In truth, Border Patrol data shows that apprehensions along the southern border were significantly higher in the late 1990s and early 2000s than in the years before he took office. While crossings did rise at points during his presidency, they also fell sharply in other periods, reflecting a long-standing pattern influenced by economic conditions, seasonal labour demand, and political instability in migrant-sending countries. The idea that his policies alone determined the flow is simplistic and misleading.

Trump's language around migrants has often been sensationalist, focusing on crimes committed by individuals who entered the country illegally. While such crimes do occur, numerous studies, including those by the Cato Institute and other non-partisan bodies, have found that immigrants, both legal and undocumented, commit crimes at lower rates than native-born citizens. Presenting isolated cases as representative of an entire group fuels fear rather than informing debate.

Another recurring theme is the claim that sanctuary cities are lawless zones where criminals thrive because local authorities refuse to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. This characterisation ignores the reality that sanctuary policies typically involve limiting cooperation on civil immigration matters while still pursuing serious criminal cases. Crime rates in sanctuary jurisdictions are generally comparable to or lower than in non-sanctuary areas. The claim that these cities are overrun by violent offenders shielded from justice is unsupported by evidence.

The "caravan" stories of 2018 and 2019 are a textbook example of Trump's approach. Migrant groups travelling through Central America toward the United States were described as an "invasion," with implications of imminent danger to American communities. In reality, many in these caravans were families seeking asylum, travelling openly and slowly, often in poor health. While the scale of these groups was notable, they were a fraction of historical migration flows and posed no military threat. The imagery of an invading horde was designed to provoke panic rather than reflect the actual circumstances.

Why does this matter? Fear distorts public policy. When voters believe they are living through a crime wave or under siege from foreign invaders, they are more

likely to support extreme measures that would otherwise be unacceptable. Harsh immigration policies, unnecessary expansions of law enforcement powers, and the erosion of civil liberties often follow. Moreover, when false claims dominate the conversation, actual problems, such as specific forms of crime that are increasing, or weaknesses in the immigration system that need attention, are neglected in favour of fighting imaginary threats.

Trump's repeated exaggerations about crime and immigration reveal a political strategy that values emotional impact over factual accuracy. It is far easier to win support by offering protection from a danger that feels immediate than by explaining statistical trends and policy nuances. The harm is that decisions made under this manufactured sense of emergency rarely address the actual causes of crime or the complexities of migration. Instead, they produce policies designed for applause at rallies rather than for results in the real world.

Health and pandemic

Donald Trump's handling of health-related claims, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, offers one of the clearest examples of confident misinformation meeting real-world consequences. From the earliest days of the outbreak, he presented the virus as under control, temporary, and largely harmless, despite evidence from public health agencies and international experience suggesting otherwise. The habit of making bold, reassuring statements without factual support turned a public health crisis into a political performance, with deadly results.

In January and February 2020, Trump repeatedly claimed that the virus was "totally under control" and would "disappear" like magic when warmer weather arrived. These statements were made even as his own advisers and intelligence briefings warned of its potential spread and severity. Downplaying the threat in this way encouraged complacency at a time when early action could have reduced transmission. The virus, of course, did not vanish with the seasons. It spread rapidly, overwhelming hospitals and causing widespread disruption.

Trump also promoted treatments without evidence. Hydroxychloroquine was repeatedly described as a potential "game-changer" based on preliminary and incomplete information. At one point, he even suggested the possibility of injecting disinfectant or using ultraviolet light inside the body. These comments were later dismissed by staff as sarcasm, although they were delivered during an official

briefing. Such statements, amplified by media coverage and repeated by supporters, led to dangerous misuse of substances and undermined public trust in official medical guidance.

Mask use became another flashpoint. Trump frequently questioned the value of masks, ridiculed opponents for wearing them, and often appeared in public without one, even in settings where health authorities recommended them. His mixed messaging stood in stark contrast to the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating confusion about a basic preventive measure. Public health officials were left trying to counteract the impact of presidential statements that discouraged compliance with evidence-based precautions.

The pattern extended to testing. Trump regularly claimed that the United States had the best testing in the world, or that the sheer number of tests made the country's situation look worse than it really was. In reality, the early testing programme was plagued by shortages, delays, and inconsistent quality. While capacity improved over time, the idea that testing itself was the problem misrepresented the role of testing in identifying and controlling outbreaks. Testing reveals the scale of infection; it does not create it.

Even the development of vaccines, a genuine scientific achievement during his presidency, was accompanied by misleading claims. Trump repeatedly suggested that vaccines would be available to the public before the 2020 election, despite the clear timelines from manufacturers and regulatory agencies showing otherwise. While the vaccines were indeed developed at remarkable speed, the exaggerated promises about their availability fed scepticism when deadlines were missed and gave fuel to conspiracy theories about political interference in science.

The harm from these health-related falsehoods was not limited to confusion. Public behaviour is shaped by trust in leadership. When leaders minimise risks, promote unproven remedies, or contradict their own health agencies, segments of the population are less likely to follow effective guidance. In the case of COVID-19, this meant slower adoption of preventive measures, more resistance to vaccination, and ultimately more illness and death than might have occurred if consistent, evidence-based messaging had been prioritised.

Trump's approach to health and the pandemic demonstrates how misinformation can be magnified by authority. False statements from fringe commentators may cause harm in small circles. False statements from a president carry the weight of the office.

They influence national behaviour and can even shape global perceptions. In a pandemic, where speed, clarity, and trust are vital, treating truth as negotiable is not just reckless. It is dangerous.

The Big Lie

Donald Trump's false claims about the 2020 election are not just another entry in his long record of exaggerations and distortions. They form a sustained campaign to convince millions of Americans that a free and fair election was stolen. This is not a matter of boasting about crowd sizes or inflating net worth. It is a deliberate attempt to undermine confidence in the electoral process itself, the very foundation of a democratic system. The persistence of these claims, even after they have been debunked in courtrooms, audits, and recounts, shows how a lie can become a political movement in its own right.

The central allegation was that widespread voter fraud, orchestrated by Democrats and aided by corrupt officials, altered the outcome of the presidential race. Trump named voting machine companies, election workers, and entire states as part of the plot. Yet in more than sixty post-election lawsuits brought by his campaign and allies, no court found evidence that would have changed the result. Many of these cases were dismissed for lack of evidence, and in others, Trump's own lawyers admitted under oath that they were not alleging fraud on the scale required to alter the outcome.

Recounts in multiple battleground states confirmed the original results, sometimes increasing Joe Biden's margin slightly. Audits of voting machines found no irregularities in how votes were counted. Even Trump's own Department of Justice stated publicly that it had found no evidence of widespread fraud. These facts did not alter his rhetoric. Instead, each failed legal challenge was reframed as further proof of the conspiracy, with judges, election officials, and even Republican state leaders recast as enemies of the people.

One of the most damaging elements of the Big Lie was its ability to adapt. Initial claims about stolen ballots gave way to theories about hacked voting machines, hidden suitcases of votes, dead people voting, and mysterious late-night "dumps" of ballots. Each story collapsed under scrutiny, but the constant introduction of new allegations kept supporters engaged and hostile to any official result. This flood of falsehoods created an environment where disproving one claim did little to restore

trust, because two more had already taken its place.

The consequences were not limited to mistrust. On 6 January 2021, thousands of Trump supporters gathered in Washington, convinced that Congress was about to certify a fraudulent election. After hearing Trump repeat his false claims and urge them to “fight like hell,” many stormed the Capitol, leading to deaths, injuries, and the temporary suspension of the certification process. Trump later described the rioters as patriots and political prisoners, further embedding the idea that their actions were justified.

Beyond the violence of that day, the Big Lie has had a lasting effect on American politics. It has led to a wave of restrictive voting laws in several states, justified as measures to prevent fraud that does not exist on any meaningful scale. It has deepened partisan division to the point where many voters will not accept any election result that does not favour their side. It has eroded trust in institutions that once enjoyed bipartisan respect, such as local election boards and state courts.

The strategy behind the Big Lie is clear. If you can convince your supporters that the only way you can lose is through cheating, then any defeat becomes proof of the conspiracy. This is politically useful for maintaining loyalty, fundraising, and setting the stage for future campaigns. However, it is corrosive to the democratic process. Elections require not just fair counting, but the acceptance of results by both winners and losers. When that acceptance is replaced by permanent suspicion, democracy becomes little more than a performance in which only the outcome approved by one side is considered legitimate.

The Big Lie is not a single false statement. It is a living, evolving framework that can absorb new myths and discard failed ones without ever admitting error. Its power lies not in the evidence, which has always been absent, but in repetition, volume, and emotional appeal. Once enough people choose to believe it, the truth becomes irrelevant to them, and the lie becomes their political reality.

Victimhood branding

Donald Trump has long cultivated an image of strength, dominance, and winning. Yet alongside this, he has developed a parallel persona that casts him as the perpetual victim of an unfair system. This victimhood branding is not a contradiction to his bravado. It is a strategic pairing. The strongman image draws admiration from supporters who value power, while the victim image creates solidarity with those who

feel mistreated or ignored by the establishment. Together, they form a narrative in which Trump is both the unbeatable champion, and the unjustly persecuted outsider.

From the earliest days of his presidency, Trump described investigations into his conduct as witch hunts. The term was applied to the Russia inquiry, to the first impeachment, to the second impeachment, to court cases involving his business practices, and to virtually any legal scrutiny he faced. In each instance, the details of the allegations were secondary to the framing. The fact that prosecutors, congressional committees, or judges were following established procedures was dismissed. What mattered was portraying the process itself as corrupt, partisan, and illegitimate.

This branding allows him to reframe setbacks as proof of his importance. If powerful forces are working so hard to stop him, the logic goes, then he must be a uniquely dangerous threat to their control. In this telling, legal defeats are not defeats at all. They are badges of honour, evidence that he is on the side of the people against an elite determined to silence him. This message resonates strongly with supporters who see themselves as similarly targeted by bureaucrats, the media, or political opponents.

Trump has extended this victim narrative to the media, labelling critical coverage as fake news and describing journalists as enemies of the people. This not only undermines the credibility of unfavourable reporting but also pre-emptively shields him from future scrutiny. If all negative coverage is biased by definition, then no revelation, no matter how well-documented, needs to be taken seriously by his followers. The result is a closed information loop in which loyalty is maintained not by defending specific facts, but by rejecting any source that contradicts him.

Even personal controversies are absorbed into the victimhood frame. Allegations of sexual misconduct, questions about his taxes, and criticism of his rhetoric are presented not as challenges to his behaviour, but as orchestrated attacks designed to destroy him. In many cases, he describes himself as being targeted not just because of who he is, but because of who his supporters are. This shared sense of persecution turns individual scandals into collective grievances, reinforcing the bond between leader and base.

The legal cases Trump faces after leaving office have only deepened this narrative. Criminal indictments, civil lawsuits, and investigations into his business dealings have been presented to his audience as proof that the establishment is

desperate to keep him out of power. Fundraising appeals often highlight these cases, turning legal jeopardy into political capital. In effect, the worse his legal situation becomes, the more he can claim to be the people's champion under siege.

Victimhood branding is powerful because it provides a ready-made explanation for any negative outcome. If Trump loses an election, it is because it was stolen. If he loses in court, it is because the judge was biased. If damaging information comes to light, it is because the media is corrupt. The possibility that he could simply be wrong, dishonest, or at fault never has to be considered. For his most committed supporters, accepting such a possibility would feel like betraying themselves.

The danger of this strategy is that it normalises permanent distrust in the justice system, the press, and other institutions that hold power to account. While scepticism of authority can be healthy, outright rejection of any check on a political figure's behaviour creates a leader who is answerable only to his own narrative. In Trump's case, that narrative is one where he is always the hero and always the victim, no matter what the evidence says. It is a role he has played for decades, and one that continues to serve him well in politics.

Strongman flattery

Donald Trump's approach to foreign policy has often been shaped less by strategy or detailed knowledge than by personal relationships and public image. Central to this is his habit of praising authoritarian leaders while downplaying or ignoring their abuses. Whether speaking about Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-un, Xi Jinping, or other strongmen, Trump frequently describes them in glowing terms, emphasising their strength, intelligence, and leadership. This flattery is not occasional politeness. It is a recurring feature of his rhetoric, one that contrasts sharply with his treatment of democratic allies and institutions.

One of the most striking examples is his repeated praise of Vladimir Putin. Trump has called Putin a strong leader, respected and admired, even in contexts where Putin's actions were hostile to American interests. During the 2016 election campaign and his presidency, Trump often dismissed or questioned intelligence assessments that Russia had interfered in the election, choosing instead to accept Putin's denials. This public deference not only contradicted the findings of his own agencies but also signalled to allies and adversaries alike that personal rapport could outweigh hard evidence.

Similarly, Trump has spoken admiringly of Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea. After a period of heightened tension marked by threats and insults, Trump shifted to describing Kim as talented, smart, and someone with whom he had developed a special relationship. He boasted about exchanging “love letters” and claimed that this personal connection had reduced the threat from North Korea. In reality, North Korea continued to expand its missile and nuclear programmes during this time, showing no substantive concessions despite the optics of high-profile summits.

Trump’s admiration for Xi Jinping has also been notable. Before relations soured over trade disputes and the pandemic, he praised Xi’s power, his ability to govern, and even the abolition of presidential term limits in China, remarking that perhaps the United States should try something similar. Such comments, even when framed as jokes, reveal an ease with authoritarian concentration of power that is at odds with democratic norms.

While Trump often justified his flattery of strongmen as pragmatic diplomacy, his tone and enthusiasm went far beyond the usual courtesies of statecraft. The praise was often public, unconditional, and accompanied by criticism of traditional allies such as NATO members, Canada, Germany, and the European Union. This inversion, complimenting adversaries while berating partners, undermined longstanding alliances and emboldened leaders with poor human rights records.

The pattern was not limited to specific countries. Trump frequently expressed a general admiration for leaders who maintained absolute control over their nations, describing them as tough, decisive, and in command. In his view, the willingness to rule without compromise was a sign of competence rather than a warning sign of repression. This attitude reinforced his own domestic image as a leader who should not be constrained by political opponents, the media, or the courts.

Strongman flattery matters because it signals values. When a democratic leader openly admires authoritarians, it shifts the standards by which leadership is judged. It suggests that raw power, loyalty, and personal control are more important than accountability, transparency, or the rule of law. For citizens in authoritarian countries, it can appear as validation of their rulers’ legitimacy. For citizens in democracies, it can erode confidence in democratic principles by presenting them as weak or outdated compared to the apparent efficiency of autocracy.

In Trump’s case, the praise of strongmen was not matched by consistent diplomatic gains. Agreements touted as historic often turned out to be vague, non-

binding, or simply restatements of existing commitments. The grand gestures of summits and photo opportunities rarely produced lasting policy changes. Yet the language of admiration persisted, because it served a personal narrative in which Trump saw himself as a peer among the world's most powerful men, defined not by shared democratic values but by a shared appreciation for dominance.

Media and fake news

Donald Trump's relationship with the press has been defined by open hostility toward outlets that criticise him and enthusiastic promotion of those that support him. From the moment he began his political career in earnest, he used the phrase "fake news" to dismiss unflattering coverage, regardless of its accuracy. This was not merely a way to express disagreement with journalists. It was a deliberate attempt to undermine the credibility of independent reporting and to create an environment in which only his preferred sources could be trusted.

Trump's attacks on the media have been sweeping. Major newspapers, television networks, and online outlets that questioned his statements or investigated his conduct were routinely labelled as dishonest, corrupt, or enemies of the people. This language served two purposes. First, it encouraged his supporters to reject critical coverage without considering the evidence. Second, it put pressure on journalists, many of whom faced increased harassment and threats after being singled out by name at rallies or on social media.

At the same time, Trump cultivated close ties with sympathetic media organisations. Certain television hosts and commentators became informal advisers, repeating his talking points and shaping their coverage to match his narrative. These relationships blurred the line between reporting and political messaging, turning news segments into extensions of his campaign. For his base, these outlets became the only trustworthy sources, creating an information bubble that reinforced loyalty and filtered out dissenting facts.

The "fake news" label was applied so broadly that it lost any specific meaning. It covered everything from investigative reports supported by extensive documentation to offhand commentary that he found unflattering. By making the term so elastic, Trump ensured that any inconvenient fact could be swept aside without addressing its substance. In doing so, he avoided engaging with evidence and shifted the focus to the supposed bias of the messenger.

