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**Master's Thesis of PUZYCKI Rachel Eleanor**

**REFUGEE POLICY UNDER  
PRESIDENT TRUMP  
- WHITE SUPREMACY AND THE FAR-RIGHT  
MOVEMENT -**

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**REFUGEE POLICY UNDER  
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# Abstract

President Trump actively limited asylum seekers from entering the country in a few key ways; through executive order 13769 and executive order 13780, aptly titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*, effectively blocking refugees sourcing from key countries - that of Syria and Yemen, and through a limit on admissible refugees to the United States. As the first far-right republican to be elected to office, scholars must critically analyze his political actions and policy changes during his presidency in order to come up with an analysis to the decrease in admitted refugees and changes to refugee policy throughout his presidency. Therefore, in this project not only is refugee policy under President Trump vastly different from his predecessors, but there is also a causal relationship between the ideologies that helped him get elected, that of the far right and white supremacist movements, and the changes to refugee policy that followed.

**Keyword:** *refugee, immigration, Trump, international, foreign policy*

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Study Background

Although President Trump's changes to foreign policy are extensive, one aspect that is not discussed as often is that of changes to refugee policy and asylum seeker resettlement. Under the Obama administration, refugee resettlement increased since the decrease in refugees allowed to settle in the United States after the events of 9/11 under the Bush administration.

President Obama paved the way for faster and more accessible resettlement, seeing numbers of refugees seeking and being granted asylum being in the 100,000's.<sup>①</sup> However, since President Trump was voted into office, this number drastically dipped, seeing a change from 110,000 to 50,000 accepted refugees between 2016 to 2017.<sup>②</sup> This change is distinct, as it had not occurred so drastically since 9/11, and rarely occurred in United States' history.

Although these changes are not only attributable to that of the executive orders 13769 and 13780, but that also resulted in a near-total immigration ban from the Middle Eastern countries of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, it is the largest policy change of note that is cause for some of the damage done to the US Refugee Resettlement

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<sup>①</sup> Lizzie Biddle. "REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT UNDER THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION: UNTANGLING THE U.S. REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL." (University of North Carolina Greensboro: 2018).

<sup>②</sup> Center for Migration Studies. *PRESIDENT TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS ON IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES* (Scalabrini International Migration Network: 2021).

program.<sup>③</sup> This ban prevented entrants to the United States for 120 days and prevented Syrian refugees indefinitely from being able to enter the country. As Syria was the largest source of refugees at the time of these changes, it's evidently the most impacted crisis during this time. Other changes to US' refugee policy included a congress-backed limit on admission of refugees in its entirety and a decrease in funding for individual resettlement programs spread across the country. This resulted in the largest hit to the program in its history, resulting in a record low number of refugees entering the country and a changing demographic towards accepting those of white and Christian backgrounds, in direct opposite to previous literature citing an increasing change towards a more diverse, non-white, and non-Christian refugee population.<sup>④</sup> This is evident in the increasingly diverse background of the United States as a whole, and a growing portion of the United States believe that these changes threaten their way of life.

President Trump is known to most to be an unconventional, highly volatile president in United States' history. He is unlike previous presidents in policy suggestion, implementation, and ideology. Although previous administrations would argue the opposite, President Trump can thank more radical communities for the support of his election. Some of these important

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<sup>③</sup> Sarah Pierce and Doris Meissner. "Trump Executive Order on Refugees and Travel Ban: A Brief Review." (Migration Policy Institute: 2017).

<sup>④</sup> Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter. "Growing Diversity among America's Children and Youth: Spacial and Temporal Dimensions." (Population Council: 2010).

groups are that of white supremacist groups and those who support the far-right movement. Although this is not to say that President Trump is a part of any of these groups, however he benefitted from the support of these ideologies and promoted the viewpoints and beliefs of them in order to win the election and influenced the changes in policy he would enact during his presidency. During the 2016 election, Donald Trump made jokes and attacks at people of color, Muslims, Mexicans, and even disabled people on his campaign trail, leading to many of his follower's agreement despite large opposition by those on the left and other conservatives that thought differently than this. Many saw his accusations outlandish and unbelievable, yet still submitted their vote on election day that would lead to his presidency. President Trump also elicited support from those on the far-right, especially through the use of the internet and social media, in order to get his message out there to groups typically not at the forefront of American media.<sup>⑤</sup> This change in conservatism towards the right is not something unique to the United States, however the push towards a mainstream view of it is.

Other scholars and journalists in particular have labeled the changes to refugee policy through executive orders 13769 and 13780 as

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<sup>⑤</sup> G. Groitl. *Donald Trump: A Populist in the White House: Background and Perspectives*. (2017).

“Islamophobic” and has labeled the ban as a “Muslim ban.”<sup>⑥</sup> And this would not be an incorrect assumption, as the literature has proven that indeed, the Trump administration did so in an attempt to curb terrorist efforts by banning specifically Muslim-majority nations. However, due to the significant changes that reached beyond these countries, including that of Venezuela and Myanmar, which were later added into the executive order list during the *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing the Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detected Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or other Public-Safety Threats*, Islamophobia cannot be the only motivating factor for the changes in refugee policy.<sup>⑦</sup> Despite limiting access to the refugee resettlement program for Syrian refugees, and those from countries like Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen, Venezuela and Myanmar are not Muslim-majority nations, therefore leading one to assume that a more specific reasoning may be at play. In specific, this change is caused by factors relating to white supremacy and the far-right movement’s impact on the Trump administration, as these countries all have two things in common: these countries are non-white, and many of them are non-Christian.<sup>⑧</sup>

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<sup>⑥</sup> Harsha Panduranga, Faiza Patel, and Michael W. Price. *EXTREME VETTING & THE MUSLIM BAN*. (Brennan Center for Justice: 2019).

<sup>⑦</sup> Donald J. Trump. *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists and Other Public-Safety Threats*. (The White House: 2017).

<sup>⑧</sup> Kira Monin, et. al, *Refugees and Asylees in the United States*. (Migration Policy Institute: 2021)

Some may argue that this concept is too broad, and that white supremacy is more linked to violent acts rather than an administration as a whole. However, due to President Trump's inability to criticize and condemn white supremacist acts, and people themselves, along with those involved in the far-right movement, along with individuals on his committee and advisory council being directly linked to these ideologies, it can be inferred that this has an impact on not only foreign and immigration policy, but on the refugee resettlement program and the changes that occurred within refugee admissions throughout his election and time in office. As will be described later in this project, although Islamophobia played a large role in the executive orders of 2017, this had a lasting impact on all non-white and non-Christian entrants to the United States during the President Trump's time in office, and will have a lasting impact for years as many of the refugee crises around the world continue to grow.

Therefore, I would like to pose the question, why is there such a drastic change in refugee policy under the Trump Administration. This study seeks to understand the nature and consequences of Trump-era refugee policy. In order to accomplish this task, this study will first describe the nature and immediate consequences of these policy changes. The second phase will discuss Trump's ideological leanings and their connections to white supremacy and far-right political movements. Finally, linkages will be drawn between these ideological leanings and implemented refugee policy.

In summation, this study seeks to understand the degree to which President Donald Trump's galvanization of such factions resulted in targeted reduction of non-white refugee groups in the United States

## **1.2. Purpose of Research**

The subject of refugee policy is well documented, as it pertains to the Trump administration, there seems to be a notable lack in consensus when relating to the Trump administration, there seems to be a lack of consensus amongst the international community. Although many have claimed that the changes in refugee policy area clearly an act of Islamophobia on the part of Trump and his advisees, those writing about the subject do so through a biased lens and are doing so in the name of journalism. In particular, liberal media tends to perpetrate a viewpoint of a multitude of the Trump administration's actions and policies as negative, despite whether or not they are legitimate or not. The opposite can be said for conservative media as well, with each respective media source discussing the other in solely negative terms despite the subject matter at hand being neutral rather, causing an inflammatory reaction from viewers and politicians alike. Often this is done through a partisan lens, and has increasingly become a challenge in social media-era politics, where various platforms are directly rewarded through views and reactions rather than by loyal leadership.

This form of journalism does have a place in this critique, however, there is a lack of evidence exhibited in these works that needs to be

scrutinized more carefully and methodically than has been done. Therefore, this project serves to bridge that gap, and aims to answer the problem of why refugee policy has seen such a dramatic change in recent history, with an emphasis on deescalating bias, and using qualitative analysis with a small look at quantitative data. By attempting this research strategy, it will serve to fill a gap in the literature on the subject and can serve as an example of how to properly research this subject without injecting bias into the research itself. Refugee policy is a complex aspect of US foreign policy however it is rarely discussed at great length outside of the context of immigration reform.

These findings can contribute to the scholarship such that this research aids in the study of what can be done further to mitigate the effects of low refugee admission rate in the next administration, whether President Biden chooses to return to the previous administration's policies or to follow in the footsteps of President Trump. Refugee policy changes have immediate and often extreme impacts on refugees already in and outside of the United States after fleeing persecution in their home countries. So far, it seems as though President Biden has raised the ceiling for admissible refugees in 2021, the rapidity with which the refugee resettlement program can rebound from the initiatives set into motion in the previous administration remain to be seen. The maintenance of such a rebound in a hypothetical win by Trump of another populist Republican leader are also questionable. Thus,

understanding the implications of the rise in populist leadership and rhetoric from this dimension that perpetrates an ideology of white supremacy and far-right actions can inform policymakers that seek to insulate or respond to proposed changes in the future. As incidents of white supremacy and far-right events continue to rise as a result of the Trump administration, this paper seeks to link the two factors in a way to explain this phenomenon, while also considering a unique feature and events related to the Trump administration.

## Chapter 2. Background

### 2.1 History of United States' Refugee Policy

The United States has a complicated history regarding refugee policy. In fact, there is no solidified refugee policy, and the majority of refugee and asylum-related regulations are based off the Refugee Act of 1980. In *The Refugee Act of 1980*, it outlined in detail refugee and immigration provisions during the Cuban refugee crisis, where thousands of Cubans were fleeing their homeland.<sup>⑨</sup> Unlike previous refugee influxes from other countries, this was notable as there came a need to differentiate those who were immigrants and refugees coming from these nations, in many cases in large numbers. This was indicative of a future problem that would arise under refugee policy, as many scholars and politicians worried that President Carter's policy may serve to allow for refugees to seek asylum in the United States in larger numbers than the country could feasibly handle.

Before *The Refugee Act of 1980*, laws regarding refugee resettlement were fundamentally changed following World War II. The laws regarding immigration in this fashion also changed. The six main objectives regarding this act were as follows. The first of these objectives was to repeal previous

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<sup>⑨</sup> UNHCR (2011, December) *Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status Under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (Reissued in Geneva, 2011) 1-56.

policy's discriminatory treatment of refugees by defining refugees in a more clear, definitive way through sharing the same definition as the *United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which defines a refugee as one seeking residence in another country on the well-rounded basis of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.<sup>⑩</sup> This change to fit the standard of the United Nations is significant, as previous acts and policies regarding refugee resettlement and asylum seekers included defining those who were escaping communism as a main objective, along with more subjective methods of acceptance under the status of refugee.<sup>⑪</sup> The second of these objectives was to change the annual limitation on regular refugee admissions, from 17,400 to 50,000 based on the fiscal year. The third of these objectives was to create an orderly but flexible method of dealing with international emergencies resulting in large displacements of refugees and asylum seekers, if the limit to objective two had already been met. The fourth of these objectives asserts that congress will have control over the process of admission for said refugees. The fifth of these objectives adds an asylum provision in immigration law, making refugee policy more distinct and standardized than previous refugee acts. The final of these

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<sup>⑩</sup> UNHCR. *Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status Under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. (UNHCR: 2021).

