

## The Erasure of the Other in Donald Trump's Political Discourse

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This paper purports to study the erasure of the other in Trump's discourse. It consists of a theoretical and a practical part. The theories elaborated, in part one, are applied to analyze examples from Trump's speeches in part two. This is based on Van Dijk's triangulation of discourse, society, and cognition. To apply this approach, a simple method is used. First, the textual traces of erasure are pointed out. Second, the data are categorized and analyzed. Third, the findings are interpreted and discussed. The results demonstrate that: a) erasure manifests itself at various levels of discourse; b) erasure is the result of power abuse; and c) erasure is ideologically monitored to re-shape different realities. These ideologies revolve around concepts like interests, victory, gain, control, and domination. Finally, the paper brings theoretical and practical contributions to the study of erasure and high-lights the need to use other theories like psychology. By highlighting this, the paper leaves the doors open for further investigations on how politicians use language to remove their counter parts and how researchers can fight erasure.

**Keywords:** Trump, Othering, Erasure, Rejection, Denigration, Minimization, Marginalization, Silencing, Ideology.

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### INTRODUCTION

Currently, erasure has become such an extremely problematic concept. It is problematic in the sense that the global context, in which we are living, is characterized by the use of power to serve personal interests. Indeed, the users of power attempt increasing their presence and their influence while trying to cut the others' role. To put it differently, they seek gains and benefits at the cost of out-group people's interests. Here, the prevalence of one's ability to dominate his counterpart makes the issue of disappearance something that we might easily observe at various levels of our lives like language, action, thoughts, etc. However, to understand how any sort of vanishing works to serve the main goals of the groups who can control, it is required to undertake a critical examination of the case under focus. As follows, it has become a need to put under question the cases where the use of power has led to the disappearing of any social part in order to understand how erasure works to re-shape history, society, politics, economy, geography, etc.

In reality, the concept of erasure is frequently investigated in contemporary research. The literature revolving around erasure explores the issue of deletion from various analytical perspectives. Using an evolutionary perspective, Wharff (2004) dealt with obliteration as the changes occurring in one's identity. His explanation of these transformations shows that the characteristics that were part of our identity one day in the past cannot endure through time. However, they will be eliminated as a result of the fact that we, as persons, are developing and reforming across time. The effacing of gender identity is also central in feminist and gender studies (Trechter, 2003; Ghasemi, 2007; Opera, 2009). These examinations sought to explain how women are being

marginalized, rejected, denigrated, misrepresented, silenced, etc. in such male-dominated societies. Other analyses like (Angelides, 2001; Barker and Langdridge, 2008; MacDowell, 2009) focused on the investigation of the deletion of the bisexual identity. These works demonstrate that though bisexuality is proved to be widespread among people in our societies, it is officially unrecognized as an independent specification like the gay and lesbian characters. However, the bisexual character is still rejected and silenced. Consequently, the concept of elimination refers to the fact of silencing a given part of one's individuality or the act of rejecting a whole existing self. This happens either for the sake of producing change or resisting it.

Moreover, the erasure of history is at the crossroads of several studies (Klein, 1997; Eley, 2011; Hawa, 2017). These studies focused on the examination of the wiping of people's history and roots. As far as humans' roots are concerned, the removal of the indigenous nations is also one of the topics that researchers shed light on (Allahar, 2005; Manor, 2012). Works of this kind examined how the indigenous folks were marginalized, minimized, silenced, removed, etc. in various regions of the world by the newly coming powers. Also, the effacing of individuals' national identity represents another focal point in the research about the ways the other is rendered invisible (Bitar, 2011). In this study, Bitar focused on the examination of the process of cancelling that operates to make invisible the Palestinian Arab National Identity across time. Religion as part of one's character is also central for rejection and deletion (House, 2015; Confino, 2015). These two studies dealt with the omission of people's religious distinctiveness focusing mainly on the destruction of the holy monuments of the minority groups in such countries. Language which is an essential part of one's individuality is un-immune against erasing too. However, it is targeted while seeking to silent and reject a given particularity of one's profile (Andronis, 2004; Potowski and Negron, 2017). Here, linguistic obliteration is dealt with as a trial to silent a particular verbal community. That is to say, it is an attempt to make them change their native tongue and meltdown in the mainstream identity by using its dialect. Political distinctiveness is also central for deletion (Doumain, 2007). The elimination of people's party identification is a struggle for their denigration as a power in the public scene. Thus, erasure is such a process that works at all levels of people's lives where one racial group endeavors to remove another (Hall, 2008; Guyette, 2016).