This approach was particularly effective when damaging stories emerged. Reports on his tax returns, allegations of misconduct, or failures in policy were met not with detailed rebuttals but with accusations that the story was fabricated by political enemies. Even when documents, photographs, or official records supported the reporting, the core message to his audience remained the same: do not believe it, because the source cannot be trusted.

Social media amplified this strategy. Trump used Twitter to bypass traditional gatekeepers and speak directly to his followers, presenting his version of events as the only truth. This direct communication allowed him to frame issues instantly, often before full details were available, setting the terms of debate and forcing critics to respond to his narrative. It also allowed him to flood the public space with so many claims that fact-checkers could not keep pace.

The result has been a deepening divide in how Americans consume and evaluate information. For many Trump supporters, trust in mainstream media has collapsed almost entirely. Facts are accepted or rejected based on their alignment with his statements rather than on independent verification. This is not a side effect of his rhetoric; it is the intended outcome. By redefining truth as whatever he says it is, Trump gains freedom from accountability.

Undermining the press in this way has long-term consequences beyond his own career. A public that does not trust independent journalism is more vulnerable to propaganda, conspiracy theories, and outright fabrications. When every outlet is viewed as biased and every fact is negotiable, the ability of citizens to make informed decisions is weakened. In a functioning democracy, the press serves as a check on power. In Trump's vision, it serves only if it serves him.

Rhetorical tricks

Donald Trump's communication style is built on a set of well-worn rhetorical devices that allow him to dominate conversations, deflect criticism, and keep his supporters engaged regardless of the evidence. These techniques are not unique to him, but he uses them with unusual frequency and intensity. Understanding them is essential to understanding how his falsehoods persist even when they have been repeatedly exposed.

One of his most common devices is whataboutism. When confronted with criticism, he shifts the focus to the alleged wrongdoing of others, often in unrelated areas. If

challenged about his own behaviour, he may respond by pointing to something a political opponent did years earlier, implying that no judgement can be made unless every wrong in history is addressed first. This tactic changes the subject without addressing the issue at hand.

Another favourite is the moving of goalposts. When one claim is disproven, he replaces it with a slightly altered version, demanding that critics disprove the new claim instead. In the context of the 2020 election, for example, when one allegation of fraud was debunked, he would simply present another, keeping the debate in motion and avoiding final resolution. This constant shifting forces opponents to play an endless game of catch-up.

The straw man argument is also a regular feature. Trump often misrepresents the position of his critics in an exaggerated or absurd form, then attacks that distortion instead of their actual argument. If an opponent calls for reforming an immigration policy, he might claim they want open borders and total lawlessness, making it easier to rally his supporters against a caricature rather than a real proposal.

Then there is the gish gallop, a flood of rapid-fire claims and accusations delivered so quickly that each would require significant time and research to refute. In speeches and interviews, Trump often moves from one statement to another with little pause, mixing exaggerations, half-truths, and outright falsehoods. By the time fact-checkers address the first point, he has already made ten more. The effect is to overwhelm the audience and create the impression that his critics are nitpicking rather than engaging with his larger message.

Repetition is another key tactic. A false claim stated once can be ignored, but a false claim repeated dozens or hundreds of times begins to feel familiar and, to some, believable. This is particularly effective with short, memorable phrases such as “the biggest ever,” “witch hunt,” or “stop the steal.” The goal is to lodge these phrases in the public mind until they become part of the political landscape.

Trump also relies heavily on absolute language, presenting his views as unquestionable truths. Words like “always,” “never,” “everyone,” and “nobody” leave no room for nuance or doubt. This certainty can be appealing in a political environment where many leaders hedge their words, but it also shuts down critical thinking. If something is declared perfect or a total disaster with no middle ground, the audience is pushed toward accepting the speaker’s framing without further examination.

Insults and personal attacks serve as another tool, used both to intimidate critics and to entertain supporters. Nicknames such as “Crooked Hillary” or “Sleepy Joe” reduce opponents to caricatures, making it easier to dismiss them without engaging with their policies or arguments. These attacks also shift political debate from substantive issues to personality clashes, where facts matter less than emotional reactions.

Recognising these rhetorical tricks is the first step in neutralising their effect. They work best when unnoticed, when the audience is caught up in the rhythm of the performance. Once identified, they can be challenged for what they are: distractions, diversions, and devices designed to avoid direct engagement with the truth. Trump’s political success owes much to his ability to deploy them in rapid sequence, creating an environment where fact and fiction blur into a single, seamless narrative.

Damage report

The cost of Donald Trump’s sustained pattern of falsehoods goes far beyond the reputational harm to one man. It corrodes trust in institutions, distorts public debate, and encourages a political culture in which reality itself becomes negotiable. Lies and exaggerations are not harmless rhetorical flourishes. They have real-world consequences that can be measured in wasted resources, damaged relationships, and even lost lives.

One of the most immediate effects is the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. When the president of a country tells his supporters that elections cannot be trusted, that the media is the enemy, and that the justice system is corrupt, the impact is lasting. Confidence in the fairness of elections has fallen sharply among his followers, and suspicion of any outcome unfavourable to him has become the default. This mistrust makes it harder for governments at all levels to function, as every decision is viewed through a lens of assumed corruption.

The distortion of public debate is another cost. In a functioning democracy, disagreements are supposed to be about competing interpretations of shared facts. Under Trump, the facts themselves are constantly in dispute. Supporters and critics inhabit different realities, making rational discussion almost impossible. Policy debates on health care, the economy, foreign policy, and public safety have been derailed by the need to first establish what is true before discussing what to do about it.

There are also tangible financial costs. Legal challenges to the 2020 election consumed millions of dollars in public funds and private donations, despite producing no evidence of widespread fraud. Public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic were undermined by false claims about the virus and vaccines, leading to higher rates of illness and death, which in turn increased the strain on hospitals and the economy. Government resources that could have been directed toward solving real problems were instead spent countering misinformation and managing the fallout.

Internationally, Trump's falsehoods have damaged the credibility of the United States. Allies found themselves unsure whether official statements reflected the actual position of the government or merely the president's personal claims. This uncertainty weakened diplomatic relationships and gave adversaries an opportunity to exploit divisions. When the leader of a country is seen as unreliable, every negotiation becomes more complicated and less productive.

On a societal level, the normalisation of lying by someone in the highest office has a corrupting effect on public life. If a president can make false statements without consequence, it sends a message that honesty is optional for anyone in a position of power. This lowers expectations not only for politicians but also for business leaders, media figures, and public officials. The line between truth and opinion becomes blurred, and accountability becomes harder to enforce.

Perhaps the most dangerous cost is the division it fosters. Trump's rhetoric has encouraged an "us versus them" mindset in which political opponents are not simply wrong but illegitimate or even dangerous. This mindset makes compromise nearly impossible and fuels hostility that can escalate into violence, as seen on 6 January 2021. A democracy cannot function when large segments of the population view each other as enemies rather than fellow citizens.

The damage caused by Trump's falsehoods is not easily reversed. Trust, once broken, is slow to rebuild. Lies, once embedded, are difficult to dislodge, especially when they have been repeated and reinforced over years. The work of repairing the harm will require consistent honesty from leaders, a stronger commitment to evidence-based debate, and a public willing to confront uncomfortable truths. Without that effort, the political culture shaped by Trump's approach to the truth will continue to outlast his time in office, with consequences that extend far into the future.

Largest inauguration crowd

On 20 January 2017, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States. The event was historic in its own right, but within 24 hours the focus had shifted from the ceremony to a dispute over the size of the crowd. During a speech at CIA headquarters the next day, Trump claimed that his inauguration had drawn “the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe.” This claim became one of the earliest and most visible examples of his willingness to assert something that could be disproven with minimal effort.

Photographs taken from multiple vantage points on the National Mall showed large empty areas during Trump’s inauguration that had been filled during Barack Obama’s 2009 inauguration. Transit data from Washington’s Metro system confirmed the difference: on Trump’s Inauguration Day, there were 570,557 trips, compared to 1.1 million on Obama’s first. Television ratings also contradicted the claim. Nielsen reported that Trump’s inauguration attracted about 30.6 million viewers in the United States, well below the record of 41.8 million for Ronald Reagan in 1981.

Despite this, Trump doubled down, accusing the media of deliberately underestimating the crowd and showing misleading photographs. White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer was sent to deliver an extraordinary briefing in which he insisted, without evidence, that “this was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period.” When pressed, Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway defended Spicer’s remarks as “alternative facts,” a phrase that instantly entered the political lexicon as shorthand for brazen falsehoods.

The evidence against the claim was not ambiguous. Aerial images from news agencies, government agencies, and even private citizens all showed the same comparison between 2009 and 2017. Official ridership statistics, video footage, and independent crowd estimates all pointed in the same direction. No credible source outside Trump’s circle supported the assertion.

Why does this episode matter? The crowd size dispute was not about a policy decision or a complex statistical model. It was about something that could be measured and confirmed by anyone with eyes and basic data. By insisting on a false version of such an easily verifiable fact, Trump signalled from the very start of his presidency that loyalty to his narrative mattered more than observable reality. This was not simply vanity over turnout figures. It was an opening test to see how far his administration could push an obvious untruth and have it accepted by his supporters.

The “largest crowd” claim failed in the court of evidence, but it succeeded in a different arena. It established the habit of dismissing any fact that conflicted with Trump’s version of events and set the tone for four years in which easily disprovable statements became part of daily political life. It was, in effect, the first chapter of the Trump presidency’s war on measurable reality.

Mexico paid for wall

From the earliest days of his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump promised that he would build a “big, beautiful wall” along the US–Mexico border and that Mexico would pay for it. The pledge became one of his signature applause lines at rallies, often delivered with theatrical pauses so the crowd could chant “Mexico!” in response to the question of who would foot the bill. By the time he left office in January 2021, the claim had morphed into something very different, yet Trump continued to insist that the promise had been fulfilled.

The physical reality was far less dramatic than the rhetoric. According to US Customs and Border Protection, during Trump’s presidency about 458 miles of border barriers were constructed. Of this, only 52 miles were in locations where no barrier had previously existed. The rest was replacement or reinforcement of existing fencing, often using updated materials and designs but covering the same stretches of land. The notion of a continuous new wall spanning the entire 1,954-mile border never materialised.

The funding also failed to match the campaign promise. Mexico did not pay for the wall directly, in whole or in part. No official transfer of funds occurred, no cheque arrived, and no Mexican budget line item was dedicated to Trump’s wall. Instead, the project was financed by US taxpayers through congressional appropriations and, after disputes with Congress, through the diversion of billions of dollars from the Department of Defense under a national emergency declaration.

When confronted with the fact that Mexico had not directly paid, Trump shifted the argument. He claimed that the renegotiated United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal would generate enough economic benefit for the United States to cover the cost. This is not the same as a foreign government paying for a specific project. Trade benefits are diffuse, indirect, and shared among many sectors and parties. There is no mechanism by which savings or gains from a trade agreement are earmarked for a wall. Economists across the political spectrum

pointed out that the claim was both speculative and misleading.

Despite these facts, Trump continued to frame the wall as a completed and paid-for success. Rally speeches, interviews, and social media posts during and after his presidency repeated the line that “we built the wall, and Mexico paid for it.” Supporters often echoed the claim, either accepting it literally or treating the trade-deal explanation as good enough to count.

The wall story matters because it illustrates several recurring patterns in Trump’s communication. First, he makes bold, memorable promises that are simple to understand. Second, when the promise is only partially fulfilled, he reframes the outcome as total success. Third, when confronted with contrary facts, he shifts the definition of key terms “Mexico paying” becomes “America benefiting from trade” so that he can claim victory regardless of the reality.

In the end, the border wall was neither built as promised nor financed as claimed. The gap between rhetoric and reality was wide and well-documented, yet the claim persisted. Like many of Trump’s most controversial statements, it relied less on factual accuracy than on repetition and the emotional satisfaction it gave his audience. The chant had become more important than the truth it was supposed to represent.

Trump Tower wiretap

On 4 March 2017, Donald Trump posted a series of tweets claiming that former President Barack Obama had ordered wiretaps on Trump Tower during the 2016 election campaign. Without offering any evidence, Trump compared the alleged surveillance to the Watergate scandal, accusing Obama of a “Nixon/Watergate” act and calling him “a bad (or sick) guy.” These claims came without warning, apparently prompted by conservative media reports and online speculation rather than any official intelligence briefing.

The accusation was extraordinary. If true, it would have meant that a sitting president had illegally spied on a political opponent. However, no evidence was ever produced to support the claim, and it was quickly denied by officials from both the Obama administration and the intelligence community. James Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence, stated flatly that “there was no such wiretap activity mounted against the president-elect at the time, or as a candidate, or against his campaign.”

The FBI also made clear that there was no court order authorising the wiretapping

of Trump Tower. While certain individuals connected to Trump's campaign were indeed the subject of surveillance under warrants obtained through the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), those warrants targeted specific people suspected of links to Russian intelligence, not Trump Tower as a whole. In addition, such warrants must be approved by a federal judge and are subject to strict legal standards, making the idea of a politically motivated "Obama order" implausible.

Despite this, Trump continued to suggest that some form of spying had occurred, often blurring the line between lawful surveillance of individuals and his original claim of an illegal wiretap. He later broadened the accusation into vague complaints about being "spied on," citing the FBI's investigation into Russian election interference as proof of deep-state corruption. This shift allowed him to maintain the narrative of victimhood without having to defend the specifics of the wiretap allegation.

Fact-checkers repeatedly rated the wiretap claim as false, and congressional investigations found no evidence to support it. Even Republican-led committees concluded that there was no factual basis for Trump's accusation against Obama. Yet the claim lingered among some of his supporters, partly because it fit into the larger storyline of Trump as a target of shadowy forces determined to bring him down.

The wiretap episode is significant because it demonstrates how a completely unverified claim can dominate the news cycle when delivered by a sitting president. By making the accusation publicly and forcefully, Trump ensured that the burden of proof shifted in practice, if not in principle: instead of him having to prove the allegation, officials and journalists spent days disproving it. The more they did so, the more he framed their denials as suspicious.

In the end, there was no wiretap, no illegal surveillance order from Obama, and no Watergate-style plot. What there was instead was a political tactic: make a dramatic claim, force opponents to scramble, and turn the absence of evidence into part of the conspiracy theory. The truth became almost beside the point. The accusation itself was the tool.

Biggest tax cut

Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 was the largest tax cut in American history. He made this assertion in speeches, interviews, and at rallies, presenting it as proof of his unmatched economic achievements. The line was simple, flattering to his

administration, and easy for supporters to repeat. It was also false when measured by any standard economic metric.

The TCJA was significant in size, reducing taxes by an estimated \$1.5 trillion over ten years. However, it was far from the largest in history. When adjusted for inflation and measured as a share of the national economy, several previous tax cuts were larger. For example, the Reagan tax cuts of 1981 reduced revenues by about 2.9 percent of GDP in their first two years, compared to roughly 0.8 percent for Trump's law. The 1945 tax cut following World War II, and even some under President George W. Bush, were also larger in relative terms.

Independent analysts from the Treasury Department, the Congressional Budget Office, and outside think tanks all agreed that the TCJA ranked well below the top spot. Fact-checkers from multiple outlets repeatedly debunked Trump's claim, pointing out that "largest" can be defined in different ways, absolute dollar amount, inflation-adjusted dollars, or percentage of GDP, but that under none of these definitions did his tax cut take first place.

Trump's rhetoric often blurred these distinctions. At times he would describe the TCJA as the "biggest ever" in dollar terms without adjusting for inflation, which naturally favours more recent tax changes because of the larger modern economy. At other times, he implied that the scale of the cuts for corporations and high earners was unprecedented, even though similar or larger percentage reductions had been enacted before.

The exaggeration also ignored the fact that the TCJA's benefits were unevenly distributed. Corporate tax rates dropped sharply from 35 percent to 21 percent, while many individual cuts were smaller and set to expire after 2025. For some middle-income households, the changes were modest, and for others, especially in high-tax states, certain deductions were reduced, offsetting the gains. Presenting the law as a massive windfall for everyone was as misleading as the claim about its overall size.

Why persist with such an easily disproven statement? The answer lies in the political value of the boast. Claiming the "biggest ever" tax cut allowed Trump to frame himself as a transformative economic leader on par with, or greater than, past presidents. It also provided a simple talking point that could be repeated without nuance, which is far more effective in a campaign setting than a complex explanation of relative rankings and GDP percentages.