<sup>⑪</sup> E. M. Kennedy, *Refugee Act of 1980*, (The International Migration Review, 15(1/2) 1981), 141–156.

objectives provides federal programs to help in assistance of the refugee resettlement process.<sup>12</sup>

In more recent history, the most recent decrease in admitted refugees was in response to the attacks on September 11, 2001. The United States admitted refugees returned to their previous levels quite quickly compared to the Trump administration, from admitting 27, 131 refugees in 2001, to admitting 52,873 in 2004.<sup>13</sup> This number can be attributed to the large influx of refugees from Africa and those fleeing Afghanistan. The number of refugees being accepted into the United States Refugee Resettlement program would also increase in the later years of the Bush Administration, with the demographics changing to include more refugees originating from the Middle East and South Asia.

Following the rebound of the refugee resettlement program in 2004, President Obama assumed office and continued previous policies set in place. Before he assumed office, Obama had played a key role in supporting these previous policies, including that of promotion of the “American dream” and the view that the United States is a country built on being a land of immigrants.<sup>14</sup> This was a significant value portrayed during the 2008 election as well, with a push for more accepting immigration policy and a

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<sup>12</sup> E. M. Kennedy, *Refugee Act of 1980*, (The International Migration Review, 15(1/2) 1981), 141–156.

<sup>13</sup> United States Department of State. *Summary of Refugee Admissions Report, Refugee Processing Center (USDS: 2021)*

<sup>14</sup> M. E. Dorsey and M. Díaz-Barriga “Senator Barack Obama and Immigration Reform.” (*Journal of Black Studies* 38(1) 2007), 90–104

more progressive approach towards earning citizenship. Under the Obama administration, the refugee resettlement program continued its increasing trend, averaging around 70,000 accepted refugees per year. A significant factor in this was that of the Syrian Civil war, in which the United States became involved. Syria soon became the largest source of refugees fleeing violence and persecution, and many of those refugees had sought asylum in the United States. This is evident through the drastic increase in refugees given acceptance from this region, which cannot only be attributed to the Afghani refugee crisis. This increase is viewed throughout the entirety of the Obama presidency, and also became a point of contention during the 2016 election cycle.

The Refugee Resettlement Program in these years was not only relevant due to the drastic decrease in refugees for a subsequent two years, but also due to the reasoning for such a change. The rhetoric used to determine this decrease was the same that President Trump claimed through the implementation of the key executive orders, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*.<sup>15</sup> Although the second of these two decreases is more drastic, with a complete halt on refugee and immigrant entry into the United States under the Trump administration, the Bush administration did so after an active attack, and never resulted in a

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States Initial Section 11 Report* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security: 2017), 1-11.

total and complete ban from those refugees deriving from Muslim-majority nations. Instead, resulting years during the Bush administration in fact saw an increase in refugees from Afghanistan, in which the United States became involved in a war against al-Qaida that would last until mid-way through President Biden's first year in office in 2021.<sup>16</sup>

For example, the statistics below shown in table one and figure one display the changes in refugee statistics over these years. It can be inferred that the first distinct decrease in refugee admissions was due directly to the attacks on 9/11 during the Bush administration, showing reluctance to accept refugees and immigrants on the basis of prevention of terrorism due to this specific event. It also can be seen that there is a quick return to the previous year's admissions even during the Bush administration, and continual gradual increase during the Obama administration. Immediately after the Obama administration, however, there is a distinct drop in 2017, following Trump entering into office. This is a key variable in this research, as this drop is distinct, noticeable, and a cause for concern as it affects the refugees that are seeking admission to the United States, but also other countries that may have to admit more refugees to their own nations, despite the United States previously being known as a large home to those seeking asylum due to persecution based on the United Nations definition of a refugee.

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<sup>16</sup> A. E. Dewey, "Refugee Issues after 9/11." (*In Defense of the Alien*, 26: 2003), 174–178.

Table 1: Total Refugee Statistics (2001-2020)<sup>17</sup>

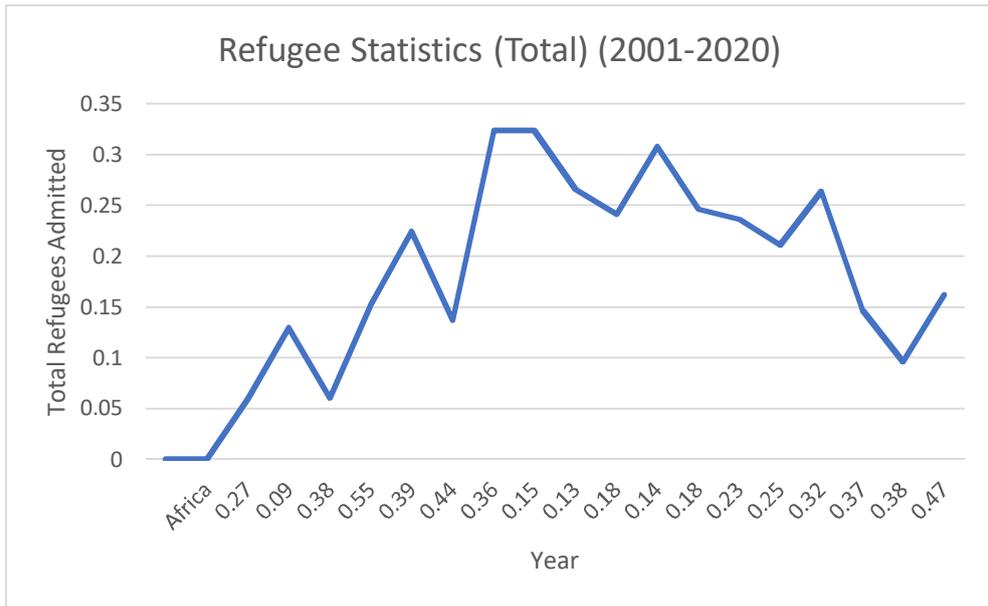
Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Refugee	69,886	27,131	28,403	52,873	53,813	41,223	48,282	60,191	74,654	73,311
Totals										
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Refugee	56,424	58,238	69,926	69,987	69,933	84,994	53,716	22,574	30,000	11,814
Totals										

In figure one, this change is even more visible, as the line graph visually indicates a larger change at hand between these individual decreases and increases over the last 20 years. This change is cause for concern, and the reason for this change is being called into question in the later chapters of this thesis. As President Trump has left a lasting impact on the country following his presidency, this can be inferred due to a unique ideology not previously presented by traditional conservatives that previously had been president and those who were running alongside him in the 2016 election.

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<sup>17</sup> US Department of State (2022). Summary of Refugee Admissions. [2000-2020]. Retrieved from: <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

Figure 1: Total Refugee Statistics (2001-2020)<sup>18</sup>



## 2.2 President Trump's Election History

Not only does this phrase invoke pride in his supporters, but it also antagonizes the previous administration and those in established roles in political institutions. President Trump was elected at a turning point for American politics, as President Obama was in contrast at the end of his second term. Most scholars argued at the time that there would be another democratic party leader in office, namely Hillary Clinton or Joe Biden, and that this would be partly due to the previous Obama administration, and this was somewhat proven, with Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote, but

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<sup>18</sup> US Department of State. Summary of Refugee Admissions (2001-2020). (US Department of State: 2022).

not the electoral college vote that year.<sup>19</sup> This was evident also from multiple polls on websites and news stations like that of the New York Times and Huffington Post, among many others.<sup>20</sup> However, there was a growing feeling of discontent within the conservative party, leading to wider divisions within the country based on political belief, and that included social issues like that of racism, sexism, and homophobia, along with more economic challenges like that of higher taxation and complications with the military and the increasing national debt. It seemed, for a while at least, that these scholars' predictions would come true, however, this was not the case. The evening of November 7, 2016, President Trump was elected to the position of the United States' 45<sup>th</sup> president, and many scholars would wonder how the world of American politics would change as a result.

President Trump was well known for his outlandish comments on racial minorities, people with physical disabilities, sexist comments towards women he worked with previously, Hillary Clinton, and even his own daughter. He was known for openly degrading those who voted for the democratic party in recent years and those who would vote for the party during that election cycle.<sup>21</sup> Some of these comments included that of degrading Hillary Clinton on the basis of being a woman, stating that

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Sanders. *The Meaning, Causes, and Possible Results of the 2016 Presidential Election*. De Gruyter (The Forum: 2018)

<sup>20</sup> New York Times. *Who Will be President?* (NYT: 2016)

<sup>21</sup> Nasaem Mehdi Abdullah and Abbas Degan Darweesh. *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Ideology*. (Journal of Education and Practice: 2016).

because she is a woman she is not as fit for office as a man would be. Other comments included that of women being dependent on their sex appeal in order to be elected to office or hold positions of power, making comments about Clinton's ability to satisfy her husband, and stating that she was not fit enough to face other foreign figureheads like that of President Vladimir Putin or the leaders of ISIS. All of these comments, in addition to those regarding his own daughter's attractiveness, stood out in comparison to his competition, and he received both criticism from the left-wing politicians and voters and praise from the right-wing members for making these comments.

Not only is President Trump's election history complicated from the domestic policy perspective, which relates heavily to his reliance on the far-right movement, but also that of his complicated and isolationist foreign and immigration policies. President Trump's policies have been described by many scholars as restrictive, specifically in terms of immigration and refugee policy.<sup>22</sup> These restrictive policies are evident not only from the policies he created, but also from comments and statements made by him and his supporters on his campaign trail. For example, President Trump discussed these topics at rallies and convention centers where he would speak directly to his voter base. In some of these speeches, he would speak

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<sup>22</sup> S.-W. Choi, *Does Restrictive Immigration Policy Reduce Terrorism in Western Democracies?* (Perspectives on Terrorism, 12(4): 2018) 14–25.

negatively about certain ethnic groups and religious affiliations, specifically discussing potential immigration policy that was stricter than his predecessors.

## Chapter 3. Changes in Refugee Policy

Refugee policy and the refugee resettlement program have been an important aspect of United States' foreign policy in the last fifty years. Since the *Refugee Act of 1980*, refugees of all races and creeds have been allowed entrance to the United States under the United Nations definition of refugee and asylum seekers – that of those facing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. In recent years under the Trump administration's orders, the United States saw record decline in not only the limit of refugees into the United States, but also a change in background, race, and religion of the refugee's given admission to the country. This has caused the United States' rank as one of the most accepting countries to refugees and asylum seekers to fall to one that is far less accepting, and far stricter than it had been under previous presidential administrations. This has led to other countries, notably those in western Europe to take up the position of accepting the refugees that the United States refused, and it also leaves many refugees seeking a new home stranded in dangerous and precarious living situations, often leading to mass displacement, lack of nutrition, and death for many.

In order to better understand the subject of refugee policy in depth, it's important to know the history behind the United States refugee policy, including the definition of refugee, asylum seeker, the *Refugee Act of 1980*, and previous administrations' responses to refugee crises. These key

features of refugee policy are important to discuss due to their later implications when discussing the main question of this paper. Later in this section, I will discuss the effects and details of executive orders 13769 and 13780, and the long-lasting implications of such changes. Although these executive orders are not the only policies that influenced refugee policy, they impacted refugee policy the most drastically and publicly, and were met with the most backlash from journalists, politicians, scholars, and the public. Lastly, I will delve further into defining the key features that make this complex problem as complicated as it is, and the key details that serve as a linkage to President Trump's ideologies – that of white supremacy and far-right nationalism.