The existing background of the literature shows that erasure is practiced everywhere. Having this reality in mind is what pushes people to call for its fight (Segal, 2016). Indeed, fighting the wide-spread of this process requires doing more critique on the issue of deletion. One of the areas of assessment in which cancellation works intensively remains language, especially that of power. As a result, political

language represents a fertile ground for the examination of effacement and the struggle for its defeat. In this paper, for instance, the process of obliteration will be dealt with in a multi-disciplinary framework of analysis, manifested mainly in the use of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. The study of the manifestation of the uses of elimination in Trump's political language will be based on three principal theoretical axes. These axes revolve around three fundamental conceptual assumptions manifested mainly in the view of removal as a social, a discursive, and an ideological phenomenon. Taking into account these three assumptions, the study of omission adopting the CDA framework finds its factual background in Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to language (Van Dijk, 2009). In brief, the application of Van Dijk's triangulation (discourse – cognition – society) in the analysis of Trump's discourse will be undertaken using a simple method of research to answer the following three questions.

1. How does erasure manifest itself in Trump's language?
2. What are the social dimensions that can explain Trump's use of erasure?
3. What are the main ideologies that can explain Trump's use of erasure?

The answers to these questions will be elaborated through the critical examination of the way the erasure of the other works in Trump's political discourse. However, before embarking on the analysis of the selected corpus, the study will focus on the review of some theoretical concepts.

## CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

In this section, the researcher will focus on the analysis of three principal theoretical bases of erasure. First, erasure will be dealt with as a social phenomenon. Second, this concept will be addressed in terms of its linguistic construction as a discursive happening. Third, it will be examined from the angle of mental mapping as an ideological fact. Finally, the three concepts of society, language, and mind will form the cornerstones of the approach to be used for the study of the topic under focus.

### Erasure as a social phenomenon

Power is, by definition, unequally distributed among social groups. This unfair distribution of authority provides the parties, who can control and influence, the ability to dominate those with less weight to rule and to command. In reality, the fact of belonging to a dominant group paves the way for people to enforce their traditions, thoughts, practices, etc. on the dominated ones. Consequently, the ability that the dominant masses enjoy to enforce their manners of life in their societies results mainly in the denigration of the dominated

crowds' approaches to living. The act of denigrating the other's styles of living constitutes a social fashion that gives prominence to one civic group at the expense of another. This community practice leads mainly to the invisibility of the dominated bunches. Accordingly, the inequitable distribution of power among various civil unions describes one of the main reasons standing behind the assumption that erasure represents a societal phenomenon.

Considering the notion of 'power' essential for the assumption that erasure is a social phenomenon makes the study of the manifestation of authority a focal point. Indeed, ability manifests itself at various levels of our lives such as our behaviors, our inter-group relations, our uses of language, etc. Being interested in the study of the manifestation of power in Trump's speeches, in this paper, we need to ask several logical questions, especially the ones that are related to the sources of one's supremacy. In other words, we need to find out the sources of authority that enables the speaker to exercise his control over his addresses while using discourse. The domination that the speaker maintains on his addresses works by giving more prominence to one's person or one's group and minimizing of the other's personality or belonging. In reality, the sovereignty that we preserve, as individuals or groups of individuals, could be derived from various origins. For instance, we can get our influence from our social positions, our economic status (social class), our access to mastery, our entry to the media, our admission to mainstream discourse, etc. These starting points equip the speaker with the weight that enables him to handle language in a way that serves to increase the visibility of the in-group people and to reduce the visualness of the out-group people. So, to grasp how the issue of control works to serve for the erasure of the other, we need to determine the fundamental derivations of the speaker's ascendancy.

In brief, the study of the way erasure works in Trump's language, in this paper, will be based on the examination of how he uses his authority to denigrate the other. Here, the manipulations of power will be linguistically traced so that we can determine the way Trump monitors such discursive choices to display more influence to the in-group people and to reduce the sovereignty of the out-group people. Indeed, the practices of domination could be traced at various levels of text and talk such as syntax, semantics, pragmatics, implications, stylistics, etc. So, for us to understand how oppression functions to serve for erasure, we need to find out any linguistic manifestation of power. Then, we will explain the means through which it operates to minimize the character of the other. This discursive dimension of erasure will be discussed in the following section.

### **Erasure as a discursive phenomenon**

People's erasure of the out-group members manifests itself at the level of various customs among which is the practice

of language in use. When it comes to language, individuals' struggle to minimize the out-group nations could be expressed either directly or indirectly through implication. In reality, one's personal desire to marginalize the other happening at the inner side either at the level of thinking or behaving is expressed to the outer world through discourse structure. That is to say, language is one of the tools that provide persons with the ability to reduce the out-group nations' role when it comes to their struggle for power. Moreover, it represents a soft means of denigration and marginalization in that it leads to the reduction of the other's presence and influence at a lower price. In fact, out of the scope of discourse, people's attempt to remove their counterparts could be more expensive and time-consuming. For instance, the use of material power like war and violence to silence one's adversary is publically unacceptable. Thus, language is one of the most powerful tools through which people can reject the out-group nations away from being in conflict with.