In reality, the TCJA was a major piece of legislation with lasting effects on federal revenue, corporate profits, and income distribution. It was not, however, the largest tax cut in American history by any credible measure. The truth was smaller than the slogan, but the slogan was what Trump wanted remembered. It fit the broader pattern of inflating achievements until they became unrecognisable from the facts, confident that the simplicity of the claim would outlast the corrections.

Dorian hits Alabama

On 1 September 2019, Donald Trump tweeted that Hurricane Dorian, then moving toward the southeastern United States, would hit several states, including Alabama. The problem was that by the time he made this statement, the National Weather Service (NWS) had already made clear that Alabama was not in the forecast path. Within minutes, the NWS office in Birmingham publicly corrected the president, stating that Alabama would not see any impact from the storm.

Rather than acknowledge a mistake, Trump doubled down. Over the following days, he insisted that his warning had been accurate, citing outdated and early projections that showed a minimal chance of peripheral impact to Alabama before the storm's path shifted eastward. The situation escalated on 4 September when Trump displayed an official hurricane forecast map in the Oval Office that had been altered with a black marker to extend the storm's projected path into Alabama. The crudely drawn addition became known as "Sharpiegate."

Meteorologists and reporters quickly noted that altering an official weather forecast chart in this way could violate federal law, specifically the prohibition on knowingly issuing false weather information. While no prosecution was ever pursued, the incident drew widespread criticism from weather professionals, who stressed that inaccurate hurricane information can cause unnecessary panic or complacency, both of which can be dangerous during severe weather events.

The administration attempted to support Trump's claim with a formal statement from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that appeared to side with him over the Birmingham NWS office. This statement, issued under political pressure according to later reports, was condemned by many within NOAA as undermining the credibility of the agency. The episode revealed the extent to which scientific agencies could be pulled into political disputes, even over something as straightforward as a weather forecast.

The evidence was clear: by 1 September, the projected path of Hurricane Dorian had shifted well east of Alabama, and no credible forecast suggested the state was at risk of direct impact. The NWS correction was factual and timely. The insistence on defending the original claim, even after being disproven, turned a minor slip into a prolonged controversy that damaged both the president's credibility and the perceived independence of federal scientific agencies.

Why does this matter beyond the oddity of the image with the black marker? It shows how Trump's refusal to admit error, even on a relatively trivial matter, can escalate into a larger battle where truth is reshaped to fit his narrative. It also illustrates the willingness of political appointees to pressure professionals into backing a false claim, creating a chilling effect on those tasked with providing accurate public information.

In the end, no one in Alabama was affected by Hurricane Dorian. Yet the incident lives on as an example of how a small factual inaccuracy, if stubbornly defended, can spiral into a controversy that undermines trust in both political leaders and expert agencies. For Trump, admitting error was apparently a greater threat than the ridicule that came from defending the indefensible.

Cleanest air and water

Donald Trump often claimed during his presidency that the United States had "the cleanest air" and "the cleanest water" in the world. He used these lines to deflect criticism of his environmental policies, which included rolling back regulations on pollution, emissions, and protected lands. The claims were presented as statements of fact, not opinion, yet they do not match the available evidence.

Air quality can be measured objectively using internationally recognised metrics, such as the World Health Organization's (WHO) air quality guidelines or the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) compiled by Yale and Columbia Universities. In these rankings, the United States performs well compared to many countries but does not hold the top position. Nations such as Finland, Sweden, New Zealand, and Canada consistently rank higher for overall air quality. While US air quality has improved significantly over the decades due to the Clean Air Act and other regulations, pollution hotspots remain, and in some years, progress has stalled or reversed in certain regions.

The same applies to water quality. The United States has safe and reliable drinking

water in many areas, but it is far from universally clean. The water crises in Flint, Michigan, and Jackson, Mississippi are only the most publicised examples of systemic issues affecting water infrastructure. On the EPI's water and sanitation rankings, the United States is again high but not first, with several other developed nations scoring better. Furthermore, environmental groups have documented that industrial runoff, agricultural chemicals, and outdated water systems continue to threaten water safety in multiple states.

Trump's repeated use of the "cleanest" claim ignored these realities. More importantly, it often came in the context of defending deregulation, as if the country's environmental protections were already at their peak and could not be improved. By insisting that America's air and water were already the cleanest in the world, he framed further environmental safeguards as unnecessary, even burdensome to business.

Fact-checkers from outlets such as The Washington Post, PolitiFact, and FactCheck.org consistently rated the claim as false or misleading. The Environmental Protection Agency's own data during Trump's tenure showed fluctuations in air quality trends and persistent challenges in water safety. In some cases, pollution levels worsened after regulatory rollbacks, particularly for certain airborne pollutants.

This claim matters because it demonstrates how a positive-sounding statement can be used to obscure the consequences of policy changes. By telling the public that environmental conditions were already the best in the world, Trump avoided having to explain why protections were being weakened. It also shows the importance of comparing political statements to objective measurements rather than accepting them at face value.

In reality, the United States has relatively good air and water compared to much of the world, but it is not number one in either category. The achievements of past decades in cleaning up pollution are real, but they are not complete, and they require continued enforcement and improvement to maintain. The "cleanest in the world" claim was not a celebration of fact, it was a shield for a policy agenda that often moved in the opposite direction.

I won by a landslide

After the 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that he had won "by a landslide" and that the official results showing Joe Biden as the winner

were the product of massive fraud. This was not a casual boast made in the heat of the moment. It became the central claim of his post-election narrative, repeated at rallies, in interviews, on social media, and in speeches to supporters, including the one delivered on 6 January 2021 before the attack on the Capitol.

The factual record was clear. Joe Biden won 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, and secured more than seven million more popular votes nationwide. This margin is significant but not historically unusual. By Trump's own earlier standard, it could hardly be called a landslide. In 2016, when he won the same 306–232 electoral vote margin against Hillary Clinton, he described it as a “massive landslide” despite the fact that numerous past presidents had won by far larger margins. However, in 2020, that exact same electoral tally worked against him, making the claim absurd on its face.

More importantly, there was no credible evidence of the widespread fraud Trump alleged. His campaign and allies filed more than sixty lawsuits challenging results in multiple states. These cases were heard by judges appointed by both Republican and Democratic presidents, including several appointed by Trump himself. Not one of these cases resulted in a finding that fraud had altered the outcome of the election. Many were dismissed outright for lack of evidence.

Recounts and audits in battleground states, including Georgia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, confirmed the results, in some cases increasing Biden's margin slightly. Trump's own Department of Justice stated in early December 2020 that it had found no evidence of fraud on a scale that could change the result. State election officials, many of them Republicans, made similar statements.

Yet Trump's “landslide” claim persisted and evolved into the larger “Stop the Steal” movement. By repeating it endlessly, he created a narrative in which losing was impossible and any loss could only be explained by corruption. This approach turned a straightforward election defeat into a loyalty test: accepting the official results became, in Trump's framing, an act of betrayal to him and to the country.

The consequences were severe. Belief in the “landslide” victory claim became one of the main motivators for those who stormed the Capitol on 6 January. It also fuelled a wave of restrictive voting laws in Republican-led states, justified by the need to prevent the very fraud that had never occurred. Trust in the integrity of elections collapsed among large sections of the Republican electorate, setting a dangerous precedent for future contests.

The “I won by a landslide” statement is a textbook example of a claim that collapses under the simplest scrutiny. It conflicts with publicly available vote counts, certified results, and dozens of court rulings. Yet as with so many of Trump’s falsehoods, its political value did not depend on its accuracy. It served as a rallying cry, a fundraising tool, and a weapon to delegitimise his successor. In that sense, the truth of the claim was never the point—the point was to make the claim, loudly and often enough, that for millions of people it would feel true.

Inject disinfectant

On 23 April 2020, during a televised White House coronavirus task force briefing, Donald Trump speculated about the possibility of using disinfectants or ultraviolet light inside the body to treat COVID-19. After hearing a presentation from a Department of Homeland Security official about the virus’s vulnerability to heat, light, and certain cleaning agents on surfaces, Trump turned to the medical experts present and said: “I see the disinfectant, where it knocks it out in a minute... is there a way we can do something like that, by injection inside or almost a cleaning?” He also mentioned bringing light “inside the body” to kill the virus.

The comments caused immediate alarm. Medical professionals and public health agencies warned that injecting or ingesting disinfectants is extremely dangerous and potentially fatal. Lysol’s parent company issued a statement advising people not to consume or inject its products. Poison control centres across the United States reported a spike in calls in the hours and days following the briefing, with some cases linked directly to confusion caused by Trump’s remarks.

The next day, facing intense criticism, Trump claimed that he had been speaking “sarcastically” to reporters, not seriously suggesting the idea. However, video footage of the briefing showed him addressing his remarks to the scientists present and following up with what appeared to be genuine questions about whether such methods could be tested. The tone and context did not match a sarcastic aside.

No reputable medical body supports the use of disinfectants inside the human body to treat viral infections. Disinfectants like bleach or isopropyl alcohol are effective on surfaces because they are toxic to living cells, including those in the human body. Introducing them into the bloodstream or lungs would cause severe injury or death, not healing. Similarly, while ultraviolet light can kill viruses on surfaces, using it inside the body is neither practical nor safe.

The incident became one of the most widely publicised examples of Trump making an unfounded and medically dangerous suggestion during the pandemic. It reinforced concerns among public health experts that his off-the-cuff remarks could spread misinformation faster than officials could correct it. The fact that the comments came from the president in an official briefing amplified their impact, as some members of the public assume that advice from the White House carries a degree of credibility.

This case matters because it shows how speculative and ill-considered ideas, when voiced by a national leader, can have immediate real-world consequences. Even if Trump believed he was merely thinking out loud, the venue and timing made the suggestion reckless. In a crisis where public trust and clear communication were vital, the disinfectant episode became a symbol of the administration's tendency to prioritise showmanship over accuracy.

In the end, no such treatment was ever tested or approved. The only lasting result of the claim was confusion, a brief surge in dangerous behaviour, and a global wave of headlines mocking the idea. For many, it became shorthand for the hazards of improvising science in front of a live audience of millions.

Windmills cause cancer

On 2 April 2019, during a speech at the National Republican Congressional Committee's annual dinner, Donald Trump claimed that noise from wind turbines causes cancer. Referring to the development of wind energy, he said: "They say the noise causes cancer," while mimicking the sound of turbine blades. This was not the first time he had spoken negatively about wind power, but it was the most explicit and bizarre health-related allegation he made about the technology.

There is no scientific evidence to support the claim that noise from wind turbines causes cancer. The American Cancer Society has stated that it is not aware of any credible research linking wind turbine noise to cancer in humans. While some people living near wind farms have reported annoyance, sleep disturbance, or headaches, phenomena sometimes grouped under the term "wind turbine syndrome", these are generally attributed to noise, vibration, or visual impact, not carcinogenic effects.

Trump's hostility to wind power predates his presidency and is tied to his opposition to offshore wind projects near his golf course in Scotland. He has often criticised wind turbines as unsightly, unreliable, and harmful to wildlife, particularly

birds. However, in pushing these criticisms, he has also made statements that are misleading or false, including exaggerated claims about turbine efficiency, their impact on property values, and now, their supposed health risks.

The “windmills cause cancer” line was widely mocked and criticised, not only by political opponents but also by energy experts and medical professionals. Fact-checkers rated the statement as entirely false. The remark even drew rebukes from Republican lawmakers in states that have embraced wind energy as a major economic driver, particularly in the Midwest, where wind farms provide jobs and tax revenue.

This episode matters because it shows how an unfounded health scare can be inserted into public discourse with a single offhand comment from a prominent figure. While it is unlikely that large numbers of people genuinely came to believe that wind turbines cause cancer, the statement still served a political purpose: it cast doubt on a renewable energy source that Trump opposed, reinforcing scepticism among his base.

It also fits into a broader pattern in which Trump attacks industries or technologies he dislikes by attaching dramatic, fear-inducing claims to them, regardless of their scientific basis. In the case of wind energy, his criticisms often focused on aesthetics, reliability, and economics, but by adding a cancer scare, he gave supporters another reason—albeit a false one—to oppose it.

No credible scientific organisation supports the idea that wind turbine noise causes cancer. The claim was false when Trump made it, and it remains false today. Yet like many of his statements, it was memorable, simple, and emotionally charged, making it an effective sound bite even in the absence of evidence. In politics, that combination can be more powerful than the truth.

Most for African Americans

Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that “no one has done more for African Americans than me,” sometimes adding “with the possible exception of Abraham Lincoln.” He made this statement in interviews, at rallies, and on social media, often framing it as a factual summary of his record rather than an opinion. The claim was intended to highlight economic indicators, criminal justice reform, and funding initiatives during his presidency. However, when examined in context, it is both historically and factually misleading.

Trump frequently pointed to record-low Black unemployment as evidence. It is true that unemployment among African Americans reached its lowest recorded rate, 5.3 percent, in August 2019. However, this was the continuation of a steady decline that began after the Great Recession, during Barack Obama's presidency. The rate had already fallen from 16.8 percent in 2010 to 7.8 percent by the time Trump took office in January 2017. The downward trend did not start with him, and the record low was erased in 2020 when the pandemic caused unemployment to spike.

He also cited the First Step Act, a bipartisan criminal justice reform bill signed into law in 2018, as proof of his commitment to African Americans. The law reduced some mandatory minimum sentences, expanded rehabilitation programmes, and allowed certain inmates to earn earlier release. While it was a meaningful reform, it was the product of years of work by activists, lawmakers, and advocacy groups from across the political spectrum. Trump's role was to sign it, not to originate or champion the idea from the outset.

Another point he raised was increased funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). His administration did secure permanent funding at certain levels, something praised by many HBCU leaders. However, federal support for these institutions has been a bipartisan effort for decades, and the amounts involved were modest compared to overall federal spending. It was not an unprecedented investment, nor was it the single greatest achievement in the history of African American education policy.

When compared to landmark historical actions, Trump's claim becomes even harder to sustain. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, beginning the legal process of ending slavery. Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, dismantling legal segregation and expanding voting protections. These were transformative moments in American history, fundamentally altering the legal status and rights of African Americans in ways no modern policy, including those under Trump, can match.

Trump's assertion also ignores the ways his rhetoric and policies alienated many African Americans. His comments about "very fine people on both sides" after the Charlottesville rally, his attacks on Black athletes protesting police brutality, and his repeated emphasis on "law and order" in response to racial justice protests were widely criticised as dismissive of systemic racism and hostile to concerns raised by Black communities.

The “no one has done more” claim is an example of Trump’s tendency to take legitimate accomplishments, strip them of context, and inflate them into unmatched achievements. While his administration did enact policies that benefited African Americans, the statement is historically indefensible and factually overstated. It turns complex, shared policy work into a personal accolade, sidelining the contributions of others and exaggerating his own role to the point of distortion.

Obama founded ISIS

On 10 August 2016, during a campaign rally in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Donald Trump declared that “Barack Obama is the founder of ISIS.” He added that Hillary Clinton was the co-founder. The remark drew immediate attention because it was not a vague insult, it was a clear, unqualified accusation that the sitting President of the United States at the time had personally created the terrorist group known as the Islamic State.

ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, emerged from the remnants of al-Qaeda in Iraq, a group that gained strength during the Iraq War following the 2003 US-led invasion. Its roots stretch back to the early 2000s, long before Obama entered national politics. By the time Obama became president in 2009, ISIS’s predecessor organisations were already active. Under Obama’s watch, ISIS did grow significantly, particularly after the power vacuum created by the Syrian civil war and instability in Iraq. However, no credible historian, intelligence analyst, or military leader claims that Obama or Clinton “founded” the group.

After backlash, Trump initially doubled down, repeating the claim in interviews and on conservative talk shows. When asked if he literally meant that Obama created ISIS, he said, “He is the founder of ISIS, absolutely.” The next day, facing further criticism, he shifted his explanation, saying it was meant as “sarcasm” and that his point was about Obama’s foreign policy decisions. Specifically, Trump argued that Obama’s withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011 created a power vacuum that allowed ISIS to expand, and that the Obama administration had supported certain rebel groups in Syria, some of which were later overrun or absorbed by extremist factions.

This reframing still did not make the original statement accurate. While it is legitimate to debate whether US foreign policy decisions contributed to the conditions that allowed ISIS to thrive, this is very different from “founding” the group. Founding

implies deliberate creation and control, not the unintended consequences of policy.