### **3.1 Executive Orders 13769 and 13780 and the US Refugee Resettlement Program**

Two of the key methods that Trump employed that were a source of change in refugee policy was that of executive orders 13769 and 13780, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. In these executive orders, the President specified a ban on entry from 8 key countries in the middle east, those from of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Later, Iraq would be removed from this list. Although these executive orders did not explicitly specify it was intended to reduce the admittance of refugees into the Refugee Resettlement Program, it resulted in diminishing the total number of refugees from the previous year

from 110,000 to 50,000, affecting those from Syria the most, as the majority of refugees were from Syria at this time- Syria continues to be the largest source of refugees in the present day.<sup>23</sup> The top 5 countries of origin at the time of the executive orders in early 2017 were that of Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia. The demographics have since shifted, and now include Venezuela, with Syria remaining the largest source of refugees to date.<sup>24</sup>

The key countries listed in these executive orders – that of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – were determined to be countries of high concern. Each country was listed for a variety of reasons, of which are as follows. Iran was listed as a country of major concern and included in these executive orders due to being a state sponsor of terrorism and failure to cooperate despite cooperation efforts by the United States. The United States also determined that Iran has been linked to al-Qaida through support and transporting of people and funds into Syria and South Asia. Iraq, which would later be removed from this list, was included because Iraq was in an active warzone and working alongside United States’ coalition efforts. Since the enactment of executive order 13769, Iraq has made expressed efforts to enhance travel documentation and information sharing, in exchange for enhanced screening rather than a ban on all travel between countries. Libya

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<sup>23</sup> Center for Migration Studies, *President Trump’s Executive Orders on Immigration and Refugees*. (Scalabrini International Migration Network: 2021)

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR *Refugee Data Finder* (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency: 2021).

was listed as a country of concern because, as an active combat zone, and also due to the lack of state-based institutions and the presence of armed militias that threaten the United States, despite that there has been some cooperative effort with the United States. Somalia was determined to be a terrorist safe haven, the refusal of Somali documentation, and porous country borders, along with the lack of capacity to maintain military pressure to reduce threats and cooperate with the United States. Sudan was a country listed primarily due to their status as a state sponsor of terrorism and presence of terrorist groups such as Hizballah and Hamas. Despite ~~stopping~~ ending cooperation with al-Qaida, the country has continued elements of terrorism linked to, and in cooperation with, ISIS. Syria was listed also due to being a state sponsor of terrorism, and due to their engagement in civil conflict and ISIS' control over large regions of the country. This is especially of note as the United States cited that the country attracts international supporters of ISIS in an attempt to plot and encourage attacks around the world, potentially in the United States. Due to Yemen and their ongoing conflict between the government and Houthi-led opposition, the United States also listed the country in this executive order. Although cooperation efforts have been trending upward, the country has not been able to sustain efforts to the United States' liking.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States Initial Section 11 Report* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security: 2017), 4-6.

The Trump Administrations executive orders 13769 and 13780 indicate important changes in immigration and refugee policy during Trump's presidency. Not only was the refugee admissions process reduced, but it was also halted altogether until halfway until 2017, and never fully recovered for a multitude of factors. One of these includes a key action directed by the orders, specifically that of increased screening and vetting of foreign nationals seeking entrance to the United States<sup>26</sup> (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2017). This was originally done under the guise of preventing terrorist attacks on American soil, arguing that this executive order would limit the number of malicious entrants or those who seek to exploit the US' immigration system. However, at the time of its writing and enactment, the largest source of refugees fleeing persecution under the definition of refugee by the United Nations was from Syria, one of the countries most affected by this immigration ban. Other countries and regions that were not listed in this initial ban were also strongly affected, as the internal dynamics influencing refugee resettlement status acceptance had also changed, with the increased vetting and screening strategies being a key factor in this.

This immigration ban, and subsequent refugee program suspension, lasted for 120 days and banned refugees from Syria indefinitely, but it was

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<sup>26</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States Initial Section 11 Report* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security: 2017), 1-11.

not the only factor that is cause for the decline in the refugee resettlement program. Another key factor in this is the targeting of key elements of the US Refugee Resettlement Program, including that of funding, decreasing admissions ceiling limits, and a halting of the program soon after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic played a small part in this decrease, resulting in the lowest acceptance of refugees since the beginning of US refugee policy enactment, this is of the least concern. This fear of the existential threat of terrorism is partially to blame for these changes, despite the refugee resettlement program's rebuilding under the Bush administration. Although they are very similar in reasoning, there are alternative reasons that are cause for these changes under the Trump administration.

Following the enactment of this order, a third draft of this document would be released, titled *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing the Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detected Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or other Public-Safety Threats*, of which altered and added more countries to the list of barred entry, including that of individuals from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, Yemen, and Somalia.<sup>27</sup> These changes are highly significant, as this ban was originally argued as Islamophobic by many in media and journalism, amongst some of those in opposing political parties. In the proclamation, the Trump

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<sup>27</sup>Immigration History. "Muslim Travel Ban." (The University of Texas at Austin: 2017).

administration argued that these countries listed remained deficient in their identity-management and information-sharing capabilities.<sup>28</sup> The previous countries listed, but those exempted from the previous list (specifically that of Iraq) were exempt from this proclamation, however additional scrutiny would be taken in order to reduce possible threats posed.

Each country was listed in this proclamation for a variety of complex reasons. Chad was listed in this proclamation despite continued cooperation, primarily due to their terrorist threat assessment and failure to satisfy key criteria relating to public safety. The United States government also identified several key terrorist groups active in the country that pose a potential risk, including that of Boko Haram, ISIS, and al-Qaida. Iran was listed again, as they failed to cooperate with the United States, and is a source of many major terrorist threats. The United States also argued on multiple occasions that Iran is a terrorist-sponsoring nation, therefore they continued with the immigration ban (and subsequent refugee refusal). Libya was included on this list again, despite continued cooperation with the United States, due to inadequacies in risk-protection protocols, and failure to satisfy terrorist safety criteria. This country also was determined to have a large number of terrorist groups, and therefore threats, within the nation's borders. The reason for North Korea's inclusion, although not formerly on

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<sup>28</sup> Donald J. Trump. *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists and Other Public-Safety Threats*. (The White House: 2017).

the list, was due to the country's non-cooperation with the United States and failing to share information between the countries. Syria was again listed, due to regularly failing to cooperate with the United States and is cited as sourcing terrorist threats to the United States. The United States also argued that Syria was a state sponsor of terrorism, therefore suspending all entrants (immigrants and nonimmigrants) to the United States. Venezuela was included on this list due to noncooperation, and unverified attempts to disclose information on terrorist threats to the United States. Although this country was not previously on the list, it is one of the few that listed failure of verification on citizenship as reasoning for these restrictions. Yemen is included on this list for similar reasons as the previous executive orders, despite being a powerful counterterrorism partner to the United States. This is due primarily due to identity-management criterion. The final country listed in this proclamation was that of Somalia, of which the United States cited the baseline information-sharing as a key factor in their inclusion, along with lack of territorial control and host to a "terrorist safe haven." All the countries included on this list had not only immigrant visas suspended, but also nonimmigrant and tourist visas cancelled.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2 Suspension of the Refugee Resettlement Program – Race and Religion**

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<sup>29</sup> Donald J. Trump. *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats*. (White House: 2017).

The suspension of the refugee admissions program and limiting of refugee entrants to the United States was another policy change that had a high impact on that of refugee policy in the United States during this time. Unlike previous administrations, the Trump administration, at the same time that the executive orders 13769 and 13780 were enacted simultaneously suspended the refugee admissions program for 120 days.<sup>30</sup> Although this is less related to that of the countries targeted with the orders, this suspension meant that no refugees could gain entrance to the United States during this time, regardless of the refugee crisis or needs of the individuals. This slowed down the admissions progress significantly, with the total amount of refugees gaining acceptance into the program in 2017 decreased by half of that from the previous year.

Another example of that of the suspension of the refugee admissions program is the overall limiting done intentionally by the Trump administration in order to curb terrorist threats from foreign nations. This was done through a series of limiting the overall ceiling limit under which refugees could be accepted.<sup>31</sup> This limit occurred yearly in the same fashion of that of a budget. Not only was the ceiling limited, but those working on the committee overseeing the refugee admissions program was also

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<sup>30</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States Initial Section 11 Report* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security: 2017), 1-11.

<sup>31</sup> American Immigration Council. "An Overview of Refugee Law and Policy." (*American Immigration Council*: 2021).

decreased as a result – specifically through overhauling and changes to the program itself.<sup>32</sup>

These examples of policies enacted that were either subsections of the executive orders 13769 and 13780 or individual policy enacted on its own are important due to many key factors. It shows that not only was the Trump administration interested in limiting immigration to the United States under the guise of reducing overseas terrorist threats to the country, it also sends the message that refugees fleeing persecution during the world's largest refugee crisis in the modern age are no longer welcome either. This is unique as previous administrations, even when enacting policy under stressful environments, were concerned with security and still saw the importance of preserving common humanity and the good that the United States can do for those who truly need the assistance. It also shows the importance of the United States from the perspective of sharing foreign aid to those countries, through an exchange of goods typically, but also through an exchange of people living under dire and potentially life-threatening situations that seek asylum.

Another key factor that involves refugee policy under President Trump is that of race and religion when discussing the diversity behind the Refugee Resettlement Program, which in recent years has mainly impacted those from more racially and religiously diverse backgrounds. Under

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<sup>32</sup> The President Trump White House. "Immigration." (*The White House*: 2020).

President Trump these demographics had shifted, with many countries that had previously been the source for many refugees allowed limited or completely restricted entry into the United States under these programs. Specifically, Syria has a Muslim, non-white majority, and the country was under an explicit ban from entry into the country under executive orders 13769 and 13780. Refugee admittance into the Refugee Resettlement Program has also shown a tendency to accept more refugees from those with Christian, white backgrounds as opposed to those from non-Christian, non-white countries of origin of which was diversifying in previous years.<sup>33</sup>

The main problem with this is that it perpetuates a racist viewpoint despite living in a world where many of these refugees who are seeking admission into the United States are increasingly non-white. The main countries of origin, that of Syria, Myanmar, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Somalia, are all non-white countries. Despite this, the United States does accept a large number of refugees from Africa, although the issue with this is that the majority of these refugees come from Christian backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> That's not to say that they are not more or less worthy of refugee status, but rather, accepting refugees from specific backgrounds

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<sup>33</sup> Adele Garnier, Liliana Lyra Jubilut, and Kristin Bergtora Sandvik. *Refugee Resettlement: Power, Politics, and Humanitarian Governance*. Edition 1., 152-181. (Berghahn Books: 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Kira Monin, et. al, *Refugees and Asylees in the United States*. (Migration Policy Institute: 2021)

based on race and religion rather than on an individual needs-based reasoning is an issue that is worth discussing further.

Although the world's refugees overwhelmingly originate from non-white, non-Christian nations, the number of refugees from these countries has fallen and the largest demographic source of refugees has become increasingly more white and more Christian. Although the largest source of refugees remains those coming from African nations, these refugees are overwhelmingly Christian. Many refugees in the past had originated from countries that are of a Muslim-majority, and therefore a majority of those refugees had been of the same faith. However, in recent years this demographic has shifted, and under the Trump Administration fewer Muslims have been given the opportunity to be accepted into the United States' Refugee Resettlement program than there had been in the past.

Many journalists have heralded this move towards a refugee population that is more white and more Christian as being Islamophobic, meaning that these policies actively discriminate against Muslims. This is an incredibly important factor when considering the executive orders of 2017, in which President Trump actively targeted Muslim-majority countries in his immigration ban, claiming that this order was enacted on principle of limiting potential terrorist entry in the name of national security interests. The previous year, under the Obama administration, the number of refugees admitted to the United States Refugee Resettlement program was 84,994,

higher than all previous years due to efforts by immigration and refugee policy lobbyists and a foreign policy aimed more towards soft power and multilateralism. This also included a large influx of refugees originating from Syria, due to the violence and destruction caused by the Syrian Civil war crisis, which caused large displacement and resettlement among its peoples. The majority of these were Muslims, of which moved to neighboring countries in Europe, but tens of thousands made their way to the United States to resettle.<sup>35</sup> However, President Trump sought to disrupt this and ban Syrian refugees into the nation, and executive orders 13769 and 13780 both accomplished this goal. Many heralded his actions, believing they were the best course of action for the country to disrupt possible terrorist threats from the country. In response to this growing concern, the Obama administration put in place added security checks in order to mitigate the risk of potential terrorist acts on United States' grounds. This, of course, did not last long, as the change in political party and increase in Islamophobic rhetoric resulting in this drastic change in refugee policy reform caused this large disparity between religious allowance for refugee resettlement.