In reality, language is –by nature – a means of rejection, denigration, and silencing. Put differently, its close connection to its socio-cultural context of use makes of such choices like words, phrases, clauses, etc. unjust. They are unjust because their use ensures more visibility to one part while making the other invisible. At the semantic level, the choice of such lexical items might serve for the silencing of one part while according more prominence to the other. For instance, the use of the masculine third-person pronoun 'he' to refer to both male and female gives prominence to one gender (man) and denigrates its opposite (woman). This example reflects the silencing and the denigration of women as a recognizable partner in our human societies. At the syntactic level, the use of linguistic such constructions like; 'nominalization', 'infinitive clauses', 'passivization', etc. serves for the erasure of the doer of the action. By hiding the actor, the identity of the agent responsible for the happening of the depicted action is mystified for a given purpose. At the rhetorical level, erasure could manifest itself through the use of such figures of speech like metaphor and metonymy. Moreover, representation is also a means of deletion where the uses of such linguistic choices are ideologically monitored to build a positive portrait of the self and to ruin the image of the other. Indeed, the analysis of these examples among many others showed that effacing works at all levels of discourse structure. So, the assumption that cancellation as a discursive phenomenon should be understood in the sense that the speaker's tendency to remove the counterpart is coded at various levels of his speech.

To sum up, the critical study of how Trump's tendency to minimize the other manifests itself in his speeches required the examination of the different discursive choices he made. Here, the analysis of the linguistic traces of erasure in this politician's language should be context-dependent. It needs to be contextualized so that we can highlight the main

ideology standing behind any act of rejection and denigration that is expressed in this US president's discourse. In reality, each choice the speaker might make is directly monitored by his ways of evaluating and thinking about the other. This view of erasure as an ideology-based phenomenon will be discussed in the coming section.

### **Erasure as an ideological phenomenon**

People's rejection of the out-group nations is constantly monitored by their ways of thinking about the self and the other. These strategies of thinking come as the result of their mental conception of the image of the in-group individuals and the portrait of the out-group characters. They are also the result of their imagination of the nature of the relation between the two groups. This cognitive conception of the self and the other is affected by various factors such as people's views of how the in-group nation and the out-group folks should be represented. Indeed, the dominant party's representation of the self and the other is goal-oriented. It is goal-oriented in that it is designed to serve such objectives like domination, economic benefits, political interests, etc. To achieve these purposes, the dominant party might resort to the reduction of the presence, the influence and the role of the counterpart hence his denigration and rejection. Therefore, the assumption that erasure is an ideological phenomenon revolves around the idea that the removal of the other is always activated by a given ideology to serve such goals.

Conceiving the idea that the removal of the other is driven by such mental conceptions, our study of the issue of erasure should take ideology analysis as a focal point. In the world of politics, for instance, ideologies of self-interest are always there. In reality, the notion of self-interest, as an umbrella term, covers language users' thoughts and desires to rule over the other. This desire manifests itself mostly in one's struggle to increase the presence of the self, acquire more power, generate added gains, etc. However, one's struggle to intensify his profits leads mainly to the reduction of the winnings of the counterpart. In the case of colonization, indeed, the colonizer's attempt to dominate the indigenous people's land and raw materials are monitored by the imperialistic ideology they promote and defend. Moreover, during electoral campaigns, candidates' minimization of each other's programs represents a discursive attempt towards the erasure of the adversary's presence to give more validity to one's promises. This trial is monitored by the desire to win and to enforce a particular political ideology. Besides, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is another example of erasure. Here, Bush's struggle to preserve the US's geopolitical interests in the region represents the main ideology that stands behind the removal of the Ba'ath party from power. In patriarchal societies, men's desire towards power and control has led to the rejection of women's role. This mental conception of the male-female

relation resulted in the production of male-dominated societies. Thus, any trial to understand how erasure works in discourse requires the determination and the critique of the ideology that motivates the speaker's desire to remove the other.

