

The Turbulent Life of a Man
Who Was Wrongly Deported

A Kafkaesque Twist Stokes Debate on U.S. Policy

This article is by Juliet Macur, Jazmine Ulloa, Annie Correal, Kirsten Noyes, Alan Feuer and Dan Barry.

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, Md. — Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, all of 16, called his older brother in distant Maryland with startling news. He had made it to the Texas border. He had escaped.

In his family’s telling, this is how his American journey began. They say that for years in El Salvador, a gang called Barrio 18 had terrorized them, extorting money from the mother’s small tortilla and pupusa business, threatening to leave them all dead in a ditch — and targeting young Kilmar, in and out of school, with increasing menace.

“They will appear in black bags,” his mother said through tears, recalling phone messages from the gang. “Those were the words they would say.”

Seeing a dim future, the teenager had slipped away to follow the worn, treacherous path known to so many other migrants before him, including his older brother. North, across desert and river, into Mexico, and then into the United States.

Over the next dozen years, Mr. Abrego Garcia would call Maryland his home. He would work in construction. Marry. Help to raise three children, all with special needs. He would also be repeatedly accused by his wife of verbal and physical abuse — and be labeled a gang member by the president of the United States.

On March 15, the tumultuous American journey of Mr. Abrego Garcia returned him to South Texas, in restraints. There, on the tarmac of Harlingen Airport, loomed three large airplanes

bound for El Salvador.

Two were reserved for undocumented immigrants being deported without the constitutional right to due process, on the allegation that they belonged to a well-known Venezuelan gang. The third plane was for dozens of other immigrants who, according to the government, had at least been given the chance to argue their case in a hearing.

Whatever their past, all the detainees — more than 260 — were being sent by the Trump administration to a Salvadoran maximum-security prison notorious for its inhumane conditions.

While captors and captives waited for takeoff, some names fell from the third plane’s manifest for various reasons, and Mr. Abrego Garcia’s name was added. This was a mistake — a perverse upgrade.

Six years earlier, a federal immigration judge had expressly prohibited

the government from returning Mr. Abrego Garcia to his native El Salvador, where gang activity might still pose a threat to his life. Yet here he was, in a Kafkaesque twist, being sent back in chains to that very country.

The reason: the Trump administration’s assertion that he was part of a Salvadoran-American criminal gang called MS-13 — an assertion based partly on his clothes and tattoos.

The New York Times conducted nearly two dozen interviews in Maryland and El Salvador, and reviewed court documents and recordings in several jurisdictions, to construct a fuller portrait of Mr. Abrego Garcia. A sheet metal worker with no criminal record but brushes with law enforcement

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Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia

After Turning In Unabomber,
Brother Yearned for His Grace

By SERGE F. KOVALESKI

It was May 1996, and David Kaczynski, a counselor for troubled youth in upstate New York, sat down to write a letter to his brother Ted. A month earlier, his brother had been shockingly unmasked as the shadowy Unabomber, responsible for a 17-year campaign of bombings that had killed and maimed people across the country.

Ted Kaczynski, a brilliant but mentally troubled mathematician who had retreated years earlier to a remote hovel in Montana, had been arrested based on information from a tipster to the F.B.I., ending one of the longest and most expensive manhunts in American history. He was now in custody and facing what would almost certainly be a lifetime behind bars, if not a death sentence. The tipster was David.



VIA DAVID KACZYNSKI

Ted Kaczynski, top, and his brother, David, in 1952.

Sitting in his home in Schenectady, N.Y., David began writing the letter. He used a pencil, knowing he might have to erase before he got it right.

“I could only imagine how much Ted resented me,” he recalled in an interview. Would Ted consider allowing him to visit, he wrote, and try to explain? “I wanted to tell him in person that we morally felt an obligation to stop the violence,” he said.

Ted declined to put David on his visitors list, and when he wrote back, it was to turn the fury of his resentment on his brother.

“You will go to hell because, for you, seeing yourself as you really are will truly be hell,” he wrote.

David remembers being stung, but not surprised.

“Ted’s letter confirmed my fear and expectation,” he said. “It felt like the hand of fate falling.”

He tried again, yearning for a different response. David would spend nearly three decades writing to his brother, years marked by nostalgia, regret and intense self-reflection.

In a series of recent interviews with The New York Times, David spoke in detail for the first time about his long correspondence — about the dozens of letters and cards he sent, along with books that he thought Ted would find interesting — all in an attempt to pry back open a line of communication that his decision to approach the F.B.I. had closed.