In table 2, this change of demographics is evident through the years. There is an evident shift from a diversifying population where refugees were

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<sup>35</sup> Amos, Deborah, *U.S. is on Target to Accept and Resettle 10,000 Syrian Refugees*, (NPR: 2016)

coming from more places, from more backgrounds, whereas in the past many refugees from parts of Europe, and that of the Soviet Union and Kosovo were common.<sup>36</sup> In previous years, like that of 2002 where the previous decrease in refugee admissions had been visible, the demographics of these refugees were mainly from places like the Middle East, South Asia, Asia, and Europe, with the largest decrease in refugees indicated a decrease in all admissions and admissions from Africa, rather than a targeted group in particular. However, as the table would indicate, this change would not last long and was due to the events on September 11, rather than racist or Islamophobic intentions.<sup>37</sup> This leads into another detail regarding this research. Although scholars suggest that the previous drop in refugee admissions was due to terrorist threats from that of September 11, we can clearly see an increase in refugee admissions, thereafter, indicating that this did not have a long-lasting impact on the demographics on refugee admissions. Although this change is significant from a quantitative perspective, it also is important in understanding the legal perspective and reasoning from which the Trump Administration's changes had occurred. The refugees affected from entering the United States under President Bush were allowed entrance, but measures to limit terrorist entry to the country had changed, therefore limiting the total number that could enter in 2002-

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<sup>36</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad. "Key Facts about Refugees to the U.S." (PEW RESEARCH CENTER: 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Arthur E. Dewey. "Refugee Issues after 9/11." (Center for Migration Studies: 2003).

2003.<sup>38</sup> Later in the Bush administration, these demographics returned to their previous status of diversification, with refugees from Africa slowly becoming the largest source of refugees resettled in the United States. This trend continued under the Obama administration, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, Obama elected to accept more refugees from Syria, a country home to a diverse and ethnically and religious population, with many of those from the country coming from a Muslim and non-white background. Despite a small drop in refugee admissions during the financial crisis of 2008, the demographics of refugees during those years stayed the same and continued to diversify, with refugees from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and South Asia being the most commonly accepted into the program.

As can be inferred from table two and figure two, the changes in 2017 under President Trump are significant in that refugees from all non-white and non-Christian regions have seen a decrease, whereas refugees from Europe (regarded as a region of mainly white, Christian background) was the only group to stay constant despite the overall trend towards a lack of diversity. This is important to note as the overall source of refugees had not changed. Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar remain the top 5 largest sources of refugees fleeing persecution and have

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<sup>38</sup> David J. Bier. *The 9/11 Legacy for Immigration*. (The CATO Institute: 2003).

remained such since 2015.<sup>39</sup> These regions, of which were accepted into refugee status in the United States during the previous Obama administration, all saw decrease in 2017, not only due to Islamophobia, but due directly in part to the executive orders 13769 and 13780, and the presidential proclamation in September of 2017. Throughout the remainder of the Trump administration, despite pushback from politicians and scholars, the source from refugees based on race and religion continued to be less diverse, showing a decrease in refugees from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and South Asia, despite the overall increase of refugees requiring resettlement from countries in those regions. Despite the overall diversification of the United States racially and religiously due to immigration and due to changing social values, the changes to refugee admission does not seem to reflect that between 2017-2020 during Trump's presidency.<sup>40</sup> Many scholars and journalists have argued that this is due to Islamophobia presented by Trump. However, this does not account for the decrease in refugees from traditionally non-Muslim countries, therefore indicating a deeper, more intrinsic change in ideology of the political sphere at the time of Trump's administration.

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<sup>39</sup> UNHCR. "Refugee Data Finder." (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: 2022).

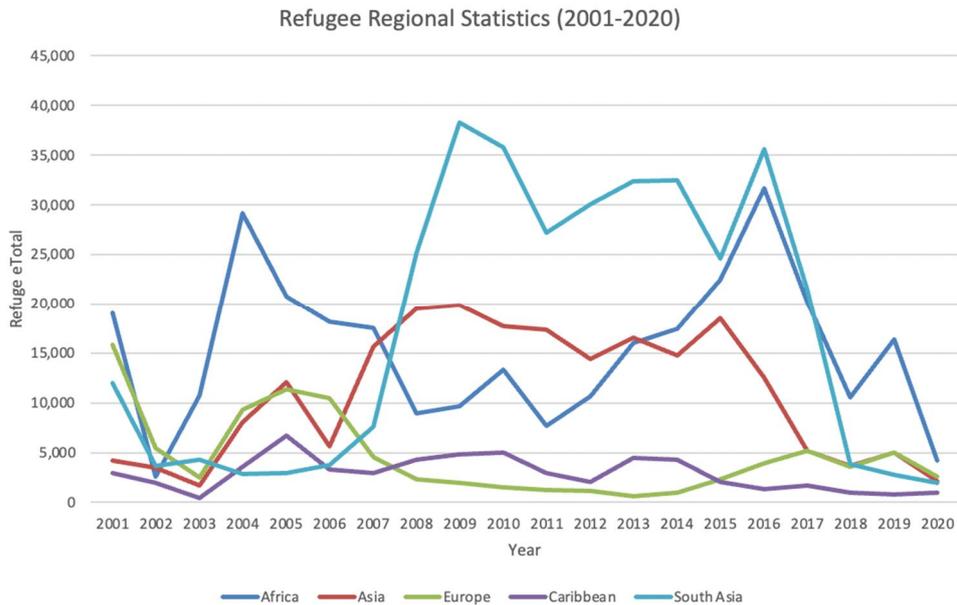
<sup>40</sup> William H. Frey. "The nation is diversifying even faster than predicted, according to new census data." (Brookings: 2020).

Table 2: Total Admitted Refugee Admissions by Region (2001-2020)<sup>41</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Africa</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Europe</b>	<b>Caribbean</b>	<b>Near East/ South Asia</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2001</b>	19,020	4,163	15,794	2,975	11,956	69,886
<b>2002</b>	2,551	3,512	5,459	1,934	3,706	27,131
<b>2003</b>	10,714	1,724	2,506	455	4,260	28,403
<b>2004</b>	29,104	8,084	9,254	3,577	2,854	52,873
<b>2005</b>	20,745	12,076	11,316	6,699	2,977	53,813
<b>2006</b>	18,126	5,659	10,456	3,264	3,718	41,223
<b>2007</b>	17,483	15,643	4,560	2,976	7,620	48,282
<b>2008</b>	8,935	19,489	2,343	4,277	25,147	60,191
<b>2009</b>	9,670	19,850	1,997	4,857	38,280	74,654
<b>2010</b>	13,305	17,716	1,526	4,982	35,782	73,311
<b>2011</b>	7,685	17,367	1,228	2,976	27,168	56,424
<b>2012</b>	10,608	14,366	1,129	2,078	30,057	58,238
<b>2013</b>	15,980	16,537	580	4,439	32,390	69,926
<b>2014</b>	17,476	14,784	959	4,318	32,450	69,987
<b>2015</b>	22,472	18,469	2,363	2,050	24,579	69,933
<b>2016</b>	31,624	12,518	3,957	1,340	35,555	84,994
<b>2017</b>	20,232	5,173	5,205	1,688	21,418	53,716
<b>2018</b>	10,510	3,670	3,612	955	3,829	22,576
<b>2019</b>	16,366	5,030	4,994	809	2,801	30,000
<b>2020</b>	4,160	2,129	2,578	948	1,999	11,814

<sup>41</sup> US Department of State (2022). Summary of Refugee Admissions. [2000-2020]. Retrieved from: <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

Figure 2: Total Admitted Refugee Admissions by Region (2001-2020)<sup>42</sup>



These changes will be further evidenced in chapter 5, where linkages between discussions surrounding potential causes such as those of suggestive of linkages between the Trump administration and white supremacy and the far-right movement will be discussed in its relationship to these changes. In essence, these changes to demographics within the refugee resettlement program are not only due to “Islamophobia,” but also due to deeper, more determining factors that may have a long-lasting impact on the refugee resettlement program and its diverse nature in the future.

With regards to religious demographics, this information was more difficult to procure. There are countless statistics of the religious makeup of

<sup>42</sup> US Department of State (2022). Summary of Refugee Admissions. [2000-2020]. Retrieved from: <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

the United States, which is overwhelmingly Protestant and Catholic Christians, however there is a large and growing Atheist, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist population.<sup>43</sup> When it comes to that of refugees, the best method to determine the religious composition of refugees worldwide is through other sources. One source in particular indicated that over 37% of refugees were considered to be religious minorities, with the remaining 61% being of Christian background.<sup>44</sup> However this changed in following years during the Trump administration, with this demographic becoming more heavily Christian, as President Trump declared that “Christians will be given preference.”<sup>45</sup> This clearly indicates that the demographics of refugees being granted asylum into the United States has changed, from being a more religiously diverse group of persecuted individuals to that of a more Christian, although still persecuted group.

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<sup>43</sup> The Pew Research Center. “Religious Landscape Study.” (*The Pew Research Center*: 2007).

<sup>44</sup> The Pew Research Center. “Most refugees who enter the U.S. as religious minorities are Christians.” (*The Pew Research Center*: 2017).

<sup>45</sup> David Brody. “Brody File Exclusive: President Trump Says Persecuted Christians will be Given Priority as Refugees.” (*CBN News*: 2017).

## Chapter 4. Defining Trump's Ideology

Donald Trump can be categorized as a unique and unprecedented president in United States history. Although there have been previous presidents that can be categorized as strange in personality or their rashness in executive decisions in times of conflict, many scholars would categorize President Trump as a loose cannon, a president whose choices and actions are unpredictable and based in controversy. President Trump's election was due in part, to his social media presence, and unlike his other conservative opponents, he managed to captivate other conservative and independent voters alike with his charm, brashness, and determination to change the country and, as his slogan goes, "Make America Great Again"<sup>46</sup> (Groitl, 2017). This strategy was not only notable in the way he captivated his audience, but also through the changing dynamics within the country itself. America as a whole has built itself off the concept of being a melting pot of different cultures, backgrounds, and the freedom that brings people to believe in the "American dream," in which immigrants and citizens alike are able to pave a way for their own success in the country. However, much of President Trump's voter base stemmed from people who believe that this diversification of the country leads to inequality and less rights for those who founded it – the white citizens of America. President Trump capitalized

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<sup>46</sup> G. Groitl. *Donald Trump: A Populist in the White House: Background and Perspectives*. (2017).

on this fear of the white majority becoming a minority themselves, and on multiple occasions during the 2016 election cycle ridiculed and disrespected Mexicans, black people, Muslims, women, and those who are disabled. This has left a significant impact on many in those social groups, and is a very controversial aspect of his campaign as he denies any wrongdoing that he may have had a part in. Therefore, in this chapter I will discuss the Trump presidency and the ideologies that had a hand in not only his election, but also in his policies and executive orders that followed as a result. The specific ideologies that I believe lent in part to his election and policies include that of white supremacy and that of far-right nationalism. A good method of doing this, and the method I will be implementing in this section, is looking at the rise in white supremacy and far-right groups and their actions and analyzing the increase in such incidents as a result of Trump's presidency and the effects it has on his policies.