To conclude, our study of the way the notion of erasure is being shaped and re-shaped in Trump's speeches will be based on the examination of how his ideology is structured. The study of how Trump's ideology is structured entails the critique of the manners he used language to draw the portrait of the self and the other. In reality, the way one's thoughts and stereotypes work to highlight the positive image of one's character and the negative portrait of the counterpart is a process through which the out-group people will be removed from the scene that is dominated by the speaker. In other words, this study of erasure as a cognitive phenomenon should take into consideration the analysis of how the in-group folks think about the out-group persons. So, it mainly is the study of how the speaker manipulates ideology to erase those who are different from his in-group character.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this paper, the study of the issue of erasure in Trump's discourse was based on the analysis of several examples. These examples are taken from the speeches that Trump delivered from the start of his electoral campaign in 2016 till the time of the writing of this paper. The examination of the extracted parts of Trump's speeches was based on the use of a simple method of research. This method of research was summarized in three successive phases. First, the discursive traces of erasure were collected by moving across the selected speeches. Here, our scrutiny of the designated discourse was based on the careful readings of the texts of these talks by moving through them: paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, clause by clause and even phrase by phrase (see Van Dijk, 2000). Second, the collected data were categorized and analyzed using Van Dijk's triangulation of discourse, society and cognition (Van Dijk, 2009). At this level, the categorization of the traced practices of erasure into different types will help facilitate their examination in the analysis phase. Third, the findings of the analysis were interpreted and discussed to show how both power and ideology work in the discursive construction of the notion of erasure in Trump's political discourse. Finally, conclusions were drawn to state the main contributions of the paper, work out its limitations, and pave the way for future researches on the topic.

### **Example analysis**

The scrutiny of the selected texts shows that the erasure of the other manifested itself at various levels of Trump's language. These manifestations were analyzed, interpreted, and discussed through the investigation of the following



examples.

### Example 1

In his refugee ban orders signed on January 20, 2017, Trump delivered the following remarks in which he suspended the entry of nationals from Syria until a time he will determine later.

*Proclaim that the entry of nationals of Syria as refugees is detrimental to the interests of the United States and thus suspend any such entry until such time as I have determined that sufficient changes have been made to the USRAP to ensure that admission of Syrian refugees is consistent with the national interest.*

Here, Trump's proclamation articulates the theoretical approach underlying the analysis in this paper. First, the notion of erasure is expressed via the use of the verb 'suspend', which means that refugees from Syria will not be allowed access to the US for a non-specified period. Indeed, erasure comes as the result of the power Trump has by the US constitution and laws manifested discursively in such choices like the verbs 'proclaim, have determined, and to ensure'. Second, these discursive traces of power will be materialized on the ground in the form of a political action manifested mainly in the refusal to welcome harmed Syrians who are seeking refugees upon the US borders. This political action reflects a sort of rejection that is mainly based on religious differences. These differences represent the logical reason why Trump denigrates refugees from Muslim majority countries. Third, the refusal to welcome refugees from Syria is an ideologically monitored decision. It is ideologically monitored in that Trump's conception of the other as dangerous, violent, terrorist, etc. pushed him to take an unjust choice where the most harmed party is the innocent people who have no aim except saving their lives. This unjust option is rhetorically justified by arguing that the entry of Syrian asylum seekers will be detrimental to US interests. Finally, this example shows that the Syrian displaced people are erased from the list of the nations that will have access to the US as escapees or immigrants. Here, discursive erasure is claimed by a person who uses his power to materialize his thinking about the other in such policies and practices the aim of which is to get rid of those who show difference towards his in-group nation.

### Example 2

In his speech on migration and terrorism in Ohio on August 15, 2016, Trump uttered the following remarks the analysis of which showed that his desire to eliminate the other is always there.

a) *Anyone, who cannot name our enemy, is not fit*

*to lead this country. Anyone who cannot condemn the hatred, oppression and violence of Radical Islam lacks the moral clarity to serve as our President. The rise of ISIS is the direct result of policy decisions made by President Obama and Secretary Clinton.*

The analysis of this example showed that it fits with the theoretical framework underlying the analysis of this paper. On the one hand, the rejection of the other is linguistically expressed via the use of negation (... is not fit to lead this country) and the verb 'lacks' which expresses the non-existence or the deficiency of something. Trump used these two choices to highlight that Clinton could not be the future president of the US. She is not suitable for the position of the US president because she does not have the power to protect the US interests. However, Trump could be a president, which means that he is the right guy to vote for in the day of the election. On the other hand, erasure comes as a result of the struggle for power between two candidates who belong to different social groups such as gender and political affiliation. In this case, the candidate with more influence; that is, the ability of his/her rhetoric to persuade the public, will have the opportunity to win the election and the party with less authority will be removed. Third, Trump's struggle to minimize Clinton's chance to win the vote represents a struggle between two opposing political ideologies (Republican vs. Democrat). Being the Republican Party's nominee for the 2016 presidential elections, Trump seeks to defeat Clinton as the nominee of the Democratic Party and to prevent her party from gaining a new mandate to the white house. In brief, the desire to remove the competitor that Trump expressed discursively is justified by the power he has to protect the US which is not the case with Clinton. This difference of power and the opposition of ideologies between the candidates to the presidency culminated in Trump's accusation that Obama and Clinton are responsible for the rise of ISIS.