Fact-checkers rated Trump's claim as false. The group that became ISIS was founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2004, years before Obama was in office. It later rebranded and expanded under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Obama's administration, far from supporting ISIS, launched an extensive military campaign against it starting in 2014, including airstrikes, special operations raids, and the deployment of advisers to assist Iraqi and Kurdish forces.

This episode matters because it demonstrates how Trump often used loaded, hyperbolic language to turn a policy criticism into a personal accusation. By framing Obama as the "founder" of ISIS, he transformed a complex geopolitical problem into a simple, emotionally charged attack line. Even after clarifying that he was speaking sarcastically, the initial, more extreme claim had already reached millions of people and dominated headlines.

In the end, the truth is straightforward: ISIS was not founded by Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. Its roots predate both of them, and US policy under Obama was aimed at destroying it, not creating it. The claim was false as stated, but its political utility lay in its shock value and its ability to stick in the public conversation long after the factual corrections had been made.

I saved the steel industry

Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump frequently claimed that he had "saved the steel industry." He pointed to his 2018 decision to impose tariffs of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on imported aluminium as proof that he had revived a dying sector, protecting American jobs and restoring industrial strength. At rallies, in interviews, and on social media, he presented the move as an unqualified success story.

The reality is more complicated. The US steel industry had indeed faced challenges from global competition, particularly from China, whose government subsidies allowed it to produce steel at lower costs. By 2017, foreign steel imports made up a significant share of the US market, and some domestic producers were struggling. Trump's tariffs were intended to level the playing field by making imported steel more expensive and encouraging buyers to purchase from American mills.

In the short term, the tariffs did provide a boost. Domestic steel production rose

modestly, capacity utilisation improved, and some idled plants restarted. Companies like U.S. Steel announced investments in upgrades and expansions, and there was a temporary increase in steelworker jobs. Trump highlighted these gains as proof that his policy was a complete victory.

However, the benefits were neither as large nor as lasting as he claimed. By late 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, much of the initial growth had stalled. Global steel prices fell, demand weakened, and some plants that had reopened announced layoffs again. Economists noted that while steel producers benefited from higher prices, industries that use steel such as automotive manufacturing, construction, and appliance production faced increased costs. This in turn led to job losses in those sectors, which outnumbered the jobs gained in steelmaking.

The tariffs also strained relationships with allies, as they applied to countries like Canada, Mexico, and members of the European Union, none of which were major sources of unfairly traded steel. Retaliatory tariffs from those nations hurt US exporters in unrelated industries, from agriculture to consumer goods. Studies from the Federal Reserve and independent trade analysts concluded that the net economic impact of the tariffs was negative, with the costs to steel-consuming industries outweighing the gains to steel producers.

By the end of Trump's term, the US steel industry remained viable but not dramatically transformed. It had not returned to the employment levels of past decades, and its long-term structural challenges such as automation, global overcapacity, and fluctuating demand were unchanged. The tariffs were a temporary measure, not a permanent rescue.

The "I saved the steel industry" claim is a classic example of Trump taking a partial, short-term improvement and reframing it as a decisive, historic turnaround. While his policy did produce some positive effects for certain producers in the short run, it fell far short of the sweeping revival he described. In reality, the industry's survival depends on factors far beyond a single trade policy, and his intervention, while impactful, did not fundamentally alter its trajectory.

Rounding the turn on COVID

In the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump repeatedly assured Americans that the country was "rounding the turn" or "rounding the corner" in its battle against COVID-19. He used the phrase at rallies, in interviews,

and during press briefings, often alongside predictions that the pandemic would soon fade away. The statement was presented as both a reassurance and proof that his administration's response had been effective.

The timing of these remarks is crucial. Trump made many of them in September and October 2020, a period when COVID-19 cases in the United States were once again rising sharply. After a summer lull, infections began climbing in early autumn, with public health officials warning of a severe winter surge. By late October, the seven-day average of daily new cases had reached record highs, and hospitalisations were increasing in multiple states. Far from turning a corner, the country was heading into its deadliest phase of the pandemic.

Trump's optimistic messaging was at odds with the assessments of his own health experts. Dr. Anthony Fauci, Dr. Deborah Birx, and officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were warning of the need for continued vigilance, mask-wearing, and limits on gatherings. The virus had not been brought under control, community transmission remained widespread, and vaccines were still weeks away from even initial emergency authorisation.

By telling the public that the nation was "rounding the turn," Trump downplayed the ongoing risk. His statements often coincided with large campaign rallies where masks were scarce and social distancing was minimal, creating environments where the virus could easily spread. These events were later linked to local spikes in cases, according to studies from public health researchers.

The claim also reflected a broader pattern in Trump's pandemic communication: a preference for projecting imminent victory regardless of the data. From his early prediction that the virus would disappear "like magic" to his promotion of unproven treatments, he repeatedly offered best-case scenarios as if they were certainties. This approach may have been intended to inspire confidence, but it also encouraged complacency at a time when public cooperation with safety measures was essential.

Factually, the United States did not round the turn on COVID-19 in the autumn of 2020. Instead, the period between mid-October 2020 and mid-February 2021 saw the highest sustained rates of infection, hospitalisation, and death of the entire pandemic up to that point. More than 200,000 Americans died during those four months alone.

The "rounding the turn" claim matters because it shows how overly optimistic political messaging can conflict with and even undermine public health objectives. Leaders can and should offer hope, but when hope is detached from reality, it can

lead to decisions that worsen the very problem being discussed. In this case, the cost of premature reassurance was measured in lives.

Biggest EC win since Reagan

At a press conference on 16 February 2017, Donald Trump boasted that his 2016 electoral college victory was the largest since Ronald Reagan. He said, “We had a very big victory, 306 electoral votes. I guess it was the biggest electoral college win since Ronald Reagan.” It was meant as proof of his strong mandate and a rejection of suggestions that his win was narrow or controversial.

The statement was quickly proven false. Several presidents between Reagan and Trump had secured larger electoral college victories. George H. W. Bush won 426 votes in 1988. Bill Clinton won 370 in 1992 and 379 in 1996. Barack Obama won 365 in 2008. All of these totals were higher than Trump’s 306. Even George W. Bush’s 2004 re-election, often described as close, gave him 286 votes, just 20 fewer than Trump.

When a reporter pointed this out during the press conference, Trump replied, “I was given that information,” and shifted the subject. This suggested the claim was not the result of a detailed historical check but rather an applause line that had been handed to him without verification. Even so, it had been repeated at rallies and interviews prior to that moment, showing that it was part of his regular talking points.

The actual facts of the 2016 election show that Trump’s victory, while decisive in the electoral college, was far from unprecedented. His 306 votes were solid but not exceptional. He also lost the national popular vote by nearly three million ballots, which made his claim to a sweeping mandate even less accurate.

This episode is an example of how Trump often inflates his accomplishments by placing them in a misleading historical context. The claim about having the biggest electoral college win since Reagan was easy to fact-check, as the electoral college records are public and unambiguous. Yet it persisted because it was simple, flattering, and fed into his broader narrative of overwhelming success.

The reality is that Trump’s 2016 electoral college result was about average for a winning candidate in modern times. By presenting it as historically unmatched, he turned a respectable win into a supposed record-breaker, confident that many listeners would accept the statement without checking the numbers.



Health care complicated

On 27 February 2017, shortly after taking office, Donald Trump met with governors at the White House to discuss replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). During the meeting, he remarked, “Nobody knew that health care could be so complicated.” The statement was quickly repeated in news headlines, partly because it was striking to hear from a president who had campaigned on repealing and replacing the ACA as a top priority.

In reality, many people knew that health care policy in the United States was complex. Legislators, policy experts, insurance companies, and patient advocacy groups had been dealing with its intricacies for decades. The ACA itself was over 900 pages long, and it had been the subject of intense debate, dozens of legal challenges, and repeated attempts at reform since its passage in 2010.

Trump’s comment appeared to reflect his personal surprise at the difficulty of crafting a replacement that would satisfy both the conservative and moderate wings of the Republican Party while maintaining popular protections, such as coverage for pre-existing conditions. His campaign rhetoric had often suggested that replacing the ACA would be straightforward and that he would deliver a better, cheaper, and more comprehensive system quickly. Once in office, he encountered the reality that the health care system is a web of interconnected laws, regulations, and markets that cannot be easily overhauled without far-reaching consequences.

Critics seized on the remark as evidence that Trump had entered office without a full grasp of the policy challenges ahead. Supporters argued that he was merely acknowledging the difficulty in a candid way. Regardless of interpretation, the statement became one of the more memorable unscripted lines of his presidency, often cited in discussions about his approach to complex issues.

The legislative battle over repealing and replacing the ACA dragged on for months, with multiple failed bills in 2017. Ultimately, Trump was unable to secure a full repeal, though his administration did make significant changes, such as eliminating the individual mandate penalty through the 2017 tax law and expanding short-term health insurance plans.

The “nobody knew” comment matters because it highlights a recurring theme in Trump’s leadership style: a tendency to speak in sweeping, personal terms that conflate his own knowledge with the knowledge of the public at large. While it may

have been an offhand remark, it captured the gap between campaign promises and governing reality, particularly on one of the most technically challenging policy areas in American politics.

Against Iraq War from start

Donald Trump has frequently claimed that he opposed the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq from the very start. He used this claim during the 2016 presidential campaign to portray himself as having better judgement than the political establishment, including his Republican rivals who had supported the war. The assertion was central to his self-image as a political outsider who could see the failures of US foreign policy before others did.

The available evidence tells a different story. In September 2002, six months before the invasion, Trump was interviewed by radio host Howard Stern. When asked if he supported going into Iraq, he replied, “Yeah, I guess so,” adding, “I wish the first time it was done correctly.” While this was not an enthusiastic endorsement, it was not an expression of opposition either. It showed that at the time he was open to the idea.

There is no public record of Trump making any strong statement against the war before it began in March 2003. His first clearly negative comments came after the invasion, when it was becoming apparent that the weapons of mass destruction cited as the main justification had not been found and that the occupation was becoming costly and chaotic. In an interview with *Esquire* magazine in August 2004, Trump criticised the war as a mess and said it should never have happened.

Fact-checkers from multiple outlets, including PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, and The Washington Post, have reviewed Trump’s statements and found no evidence to support the claim that he was against the war “from the beginning.” The record shows that his position evolved over time, shifting from mild acceptance before the invasion to strong opposition once the war’s problems became clear.

Despite this, Trump repeatedly used the claim in debates and interviews, contrasting his supposed foresight with Hillary Clinton’s 2002 Senate vote authorising military action. By framing himself as an early and consistent critic, he aimed to bolster his credibility on foreign policy and appeal to voters weary of costly overseas interventions.

This episode matters because it shows how a politician can rewrite their own history for strategic advantage, confident that many people will not investigate the

timeline closely. While Trump was indeed an outspoken critic of the Iraq War in later years, his claim of early opposition is not supported by the evidence. It is an example of how the selective editing of one's past can create a narrative that is both politically useful and historically inaccurate.

Windmills cut values 75%

Donald Trump has often attacked wind energy, portraying wind turbines as ugly, unreliable, and harmful to the environment. Among his more specific claims is that living near wind turbines can reduce property values by as much as 75 percent. He has repeated this in speeches, interviews, and at rallies, using it as part of his argument against expanding wind power in the United States.

The problem is that the claim is not supported by credible evidence. Numerous studies have examined the relationship between wind farms and nearby property values, and while some have found small decreases for homes very close to turbines, the drops are typically in the range of a few percent, not the catastrophic 75 percent Trump describes. For example, a 2014 study by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, which looked at more than 50,000 home sales in the United States, found no statistically significant impact on property values from wind projects.

Other research has shown that any effect tends to be localised and short-term, often fading once a project is completed and residents adjust to its presence. In some cases, property values near wind farms have remained stable or even increased, particularly when developers offer community benefits or when the turbines are located in areas where renewable energy is popular.

Trump's exaggerated figure appears to have no direct source in real estate data or academic studies. It likely stems from anecdotal complaints by opponents of specific wind projects, such as the offshore wind farm proposed near his golf course in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. In that case, Trump fought a long legal battle to block the project, arguing it would spoil the view from his resort. While some residents expressed concern about property values, no credible analysis suggested anything close to a 75 percent drop.

The significance of this claim lies in how it fits into Trump's broader rhetorical approach. Rather than arguing against wind power on policy or economic grounds alone, he attaches extreme, fear-inducing consequences to its use. A potential loss of three-quarters of a home's value is a shocking number, one that would

understandably alarm any homeowner. By using it, Trump sidesteps the need for nuanced debate and appeals directly to financial self-interest.

In reality, wind turbines are not a death sentence for property values. While local impacts can occur, especially in the immediate vicinity of a large project, they are modest and vary by location. Trump's 75 percent figure is a vast exaggeration, unsupported by the evidence. Like many of his more memorable claims, it works as a sound bite but fails as a statement of fact.

I am the chosen one

On 21 August 2019, Donald Trump looked skyward during an exchange with reporters on the White House lawn and declared, "I am the chosen one." The remark came as he defended his aggressive trade policies toward China, arguing that previous presidents had failed to confront Beijing over unfair practices. The moment was widely reported and instantly became the subject of headlines, memes, and late-night comedy monologues.

Trump later insisted that the comment was made in jest, saying he was being sarcastic. However, the delivery was ambiguous. He made the statement in a serious tone before continuing his defence of tariffs, and it was not immediately clear to viewers whether he intended it as humour, self-aggrandisement, or both.

The "chosen one" moment also drew attention because it fit into a pattern of grandiose language Trump had used about himself. Around the same time, he retweeted a supporter who had referred to him as "the King of Israel" and "the second coming of God." While those words had come from someone else, Trump's decision to amplify them, along with his own "chosen one" quip, fed into criticism that he encouraged a personality cult around his presidency.

Religious imagery has long been used in politics, sometimes seriously and sometimes playfully, but it is unusual for a president to apply messianic language to themselves, even in jest. For Trump's critics, the remark symbolised his inflated self-image and disregard for conventional humility in political leadership. For some supporters, it was taken as a tongue-in-cheek way of acknowledging that he believed he was uniquely equipped to confront China and other perceived threats.

The broader significance of the "chosen one" claim is less about its literal truth, there was no suggestion that Trump was actually claiming divine appointment, and more about how it reinforced his cultivated image as a singular, irreplaceable figure.

Whether intentional or not, such statements can deepen the sense among his base that his leadership is exceptional and even destiny-driven, while further alienating those who see them as narcissistic or unpresidential.

In the end, the “I am the chosen one” remark was another example of Trump’s tendency to blur the line between joke and declaration. By mixing humour, bravado, and religious overtones, he ensured the statement would be remembered, replayed, and debated, which is often the real goal of such provocative lines.

Hurricane relief

Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that Puerto Rico received \$92 billion in hurricane relief following the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017. He has used the figure to argue that the island was given excessive aid, sometimes suggesting that its leaders mismanaged or wasted the money. The number has been a recurring talking point in his speeches, interviews, and social media posts.

The claim is misleading. The \$92 billion figure does not represent actual aid delivered to Puerto Rico. It is a projection of total potential federal aid over many years, including funds that have been allocated but not yet spent, and in some cases not yet formally approved for release. As of 2020, the amount actually disbursed to Puerto Rico was far lower, closer to \$20 billion. Much of the remaining projected funding was still tied up in bureaucratic processes, contracting delays, and disagreements between federal agencies and the Puerto Rican government over how the money would be used.

Hurricane Maria caused catastrophic damage to Puerto Rico’s infrastructure, power grid, and housing. Recovery was slow, and many residents were without electricity for months. Critics of the Trump administration accused it of responding sluggishly compared to its handling of disasters on the US mainland. Trump, in turn, defended the response and used the \$92 billion figure to counter claims that Puerto Rico had been neglected.

By framing the relief as a lump sum already given, Trump created the impression that the island had been showered with unprecedented generosity. In reality, the total estimated aid for Puerto Rico over the long term was indeed large, but much of it was still in the pipeline. Moreover, federal disaster relief is not a gift in the casual sense; it is a legal obligation to assist US citizens recovering from major disasters, similar to aid given to Texas, Florida, and other states after hurricanes.

Fact-checkers from multiple outlets, including The Washington Post and Politico, rated the \$92 billion claim as misleading or mostly false. The distinction between allocated, obligated, and disbursed funds is important. Allocated means Congress or an agency has set aside the money. Obligated means contracts or agreements are in place to spend it. Disbursed means it has actually been delivered and used. Trump's number blurred these stages together to give a more dramatic impression.