It is also important to define the difference between the two main actors in this chapter – that of white supremacy and the far-right movement. White supremacy, in the case of this project, is defined in distinct terms as being an ideological subset under the “far-right” movement, and originally was discussed early on in the history of the United States as being an ideology in which “each race prefers to associate with members of their race and they do so naturally unless they are prodded and inflamed and controlled by outside pressures,” and discusses the “inferiority” of races

excluding that of the white race.<sup>47</sup> The definition of this ideology has been molded and changed to mean something more palatable for the modern times, and this definition is more vague than it had been before, however is still in essence falls under this definition. The new definition is broader in the sense that there is less involvement in the typical white supremacist groups that existed at the time of the previous definition like that of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, have diversified within large and small communities, typically in areas with high amounts of fringe conservatism, and hides behind a guise of “white pride” rather than “supremacy.”<sup>48</sup> The movement still perpetrates that of “racial superiority”<sup>49</sup> and creating fear within the followers of immigration-related issues, as there is a growing diverse community in the country, however there are sources to indicate that immigration is not a threat.<sup>50</sup>

The far-right movement (also sometimes known as the “extreme right” or “radical right”), on the other hand, is a much broader definition for a phenomenon based in ultra-conservatism, in contrast to that of the far-left, which is an ultra-progressive movement often in opposition with the beliefs

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<sup>47</sup> James W. Vander Zanden. “The Ideology of White Supremacy.” (Journal of the History of Ideas: 1959).

<sup>48</sup> Simon Clark. “How White Supremacy Returned to Mainstream Politics.” (The Center for American Progress: 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Simon Clark. “How White Supremacy Returned to Mainstream Politics.” (The Center for American Progress: 2020).

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Neumann. “Immigration is not a National Security Threat.” (National Immigration Forum: 2021).

of the far-right.<sup>51</sup> For the purposes of this project, the far-right movement involves that of white supremacy, however as white supremacy is referred to in depth as a more specified ideology, this will be discussed in its own section. In this project, the far-right movement is defined as a movement based upon nationalistic and populist theories and is often a sign of conservatism becoming mainstream in the social media and news sector in which this level of ultra-conservatism is easily spread and propagated amongst followers of this ideology, and the “single-issue” movements like that of anti-immigration and isolationism from foreign affairs, of which are of high importance in this project.

These differences are important to distinguish, as although they are often conflated with one another, the far-right movement is a movement in which white supremacy is a category of events and acts perpetrated by people who believe in the ideology of white supremacy, however not all of those who are involved in the far-right movement can be categorized as white supremacists.<sup>52</sup> White supremacy, to many scholars, is a more serious threat to national security, despite being labeled under the far-right movement as a subgroup.<sup>53</sup> As the far-right movement is a broad spectrum of groups, the main focus of this project is reliant on that of the white

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<sup>51</sup> Anti-Defamation League. “Extreme Right/Radical Right/Far Right.” (ADL: 2022).

<sup>52</sup> Cynthia Miller-Idriss. “White Supremacist Extremism and the Far Right in the US.” (American University: 2021).

<sup>53</sup> 116<sup>th</sup> Congress 1<sup>st</sup> Session. “Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019.” (United States Congress: 2019).

supremacist groups, rather than every group that is a part of the far-right movement, both for the sake of simplicity and for the fact that white supremacy has more linkages to that of the decrease in refugees under the Trump administration.

#### **4.1 White Supremacy and President Trump**

To clarify, this project does not intend to point names or call President Trump and his administration racist in any way. However, it is important to define a distinction between being and acting in favor of white supremacist ideologies. In the case of the Trump administration, although they did not act with the distinct nature of white supremacy in mind, there is evidence to support that the white supremacist movement had some part in influencing which policies President Trump enforced and implied he would support during and after his election. Examples of this are that of his anti-immigration policies, that of “Make America Great Again,” insinuating that there are people in the country making it worse, and subsequently making attacks on specific racial groups that are growing in population within the country. Despite claims that this was not done out of racist intent or motivation, these actions and subsequent outcry by a minority of those who voted for him indicate that this thought process was a core of his ideology.

During Trump’s presidency, acts of white supremacy and acts perpetrated by far-right groups increased drastically since 2016. In particular, these white supremacist actions that took place mainly were

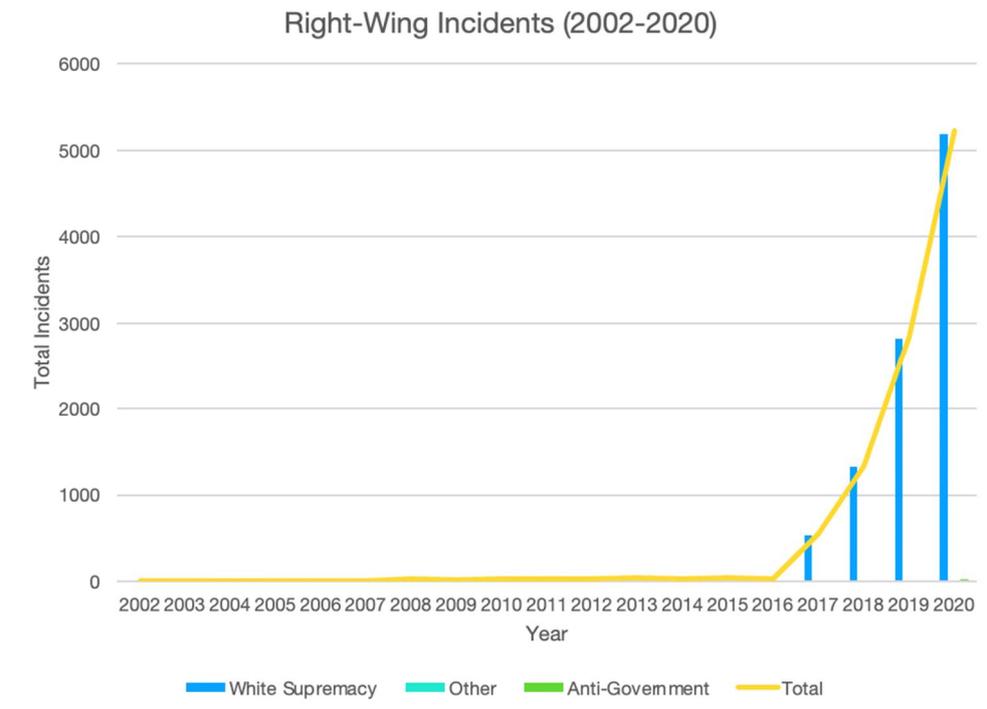
propaganda and event based, as opposed to some of the more violent acts by far right and anti-government groups. In table three, it is evident that there is a drastic and distinct increase in these white supremacy events and propaganda related activities that have not been present in previous years.

Table 3: Right-Wing Incidents (2002-2020)<sup>54</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>White Supremacy</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Anti-Government</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2002</b>	1	1	2	4
<b>2003</b>	3	1	2	6
<b>2004</b>	4	0	2	6
<b>2005</b>	4	0	0	4
<b>2006</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>2007</b>	3	1	2	6
<b>2008</b>	20	1	5	26
<b>2009</b>	18	2	2	22
<b>2010</b>	17	5	7	29
<b>2011</b>	24	2	7	33
<b>2012</b>	22	3	8	33
<b>2013</b>	29	0	9	38
<b>2014</b>	19	1	10	30
<b>2015</b>	28	3	13	44
<b>2016</b>	23	0	12	35
<b>2017</b>	534	4	7	545
<b>2018</b>	1328	4	5	1337
<b>2019</b>	2823	5	6	2834
<b>2020</b>	5191	15	21	5227

<sup>54</sup> Anti-Defamation League. (2022). ADL H.E.A.T. Map [2002-2020].

Figure 3: Right-Wing Incidents (2002-2020)<sup>55</sup>



This is even more evident when looking at figure three, where there is a trendline alongside the data from the table, which adds the variables of other right-wing extremist events and anti-government events. In combination, this indicates that the Trump administration has had a positive effect for the white supremacist movement specifically, with many of these groups perpetrating acts of violence and promotion of the ideology within the greater mainstream, whether that be due to the ease of communication on social media, which Trump had taken advantage of in large part during

<sup>55</sup> Anti-Defamation League. (2022). ADL H.E.A.T. Map [2002-2020].

his election cycle, and through an ease of restrictions and increase of free speech in recent years.

Although these incidents are not the only ways in which Trump's ideology was able to manifest, there is much to suggest that this had an impact on foreign and immigration policy, and therefore refugee policy and the refugee resettlement program. Several tenets of white supremacy are that of the white race being superior to all other races, particularly people of color and the black race, with there being an emphasis on exclusion of others from their own social groups.<sup>56</sup> This is in direct connection to that of events that occurred during Trump's presidency, including white supremacist rallies, events, and propaganda, of which President Trump reacted with neutrality. This resurgence in white supremacy is distinct, not only from table three and figure three, but through the reaction that the republican-led government and President Trump seemed to find admissible. This ideology directly threatens people of color within the communities of which these acts and propaganda are perpetrated in, as well as the immigrants and refugees that are settling within the United States and local communities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> James W. Vander Zanden. "The Ideology of White Supremacy." (Journal on the History of Ideas: 1959).

<sup>57</sup> Richard H. Schein. "After Charlottesville: Reflections on Landscape, White Supremacy, and White Hegemony." (Southeastern Geographer: 2018).

An important thing to note about this dataset in table 3 is that some of the included events include hate crimes based upon white supremacist intentions. A majority of this is anti-Semitic, however a good portion also includes racially and religiously motivated hate crimes against Mosques, places of worship, and those who are Muslim or “Muslim-looking.” This is important in determining future connections and instances in which white supremacy can be linked to the changes in refugee policy, many of whom asserted was directly an attack on Muslims, rather than people of color or those who are a religious minority.

## **4.2 The Far-Right Movement**

Throughout President Donald Trump’s political campaign in 2015-2016 and throughout his presidency and thereafter, he employed relatively unusual methods of securing votes from not only long-time Republican voters, but also from those who were a part of fringe political communities. These groups included members of the Ku Klux Klan, (also known as the KKK), a notoriously racist and far-right fringe group, along with the growing base of supporters who watch and listen to far-right podcasts like that of Joe Rogan, Ben Shapiro, and Alex Jones, who are known to spread and influence far-right political information. Although President Trump never fully acknowledged his links to the far-right movement officially, the rhetoric and arguments he employed while on his campaign trail, while in office, and on his social media pages are indicative of the fact that he took

much of the basis for it into account when seeking supporters for his voter base.

This of course has direct implications on immigration and refugee policy. Most notably, President Trump took aim at the Latin American and Muslim communities, as they were seen as an “undesirable other.” A result of this is the executive orders 13769 and 13780, on *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*, along with rhetoric and distinct language used against foreign and domestic non-white and non-Christian communities.