The letters range from the prosaic to the profound: recollections of childhood softball games, news about David’s retirement, updates on their aging mother’s declining health. Occasionally, there were

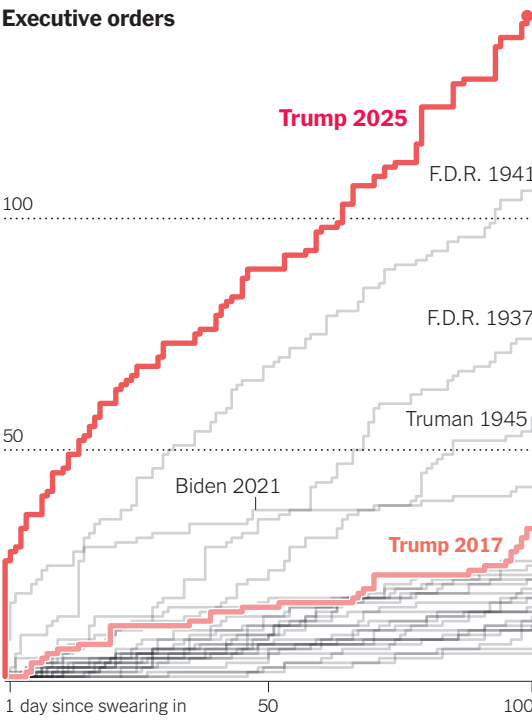
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Snapshots of Trump’s First 100 Days in 6 Charts

By IRINEO CABREROS and AATISH BHATIA

He issued more executive orders than any modern president . . .

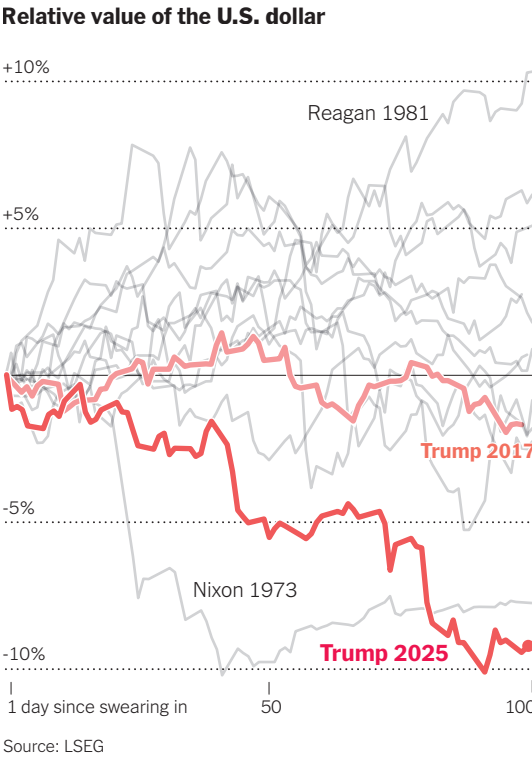
The executive order is a way to issue directives without regulation or legislation: Some direct agencies to develop policy and some just express a sentiment, but many effectively carry the force of law.



Source: Federal Register

The dollar plunged.

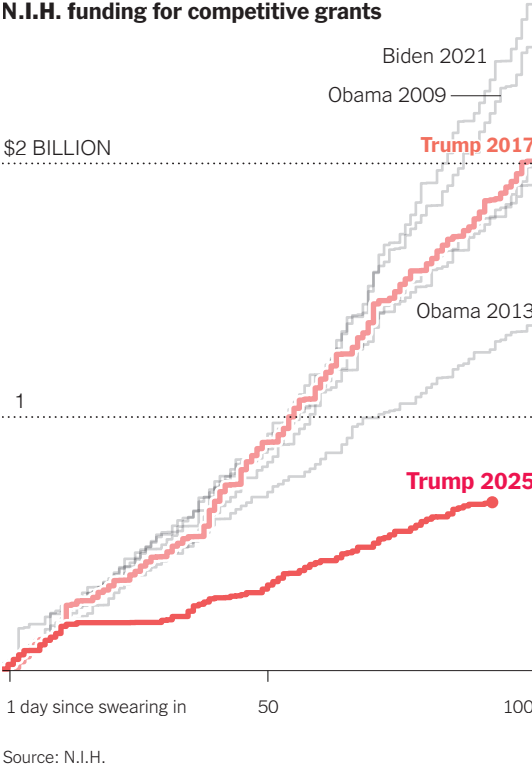
This chart measures the dollar against a basket of major currencies. A sharp slide came after Mr. Trump announced tariffs on April 2. He temporarily reversed course, but the dollar has yet to recover.



Source: LSEG

Federal funding for medical research slowed.

The administration has made big cuts to the National Institutes of Health, which funds more medical research than any other organization in the world. Some cuts align with political priorities, including care for transgender people, studies on racial disparities and vaccine research.