The significance of this claim lies in how it shaped public perception of Puerto Rico's recovery and its relationship with the federal government. By overstating the aid already provided, Trump fuelled a narrative that the island's leaders were ungrateful or incompetent, while downplaying criticisms of the federal response. The reality was more complicated: a large amount of aid was planned, but only a fraction had reached the people who needed it.

Highest taxed nation

Donald Trump often claimed, both during his campaign and throughout his presidency, that the United States was the "highest taxed nation in the world." He used this line to justify sweeping tax cuts, deregulation, and a general argument that American businesses were overburdened compared to their foreign competitors. It was a simple, memorable claim that played well at rallies and in interviews.

The statement is false when measured by any standard economic metric. Tax levels can be compared in multiple ways, total tax revenue as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), average personal income tax rates, or corporate tax rates, but on none of these measures is the United States the highest taxed nation. In fact, among advanced economies, the US consistently ranks near the bottom in overall taxation relative to GDP.

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which tracks taxation across major economies, shows that before Trump's 2017 tax cuts, total US tax revenue was around 26 percent of GDP. This was far below countries like France, Denmark, and Sweden, where the figure is over 40 percent. Even in terms of corporate taxes, where the statutory US rate was high before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, effective tax rates were lower due to deductions, credits, and loopholes.

Trump's claim likely originated from focusing solely on the then-35 percent statutory corporate tax rate, which was one of the highest among OECD countries

before being reduced to 21 percent in 2017. However, even on that narrow measure, the claim was misleading because many companies paid far less in practice, and because corporate taxes are only a small part of the overall tax picture.

Fact-checkers repeatedly debunked the “highest taxed” claim. The Washington Post’s Fact Checker gave it multiple “Pinocchios,” noting that it was a case of cherry-picking a single statistic and presenting it as representative of the entire tax system. Nevertheless, the line persisted because it was politically effective, it conveyed a sense of unfair burden without requiring the audience to parse detailed tax policy data.

The significance of this claim lies in how it simplifies a complex topic for political gain. Taxes in the United States are relatively low compared to many peer nations, especially when considering the level of public services provided. By insisting that America was the “highest taxed,” Trump framed tax policy as an emergency problem in need of immediate, sweeping cuts, creating a political environment that favoured his legislative agenda.

In reality, the US tax system has flaws and inefficiencies, but being the highest taxed nation in the world is not one of them. The claim was a slogan, not a fact, designed to support a political goal rather than describe the truth.

Stable genius

On 6 January 2018, Donald Trump took to Twitter to defend himself against growing media commentary and insider accounts questioning his mental fitness for office. The trigger was the release of Michael Wolff’s book *Fire and Fury*, which portrayed chaos inside the Trump White House and included claims from aides suggesting he was erratic and ill-informed. In a series of tweets, Trump wrote that his “two greatest assets” were “mental stability and being, like, really smart,” and then declared, “I went from VERY successful businessman, to top T.V. Star... to President of the United States (on my first try). I think that would qualify as not smart, but genius... and a very stable genius at that!”

The phrase “very stable genius” instantly became one of the most famous lines of his presidency. Supporters saw it as a defiant rejection of the media narrative, while critics treated it as self-parody, using it to mock his public speaking style, policy missteps, and frequent social media outbursts. Memes, T-shirts, and even book titles followed, cementing the phrase in political pop culture.

Trump's defence of his intelligence and stability was unusual not only for its grandiosity but also for the fact that presidents rarely feel the need to declare such qualities outright. His reasoning for the claim rested on his personal career trajectory: wealth, fame, and a successful presidential run. He framed these as self-evident proof of genius and emotional steadiness.

The difficulty with the "stable genius" claim is that both stability and genius are subjective and not easily measured. However, public records, fact-checks, and reporting have documented numerous instances of Trump making contradictory statements, lashing out impulsively at perceived slights, and promoting easily debunked falsehoods. While none of these definitively prove instability, they do not align neatly with the image of calm, calculated leadership the phrase implies.

Similarly, the claim to genius is more rhetorical than factual. Trump has touted his education at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and his business successes as proof of exceptional intellect, yet his record also includes multiple bankruptcies, controversial business practices, and public gaffes. His approach to self-promotion often relies on repetition of flattering narratives rather than objective evidence.

The significance of the "very stable genius" moment lies in how it encapsulates Trump's style: boastful, provocative, and rooted in self-branding. The phrase was not just a defence against criticism, it was a deliberate choice to frame himself in the most flattering possible terms, knowing that even if mocked, it would dominate conversation and reinforce his image among loyal supporters.

Whether taken seriously, ironically, or as pure theatre, the "very stable genius" claim is a reminder of how Trump often turned political controversies into opportunities for personal branding, ensuring that the conversation stayed centred on him.

Knows more than generals

During his 2015–2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that he knew more about the terrorist group ISIS than US military generals. One of the most cited examples came at a rally in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in November 2015, where he said, "I know more about ISIS than the generals do, believe me." He used similar lines in interviews, positioning himself as uniquely capable of defeating the group.

The claim was part of a broader narrative in which Trump portrayed the US military leadership as incompetent, bogged down by political correctness, and responsible for years of failed Middle East policy. By presenting himself as an outsider with superior knowledge, he implied that electing him would break this cycle and deliver swift victories.

However, there is no evidence that Trump possessed intelligence or military expertise surpassing that of career generals. At the time he made the claim, Trump had no military service record and no access to classified information about ISIS's operations, capabilities, or leadership. His statements about the group in public were often vague, relying on broad promises to "bomb the hell out of ISIS" and to "take their oil" rather than on specific, credible strategies.

Once in office, Trump did oversee a military campaign that led to the territorial defeat of ISIS's so-called caliphate by 2019. However, the core strategies, partnerships, and operations that achieved this had been set in motion under the Obama administration. Trump's contribution was primarily to loosen certain rules of engagement and increase the tempo of operations, not to develop an entirely new plan from scratch. Military officials themselves credited years of coordinated effort by US and allied forces rather than any single individual's genius.

The "I know more than the generals" remark matters because it reflects a recurring feature of Trump's political style: the public dismissal of expert authority in favour of personal intuition and self-confidence. It also resonated with voters frustrated by years of costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, even though those conflicts were not directly comparable to the fight against ISIS.

In reality, defeating a group like ISIS requires the very resources, coordination, and intelligence networks that career military officers manage daily. Trump's boast was not based on superior knowledge but on a rhetorical strategy designed to make expertise seem irrelevant and his own leadership seem indispensable. Like many of his boldest claims, it was less about factual accuracy and more about projecting dominance in a way that appealed to his audience.

Great, beautiful wall

From the earliest days of his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump promised to build a "great, beautiful wall" along the US-Mexico border to stop illegal immigration, human trafficking, and drug smuggling. He pledged that it would be tall, impenetrable, and

paid for by Mexico. This became one of his signature promises, chanted by supporters at rallies and central to his identity as a candidate who would deliver bold, visible results.

Once in office, the reality was far less dramatic than the campaign image. By the end of his term in January 2021, no new wall had been built across previously unfenced stretches of the border on a scale that matched the promise. The vast majority of construction was replacement or reinforcement of existing barriers, often upgrading vehicle barriers or shorter fencing to taller steel bollard structures. According to US Customs and Border Protection data, of the roughly 450 miles of barrier constructed during Trump's presidency, only about 80 miles were in locations where no barrier had existed before, and many of those miles were in remote areas where illegal crossings were rare.

Mexico never paid for the wall. Instead, the funding came from US taxpayers, through congressional appropriations and a controversial reallocation of money from the Defence Department after Trump declared a national emergency in 2019. This move faced legal challenges and political backlash, with critics arguing that it bypassed Congress's constitutional power of the purse.

The wall also failed to match Trump's descriptions of being "virtually impenetrable." Migrants, smugglers, and activists demonstrated that it could be climbed with simple ladders or breached with power tools. While it did act as a deterrent in some areas, experts agreed that a physical barrier alone could not address the complex realities of migration, which are influenced by economic conditions, violence, and asylum laws.

The "great, beautiful wall" promise matters because it illustrates how a simple campaign slogan can collide with practical, legal, and financial constraints once in office. It also shows how a partial fulfilment of a pledge can still be presented as total success to supporters. Trump frequently framed the wall as being "almost finished" or claimed that "hundreds of miles" of new wall had been built, without distinguishing between new construction and replacement of old barriers.

In the end, the wall existed more as a political symbol than as the transformative border security measure Trump originally described. While some of the upgraded barriers did have an impact in certain locations, the sweeping vision of a Mexico-funded, continuous new structure from coast to coast was never realised.

Best economy ever

Donald Trump frequently claimed that under his leadership, the United States had “the best economy in the history of the world.” He repeated this line in rallies, interviews, and debates, presenting it as proof of his exceptional ability as a leader and dealmaker. The statement was designed to be definitive, leaving no room for debate, and to frame his presidency as an era of unprecedented prosperity.

While the economy was strong before the COVID-19 pandemic, the claim does not hold up when examined against historical data. During Trump’s first three years in office, GDP growth averaged about 2.5 percent per year. This was solid, but not exceptional by post-war standards. Economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s was often higher, and even during the 1990s under Bill Clinton, annual growth rates were stronger in several years.

Unemployment did fall to 3.5 percent in late 2019, the lowest rate in decades. However, this continued a trend that began during the Obama administration, when unemployment fell from 10 percent in 2009 to 4.7 percent by January 2017. Wage growth improved modestly under Trump, but again, it was part of an ongoing recovery rather than a unique surge tied solely to his policies.

The stock market reached record highs during Trump’s presidency, which he cited as further proof of his economic success. Yet markets had also been climbing steadily for years before he took office, driven by low interest rates, corporate earnings growth, and global economic expansion. Under several past presidents, including Clinton and Obama, stock market gains over comparable periods were as strong or stronger.

Trump’s 2017 tax cuts did provide a short-term boost to corporate profits and business investment, but the effect faded by 2019. The tax law also significantly increased the federal deficit, even before the massive pandemic-related spending in 2020.

By early 2020, before COVID-19 hit, the economy was healthy but not historically unmatched. The pandemic then caused the deepest quarterly GDP drop since World War II and the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression, wiping out many of the gains Trump had boasted about.

The “best economy in the history of the world” claim matters because it shows how political leaders can present relative success as absolute, historic achievement by removing context and comparison. Trump took a strong, steady economy that was

part of a decade-long recovery and rebranded it as the singular result of his leadership. While his policies may have influenced certain aspects, the data shows a picture of continuity rather than unprecedented transformation.

Toughest on Russia

Donald Trump often claimed that “nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have.” He used this line throughout his presidency to counter allegations that he was soft on Vladimir Putin or influenced by Russian interests. The statement was intended to portray him as a leader who confronted Moscow more forcefully than any of his predecessors.

It is true that the Trump administration approved certain policies that were adversarial toward Russia. These included supplying lethal aid to Ukraine, expelling Russian diplomats in response to the poisoning of a former spy in the United Kingdom, increasing defence spending for NATO, and imposing multiple rounds of economic sanctions on Russian individuals and entities. Some of these moves went further than the policies of Barack Obama, particularly the provision of weapons to Ukraine.

However, the claim that nobody had been tougher does not hold up historically. Previous administrations took significant actions against Russia or the Soviet Union, including large-scale arms buildups, sanctions, and diplomatic confrontations. Ronald Reagan’s military expansion and Strategic Defense Initiative, for example, were far more sweeping in scale and intent. The George W. Bush and Obama administrations also imposed sanctions and pursued aggressive policies in response to Russian actions.

What made Trump’s claim especially contentious was the contrast between his administration’s formal policies and his personal rhetoric. While sanctions and military aid were enacted, often with strong bipartisan support in Congress, Trump himself frequently praised Putin, questioned the findings of US intelligence agencies on Russian election interference, and publicly expressed a desire for warmer relations. The most notable example came at the July 2018 Helsinki summit, where Trump appeared to side with Putin over his own intelligence services, prompting bipartisan criticism at home.

This gap between actions and words created ambiguity. Supporters argued that the tangible measures against Russia proved toughness regardless of Trump’s public

statements. Critics countered that his personal posture undermined the impact of those measures and sent mixed signals about US resolve.

Fact-checkers and foreign policy analysts generally rated the “nobody tougher” claim as false or exaggerated. While Trump’s administration did take concrete steps against Russia, these were neither unprecedented nor solely his initiative. Many were driven by Congress or career officials and, in some cases, implemented over his objections.

The significance of this claim lies in how it sought to reframe a politically damaging narrative. By declaring himself the toughest president on Russia, Trump attempted to neutralise concerns about his relationship with Putin. In practice, his record was mixed, stronger in some areas than Obama’s, weaker in others, and far from the unmatched toughness he described.

Perfect call

Donald Trump’s description of his 25 July 2019 phone call with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky as “perfect” became one of the most repeated and controversial phrases of his presidency. The call was at the centre of his first impeachment, launched after a whistleblower alleged that Trump had pressured Zelensky to investigate political rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter in exchange for releasing nearly \$400 million in congressionally approved military aid.

When news of the complaint broke, Trump insisted there had been nothing improper, calling the call “perfect” and urging everyone to read the White House summary of the conversation. That summary, however, confirmed that Trump had asked Zelensky to “do us a favour” by looking into debunked conspiracy theories about the 2016 election and investigating the Bidens. The timing of these requests, alongside the withheld aid, fuelled accusations of abuse of power.

The House of Representatives impeached Trump in December 2019 for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. His defenders argued there was no explicit quid pro quo and that the aid was eventually released without Ukraine committing to any investigation. Critics pointed out that the release of aid only came after the allegations became public, and that foreign governments do not need an explicit demand to feel pressured when assistance is on the line.

Describing the call as “perfect” served two purposes for Trump. First, it framed the conversation as beyond reproach, dismissing the allegations as partisan attacks.

Second, it provided a simple, memorable talking point that could be repeated endlessly, regardless of the evidence. Even as transcripts, testimony, and media coverage contradicted his characterisation, Trump's use of the word "perfect" signalled to supporters that there was no need to question his actions.

Fact-checkers and legal analysts overwhelmingly rejected the idea that the call was flawless. While not all agreed on whether it justified impeachment, few considered it appropriate for a president to ask a foreign leader to investigate a domestic political opponent. In diplomatic terms, the exchange was far from perfect, it risked undermining bipartisan support for Ukraine at a time when the country was facing ongoing Russian aggression.

The "perfect call" claim matters because it shows how Trump used repetition and branding to shape public perception. By insisting on a single, emphatic description, he attempted to replace the complex reality of the impeachment evidence with a simple slogan. Whether supporters believed it literally or accepted it as political theatre, the phrase became shorthand for his refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing in the face of overwhelming scrutiny.

Turned down billions

Donald Trump has often claimed that by becoming president, he sacrificed billions of dollars in personal income and business opportunities. He framed this as proof of his patriotism and selflessness, portraying his decision to run for office as a costly act taken purely for the good of the country.

The claim is difficult to verify, and the evidence available does not support it. Before his presidency, Trump's income came from a mixture of property holdings, licensing deals, and media projects such as *The Apprentice*. While some of these ventures likely would have continued to generate revenue had he remained a private citizen, there is no public record showing that he was on track to earn billions during the years he was in office.

In fact, Trump did not divest from his businesses after becoming president. Instead, he placed them in a trust managed by his sons, allowing him to continue benefiting from them financially. Reports by *The Washington Post*, *ProPublica*, and other investigative outlets documented that his properties actively marketed to and profited from political groups, lobbyists, and foreign officials during his presidency. His hotels and golf courses often hosted events connected to his political allies, and his

brand gained unprecedented global exposure.

Forbes estimated that Trump's net worth did decline during his presidency, largely due to the political backlash that made some business partnerships untenable and the pandemic's impact on the hospitality industry. However, the loss was closer to hundreds of millions, not billions. More importantly, this loss was not purely a result of turning down opportunities, it was also a consequence of market forces, reputational damage, and the inherent volatility of his business sectors.

The "billions lost" claim also ignores the substantial personal benefits Trump gained from holding the presidency. These included the ability to shape policy in ways favourable to his business interests, direct access to global leaders and investors, and the strengthening of his political brand, which has since become a lucrative fundraising and media enterprise.