During President Trump’s election and throughout his presidency, he used social media accounts and outreach in a way that previous presidents and other candidates had not been able to in the past. For example, he commonly supplemented his arguments through his use of authoritarian terminology, specifically through creating discourse and a common theme of agitation during rallies, speeches, and discussions on Twitter, Facebook, and other media sources.<sup>58</sup> This in turn saw a large embrace by those who were a part of fringe far-right networks, and through average conservative-leaning independents who were distraught with the previous administration. As an “American agitator” he seemed to have an overwhelmingly negative response when it came to those who were more progressive, those who

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<sup>58</sup> Brigitte L. Nacos, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Yaeli Block-Elkon. “Donald Trump: Aggressive Rhetoric and Political Violence.” (Perspectives on Terrorism: 2020).

would later become opposed to him further with his backlash on immigration and support of the far-right movement in key events in which white supremacists and other far right advocates were present. Some of these events included the alt-right and white supremacist Charlottesville rally, formally called “Unite the Right” in the summer of 2017, where a man drove his car into counter protestors, killing one person.<sup>59</sup> This event called for a national emergency, and President Trump condemned the attack, calling it an act of domestic terrorism, and that he “strongly condemns all forms of violence, bigotry, and hatred” which included “white supremacists, KKK, neo-Nazis and all extremist groups.”<sup>60</sup> However, he not only condemned the man charged with killing the 32 year old woman through the use of his vehicle, but he also criticized those counter-protesting, claiming that violence was perpetrated on “many sides”, and scholars and journalists claimed that this was not a condemnation of the alt-right, as Trump also claimed that the “alt-left” were there perpetrating violence too.<sup>61</sup>

At the same time, President Trump was being criticized for his actions in Charlottesville and also those on his presidential cabinet. The far-right movement is somewhat responsible for Trump’s ideology through the hiring of his chief strategist Steve Bannon, the driving force behind

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<sup>59</sup> Phil McCausland, Emmanuelle Saliba, Euronews and Moira Donohue. “Charlottesville Rally Turns Deadly: One Killed After Car Strikes Crowd.” (NBC News: 2017).

<sup>60</sup> BBC News. “Charlottesville: Trump Criticized over response to far-right.” (BBC News: 2017).

<sup>61</sup> Rosie Gray. “Trump Defends White Nationalist Protestors: ‘Some Very Fine People on Both Sides’” (The Atlantic: 2017).

Breitbart News, a news organization known for its right-wing ideology and conservative commentary.<sup>62</sup> This is not the only individual on his cabinet associated with the far-right, whether that be through their own organizations or through their actions. Other actions made by President Trump include that of giving a medal of freedom to Rush Limbaugh, a political commentator known for his openly racist, sexist, and association with being a far-right movement advocate.<sup>63</sup>

Although the connections between the Trump presidency and those on his cabinet are important when linking the presidency to the far-right movement, it is not the only linkage that can be made between the two. President Trump also can be linked to the “mainstreaming” of the far-right movement, through his use of social media and through his acts made during his presidency and his call to action after the events of Joseph Biden’s election in fall of 2020.<sup>64</sup> Although the far-right movement had been building long before the time of Trump’s presidency, it is correct in assuming that the far-right helped propel his ascendance into office and the effects that were present throughout. In particular, the far-right had a large involvement in the previously mentioned alt-right rally in 2017 in Charlottesville, but also had a hand in President Trump’s “build the wall”

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<sup>62</sup> Stephen Piggott. “Is Breitbart.com Becoming the Media Arm of the ‘Alt-Right?’” (SPLC Southern Poverty Law Center: 2016).

<sup>63</sup> Jackson Katz. “Trump giving Rush Limbaugh the Medal of Freedom was controversial – and fitting.” (NBC News: 2020).

<sup>64</sup> Aurelien Mondon and Antonia Vaughan. “The Trump Presidency and the Mainstreaming of Far-Right Politics.” (GALE: 2021).

and “drain the swamp” arguments, of which failed to materialize during his presidency. For example, only part of the southern border “wall” was built during President Trump’s presidency, despite that being one of his major campaign promises in 2016.<sup>65</sup> As for other campaign promises, Trump did deliver. Some of those promises included moving the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, of which he upheld.<sup>66</sup> This in particular is to appease his far-right supporters (and those who are typical republican conservatives), who believe in the legitimacy of the Israeli state as opposed to the growing resistance from Palestinian supporters.<sup>67</sup>

These linkages to the far right movement are indicative within his presidential executive orders, proclamations, and promises he made during his election and throughout his presidency. It’s evident that despite him avoiding discussion and connections to the movement,<sup>68</sup> he still has a tendency to lean towards those who support him that are involved in these processes and in the movement, especially through refusing to condemn those who acted upon actions relating to the movement. One example of this is the events on January 6, 2021, where a group of protestors attacked the U.S. Capitol building in response to the defeat of President Trump in the

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<sup>65</sup> Claire Hansen. “How Much of Trump’s Border Wall was Built?” (US News: 2020).

<sup>66</sup> Amos Yadlin. “Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: Opportunities, Risks, and Recommendations.” (The Institute for National Security Studies: 2017).

<sup>67</sup> Lydia Saad. “Americans Still Pro-Israel, Though Palestinians Gain Support.” (GALLUP: 2022).

<sup>68</sup> Paul D. Shinkman. “Trump Declines to Condemn White Supremacists.” (US News: 2020).

2020 election. This attack was called an “insurrection” by many, however many find fault with this term as it technically denotes those who “engage in rebellion or insurrection against the authority of the United States or the laws therein, or gives aid or comfort thereto,” of which the attack on the Capitol is still being currently discussed.<sup>69</sup> This attack was, as identified by many scholars, to be partially caused by President Trump’s actions, as evidenced through appointing those to smaller positions within the Capitol at the time, and through voicing distrust in the governing process that would determine the outcomes to President-elect Biden’s election.<sup>70</sup> This was also in part due to the supporters of Trump being the main perpetrators of the attack.

All of these factors, including the events after the 2020 election, all point to signs that the far-right movement has had significant effects on the Trump administration and its effects on policy making, both domestic and foreign. In the future, President Biden will have to seek to either continue having these policies remain in place or change them to better fit that of the Democratic party. In the next chapter, these factors, that of linkages between the Trump administration and white supremacy and the far-right movement

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<sup>69</sup> “18 U.S. Code § 2383 – Rebellion and Insurrection.” 112-113. (US Code: 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Inderjeet Parmar. “Trump’s Coup and Insurrection: Biden’s Challenge and Opportunities.” (Insight Turkey: 2021).

will be further linked to the affected refugee policy changes made through the executive orders 13769 and 13780.

### **4.3 Comparison to Previous Administrations**

In previous chapters, other presidencies were discussed in part due to the significance of the time period that is the subject of this project.

However, as the topic of this project needs more explanation, it's best to not only discuss the similarities and differences between the Trump and Bush administrations, but also that of the Obama administration as well, as there are more differences than similarities during these presidencies. These differences are important as the changes to refugee admissions varied quite drastically between each presidency, so in order to better understand the subject, it's important to look at the policies enacted and overall attitude towards refugee policy under each presidency. Although President Bush and President Trump had many similarities, they differed in key ways that will be explained below. The differences between President Obama and that of President Trump can be defined as more distinct, not only due to differences in political party and opinion, but also through their overall view on refugee policy and how best to properly pursue national security strategy.

As previously discussed, the Bush administration saw a large decrease in the overall refugee admissions not after President Bush's inauguration in January of 2001, but after the attacks on September 11, 2001

throughout the years of 2002-2003.<sup>71</sup> This drop was significant as it did not target specific refugee groups when it came to its reduction, but rather was indicative as a restriction of entrants from all regions, as opposed to the Trump administration, where all but those entering the United States from Europe and the Caribbean were affected.<sup>72</sup> This was unique as the threat to national security during the events of September 11, 2001 are unprecedented compared to any other event in United States history, and would later spur the “Global War on Terrorism” which would lead the United States to the Middle East in order to curb terrorist threats abroad.<sup>73</sup>

Although this created a ripple effect that would cause refugee admissions to drop in subsequent years, these numbers would rebound by 2004, showing that there was still large importance placed on the refugee admissions program. This can be shown through the Bush administration’s attitude towards refugee crises, the way the United States has previously acted with regards to refugees, and the refugee resettlement program. Despite the war in Iraq, the Bush administration accepted refugees during the Iraqi displacement crisis in 2006.<sup>74</sup> Although this was in part due to the war, it quickly became one of the largest refugee crises before the Syrian

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<sup>71</sup> United States Department of State. *Summary of Refugee Admissions Report, Refugee Processing Center (USDS: 2021)*

<sup>72</sup> US Department of State (2022). Summary of Refugee Admissions. [2000-2020]. Retrieved from: <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

<sup>73</sup> George W. Bush. “Transcript of President Bush’s Address.” (*CNN*: 2001).

<sup>74</sup> Scott Harding and Kathryn Libal. “The Politics of Refugee Advocacy and Humanitarian Assistance.” (*MERIP*: 2007).

refugee crisis in following years. Maintaining the refugee admissions program at a large acceptance rate became a focal point of realization after the sudden crisis response leading to a distinct decrease of all refugees, regardless of background, race, and religion.

Obama's presidency on the other hand can be categorized as a period of expansion of refugee admissions, and an overall continuation of the tail-end of the Bush administration's policies. During the Obama presidency, there was an unprecedented number of refugees fleeing countries like Syria, Somalia, Myanmar and many other nations, also known as a "global refugee crisis," resulting in some of the largest totals of admitted refugees throughout the United States' history.<sup>75</sup> This displacement of peoples seeking asylum in international communities was of the utmost importance to the Obama administration, as one of the former president's key policy suggestions was that of immigration reform. Not only was this focused on the opening of immigration, but it was also characterized by an intent to crack down on so-called "illegal" immigration, deportation of felons rather than families, and appropriate more lenient measures for those who are undocumented living in the country for more than 5 years who showed action towards earned citizenship.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Susan F. Martin. "The Global Refugee Crisis." (*Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*: 2016).

<sup>76</sup> The President Obama White House. "Immigration" (*The White House*: 2014).

President Obama also stressed his support for the refugee resettlement program, and other similar programs internationally. Not only was the Obama administration widely accepting of refugees from countries in which these crises were arising, at the time – Syria and Somalia, he also discussed the importance of accepting these refugees through an improved vetting program of intensive screening and security checks.<sup>77</sup> Although this is similar to the intended methods that President Trump enacted policy through during his presidency, it is clearly separate in a few key distinct ways.

Unlike that of President Trump, President Obama heralded the need for refugee programs worldwide, and knew the importance that the program in the United States held. In particular, as Obama was in office during the largest refugee crisis in modern history, he knew there was a need for increased security, not only for Americans but also for the women and children fleeing persecution from their home countries. He saw the refugee crisis as a test of “common humanity” rather than as solely a hindrance or possibility for terrorist entry to the United States.<sup>78</sup> Although the Obama administration acknowledged the possibility of a security threat to the United States, they took the risk and knew the importance of this program

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<sup>77</sup> Barack Obama. “Remarks by President Obama at Leader’s Summit on Refugees.” (*The White House*: 2016).

<sup>78</sup> Barack Obama. “Remarks by President Obama at Leader’s Summit on Refugees.” (*The White House*: 2016).

not only to the international community, but also to those seeking asylum fleeing persecution.

The Trump administration, on the other hand, gutted the refugee admissions program, suspending all activities in the first months of his presidency, and subsequently changed and made the refugee screening process stricter, along with drastically lowering the limit for accepted refugees.<sup>79</sup> This was, as previously mentioned, all in the name of curbing possible terrorist entrants to the United States. Despite Trump distinctly offering refugee preference to white Christians facing persecution, many previous presidents, including that of Bush, Clinton, and Obama, criticized the move by President Trump, citing that the country needs to support Afghan refugees.<sup>80</sup> There is bipartisan support for this, but President Trump has time and time again denied support for the refugee admissions program and the importance for such in an increasingly global world.

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<sup>79</sup> The President Trump White House. "Immigration." (*The White House*: 2020).

<sup>80</sup> Mica Rosenberg and Susan Heavey. "U.S. Ex-presidents Bush, Clinton, Obama band together to Aid Afghan Refugees." (*Reuters*: 2021).

## **Chapter 5. Linkages Between Changes in Refugee**

### **Policy and President Trump's Ideology**

In order to determine linkages between the changes in refugee policy and Trump's ideology related to white supremacy and the far-right influence on his policies, a few things are necessary. One of those things is dealing with the overall nature of the executive orders 13769 and 13780, due in part to the conservative nature of Trump's administration, and the influences that white supremacy and the far-right had on overall immigration policy leading up to and following the 2016 election. Another would be the inverse correlation between the decrease in admitted refugees and the subsequent rise in white supremacy instances between 2017-2020. I argue that these events are correlated due to the opposite intensity between these variables, and the subsequent time frame in which it occurred, as a rise in ultra-conservatism tends to have an inverse correlation and less positive view of immigration to the country.