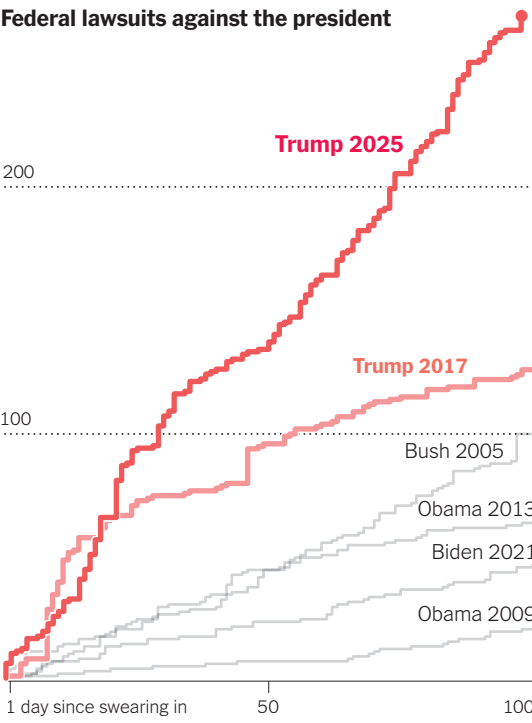


Source: N.I.H.

Note: Dollar value changes are shown via shifts in the DXY index, which measures the value of the U.S. dollar against a mix of six other currencies: the euro, yen, British pound, Canadian dollar, Swedish krona and Swiss franc. The shifts are relative to the value on the day the president was sworn in.

. . . and was sued in federal court more, too.

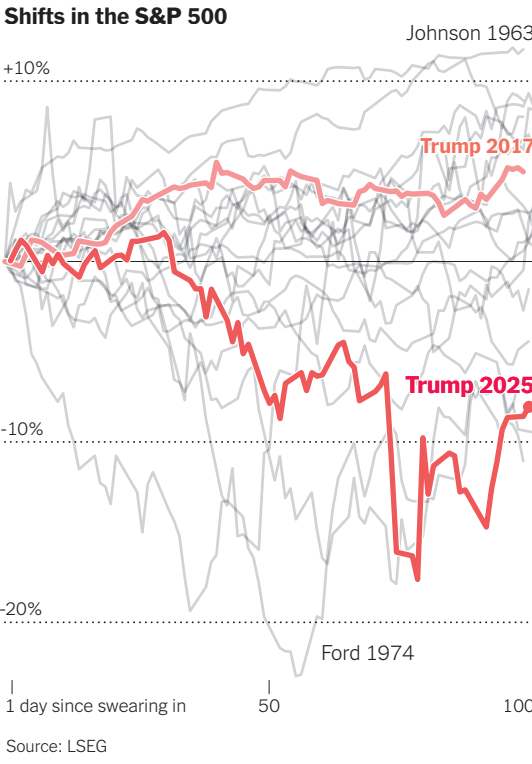
Legal challenges to policies are not uncommon, but this term is remarkable because of how many, and how quickly, suits have been filed. Though the Supreme Court is considering aspects of a few cases, it may be years before there is a full accounting.



Source: PACER

Markets fell, too.

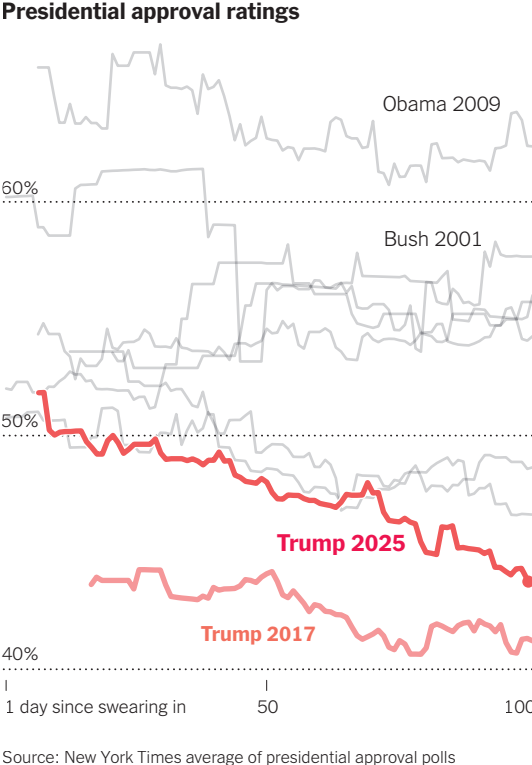
The S&P 500 fell nearly 8 percent between Mr. Trump’s inauguration and his 100-day mark, the worst such market performance since 1974 under Gerald Ford.



Source: LSEG

Trump went from being popular to unpopular.

Voters had said they trusted Mr. Trump to handle issues like the economy, immigration and energy. On each of these issues, he had a chance to find public backing. But 100 days in, polls showed that he had managed to turn long-term strengths on the economy and immigration into weaknesses.