By presenting his presidency as a monumental financial sacrifice, Trump sought to position himself as a public servant motivated solely by duty rather than profit. In reality, the picture is more complex: while his time in office may have reduced his wealth on paper, it also created new revenue streams, enhanced his visibility, and cemented his influence in ways that may yield significant long-term financial rewards.

The significance of this claim lies in how it reframes a personal choice with mixed outcomes into a narrative of pure self-denial. It is a carefully crafted image, designed to inspire admiration and counter the widespread perception that Trump's public service was intertwined with his private financial interests.

Enemy of the people

Donald Trump repeatedly referred to the press as "the enemy of the people" during his presidency, starting in early 2017 and continuing throughout his term. The phrase, historically associated with authoritarian regimes, was used to attack mainstream news organisations that he believed were biased against him. He most often applied it to outlets like CNN, The New York Times, and The Washington Post, while praising coverage from friendly networks such as Fox News.

Trump claimed the phrase was justified because, in his view, the media deliberately misled the public, fabricated stories, and ignored positive news about his administration. His use of the term escalated tensions between the White House and the press corps, turning routine political criticism into a direct challenge to the legitimacy of independent journalism.

The impact of this rhetoric was significant. Journalists reported receiving increased threats, and organisations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists warned that the “enemy of the people” label undermined trust in the free press and could encourage violence. The phrase also alarmed historians and political scientists, who noted its long history as a tool of authoritarian leaders to discredit dissent and consolidate power.

Factually, the role of the media in the United States is to hold government accountable, not to serve as its adversary or ally. While errors and biases exist in journalism, as in any field, broadly labelling the press as an “enemy” undermines the First Amendment protections that form a cornerstone of American democracy. By conflating unfavourable coverage with disinformation, Trump blurred the line between legitimate scrutiny and malicious intent.

The phrase also served a political purpose. By framing negative stories as attacks from a hostile force, Trump gave his supporters a ready-made reason to dismiss damaging reports without engaging with their substance. This approach strengthened loyalty among his base while further polarising the national conversation about truth and credibility.

The “enemy of the people” line matters because it illustrates how language can be used to delegitimise institutions that are vital to democratic governance. While presidents have always clashed with the press, Trump’s repeated and unapologetic use of this historically charged phrase marked a sharp break from tradition, raising questions about how far political leaders can go in vilifying the free press without eroding the public’s ability to hold power to account.

Best words

During a campaign rally in December 2015, Donald Trump defended his communication skills by saying, “I’m very highly educated. I know words, I have the best words.” The line was intended as a boast about his intelligence and speaking ability, but it quickly became one of the most widely mocked quotes of his political career because of its simplicity and lack of sophistication.

Trump often presented himself as a master communicator, claiming that his success in business, television, and politics was due in part to his choice of words and ability to connect with audiences. The “best words” remark fit into this self-image, portraying him as someone whose verbal talents were unmatched. However, it also

highlighted a contradiction: while he praised his own vocabulary, his speaking style was often repetitive, informal, and marked by simple phrasing.

Critics seized on the quote as an example of Trump's tendency to overstate his abilities while inadvertently undercutting his point. The phrase "I have the best words" became a staple in political satire, appearing on T-shirts, memes, and comedy sketches. It was also used as shorthand for moments when Trump made factual errors, used malapropisms, or contradicted himself in public statements.

Supporters, on the other hand, often argued that his plainspoken style was a strength. They saw it as evidence that he could speak directly to ordinary people without hiding behind political jargon. For them, "best words" was less about vocabulary breadth and more about choosing language that resonated emotionally with his audience.

There is no objective way to measure whether a politician has "the best words," but linguistic analysis of Trump's speeches has shown that he often speaks at a lower grade level than most recent presidents, relying heavily on short sentences and repeated phrases. While this may not reflect poorly in terms of audience engagement, it does not support the idea of an exceptional or unusually refined vocabulary.

The significance of the "best words" claim lies in how it captures Trump's brand of self-promotion: confident, catchy, and unconcerned with whether the statement can be substantiated. Like many of his most memorable lines, it worked as a sound bite that stuck in people's minds, ensuring that even his critics helped spread it far and wide. Whether meant seriously or playfully, the remark has endured as one of the most recognisable examples of his rhetorical style.

Tech expert

Donald Trump has, on several occasions, claimed that he knows more about technology than anyone. Variations of this boast appeared throughout his campaign and presidency, often in the context of cybersecurity, social media, or military equipment. One example came in 2019, when discussing the threat of cyberattacks, he told reporters, "I know more about technology than anybody."

The statement, like many of Trump's self-assessments, is impossible to verify in any literal sense. Technology is a vast field covering everything from basic computing to advanced artificial intelligence, telecommunications, engineering, and beyond. No

single person can be an expert in all of it. Trump's background offers no evidence that he has specialised expertise in any branch of technology. His career has been in real estate, branding, and entertainment, and while he has used technology as part of those businesses, there is no record of him contributing to technological innovation or policy in a way that would justify such a sweeping claim.

When pressed on these kinds of statements, Trump often reframed them as general confidence in his ability to “understand” and “manage” issues, rather than as literal technical expertise. However, he sometimes coupled the boast with examples that did not support it. For instance, in discussing cybersecurity, he once suggested that the best way to protect sensitive information was to “write it out and have it delivered by courier,” a comment that was widely mocked as outdated.

During his presidency, Trump's policies on technology were mixed. His administration pushed for 5G infrastructure expansion, took high-profile actions against Chinese tech companies such as Huawei and TikTok, and made investments in artificial intelligence research. At the same time, critics accused him of lacking a coherent long-term technology strategy and of making statements that revealed a limited grasp of the underlying issues.

The “know more than anybody” phrasing is a hallmark of Trump's rhetorical style. He has applied it not just to technology, but to a wide range of subjects such as military strategy, taxes, renewable energy, and campaign finance. The appeal of this approach is that it projects total mastery, reassuring supporters that he is in full control, while frustrating opponents who see it as empty bravado.

The significance of the “I know more about technology than anybody” claim lies less in whether it is factually accurate, which it is not, and more in how it reinforces his brand as someone who is supremely confident in all areas, regardless of expertise. It is another example of how Trump uses exaggeration as a political tool, ensuring his statements are memorable even if they are implausible.

Respects women most

Donald Trump has repeatedly said that “nobody respects women more than I do.” This claim has appeared in debates, interviews, and rallies, often as a quick defence when faced with accusations of sexism, harassment, or derogatory remarks about women. The statement is absolute in its scope, placing Trump above all others in his supposed respect for women.

The problem is that the claim is sharply at odds with a long public record. Trump has been accused by more than a dozen women of sexual misconduct, ranging from unwanted kissing to assault. He has denied all allegations, but several of the accusers have provided consistent accounts over many years. In addition to these accusations, his recorded comments in the 2005 Access Hollywood tape, in which he bragged about grabbing women without consent, undercut the image of deep respect he claimed to hold.

Even outside the sphere of personal conduct, Trump's public remarks about women have often been belittling or demeaning. He has insulted the appearance of female journalists, political opponents, and celebrities, sometimes in crude terms. When confronted with these comments, he has typically dismissed them as humour or as counterpunching against critics.

In policy terms, Trump did appoint women to significant roles in his administration, including Kellyanne Conway as counsellor to the president and Betsy DeVos as secretary of education. Supporters cite these appointments as evidence of his willingness to work with and promote women. Critics point out that representation alone does not necessarily equate to respect, particularly when the surrounding rhetoric is hostile or dismissive.

The "respects women most" line fits into Trump's broader habit of using superlatives to describe himself. By framing respect as a competition that he wins outright, he shifts the discussion from specific examples to a sweeping, unprovable claim. This tactic makes it harder to pin him down with factual rebuttals, since it is not grounded in measurable evidence.

The significance of this claim is twofold. First, it shows how Trump attempts to neutralise damaging narratives with absolute counterclaims. Second, it reveals the gap between image and record, a gap wide enough that the phrase is often met with laughter or disbelief from critics. In reality, Trump's history with women, both personally and publicly, contains many examples that contradict the idea that he is uniquely respectful. The claim works as a defiant talking point, but it collapses under the weight of documented behaviour.

Airports in 1775

On 4 July 2019, during his "Salute to America" speech in Washington, Donald Trump recounted a version of the American Revolutionary War that included an

unusual detail. While praising the bravery of George Washington's troops, he said, "Our army manned the air, it rammed the ramparts, it took over the airports, it did everything it had to do." The remark immediately drew attention because airports did not exist until the early 20th century, more than a century after the events of 1775.

Trump later blamed the slip on a malfunctioning teleprompter combined with heavy rain, saying that the words were hard to read and that he had to improvise. Supporters accepted this as a simple mistake, pointing out that public speakers occasionally misspeak. Critics saw it as an example of his tendency to talk confidently even when facts are wrong, and to deliver lines without apparent awareness of their historical inaccuracy.

The comment became a minor internet sensation, with "1775 airports" trending on social media. Memes depicted colonial soldiers storming modern runways and Revolutionary War figures boarding passenger jets. While much of this was light-hearted, it also reinforced the perception among critics that Trump sometimes failed to grasp details that most people take for granted.

On its own, this moment was not politically significant in the way that major policy disputes or scandals were. However, it is worth noting because it illustrates a recurring feature of Trump's speaking style. He often spoke quickly, avoided admitting error in the moment, and projected confidence even when the statement made little sense. By the time clarifications arrived, the line had already cemented itself in public memory.

The "airports in 1775" line matters less for its content than for what it reveals about Trump's approach to communication. He preferred to keep moving forward, rarely pausing to self-correct, and sometimes explained mistakes by blaming technology or other factors rather than acknowledging a simple slip of the tongue. While harmless in this instance, the pattern had greater consequences when the subject matter was more serious, as inaccurate statements could shape public understanding of events and policy.

Fastest vaccine rollout

Donald Trump frequently claimed that his administration delivered the fastest vaccine rollout in history. He linked this achievement to "Operation Warp Speed," the public-private partnership launched in May 2020 to accelerate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The phrase "fastest in history"

was repeated often in the months after the first vaccines became available, and Trump presented it as proof of his unmatched leadership and ability to get things done.

It is true that the timeline for COVID-19 vaccine development and initial distribution was unprecedented. Less than a year passed between the identification of the virus and the first emergency use authorisations for the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines in December 2020. This speed was due to multiple factors: advances in vaccine technology, early genome sequencing of the virus, and massive government funding that reduced financial risks for pharmaceutical companies.

Operation Warp Speed played a significant role in funding research and securing advance purchase agreements for hundreds of millions of doses. The US government committed billions of dollars to vaccine developers, enabling large-scale production to begin before clinical trials were completed. This meant that once authorisation came, distribution could begin almost immediately.

However, Trump's "fastest rollout" claim blurs the distinction between vaccine development and vaccine administration. While development was indeed rapid, the early rollout to the public was slower than promised. By the end of 2020, only about 2.8 million Americans had received a first dose, far short of the administration's stated goal of 20 million by that point. Logistical challenges, supply chain issues, and coordination problems between federal and state governments all contributed to the shortfall.

Trump also took personal credit for scientific breakthroughs that were the result of decades of research, much of it publicly funded long before his presidency. The mRNA technology used by Pfizer and Moderna had been in development since the 1990s, and global collaboration, not just US policy, accelerated the process.

The "fastest vaccine rollout" claim matters because it shows how Trump framed a complex, shared achievement as a singular personal triumph. While it is fair to credit his administration with funding and logistical support that helped speed vaccine availability, the reality is more nuanced than the slogan suggests. The development phase was historic in speed, but the actual rollout to the public fell short of the lofty image he projected.

Acid-washed emails

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump repeatedly accused Hillary

Clinton of “acid washing” her private email server. The phrase was meant to evoke a mental image of physically destroying evidence with powerful chemicals, suggesting deliberate and almost criminal destruction of government records. He used the line in rallies, interviews, and debates, often as part of his broader claim that Clinton had committed serious crimes while serving as secretary of state.

In reality, “acid washing” is not a technical term used in data management. What Trump was referring to was the use of a software program called BleachBit, which can permanently delete files from a computer so they cannot be recovered. Clinton’s team used the program to remove emails from her private server that they said were personal and unrelated to government work, before turning over work-related messages to the State Department.

The FBI investigated Clinton’s use of a private email server and concluded that while her handling of classified information was “extremely careless,” there was no evidence of intent to violate laws governing classified material. The deletion of personal emails with BleachBit was not illegal, though critics argued it was suspicious and undermined transparency.

Trump’s use of “acid wash” as a description was factually inaccurate but rhetorically effective. It transformed a relatively mundane IT procedure into something that sounded sinister and destructive. By choosing a term associated with chemical corrosion, he heightened the sense of wrongdoing in the minds of his audience.

The phrase also served Trump politically by keeping the Clinton email controversy alive long after the FBI had closed its investigation. It allowed him to cast doubt on her honesty, frame her as corrupt, and rally supporters who believed she had escaped accountability.

The “acid-washed emails” claim illustrates how Trump often used colourful, misleading language to reshape public understanding of technical or bureaucratic matters. It was not about explaining the facts of the case but about crafting an emotionally charged image that stuck in people’s minds. Even years later, the phrase remains part of political debates, showing how effective such rhetoric can be at outlasting the truth.

Bringing coal back

Donald Trump often promised to “bring coal back” as part of his broader pledge

to revive traditional American industries. He framed this goal as a way to restore jobs in struggling mining communities, reduce dependence on foreign energy, and preserve a way of life in regions hit hard by industrial decline. The promise was especially prominent during his 2016 campaign and early presidency, when he portrayed himself as the saviour of the coal industry against what he called the “war on coal” waged by environmental regulations.

Once in office, Trump rolled back numerous environmental rules affecting coal mining and coal-fired power plants. These included repealing the Obama-era Clean Power Plan, loosening restrictions on mountaintop removal mining, and easing limits on toxic waste from coal plants. He also withdrew the United States from the Paris climate agreement, framing it as an unfair burden on American energy producers.

Despite these efforts, the coal industry did not experience a significant revival. Employment in coal mining, which had been declining for decades due to automation and competition from cheaper energy sources like natural gas and renewables, remained low. While there was a modest uptick in coal jobs early in Trump’s presidency, the numbers soon fell again, and by the end of his term, coal production and consumption were near historic lows.

Market forces, not just regulations, were the primary driver of coal’s decline. Natural gas from the fracking boom proved far cheaper for electricity generation, and renewable energy costs continued to drop. Power companies shifted away from coal because it was less economically competitive, regardless of changes in federal policy.

Trump’s “bring coal back” claim matters because it reflects the limits of presidential influence over industries shaped by global market trends. His deregulatory agenda may have slowed the pace of coal’s decline slightly, but it could not reverse the structural changes reshaping the energy sector.

In political terms, the promise succeeded in signalling solidarity with coal country and portraying Trump as a defender of traditional jobs against environmentalists and urban elites. In practical terms, the revival never came. The industry remained in long-term decline, leaving communities still facing the same economic challenges they had before his presidency.

Best builder

Donald Trump has long claimed that “nobody builds better than I do,” a boast that

dates back to his career as a real estate developer and continued throughout his political life. He used this claim to frame himself as a master of large-scale projects, someone whose construction expertise would translate into effective governance, especially when proposing infrastructure initiatives or the border wall.

Trump's business career does include the development of high-profile buildings, including Trump Tower in New York, various hotels, golf courses, and resorts around the world. Many of these projects became instantly recognisable due to their size, location, or the Trump name emblazoned on them. Supporters see this as evidence that he understands complex construction projects and has the skills to oversee them successfully.

However, the claim that nobody builds better than he does is highly subjective and does not withstand scrutiny when examined against the full record. Several of Trump's ventures have been plagued by delays, cost overruns, lawsuits, and quality concerns. Some of his branded projects were developed by other companies under licensing agreements, meaning Trump's role was limited to selling his name rather than directing the actual construction.

Notably, some of his projects have faced structural issues. The Trump SoHo building in New York experienced sales struggles and legal disputes. Trump's Atlantic City casinos went bankrupt multiple times, and his Trump University real estate seminars were widely criticised as misleading. While not all of these failures involved literal construction flaws, they weakened the image of unqualified success that the "best builder" claim suggests.

When in office, Trump frequently invoked his building prowess in connection with infrastructure policy. He promised vast new public works, including airports, bridges, and highways, but few major projects were completed under his administration. Even his signature construction pledge, the border wall, fell far short of the ambitious new structure he described during the campaign.