In this section, I will be taking a deeper look into this inverse correlation and the datasets provided by the United States Department of State's refugee statistics and that of the Anti-Defamation League's dataset on extremist incidents and propaganda throughout the years, including that before 2017. However, there are some aspects of this research that data alone cannot account for, as white supremacist incidents have seen a distinct

increase through not only incidents and propaganda, but also through visibility and a growing popularity shown through news sources, conservative leanings of current politicians, and the overall influence that President Trump has had throughout his election and presidency.

## **5.1 Linkages Evidenced through Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

As previously identified, these changes to refugee policy were not only due to Islamophobia, and the executive orders 13769 and 13780 were not solely due to a ban on Muslim entrants to the United States, but rather a shifting narrative and ideology of white supremacy and the far-right movement that has had an influence on President Trump's professional ideology throughout his election and presidency. On countless occasions, President Trump has had the opportunity to denounce these claims and white supremacist rhetoric, however he continued to perpetrate and spread these beliefs and ideology, therefore leading to changes resulting in a limiting of refugees entering the country despite the United States' longstanding history regarding refugee acceptance and its status as one of the largest refugee host countries in the world.

When it comes to qualitative linkages between the decreases in refugee admissions through the executive orders enacted in 2017 during Trump's Presidency and his ideology based on white supremacy and the linkages to the far-right movement, it's important to look at the bigger

picture. There are dozens of news articles and documents written by scholars that determine that these executive orders and changes to refugee policy were based in “Islamophobia,” as President Trump has indicated on multiple occasions that he dislikes “radical Islamic terrorism.”<sup>81</sup> Therefore, along with previously discussed linkages between the executive orders referring to Trump’s ban on entrance for those from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, there is a correlation between these changes in refugee policy (to some extent) and that of Trump’s dislike of Islam and correlation with “Islamophobic” viewpoints. However, it is deeper than that. These linkages to Islamophobia are not the only concerns to discuss, as many of the countries affected when it comes to changes in refugee policy are also that of Myanmar and Venezuela, both of which were added to the executive order in a later proclamation.<sup>82</sup> This indicated a further change deeper than that of solely Islamophobia.

In reality, this indicates a linkage between white supremacist tendencies and that of an increasingly diverse, non-white and non-Christian population in the refugee community which may be seen as a threat by those in the United States that are supporters of President Trump, and the actions of the Trump administration itself. The Trump administration has

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<sup>81</sup> Richard Stengel. “Why Saying ‘Radical Islamic Terrorism’ Isn’t Enough.” (New York Times: 2017).

<sup>82</sup> Donald J. Trump. *Presidential Proclamation Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists and Other Public-Safety Threats.* (The White House: 2017).

perpetrated many acts and foreign policy decisions that are unusual by many standards, specifically regarding an “America First” doctrine, but also through their overbearing decisions regarding countries they deem to be not on par with the United States. This can be seen through comments by President Trump throughout his presidency, once calling developing countries, specifically that of Haiti, Central and South America, and Africa as “shithole countries,” indicating that the administration already thinks lowly of the countries listed, of which the majority of the population is non-white, and in many cases has a large non-Christian population.<sup>83</sup>

Interestingly enough, this was in response to immigrating peoples from these countries, further solidifying President Trump and his administration and followers’ dislike of those immigrating to the country, with this article specifically pertaining to the removal of protections for those immigrating from countries in these regions.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, not only is it evident that the ideologies that influenced the Trump administration, that of white supremacy and the influence of the far-right movement, but it is directly responsible for the changes to immigration policy and the decrease in admitted refugees to the United States.

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<sup>83</sup> Ali Vitali, Kasie Hunt, and Frank Thorp V. “Trump Referred to Haiti and African Nations as ‘Shithole’ Countries.” (NBC News: 2018).

<sup>84</sup> Josh Dawsey. “Trump Derides Protections for Immigrants from ‘Shithole’ Countries.” (The Guardian: 2018).

A good method to determine the linkages between the changes made to the refugee resettlement program and that of President Trump's ideology based off white supremacy and the influence by the far-right movement is that of framing theory, in which an analysis can take place through analyzing how this ideology views certain things through members of such groups; in the case of this project, that of the Trump administration. Other factors of doing so include searching for data relating to refugee outlook in the United States. The most fitting example is that of the Pew Research Center, in which public opinion polls can determine the process through which those in the United States view refugee and immigration issues. Although refugee resettlement has never been a large priority or looked upon positively as a majority during many previous refugee crises, such as the Indochinese and Cuban refugee crisis, the response towards refugees in previous to the Trump administration was negative.<sup>85</sup> This was due to a multitude of factors, including that used by President Trump to determine that refugee entrance from Syria and the other countries listed in executive orders 13769 and 13780 was due to the risk of terrorist entrance to the United States. However, there is also a growing consensus that there is a rise in white supremacist cases in the United States as well, as shown through that of the Anti-Defamation League's datasets<sup>86</sup> regarding the topic and the

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<sup>85</sup> Drew Desilver. "U.S. public seldom has welcomed refugees into the country." (Pew Research Center: 2015).

<sup>86</sup> Anti-Defamation League. "ADL H.E.A.T. Map [2008-2020]." (ADL: 2022).

United States' classification as white supremacist networks as being the largest source for domestic terrorism for the United States<sup>87</sup>. As this is the largest source of terrorism for the United States, it seems rather obvious that the risk of terrorism from those outside the United States is less of a terrorist threat than previously indicated. In the same year, the United States published its "National Terrorism Advisory System"<sup>88</sup>, in which the country listed countries on its watch list, including some of the nations on the list indicated in the previously listed executive orders. Much of the article was geared towards international terrorist threats, but there was a large focus on that of domestic and homegrown terrorist threats that pose an even larger danger than that of those seeking entrance to the United States from abroad.

Through further analysis through the framing theory, we can see how news and media outlets have influenced that of white supremacist and far right networks on the immigration and refugee issue, and how it has played a major factor in Trump's policies regarding such. These filters that are distributed through different media sources, like Twitter, which President Trump used often to discuss his points and his policy changes, impacted how the Trump administration worked and what policies were implemented.<sup>89</sup> White supremacy and the far-right movement became a

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<sup>87</sup> 116<sup>th</sup> Congress 1<sup>st</sup> Session. "Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019." (United States Congress: 2019).

<sup>88</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security. "National Terrorism Advisory System." (DHS: 2019).

<sup>89</sup> G. Groitl. *Donald Trump: A Populist in the White House: Background and Perspectives*. (2017).

large movement in part due to this increase in social media access,<sup>90</sup> despite access to liberal media sources, of which President Trump would express dissatisfaction with during his time in office.

Through looking at more quantitative analyses this becomes clearer. When looking at the linkages between the changes to refugee policy, specifically through the decreased admissions for refugees based upon the resulting executive orders 13769 and 13780 and President Trump's ideology based on white supremacy and the influences of the far-right movement on his policies. This can be done in several ways, including looking at the statistics relating to changes of refugee demographics and the aforementioned incidents of white supremacy and other related events. Statistically speaking, when looking at table 2 and table 3, these refugee changes and white supremacy incidents occurred at an inverse rate, with refugee admissions decreasing at a similar rate to that of the increase in white supremacist cases. This seems to indicate that as white supremacy cases arise, the admitted refugees decrease due to the overall influence of such. One way to do this more effectively is to look at the overall rate of change during Trump's presidency, specifically from 2016-2020. For example, the rate of change between 2016-2020 for that of refugees admitted into the refugee resettlement program was that of -18,295 (-22%

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<sup>90</sup> Sarah D. Nilsen and Sarah E. Turner. *White Supremacy and the American Media*. (Routledge: 2021).

decrease)<sup>91</sup>, whereas the rate of change of white supremacist incidents was +1,292 (5,617% increase)<sup>92</sup>. Although this does not seem to correlate completely with each other, as the rate of decrease and rate of increase is off by a large degree, the fact that there was a large enough decrease to be noticeable between the 2016 refugee admission rate and the 2020 admission rate, in comparison with the large increase in white supremacist cases seems to indicate that as refugee admissions went down, white supremacist cases were more likely to rise. There seems to be a connection between the two through an inverse correlation, as there is a rise in white supremacist cases shows a correlation between acceptance by Trump's ideology and a growing leniency of these actions within the administration, and a decrease of similar proportions to that of a change in refugee resettlement.

This is also an interesting point to note, as the changes to refugee policy over those years also can stand in comparison to that of the initial drop in refugee cases in 2002. This decrease is of note as it is the only major change that can be considered similar to the decreases made by the Trump administration, although due to very different reasons. As the decrease during the Bush administration is often attributed to a fear of terrorism immediately following the attacks on September 11, 2001, however, these changes were not permanent throughout President Bush's first four years as

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<sup>91</sup> US Department of State. Summary of Refugee Admissions (2001-2020). (US Department of State: 2022).

<sup>92</sup> Anti-Defamation League. ADL H.E.A.T. (Anti-Defamation League: 2022).

presidency, nor throughout the remainder of his second term in office.<sup>93</sup> President Bush took a stance similar to that of President Obama and returned to a position of a “national responsibility to assist,” of which is evident through the administration’s prompt return to the previous rate of refugee admissions.<sup>94</sup> This is of note, as this is highly different from that of the Trump presidency, in which the changes were enacted solely due to a belief that there was a grave and imminent terrorist threat coming from the regions it barred from entry - however this is not the case, as the majority of terrorist efforts that affected U.S. National Security occurred as a result of domestic terrorist events.<sup>95</sup> Although both presidents enacted policy that affected refugee resettlement drastically during a one-year change, President Trump maintained a low level of refugee acceptance despite having little to back up his analysis and argument for such policy enactment.

This change can be shown clearly through looking at the rate of change over the course of a one-year and a four-year time period. For example, the rate of change between 2001-2002 due to the events of September 11, 2001, was -42,755 (-61% decrease), and the initial rate of change for 2016-2017 was -31,278 (-37% decrease). Although the first decrease was noticeable due to an international terrorist attack to the United

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<sup>93</sup> A. E. Dewey, “Refugee Issues after 9/11.” (*In Defense of the Alien*, 26: 2003), 174–178.

<sup>94</sup> Kimberly Asin Wilson. “The Framing of Refugees and Refugee Status Through U.S. Presidential Discourse.” (Elon University: 2019).

<sup>95</sup> 116<sup>th</sup> Congress 1<sup>st</sup> Session. “Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019.” (United States Congress: 2019).

States and was much more of a drastic drop than that of 2016-2017 during that time period of one year, this decrease was not permanent, and the rate of change would become -3,214 (-5% decrease) between 2001-2005. On the other hand, the rate of change for 2016-2020 was -18,295 (-22% decrease).<sup>96</sup> This indicates that although there was a more sudden change in 2002 due to those events, the changes due to that of executive orders 13769 and 13780, along with that of subsequent acts, had a more long-lasting impact on refugee policy, despite there being little to indicate legitimate terrorist threats during that time period.

Although these correlations are not a key part of this project, they indicate a large correlation between the total refugee admissions changes in regional refugee admissions changes, where some regions are more heavily affected than others. In this case, the hypothesis is bolstered by these changes, with the Middle East and Africa being highly affected regions, also affected due to the executive orders in 2017, along with white supremacist rhetoric that was common throughout Trump's presidency.