b)... *Hillary Clinton lacks the judgment, the temperament and the moral character to lead this nation. Importantly, she also lacks the mental and physical stamina to take on ISIS, and all the many adversaries we face...*

In this example, Trump's emphasis on the person of Clinton reflects his strong desire towards the rejection of the possibility that she will be able to lead the American nation. His erasure of his competitor manifests itself discursively through the repetitive use of the verb 'lacks'. By highlighting that Clinton misses the judgment, the temperament, and the moral character to lead the American nation and that she does not have the stamina to face the US adversaries, Trump seeks to dismiss her from the political scene. In other

words, the discursively expressed erasure is based on the use of argumentation; the tool through which Trump seeks to persuade the public not to vote for Clinton in the day of the election. This sort of erasure is the result of a struggle for power between two candidates who belong to two different political families (democrats vs. republicans). The difference in terms of social classification makes Trump's attempt to get rid of his competitor an ideology-based process. As far as ideology is concerned, Trump's claim that Clinton lacks the mental and the physical stamina reflects his rejection of Clinton as a woman. In reality, Trump is well-known for his sexist talks and practices in the past (Ben Khalifa, 2017). His gender-based denigration of the other, as a woman, is mainly affected by his chauvinistic ideology; I mean his way of thinking that men have more power than women to assume such responsibilities. So, Trump's gender-based evaluation of Clinton represents the main point around which his argument not to vote for her in the coming elections revolves. Trump's claim that she is not the right person for the US presidency is discursively expressed in his speech where his strong desire towards power is the main leading factor.

c) ... *we will seek to starve funding for Iran-backed Hamas and Hezbollah. We can use existing UN Security Council resolutions to apply new sanctions.*

Here, Trump uses his political threat to Iran-backed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah as a campaigning technique to increase the number of people who might vote for him on the elections day. This threat manifests itself in Trump's promise to minimize the power of Iran and its allies hence to reduce their influence in the Middle East region. His desire to silence Iran and its allies manifests itself discursively via the use of such choices like the verb 'to starve' and the noun 'sanctions'. This political desire for erasure is the outcome of a long-standing conflict of power between Iran and the US, especially in the region of the Middle East. However, the US's domination of the political scene in the UN paves the way for Trump to threaten Iran with the use of economic sanctions by referring to existing SC resolutions. In reality, Trump's use of power to reduce Iran's role is fed by the difference of ideology between the two states. While the US is supporting the proliferation of the Zionist ideology and project in the Middle East, Iran is supporting the movements that are interested in the defeat of the US-Israeli Zionist project in the region. Thus, the conflict of interests between the US and Iran is a highly sensitive issue in the Americans' political thinking what pushes Trump to manipulate his rejection of Iran in the way that serves for more voices in the election day. In other words, the power one can have to manipulate the difference of ideology to reject the other while addressing his public is a means by which he can have the trust of his public.

### Example 3

While delivering his historic speech, on December 6, 2017, to affirm that Jerusalem will be the eternal capital of Israel, Trump produced the following claims.

*But today we finally acknowledge the obvious. That Jerusalem is Israel's capital. This is nothing more or less than a recognition of reality. It is also the right thing to do. It's something that has to be done. That is why consistent with the Jerusalem embassy act, I am also directing the State Department to begin preparation to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.*

By claiming that Jerusalem will be Israel's capital and that the US embassy will be removed from Tel Aviv to this city, Trump denigrates the right of the Palestinians to get back to and rule their colonized territories. This claim represents an act of aggression and denigration in that Trump's locutionary act of declaring these two decisions will be transformed into actions (perlocutionary act) manifested in new capital for Israel and a new embassy for the US in the city of Jerusalem. In other words, the Palestinians will be denied the right to have this city as part of their state. Here, erasure is not directly claimed; however, it can be read through implication. The two-state solution should be the result of a just and a well-balanced diplomatic debate where both Palestinians and Israelis are involved, but it should not be through a one-sided decision that is taken by a party who shows sympathy towards the Israelis. This one-sided decision is the outcome of the un-equivalence of power between Israel and Palestine on the one hand and between the US and the Arab nations on the other hand. Living in an era of unjust distribution of power offers Trump the opportunity to increase Israel's control and to reduce the Arab nations' authority in the region. Moreover, his utterance of a one-sided decision might imply that Trump's minimization of the Palestinian voice, in particular, and the Arab voice, in general, is a biased claim. It is a biased claim in that Trump's adoption and defence of the Zionist ideology is the only reason that can explain his proclamation of such non-democratic political decisions. In brief, the erasure of the Palestinians, which is read using implication, is the result of a misbalance of power that Trump manipulated for the sake of defending the Zionist ideology and project in the Middle East.