The "best builder" claim fits Trump's broader pattern of using superlatives to promote himself. It works as a branding tool, conjuring an image of precision, quality, and success, regardless of mixed results in reality. While he undeniably has experience in property development and branding, the idea that no one builds better is marketing rhetoric rather than an objective truth. The statement reflects the way Trump sells himself, through grand declarations designed to be memorable, even if they are not entirely accurate.

Energy independence

Donald Trump often claimed that the United States achieved energy independence during his presidency. He presented this as a direct result of his policies, portraying it as a historic milestone that ended reliance on foreign energy and made the country stronger both economically and strategically.

It is true that during Trump's term, the United States became a net exporter of energy for the first time in decades. This meant the country exported more energy than it imported, largely due to increases in domestic oil and natural gas production. However, this trend began years before Trump took office, driven by advances in hydraulic fracturing, horizontal drilling, and other technologies that expanded access to shale oil and gas.

The shift toward net energy exports started under the Obama administration, when production surged and imports of crude oil fell. By 2016, the US was already close to this position. Trump's policies, which included rolling back environmental regulations and opening more federal land to drilling, may have encouraged further production, but they were building on an existing trajectory.

The term "energy independence" can also be misleading. Even as a net exporter, the US continued to import millions of barrels of oil per day. These imports were often offset by exports of different grades of crude oil or refined products. The country remained tied to global energy markets, meaning that events overseas, such as disruptions in supply or changes in demand, still affected domestic prices.

Trump's use of the term served a political purpose. It allowed him to present the United States as no longer vulnerable to foreign pressure over energy and to frame himself as the leader who delivered that security. In reality, the milestone was the result of long-term industry trends, market dynamics, and technological innovation, rather than a single administration's policy shift.

The "energy independence" claim matters because it shows how political leaders can take credit for structural changes that began long before they arrived. By declaring victory on an issue that is more complex than the slogan suggests, Trump simplified a decades-long transformation into a personal achievement, ignoring the fact that global market forces still had the power to disrupt American energy supply and prices.

Invented Abraham Accords

Donald Trump has often implied, and sometimes outright claimed, that nobody had heard of the Abraham Accords before he came along, framing the historic agreements as entirely his creation. Signed in 2020, the accords normalised diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab nations, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. Trump presented them as a breakthrough in Middle East peace, one that only his leadership could have achieved.

The agreements were indeed a notable diplomatic achievement, and Trump's administration played a key role in brokering them. His team, led by Jared Kushner and other senior officials, engaged in sustained negotiations that resulted in the first new normalisation deals between Israel and Arab states in decades. The accords were widely praised as a positive step for regional stability and economic cooperation.

However, the idea that Trump “invented” the concept is misleading. Secret and semi-public talks between Israel and various Arab states had been taking place for years, driven by shared concerns over Iran's influence and other regional issues. These relationships were quietly improving well before Trump took office, with intelligence sharing, trade discussions, and unofficial contacts already underway.

Trump's claim also downplays the role of other leaders and governments. The accords required political will from all parties, and leaders in Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and other countries had their own strategic reasons for pursuing formal ties. While the US provided key diplomatic support and incentives, including arms deals and political concessions, it was not the sole driving force.

The “nobody knew” framing served Trump politically by presenting the accords as an unexpected triumph that only he could deliver. This aligns with his broader habit of portraying major events as the result of his personal genius rather than as the culmination of complex, multi-party negotiations.

The significance of the claim lies in how it simplifies a complicated diplomatic process into a single, branded achievement. While Trump and his administration deserve credit for facilitating the agreements and sealing the deals, the accords were the product of longstanding trends and mutual interests that existed before his presidency. By framing them as something entirely new and his alone, he turned a multilateral diplomatic success into a personal campaign slogan.

Michigan Man of the Year

Donald Trump has often told audiences that he was once named “Michigan’s Man of the Year.” The claim appeared in multiple speeches, typically as a way to introduce stories about trade, manufacturing, or his supposed long-standing connection to the state. It served as a flattering credential, suggesting that Michigan had formally honoured him for his achievements or contributions.

The problem is that there is no public record of such an award ever being given to Trump. Journalists and fact-checkers have searched archives, contacted state officials, and reviewed the records of known Michigan awards without finding any evidence that a “Man of the Year” title was bestowed on him. The most likely explanation is that Trump attended a Republican event in Michigan years before his presidency where he was praised or introduced warmly, and he later reframed that experience as receiving a formal title.

Trump’s repetition of the claim, despite the absence of proof, fits into his broader tendency to embellish or inflate personal accolades. By turning a routine political or social appearance into an official-sounding award, he added prestige and credibility to his narrative. The vagueness of the “Man of the Year” title also makes it difficult to challenge in real time, since it could plausibly refer to a range of informal honours or events.

Supporters tend to dismiss the lack of documentation as unimportant, focusing instead on the idea that Trump’s business success and political rise would naturally earn him such recognition. Critics see it as another example of him creating or exaggerating personal achievements to bolster his image.

The “Michigan Man of the Year” claim matters less for what it says about Michigan and more for what it reveals about Trump’s approach to storytelling. Facts can be adjusted, details can be filled in later, and a loosely remembered event can be turned into an impressive-sounding award. This tactic strengthens his personal brand among supporters while frustrating opponents who see it as a casual disregard for truth.

Trade expert

Donald Trump has frequently claimed that nobody understands trade better than he does. This assertion was central to his political persona, as he positioned himself as the first president in decades willing to take on what he described as unfair trade

deals that hurt American workers. He cited his experience in business as proof that he knew how to negotiate and win in the global marketplace.

Trump's presidency was marked by aggressive trade policies, most notably the imposition of tariffs on steel, aluminium, and a wide range of Chinese goods. He argued that these tariffs would level the playing field, bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States, and reduce the trade deficit. His administration renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), replacing it with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which he touted as a vastly improved deal.

While Trump's willingness to confront trade partners was a departure from recent presidents, the results of his policies were mixed. The trade deficit did not shrink during his term; in fact, it grew in some years. Many economists concluded that the tariffs acted as a tax on American consumers and businesses, raising prices on goods and disrupting supply chains. Some industries, such as agriculture, were hit particularly hard, leading the administration to provide billions in subsidies to offset losses caused by retaliatory tariffs.

The USMCA did update some provisions of NAFTA, particularly in areas such as digital trade, labour protections, and automotive manufacturing rules. However, many of these changes were incremental rather than revolutionary, and the agreement retained much of NAFTA's original framework.

Trump's claim to be the ultimate trade expert rests largely on self-promotion rather than measurable outcomes. While he did focus political attention on trade issues and challenge long-standing arrangements, the economic impact of his approach remains contested. Supporters view his hard-line stance as necessary to protect American jobs, while critics argue that his policies were more disruptive than beneficial.

The "trade expert" claim matters because it reflects Trump's strategy of presenting himself as uniquely qualified in areas where outcomes are difficult to measure definitively. By blending business bravado with selective framing of results, he maintained the image of a master negotiator, even when the evidence suggested a more complicated reality.

Largest stock market

Donald Trump often claimed that under his presidency the United States had the largest or greatest stock market in history. He used this assertion to demonstrate the

strength of the economy and his success as a leader, frequently pointing to rising market indices such as the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500, and the Nasdaq as proof of his achievements.

It is true that the stock market performed strongly for much of Trump's presidency, setting multiple record highs before the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020. The Dow Jones, for example, climbed from around 19,800 on his inauguration day to over 29,000 by February 2020. Trump regularly highlighted these numbers at rallies and on social media, framing them as a direct result of his tax cuts, deregulation efforts, and trade policies.

However, the claim that this was the "largest" stock market in history is imprecise. Stock market values naturally tend to grow over time due to inflation, population growth, and technological progress, so breaking records is not unusual. When adjusted for inflation or measured as a percentage increase rather than in absolute points, the Trump-era gains were strong but not unprecedented. Other periods, such as the 1990s under Bill Clinton or the post-financial crisis rebound under Barack Obama, saw comparable or even larger percentage increases.

The market also experienced significant volatility during Trump's term. The US-China trade war in 2018 and 2019 triggered sharp drops, and the pandemic caused one of the fastest market crashes in history, erasing years of gains in a matter of weeks. Although markets recovered quickly after massive government stimulus and Federal Reserve intervention, these factors were not under Trump's direct control.

The "largest stock market" claim simplifies a complex picture. While markets were strong for much of his presidency, their performance was influenced by many forces beyond presidential policy, including global economic trends, corporate earnings, interest rates, and investor sentiment.

The significance of this claim lies in how Trump used market performance as a political scoreboard. By presenting stock market highs as personal victories, he reinforced his image as a businessman-president whose leadership was tied to financial success. The reality is that while his policies may have contributed to short-term investor optimism, the long-term drivers of market growth extend far beyond any one presidency.

Saved pre-existing conditions

Donald Trump frequently claimed that he had saved protections for people with

pre-existing medical conditions. This talking point was central to his healthcare messaging, especially in response to criticism that his administration was trying to dismantle the Affordable Care Act (ACA). He portrayed himself as a defender of patients who might otherwise face higher premiums or be denied coverage altogether.

In reality, the ACA, also known as Obamacare, already guaranteed these protections when Trump took office in 2017. The law barred insurance companies from charging more or refusing coverage to individuals with pre-existing conditions, a provision that enjoyed broad public support. Rather than strengthen this safeguard, Trump repeatedly supported efforts to repeal the ACA in Congress, which would have eliminated these protections unless they were replaced with new legislation.

His administration also backed a lawsuit, led by Republican state attorneys general, seeking to strike down the ACA in its entirety. Had the suit succeeded, the legal guarantee for pre-existing condition coverage would have been removed. Trump promised that his administration would enact a replacement plan that kept these protections, but no such plan ever materialised during his presidency.

When pressed on the issue, Trump often cited executive orders and policy statements declaring his support for pre-existing condition protections. However, these measures had no binding legal effect and did not create or maintain the protections already provided by law. Legal experts noted that without the ACA, his orders would not prevent insurers from denying coverage or charging more.

The “saved pre-existing conditions” claim is significant because it reverses the reality of his record. Rather than being the protector of these provisions, Trump supported policies and legal challenges that would have dismantled them. The popularity of the protections explains why he repeatedly asserted this claim despite the contradiction.

It is an example of how Trump often took an issue where public opinion was firmly in one direction and attempted to position himself on the popular side, even if his actions pointed the other way. The result was a talking point that sounded reassuring to voters but was not supported by the facts.

Environment expert

Donald Trump often claimed that “nobody knows more about the environment than I do.” He used this assertion to counter criticism of his environmental policies,

portraying himself as both knowledgeable and deeply committed to clean air, clean water, and conservation. The statement was meant to disarm environmental concerns while justifying his administration's rollbacks of regulations.

In office, Trump frequently highlighted the United States' environmental achievements, citing statistics on air and water quality improvements. Many of these trends, however, began decades earlier under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The long-term decline in air pollutants, for example, was driven by laws like the Clean Air Act and by technological advances in industry and transportation, not by policies introduced during Trump's presidency.

Trump's environmental record was dominated by deregulation. His administration rolled back or weakened more than 100 environmental rules, including protections for waterways, limits on methane emissions, and fuel efficiency standards for vehicles. He withdrew the United States from the Paris climate agreement, arguing that it unfairly burdened American industry while letting other nations pollute freely. Supporters saw these moves as necessary to protect jobs and economic growth, while critics saw them as a retreat from environmental leadership.

Despite his "expert" claim, Trump often made statements that conflicted with established science. He repeatedly questioned the reality of human-driven climate change, at times calling it a hoax, and suggested that wind turbines caused health problems. His focus on short-term economic benefits over long-term environmental sustainability was consistent throughout his term.

The "environment expert" label was a political tool rather than an accurate description of his background or policies. Trump had no formal training in environmental science, and his business history included projects that faced environmental violations and lawsuits. By presenting himself as uniquely knowledgeable, he sought to deflect criticism and assure supporters that deregulation would not harm the environment.

The significance of this claim lies in how it reframed environmental policy debates. By asserting personal expertise, Trump shifted the conversation away from scientific consensus and toward his own authority, allowing him to present regulatory rollbacks as informed decisions rather than as political concessions to industry.

Revived manufacturing

Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that he had brought back American

manufacturing jobs, often portraying his presidency as a renaissance for the industrial heartland. He used this claim to appeal to working-class voters, especially in Midwestern states hit hard by factory closures and offshoring.

In the early part of Trump's term, manufacturing employment did grow. Between January 2017 and December 2019, the sector added roughly 480,000 jobs. Trump credited this growth to his trade policies, corporate tax cuts, and deregulation, arguing that these measures gave companies the confidence to expand production in the United States. He frequently pointed to high-profile announcements from companies like Carrier and Foxconn as proof that manufacturing was coming back.

However, the picture was less dramatic than Trump's rhetoric suggested. The manufacturing gains in the first three years of his term were part of a longer recovery that began after the 2008 financial crisis. From 2010 to 2016, under Barack Obama, the sector added about 900,000 jobs. Economic factors such as a strong global economy, rising demand, and a weak dollar in certain years also played a role in boosting exports and production.

By mid-2019, manufacturing growth began to slow, partly due to the US-China trade war. Tariffs on imported materials raised costs for many American manufacturers, and retaliatory tariffs reduced demand for US goods abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic then caused a sharp downturn in 2020, erasing many of the earlier gains as factories closed and supply chains were disrupted.

The "revived manufacturing" claim glosses over the cyclical nature of industrial employment and the long-term challenges the sector faces from automation and global competition. While Trump's policies may have influenced some short-term decisions, they did not fundamentally reverse the decades-long trend of manufacturing jobs declining as a share of the workforce.

Politically, the claim was powerful because it tied into Trump's image as a defender of blue-collar workers. In practical terms, manufacturing did see some growth during his presidency, but the scale and durability of the revival were far smaller than his speeches suggested. The reality is that no president can single-handedly bring back manufacturing to the levels of the mid-20th century, when the industry dominated the American economy.

Tax expert

Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that nobody knows more about taxes than

he does. He used this assertion to bolster his image as a savvy businessman who could reform the tax system to benefit ordinary Americans. The claim also carried an implied edge, that his personal knowledge of the tax code came from exploiting it successfully, and that he would use that insight to close loopholes and make the system fairer.

During his presidency, Trump's signature legislative achievement was the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. This law significantly reduced the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, lowered individual income tax rates for most brackets, and increased the standard deduction. Supporters argued that these changes spurred economic growth, encouraged investment, and let Americans keep more of their money.

Critics, however, pointed out that the tax cuts disproportionately benefited corporations and wealthy individuals. Analyses by independent groups, such as the Tax Policy Center, found that high-income households received the largest percentage gains, while the middle class and working poor saw smaller benefits. Many of the individual tax cuts were temporary and set to expire after 2025, while the corporate tax cuts were permanent.

Trump's personal tax history also cast a shadow over his "expert" claim. Investigations by The New York Times revealed that he paid little or no federal income tax in several years, largely due to heavy use of deductions, losses, and other tax strategies available to real estate developers. While legal, these practices raised questions about whether his expertise served the public interest or merely highlighted his ability to avoid taxes.

The "tax expert" label was as much about branding as about policy. It implied mastery of a complex system, yet his administration's reforms reflected long-standing Republican tax priorities rather than a unique personal vision. By promoting the idea that he understood taxes better than anyone, Trump positioned himself as the ultimate insider who could beat the system, but the changes he implemented often reinforced advantages for people already at the top.

The significance of this claim lies in how it merges personal mythology with political action. Trump's boast played well with supporters who saw him as a fighter for their wallets, even though the practical effects of his tax policy were uneven and often favoured the wealthy.

Drone expert

Donald Trump has claimed that nobody knows more about drones than he does. This assertion appeared in interviews and speeches when discussing military technology, border security, or law enforcement. The statement was intended to present him as fully informed about modern defence capabilities and as someone who could make the best decisions on how to use them.

Drones, formally known as unmanned aerial vehicles, have been used by the United States for surveillance, targeted strikes, and reconnaissance for decades. Under Trump, drone strikes increased significantly compared to the Obama administration, especially in regions like Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen. His administration also loosened rules on reporting civilian casualties from such strikes, reducing transparency.

In the context of border security, Trump sometimes suggested that drones could be an effective tool for monitoring illegal crossings. While drones can aid in surveillance, experts have pointed out that they are not a replacement for physical barriers or human patrols, and their effectiveness depends on how quickly border agents can respond to what the drones detect.