Notes: Lawsuits are cases in which the sitting president was named as a defendant; excludes criminal and appellate cases. S&P 500 shifts are relative to value on the day the president was sworn in. Grant funding represents fiscal year obligations for new grants and competitive grant renewals, in March 2025 dollars.

LALENA FISHER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE U.S. ECONOMY
GIRDS FOR A SHOCK
IN THE TRADE WAR

SHIPPING SLOWS DOWN

Specter of Empty Shelves
and a Recession as
the Tariffs Land

By ANA SWANSON

When the Covid pandemic hit, factories in China shut down and global shipping traffic slowed. Within a matter of a few weeks, products began disappearing from U.S. store shelves and American firms that depend on foreign materials were going out of business.

A similar trend is beginning to play out, but this time the catalyst is President Trump’s decision to raise tariffs on Chinese imports to a minimum of 145 percent, an amount so steep that much of the trade between the United States and China has ground to a halt. Fewer massive container ships have been plying the ocean between Chinese and American ports, and in the coming weeks, far fewer Chinese goods will arrive on American shores.

While high tariffs on Chinese products have been in place since early April, the availability of Chinese products and the price that consumers pay for them has not changed that much. But some companies are now starting to raise their prices. And experts say that the effects will become more and more obvious in the coming weeks, as a tidal wave of change stemming from canceled orders in Chinese factories works its way around the world to the United States.

The number of container ships carrying metal boxes of toys, furniture and other products departing China for the United States plummeted by about a third last month.

The reason consumers have not felt many of the effects yet is because

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What Chaos?
Trump Fans See
A Strong Start.

By ROBERT DRAPER

WASHINGTON — For those tens of millions of Americans who regard President Trump’s bull-in-a-china-shop decade of political life as a waking nightmare, what may be hardest to fathom is that tens of millions of their fellow citizens have viewed the very same spectacle and have said, in effect, “We are fine with it.”

And so it continues. A hundred days into Mr. Trump’s tumultuous second term, 42 percent of those in a recent New York Times/Siena poll not only approve of the job he is doing as president but describe his time in the White House so far as “exciting.”

True, only 43 percent of voters in the poll view him favorably, compared with 56 percent who view him unfavorably. Mr. Trump is also faring worse in the polls than any other modern president in his first 100 days.

And yet in the midst of the second-term chaos, Mr. Trump has suffered only a modest decline from the 48 percent of voters who viewed him favorably in the final Times/Siena poll before the November election. The numbers underscore that the durability of his appeal for his base cannot be ignored any more than Mr. Trump himself.

“He’s doing so much that the Democrats can’t keep up,” said Maria Libeck, a 68-year-old sales representative who was at the

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NATIONAL 18-32

Worries About Fetterman

A former aide expressed concerns to a doctor about the senator’s mental health, citing erratic behavior. PAGE 28

Buffett Planning to Step Down

Warren E. Buffett told Berkshire Hathaway shareholders he would resign as C.E.O. by the end of the year. PAGE 28

SUNDAY OPINION SPECIAL SECTION

Deconstructing the Cabinet

During this extraordinary time in U.S. history, the Opinion desk spent two days with those in the president’s inner circle. Photographs by Damon Winter.

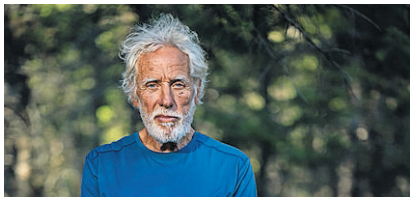
INTERNATIONAL 4-16

Deciding on the Next Pope

Change in the church will be central to the conclave of cardinals, which begins on Wednesday. PAGE 10

Antiwar Exiles in Canada

They fled an America at war in Vietnam. How are they faring, and feeling, 50 years after the war’s end? PAGE 14



METROPOLITAN

One Family’s Pursuit of Shad

To those who cast their nets into the Delaware River each spring, hoping for a bounty of the fish, it’s a tradition worth saving. PAGE 6

SUNDAY STYLES

Defiance, Elegance and Flair

While cultivating images of dandyism, the artist Iké Udé understands the power of rejecting labels. PAGE 8

Of Restaurants and Regrets

In his new memoir, the restaurateur Keith McNally has a lot to say about business and boldfaced names. PAGE 1



ONLINE

King of Churchill Downs

Sovereignty came from behind on a sloppy track to win the 151st Kentucky Derby. Coverage at nytimes.com.

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Turning to ‘New Media’

Residents of Oakdale, Calif., have abandoned traditional media outlets for a mishmash of online sources. These days, they are often not sure what information to trust. PAGE 6

Who Sets Your College Price?

Universities have turned to little-known consultants, owned by private equity firms, to find applicants and calculate scholarships. Here’s how that affects the price you pay. PAGE 1