### Example 4

In his speech warning the North Korean leader not to try the US on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2017, Trump made the following comments.

*The world cannot tolerate the menace of a rogue regime that threatens with nuclear devastation. All responsible nations must join forces to isolate the*

*brutal regime of North Korea, to deny it and any form, any form of it [...]. We call on every nation [...] downgrade diplomatic relations with the regime and sever all ties of trade and technology. It is our responsibility and our duty to confront this danger together...*

To put more pressure on the North Korean regime to abandon its nuclear program, Trump resorted to its denigration. In this example, the rejection of this government manifests itself discursively via the use of such strategies. First, negation (cannot tolerate, cannot support, cannot supply, etc.) is resorted to while seeking to highlight that this administration is not welcome and it should be rejected by the world community. Second, representation is brought into play to highlight the negative image of the authority (rogue, threat, brutal, danger). Third, the denial of the recognition of this leadership or any form of it (... to deny it and any form, any form of it ...) is meant to convey a strong political desire towards the total rejection of it by cutting diplomatic relations, ties of trade and technology, etc. This strong inclination towards the refusal of this system of government is emphasized by his call for the use of force to isolate it. In reality, Trump's exclusion of the North Korean regime gets its explanation rooted in the conflict of power between the US and North Korea. This conflict of power manifests itself in the exchange of threat, which is something that can derange the US's dream to rule the world. Having the authority to affect the decision-making process in the UN, Trump called for the use of SC resolutions to impose new sanctions on Kim's regime. Moreover, the North Korean government is misrepresented, rejected, and denigrated because of his anti-western imperialism position. For instance, Kim Jong-un's refusal to be under American domination like his neighbor of South Korea raised the rage of the Americans and made them resort to his demonization. In brief, Trump's call for the rejection of the North Korean regime is affected mainly by the conflict of power and the difference of ideologies that exist between the two states.

#### **Example 5**

In his speech about the decertification of Iran from its nuclear deal on October 13, 2017, Trump delivered the following statements.

*The U.S is far from the only target of the Iranian dictatorship's long campaign of bloodshed. The regime violently suppresses its own citizens it shot unarmed student protestors [...] has fueled sectarian violence in Iraq and vicious civil wars in Yemen and Syria [...] has supported the atrocities of Bashar al-Assad's regime. [...]. Given the regime's murderous past and present, we should not take lightly its sinister vision for the future.*

Trump's rejection of the Iranian regime is based upon his use of a well-structured logic of reasoning that reflects the high degree of his political rhetoric. He started his demonizing of the image of this government by presenting its crimes against its people (dictatorship, bloodshed, suppresses, etc.) and its support of external violent groups and authorities like in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, etc. Then, he shed light on the past and the present image of this administration, which he depicted by using the term 'murderous' that highlights the regime's thirsty to blood and death. After emphasizing the gloomy past and present of this leadership, Trump called for the need to disempower it by not allowing it to pursue its sinister vision of the future. Trump's demonization of the Iranian ruling elites might come as a result of his ignorance that Iraq was damaged by the US forces before being in the hands of the Iranians. This mystified reality can be explained by the US's struggle to continue its domination on the Middle East region where Iran started having a strong influence. To reduce Iran's interference and to increase the US's domination and interests in this region, Trump resorted to the conviction of the regime so that he can isolate it from its people and the world community. In reality, this strategy is frequently used by the Americans to deteriorate any power that tries to share them their spoils or oppose their ideological views of how the world should be. As far as ideology is concerned, Iran's opposition to the spread of the Zionist project in the region by supporting such fighting groups like Hezbollah and Hamas makes the US leaders struggle to demonize it and to minimize its role. Thus, the strong desire that Trump expressed in his denigration of and the disempowerment of the Iranian regime is mainly the result of a difference of ideologies and the opposition of the interests between the leading elites of the two states. This ideology-based hate is externalized via the choices that Trump used to misrepresent Iran's political regime.

#### **Example 6**

While meeting President Macron in a joint press conference on April 24, 2018, Trump articulated the following remarks.