Despite the “expert” label, there is no evidence that Trump had special technical knowledge about drone systems beyond what was briefed to him by military and security advisers. His statements about drones often focused on their general capabilities rather than detailed operational or technological specifics.

The “drone expert” claim reflects Trump’s broader habit of presenting himself as uniquely knowledgeable across a wide range of topics. While he was commander-in-chief and therefore authorised to make strategic decisions about drone use, the expertise in developing, operating, and deploying drones rests with military personnel, engineers, and intelligence specialists.

The significance of the claim lies in how it adds to his cultivated image as a hands-on, all-knowing leader. By asserting mastery over highly technical subjects, Trump reinforced the perception among his supporters that he was in complete control of complex matters. In practice, his role was one of policy direction rather than operational expertise.

Facebook expert

Donald Trump has claimed that nobody knows more about Facebook than he

does. He has made similar statements about other technology companies, but his remarks about Facebook often came in the context of accusing social media platforms of bias against conservatives. By portraying himself as an expert, he sought to strengthen his argument that these platforms were unfairly targeting him and his supporters.

Facebook played a significant role in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, where his team made extensive use of targeted advertising and data analytics to reach voters. His campaign's digital operation, led by Brad Parscale, ran thousands of micro-targeted ads on the platform, tailoring messages to specific demographics. These methods were effective in mobilising supporters and reaching undecided voters, leading Trump to credit Facebook as an important tool in his victory.

However, Trump's "expert" claim is more about political positioning than technical knowledge. While he was a beneficiary of sophisticated Facebook advertising strategies, much of the planning and execution was handled by campaign staff and outside consultants. There is no evidence that Trump personally designed ads, managed data, or oversaw the technical aspects of the platform's use.

His criticism of Facebook intensified during and after the 2020 election, when the platform began flagging or removing posts that violated its misinformation policies. Trump accused the company of censorship and political interference, framing himself as a victim of an unfair system. By claiming expertise, he positioned himself as someone who understood Facebook's inner workings and could expose its alleged biases.

The "Facebook expert" claim is significant because it combines Trump's self-promotion with his broader narrative about media and technology bias. It presents him as both a skilled user of the platform and a credible critic of its policies. In reality, his involvement with Facebook's operational side was minimal, and his expertise lay more in recognising its political utility than in mastering its technical or business operations.

Greatest military

Donald Trump often claimed that under his leadership the United States had the greatest military in history. He linked this assertion to increased defence spending, new weapons systems, and his efforts to support service members and veterans. The statement was used both to project strength internationally and to reinforce his image

as a president who prioritised national security.

During Trump's presidency, Congress approved significant increases in the defence budget, rising from about 611 billion US dollars in 2016 to roughly 738 billion in 2020. These funds went toward modernising equipment, expanding the size of the force, and improving readiness. Trump also announced new initiatives such as the creation of the US Space Force, the first new military branch in more than 70 years.

Supporters argued that these moves rebuilt a military they believed had been neglected under previous administrations. They pointed to rising troop pay, investment in advanced aircraft and naval vessels, and an emphasis on preparedness as evidence that the military had been strengthened.

However, the claim that the United States had the "greatest" military in history is subjective and impossible to measure definitively. The US military was already the largest and most technologically advanced in the world before Trump took office, and while budget increases continued under his leadership, they did not represent a historic transformation. Many procurement programs he touted were initiated years earlier, and some faced delays or cost overruns.

Critics also noted that military greatness involves more than spending levels. Strategic decision-making, alliances, and long-term planning all contribute to military effectiveness. Trump's strained relationships with some NATO allies, abrupt policy shifts in conflict zones, and public disputes with military leaders led some analysts to question whether his approach truly strengthened the armed forces in a lasting way.

The "greatest military" claim matters because it reflects Trump's broader tendency to equate size and spending with excellence. While his administration did increase resources for the armed forces, the idea that these changes made the US military the greatest in history is more of a political slogan than a verifiable fact. It simplifies a complex institution into a single boast that fits neatly into his brand of confident, superlative messaging.

Lawsuit expert

Donald Trump has claimed that nobody knows more about lawsuits than he does. This assertion draws from his long history of involvement in legal disputes, both as a plaintiff and as a defendant, during his business career and political life. He has often framed this experience as a source of valuable knowledge, implying that it equips him to handle legal challenges better than anyone else.

Over several decades, Trump and his companies have been involved in thousands of legal cases. These have included contract disputes, allegations of fraud, employment issues, real estate conflicts, and defamation claims. Some cases ended in settlements, others in victories, and some in losses. Trump has often used litigation as a tool in business negotiations, seeing it as a way to apply pressure or protect his interests.

As president, Trump faced numerous lawsuits over policies, business practices, and personal conduct. These included challenges to his travel bans, questions about the constitutionality of his business dealings while in office, and defamation suits stemming from his comments about accusers. He also pursued legal action himself, such as suing to block the release of his tax returns.

While his familiarity with the legal system is undeniable, the “lawsuit expert” label is subjective. Expertise in a field typically implies a deep understanding of its rules and strategies, often supported by formal training or credentials. Trump is not a lawyer, and his knowledge of lawsuits comes from being a party to them rather than from practising law or studying it professionally.

The claim fits into Trump’s pattern of presenting life experience as equivalent to specialised expertise. By framing his extensive history of legal entanglements as mastery, he turns what many would see as a liability into a point of pride. For his supporters, it reinforces the image of a fighter who never backs down.

The “lawsuit expert” claim matters because it illustrates how Trump can reframe potentially negative aspects of his record into strengths. While his involvement in countless legal battles has certainly given him familiarity with the process, it is more accurate to say he is experienced in lawsuits rather than an expert in them.

Infrastructure expert

Donald Trump has often claimed that nobody knows more about infrastructure than he does. He linked this claim to his career as a real estate developer, presenting himself as uniquely qualified to oversee large-scale public works projects. From the campaign trail through his presidency, he promised a historic rebuilding of America’s roads, bridges, airports, and other infrastructure.

One of Trump’s most repeated pledges was a massive infrastructure investment plan, often cited as worth one trillion dollars or more. He said this would create jobs, modernise transportation networks, and strengthen the economy. However, despite

multiple announcements and themed “infrastructure weeks,” no major legislative package was passed during his term. Congress remained divided over funding methods, and the administration never produced a detailed plan that could gain bipartisan support.

Trump did sign some infrastructure-related bills, such as measures to improve water systems, rebuild after natural disasters, and fund airport upgrades. His administration also sought to speed up project approvals by reducing environmental review requirements, arguing that lengthy processes slowed progress. Critics said these changes weakened important safeguards and risked environmental harm.

The claim of being an infrastructure expert is difficult to reconcile with the lack of sweeping results. While Trump’s business background gave him experience in developing private real estate projects, public infrastructure requires navigating complex political, legal, and budgetary challenges. His administration’s inability to deliver on its most ambitious promises suggested that such expertise does not necessarily translate from the private to the public sector.

The “infrastructure expert” claim fits Trump’s habit of asserting unmatched knowledge in areas where results were limited. It allowed him to frame a lack of legislative success as a matter of political obstruction rather than a shortfall in planning or execution. In reality, while he championed the idea of revitalising infrastructure, his presidency did not produce the large-scale rebuilding he often described.

The greatest

Donald Trump’s public persona is built on a relentless stream of claims of unmatched expertise and superlatives about his own achievements. He has described himself as the best builder, the greatest military leader, the smartest on taxes, the ultimate trade negotiator, the saviour of manufacturing, the most respectful towards women, the champion of the environment, the fastest vaccine deliverer, the innovator of peace accords, the master of infrastructure, the man who knows more about drones, Facebook, lawsuits, energy, coal, and virtually every other subject he chooses to talk about. Alongside these claims of knowledge and skill, he routinely places himself at the top of every conceivable league table, the largest stock market in history, the best for African Americans since Lincoln, the cleanest air and water, the biggest crowds, the greatest economy, the strongest borders.

In isolation, one such claim might be dismissed as mere confidence or political salesmanship. Taken together, they form a deliberate pattern. Trump constructs a narrative in which he is not just competent, but uniquely capable, someone whose abilities outstrip those of any contemporary and often of anyone in history. The repetition is key. By endlessly asserting superiority, he sets the terms of discussion. His supporters hear a leader who never doubts himself, who always has the answer, and who is constantly winning. His critics hear delusion, insecurity, or outright fabrication. Either way, the focus remains on him.

What this self-praise truly means is less about fact and more about control. By framing himself as the unquestionable expert, Trump attempts to short-circuit debate. Expertise becomes a matter of personal declaration rather than evidence. His superlatives are not measured by independent metrics, but by the force of his own insistence. This turns policy discussions into loyalty tests, to question the claim is to question the man, and to question the man is to declare yourself an opponent.

It also reveals a reliance on branding over substance. Just as a product can be marketed as “the best” without rigorous proof, Trump markets himself as the best in every domain, counting on repetition, confidence, and spectacle to make the label stick. In politics, as in advertising, perception often outweighs reality. The danger is that this style can obscure failures, exaggerate modest successes, and create an environment where image takes precedence over measurable outcomes.

Ultimately, Trump’s constant self-congratulation is both a shield and a weapon. It shields him from criticism by framing any challenge as jealousy or hostility, and it serves as a weapon by overwhelming opponents with the sheer volume of grandiose claims. It is a calculated strategy, not an accident of personality. In the end, the truth of the claims matters less to him than their ability to dominate the conversation and reinforce the myth of the man who, in his own telling, always knows more, builds better, and wins bigger than anyone else.

Surviving on illusions

Without people believing his self-inflated claims and outright lies, Donald Trump’s political survival would have been far less likely. His style of leadership depends on controlling the narrative, not just through policy arguments but through constant repetition of personal greatness. For many supporters, his statements are not assessed in the way one would evaluate a fact in a courtroom or a research paper.

Instead, they are absorbed as part of a larger story about a strong, successful leader who will fight for them against a corrupt establishment.

This belief system allows Trump to turn falsehoods into political capital. When he declares that he is the greatest job creator, the best negotiator, or the man who rebuilt the military, many supporters take it at face value, especially if it fits their pre-existing view of him. In an age of partisan media, these claims are often repeated uncritically within friendly outlets, giving them the appearance of truth through sheer repetition.

The lies and exaggerations are not random. They are crafted to flatter his audience, to give them the feeling that by supporting him, they are on the winning team. This creates an emotional bond that makes it harder for them to accept contradictory evidence. Any challenge to the narrative is framed as an attack from enemies, making supporters more likely to defend him rather than reconsider their position.

If his supporters had consistently rejected the false claims, the image of Trump as the unrivalled expert and unparalleled achiever would have collapsed. Without that image, his appeal would have been diminished, his perceived authority weakened, and his chances of re-election sharply reduced. For Trump, truth is less important than loyalty, and loyalty is maintained by keeping the myth alive.

In this sense, his re-election campaign was not just a contest of policies but a referendum on belief. Those who accepted the myth voted for its continuation. Those who did not were dismissed as misguided, biased, or malicious. The survival of his political career depended on keeping enough people inside the myth, where every boast was an accomplishment and every lie was simply the truth as he told it.

Fact-checking skills

If there is one lesson to take from Donald Trump's record of falsehoods, it is that relying on anyone else to do all the checking for you is dangerous. The sheer volume and speed of misleading claims in modern politics mean that no news outlet or fact-checking organisation can catch everything. The best defence is to learn how to verify information for yourself. This does not require advanced training or specialist tools. It requires patience, clear thinking, and a willingness to slow down before accepting what you are told.

The first step is to find the original source of a claim. If Trump says unemployment

is the lowest in history, find the actual government statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics rather than relying on a news headline or a social media post. If he says a foreign leader praised him, look for the transcript or recording of that statement, preferably from multiple outlets or official releases. The closer you get to the primary source, the less likely you are to be misled by spin or selective quoting.

The second step is to check the date. Old stories, images, or statistics are often recycled as if they are current. Trump and his supporters have at times cited outdated figures or re-shared years-old news as proof of recent success or failure. Always confirm when the information was first published and whether newer data is available.

The third step is to compare sources with different perspectives. If you only read outlets that agree with your existing views, you will be more vulnerable to accepting false or distorted claims that fit your expectations. When checking a statement, consult both mainstream sources and those that lean politically in the opposite direction. If they agree on the facts, that is a good sign that the information is solid.

Fourth, understand the basics of numbers. Many political claims are built on statistics that are technically correct but misleading without context. Knowing the difference between absolute numbers and percentages, or recognising when a claim cherry-picks a start and end point, can help you see through these tricks. If Trump claims record job growth, check whether he is talking about raw numbers, which tend to rise with population growth, or percentage growth, which gives a truer picture.

Fifth, be alert to emotional triggers. The most dangerous falsehoods are often the ones that provoke the strongest reaction, because strong emotion makes people less likely to check details. If a statement makes you angry, excited, or afraid, take that as a signal to pause and verify before sharing or believing it. Trump has mastered the art of delivering claims designed to hit these emotional buttons. Recognising that pattern makes you harder to manipulate.

Finally, keep your own record. When you see a claim debunked, save the evidence. Screenshots, links to official reports, and archived versions of pages are useful when the claim resurfaces later, often in slightly altered form. The internet has a short memory, but political operators count on that. Having your own record means you can check and respond quickly when the same falsehood comes back.

Fact-checking is not about assuming everything is false. It is about refusing to give blind trust to anyone, whether it is Trump, another politician, or a commentator you

happen to like. Truth does not depend on loyalty, popularity, or how well a statement fits your worldview. It depends on evidence that can be examined and confirmed. Learning to demand that evidence for yourself is the surest way to avoid becoming just another audience member in someone else's performance.

The cost of abandoning truth

When a society stops caring whether its leaders tell the truth, it is not just political debate that suffers. The decay spreads into every part of public life. Facts become negotiable, evidence becomes optional, and loyalty replaces accuracy as the standard by which statements are judged. In such an environment, the loudest voice wins, not the most credible. This is the end point of the culture Donald Trump has worked to normalise.

The first cost is the collapse of shared reality. Without agreement on basic facts, citizens cannot have meaningful debates about policy or the future. If half the population believes the economy is thriving while the other half believes it is collapsing, based solely on which politician they trust, then discussion becomes theatre rather than problem-solving. This makes it easier for those in power to avoid accountability, because no piece of evidence will be accepted by everyone.

The second cost is the weakening of democratic institutions. Courts, legislatures, and election systems rely on the public believing that they operate fairly, even if they sometimes deliver results people do not like. When Trump tells his supporters that judges are corrupt, elections are rigged, and the media is their enemy, he is not just defending himself. He is eroding the credibility of the institutions that stand between citizens and the abuse of power. Once that credibility is gone, it is far easier for any leader (now or in the future) to bend those institutions to personal will.

The third cost is the encouragement of political extremism. When opponents are not just wrong but portrayed as dangerous enemies of the people, compromise becomes betrayal. Violence starts to look, to some, like a legitimate political tool. The events of 6 January 2021 showed how quickly heated rhetoric and false claims can tip into action. Once the idea takes hold that truth is a matter of allegiance, anything becomes permissible in defence of "our side."

There is also an economic cost. False claims about trade, investment, health, or science can lead to poor decisions that waste resources and harm livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic showed how misinformation from the highest level can slow the

adoption of life-saving measures, prolonging crises and deepening their impact. Markets rely on trust and accurate information. When those are replaced by slogans and wishful thinking, stability suffers.

Perhaps the most lasting cost is cultural. In a society where lying is accepted as normal, honesty becomes a weakness. Those who tell the truth, even when it is unpopular, risk being mocked or ignored, while those who lie effectively are rewarded with attention and loyalty. Over time, this creates a political environment where truth-telling is not just rare but actively discouraged. The message to future leaders is clear: success comes from controlling the narrative, not from respecting the facts.

Rebuilding a culture of truth requires more than exposing individual lies. It demands a shift in public expectation, where leaders are judged on the accuracy of their statements, not just their ability to rally a crowd. It means valuing evidence over applause and holding even those we support to the same standards we apply to their opponents. It means refusing to excuse falsehoods simply because they serve our preferred outcome.

The truth is not a partisan possession. It is a public resource, like clean air or safe water, that must be protected if a society is to remain healthy. Once it is polluted beyond repair, the damage affects everyone, regardless of political allegiance. Donald Trump's career has shown how quickly truth can be eroded when it is treated as expendable. The question that remains is whether the public is willing to demand its restoration. The cost of abandoning it is already high. The cost of never reclaiming it will be higher.

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