*[...] countries that are in the area, some of which are immensely wealthy, would not be there except for the United States and, to a lesser extent, France. But they wouldn't be there except for the United States. They wouldn't last a week. We're protecting them. They have to now step up and pay for what's happening ...*

In these remarks, Trump denied the existence of some of the Gulf States in the region without the protection of the US. The misbalance of power between the US and what the Americans call allies countries in the regions paved the way for this US president to blackmail them. For instance, his repetitive use of negation reflects his strong desire towards

the abuse of the other to serve such personal objectives. In reality, blackmailing is one of the styles that are frequently used in Trump's language. Trump resorts to the extortion of the others, and especially the ones who need his support and the protection of his state, to get more financial gains. His direct claim – that they should step up and pay if they want the US to keep protecting them – reflects his economic ideology of exploring any social factor in a way that serves for the increase of his interests. In other words, he is ruling with the view of the state as a company where everything and every social circumstance should be explored and commercialized. This is done for the sake of getting more benefits and away from the principles of world politics. Moreover, this reality is also concrete in his decisions to make other countries like Japan and South Korea pay more for their protection. In brief, Trump's erasure of the out-group nations manifests itself, in this example; at the level of his threat to make them disappear if they will not pay the US for their protection. This is a sort of power abuse that is monitored by pure capitalist ideology.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of the aforementioned examples prove that Trump's erasure of the other played a significant role in the re-shaping of various kinds of contexts such as the social, the political, the historical, and the geographical.

In example one, Trump's rejection of the Syrian refugees as seekers of shelter and protection in US territory could have served to re-shape three kinds of contexts: the social, the historical, and the political. At the social level, Trump's refusal to welcome the Syrian refugees leads mainly to such a negative change on these harmed people's lives. Their situation changed from the fact of being safe and secure if they were accepted to get admission to the US territory to that of remaining in danger and prone to death at any time when they are denied access. Here, an ideologically monitored claim by a president who has a great desire to remove the other resulted in a great failure to save a big number of human lives. At the historical level, Trump's denigration of the Syrian refugees changes the US's history from being a land of immigration, immigrants, pluralism, and multi-culturalism to a nation of segregation where people are segregated against based on their religion. In other words, by his fear of the other, Trump gave to the world a new history of the US which has become under his rule a land of bigotry and xenophobia. At the political level, Trump's racist claim highlights a deviation in the US politics from political thinking of leaders who show compassion to all harmed nations regardless of their race, religion, thoughts, etc. to the new political thinking of segregation. In this newly emerged trend in the US politics that Trump leads, people need to enter to the US not only their official documents but also their religious identity. Thus, the erasure expressed through the

linguistics of this claim has led to changes at the social, historical, and political contexts and more precisely when being translated into concrete actions.

In example two, Trump's removal of the other has led to the re-shaping of three kinds of contexts: these are the social, the political, and the geographical. First, Trump's claim that Clinton could not be the future president to the US because she is a woman and she lacks the physical and mental power to face ISIS has led to a change in the American social context. This change could be explained by the move from a civic context where gender equality is guaranteed by law to a new situation where gender has become a criterion to select people for a given social role. In other words, according to Trump, there are some responsibilities that women cannot assume because they are inferior to men. Second, Trump's claim could have led to a change in the US politics from a political scene where both men and women have the right to be elected for the presidency to a new one where only men have the right to be elected for the presidency because they have the physical and mental power that women do not have. That is to say, by this claim Trump highlighted the need for a shift in American politics by stressing a sex-based criterion for the selection of the US president in the day of the election. Third, Trump's claim to apply new economic sanctions on Iran and to reduce its role in the region could have led to the emergence of such geopolitical changes in the Middle East region. This change takes place through minimizing Iran's political influence and maximizing the US's political influence in the Middle East as a geographical zone rich in oil and gas. This means that a geographical map of both US's and Iran's political influences in the region will be re-drawn under Trump's rule. So, the different kinds of erasure Trump resorted to in this example served to re-shape the social, the political, and the geographical. This is done in the way that serves to justify that Trump is the right guy the Americans should vote to the day of the election.

In example three, Trump's erasure of the Palestinians' right to have Jerusalem as the capital of their state by claiming it to be Israel's capital resulted mainly in the re-shaping of three sorts of contexts: the geographical, the historical and the political. At the geographical level, the city of Jerusalem moved from the state of being part of the Palestinians' territories to the state of being part of the Israelis' territories. In other words, by this claim, Trump re-shaped the maps of the geography of the two countries. At the historical level, Trump's claim that Jerusalem should be the new capital of the state of Israel represents a turning point in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By changing Jerusalem's history from being a Palestinian property to an Israeli property, Trump opened a new chapter in the Arab-Jewish conflict to erase a long history of Arab negotiations to go back to the boundaries of 1948 and later on to that of 1967. At the political level, Trump's claimed



resolution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by giving Israel the right to build its new capital in Jerusalem represents a shift in the politics of this crisis. This shift highlights the movement from a crisis that is ruled by the interaction of global political perspectives to a crisis that is ruled by a one-sided political perspective led by the US. This means that Trump overcame the traditions of world politics to practice a kind of personal politics that is unfair and leads to the rejection of the others' political voices. To sum up, Trump's claim for Jerusalem to be the new capital of the state of Israel served to re-shape three important variables of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This re-shaping of the geography, history and politics of the crises is ideologically monitored to serve for the enlargement and empowerment of the Zionist state.

In the last three examples, Trump's erasure of the other resulted in the re-shaping of world politics (example four and five) and the history of the relationships between the US and its allies (example six). In example four, Trump's denigration of the North Korean regime is a call to the world community that North Korea should not be welcome in world business, trade, and technology. In addition, it is an attempt to persuade the global community and especially the US's allies to downgrade diplomatic relations with the North Korean regime. In other words, Trump's erasure of the North Korean regime from the list of states with which the US could have diplomatic relations is a political trial to re-shape the political community's perspective towards North Korea. In example five, Trump's call to isolate Iran represents a political trial to re-shape Iran's political ties with the world community. This means that by rejecting the practices of the Iranian regime Trump sought to persuade the global community and especially his allies to cut economic, political, and diplomatic ties with Iran. In example six, Trump's emphasis on the superiority of the US and the inferiority of its allies like the Gulf States represents a shift in the history of the US's relationships with its allies. This shift culminates in the movement from a long history of relations based on partnership and shared interests to a new history marked by the protection of the US to its allies. In other words, the allies are in a strong need for the US's services while the US does not need their services. Trump's highlighting of this reality is meant to prove that the history of the relations between the US and its allies has changed. Therefore, for the US to keep protecting these nations, they should pay the bills. Briefly, the analysis of the erasure of the other Trump articulated in these three examples led to the re-shaping of both world politics and the history of the relationships between the US and its allies in the way that best serves for the maintaining of the US domination of global affairs.

To conclude, the erasure of the other represents a discursive mechanism of shaping and re-shaping different aspects of the communicative agents' context of interaction. In other words, erasure is not only a mere linguistic

phenomenon of rejection, denigration, minimization, and removal but also a whole cognitive process of thinking that is meant to enable people to move from an old situation of being to a new one. This process of thinking is monitored by the communicative agents' ideologies. That is to say, it is controlled by the speaker's ways of viewing and evaluating things as well as the goals he seeks to achieve.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the above examples shows that the erasure of the other is frequently present in Trump's speeches. Indeed, he resorts to the denigration and the rejection of any other who shows difference towards him or his in-group nations. His desire to get rid of the other manifests itself at various levels of his speeches such as semantics, syntax, stylistics, rhetoric, argumentation, representation, implication, etc. The examination of these discursive traces reveals that any attempt to remove the other from the scene is the result of a conflict of power or a conflict over power and interests between the in-group nation and the out-group nation. The examination of the nature of the relation between Trump and the parties that he seeks to marginalize reveals that the power the US has, as a state, paves the way for Trump to oppress the parties he is addressing. This internal desire towards the abuse of power is monitored by such ideologies that determine Trump's way of thinking about the self, the other, and how the relationship between the in-group and the out-group should look like. The investigation of these ideologies proves that they revolve around such concepts like interests, victory, gain, control, and domination.

By reaching these results, the paper brings valuable contributions to the study of erasure. These contributions are of two types: theoretical and practical. At the theoretical level, the paper offered a multi-disciplinary discussion to the issue of erasure in political discourse by making a connection between the discursive, the social, and the cognitive dimensions of the phenomenon. However, at the practical level, the application of this multi-disciplinary approach has led to an in-depth critique of how erasure works in language use, how power is manipulated to reject the other, and how ideologies are monitored to justify one's denigration of the other. These practical contributions represent the proofs that can justify the validity of the three hypotheses that are formulated before; erasure as a social, a discursive, and a cognitive phenomenon. Despite these valuable contributions, there still exist some limitations. These limitations can be summarized in the need for the use of other theories like psychology to understand the effects of one's mental status on one's practices of erasure and the analysis of more examples to cover other levels at which erasure manifests itself discursively. In reality, these limitations have not affected the research quality of the paper; however, they paved the way for more research to be undertaken so that a

better critique of the issue can be built and its proliferation defeated.

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### Conflict of interests

The author of this paper declares that this study has no conflict of interests with any party in the world. However, it is carried for the sake of an objective scientific study of the phenomenon of erasure.

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