In order to prove this is a causational study, more information must be discussed in order to show how President Trump was influenced not only by his personal politics, but also through the ways that these ideologies of white supremacy and the far-right movement impacted legitimate policy in

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<sup>96</sup> US Department of State. Summary of Refugee Admissions (2001-2020). (US Department of State: 2022).

other arenas during the Trump administration. One example of this is the building of the wall, an immigration policy announced early on during the 2016 election. Some may view this policy as merely conservative, however that is far from the case. For example, the strongest supporters for such a policy were those from the far-right movement, with a large number supporting the building and private right-wing groups continuing to build the wall using private means.<sup>97</sup>

On another note, white supremacy and the far-right was a key factor in Trump's election throughout the many rallies he visited and those who would yell and jeer during these events. Although he never fully said he publicly supported either of the movements, it can be seen through his actions and individual comments that this had an impact on his personal politics and base ideology. In reality, this can be argued for many reasons. One of which is that publicly, a president cannot and will not risk alienating those who are more independent or moderate in his voter base by voicing public support for the white supremacist, far-right, and populist ideologies. This can be seen through his wavering to neither publicly denounce nor support white supremacist incidents that occurred during his presidency.<sup>98</sup>

## **5.2 Potential Counter Arguments**

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<sup>97</sup> Nick Miroff. "Right-wing group continues to private build border wall. It lacks permits, but not official praise." (*The Washington Post*: 2019).

<sup>98</sup> Greg Sargent. "Why is Trump reluctant to condemn white supremacy? It's his racism and his megalomania." (*The Washington Post*: 2017).

Some potential counter arguments arise from my methodology and analysis of these linkages between refugee admissions and changes to immigration policy under President Trump, and the ideologies of which he accepted while in office, specifically that of white supremacy and the far-right movement. Although there has been much discussion surrounding the debate of the executive orders 13769 and 13780, along with the subsequent presidential proclamation, many of those in journalism and in scholarly circles have only named these actions as a “Muslim ban” or as “Islamophobic.”<sup>99</sup> This is due to the main locations listed within the executive orders being Muslim-majority countries. This also received outcry and criticism in journalistic works, with articles being published on every major American (and international) left and center-leaning news site to this day covering the issue.

However, to call the changes that these executive orders only a “Muslim ban” would be inaccurate, as other countries on the list are not of a Muslim-majority, and the reasoning for the ban is deeper than it solely being Islamophobic. In fact, the purpose of this project is to prove that other, more deep-rooted causes are to blame for these changes in refugee policy, and although the previous argument of the changes enacted through executive orders 13769 and 13780 being Islamophobic and a “Muslim ban” are not

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<sup>99</sup> Harsha Panduranga, Faiza Patel, and Michael W. Price. *Extreme Vetting & the Muslim Ban..* (Brennan Center for Justice: 2019).

incorrect, it fails to take into account the bigger picture and deeper reasoning for these changes. Islamophobia, at its root, is pushed forth by deeper causes, like that of the main argument of this paper, specifically pertaining to white supremacy and the far-right movement. In particular, there are links between major players in this, with active white supremacists mainly being white men, and those being affected including that of a Muslim – or “Muslim-looking” minority.<sup>100</sup> This is also evident in anti-Semitic and other hate crimes listed in a previous study linked in previous chapters of this project, particularly chapter 4, in which white supremacist events and propaganda was listed and showed a drastic increase during Donald Trump’s presidency.<sup>101</sup>

On the other hand, other arguments for these executive orders and changes in refugee policies have elicited a mixed response. Although the majority of the literature surrounding the changes to the refugee resettlement program under President Trump have been overwhelmingly negative, and associated with the previously mentioned “Muslim ban,” calling it “Islamophobic,” the literature regarding the executive orders and proclamations themselves is about protecting the United States from outside terrorist threats, pushing a doctrine of “America First.”<sup>102</sup> This is evidenced

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Hopkins. “Gendering Islamophobia, Racism, and White Supremacy.” (Dialogues in Human Geography. SAGE: 2016).

<sup>101</sup> Anti-Defamation League. “ADL H.E.A.T. Map [2008-2020].” (ADL: 2022).

<sup>102</sup> Michael Magcamit. “FOREIGN POLICIES: President Donald Trump and the Pursuit of “America First” Doctrine.” (World Affairs: 2017).

through the Trump administration's overall attitude towards foreign policy in general, and the claims and promises made during the 2016 election campaign. The original documents, that of executive order 13769 and 13780, list the major reasoning for the executive order as security-related, and seeks to raise the baseline for "vetting and screening of foreign nationals" against admission of malicious actors in order to "enhance the security of the American people."<sup>103</sup> However, despite this being the reasoning, and this reasoning being legitimate based upon the sources they provide within their statement, this is further from accurate than one may think. This is in part due to the fact that domestic terrorism poses the greatest threat to the United States in regard to terrorism, not foreign-based terrorism.<sup>104</sup> This is also evidenced through the United States Senate discussing the linkages between white supremacist groups and the far-right movement and its involvement with domestic terrorist acts that have been growing throughout the Trump presidency, as evidenced through table 3 and previously mentioned.<sup>105</sup> This seems to indicate that although the Trump administration used terrorism as a reason for the creation and implementation of the changes to refugee policy, these reasons are in fact

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<sup>103</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security. "Executive Order 13769: *Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. Initial Section 11 Report." (United States Department of Homeland Security: 2017)

<sup>104</sup> Joanna Walters and Alvin Chang. "Far-Right Terror Poses Bigger Threat to US than Islamist Extremism Post-9/11." (The Guardian: 2021).

<sup>105</sup> 116<sup>th</sup> Congress 1<sup>st</sup> Session. "Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019." (United States Congress: 2019).

inaccurate, and indicate that white supremacy and the far-right movement have more involvement in the changes to refugee policy than the Trump administration would like to admit.

Overall, despite these claims and counter arguments, the argument of this project is important and is factually based and accurate, although it does have its faults. One of these faults is bias, of which despite looking at all the sources, there seems to be a strong correlation between these concepts and changes to refugee policy under the administration. This is important to note, as the majority of these journalistic claims came from a place of more progressive thinking, whereas the claims made in this project were based in scholarly works rather than opinion articles. If this project were to be redone or altered, more work would be done to mediate this, however it seems that scholarly works also follow suit in its criticism of the Trump administration's actions and the alterations and diminishments of the refugee admissions program.

Another key counter argument to this project is that of if President Trump's policies and actions were social movement based, or politically based. Although some may see President Trump as an individual entity in which he has a personal political preference towards conservatism, it is ultimately both that play a part in this story. Not only does President Trump have a uniquely far-right conservative political background, these social movements – white supremacy and the far right movement – played a

significant role in his politics. This can be seen through newly released information coming from that of the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the capital, in which President Trump’s conduct insinuates support for the insurrection despite advisors and similarly conservative politicians discussing otherwise. President Trump was known to “throw dishes” and even went so far as to grab the steering wheel of a vehicle taking him to a safe location during the insurrection to show how “badly he wanted to go to the Capitol with the rioters.”<sup>106</sup> Trump was not only influenced by the white supremacist and far-right ideologies, but he also intensified the beliefs of those who supported such movements through his own personal politics.

Although white supremacy and the far-right movement were once fringe identities in the early 2000s and had not been able to gain traction during that time, due to President Trump and his ideology that was similar to and influenced by such ideas, the movement grew and became more powerful and gained traction within the greater mainstream.<sup>107</sup> Trump showed this through his push for harsher immigration policies highly supported by the white supremacist and far right movements, like that of “building the wall” and his own personal politics of racist rhetoric towards immigrants, Muslims, and other minorities within the country.<sup>108</sup> This use of

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<sup>106</sup> Domenico Montanaro. “Trump’s legal exposure may be growing – and 4 other takeaways from the Jan 6. Hearing.” (*NPR*: 2022).

<sup>107</sup> Casey Ryan Kelly. “Donald J. Trump and White Ambivalence.” (*Rhetoric & Public Affairs*: 2020).

<sup>108</sup> The President Trump White House. “Immigration.” (*The White House*: 2020).

rhetoric, although partially influenced by his personal politics, was partially in response to a growing number of white supremacists and far-right supporters within the country. This can be seen through previously mentioned statistics like that of the rise in white supremacist events,<sup>109</sup> but also through polls by organizations that monitor political preferences. The country had already been becoming more politically polarized during the Obama administration, with those who were previously moderately conservative leaning more towards the far right and those who were moderately liberal becoming more progressive.<sup>110</sup> So it should not come as a surprise as to the influence this had on voters becoming more politically polarized during the 2016 election. Despite losing the popular vote, President Trump assumed office through implementing this political ideology and principles through his proposed policy solutions during his campaign.

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<sup>109</sup> Anti-Defamation League. (2022). ADL H.E.A.T. Map [2002-2020]. Retrieved from: <https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/adl-tracker-of-antisemitic-incidents>

<sup>110</sup> Michael Dimock, Jocelyn Kiley, Scott Keeter, and Carroll Doherty. "Political Polarization in the American Public." (*The Pew Research Center*: 2014)

## Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion

### 6.1 Discussion

The changes that resulted in effect due to executive orders 13769 and 13780, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*, along with subsequent proclamations and executive orders regarding the refugee resettlement program were vast and had more implications than just being a “Muslim ban” than previously thought. These changes, although not the largest aspect of the Trump administration’s foreign and immigration policy strategies, has long lasting effects that are continuing to impact the refugee resettlement program in negative ways through even the Biden administration, despite efforts to undo and modify the changes that the Trump administration had attempted to solidify.

Understanding the implications of white supremacy and the far right movement also needs to be done through the lens of other presidencies previously mentioned, like that of President Bush and President Obama. These two unique administrations indicate that although similar policies may or may not be enacted, neither had the large scope nor the impact on the refugee admissions program in quite the same way that the Trump administration had. Trump uniquely affected the refugee admissions program through not only his own personal politics, but also through strengthening his already polarized voter base with ties to white supremacist and far right social movements and political ideologies, something that no

other president has done before, specifically through enacting executive orders 13769, 13780, and the presidential proclamation, along with suspending the refugee admissions program, and putting a low ceiling on admissible refugees until the end of his presidency. This therefore limited refugee admissions to an extent not present during any other presidency, even that of the Bush administration, despite the shock effect after the events of September 11, 2001.

Although these changes were not permanent, they indicate that the refugee resettlement program, once regarded to be a “safe haven”<sup>111</sup> for refugees seeking asylum from persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion,<sup>112</sup> has become a much less permanent solution despite their own political turmoil. The Trump Presidency solidified that, despite a growing, diverse population in the United States,<sup>113</sup> the country is becoming more divided than ever on topics such as immigration, refugee rights, foreign policy, and even domestic issues regarding race and party politics. This growing divide can be in part due to the main subjects of ideology in this project, that of a resurgence in white supremacy and a growing far-right movement which

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<sup>111</sup> David W. Haines. *Safe Haven? A History of Refugees in America*. (Kumarian Press: 2010).

<sup>112</sup> UNHCR. *Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status Under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. (UNHCR: 2021).

<sup>113</sup> Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter. “Growing Diversity among America’s Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions.” (Population Council: 2010).

will continue to impact refugee policy in future years, despite the Trump administration no longer being in office.

As this is a major hypothesis of this project, it can be concluded that in part this was a correct assumption in part due to the qualitative indicators that show a correlation between these decreasing changes to the refugee resettlement program and Trump's ideologies. Despite some flaws and difficulties in argument, namely that of bias, though which mediation was made through intense scrutiny of all potential source material in order to maintain neutrality, much of the literature on the subject matter was concluded to be biased, so instead an implementation of using sources from multiple different perspectives was undertaken in order to maintain this neutrality. Despite this neutrality, the conclusion of this hypothesis was ultimately proven – that the Trump administration's usage of white supremacist ideology and ties to the far-right movement - ultimately are correlated to that of the changes to refugee policy during this time.

Through the qualitative and quantitative data involved with this project, it can be seen that although the connection between the changes to refugee policy under the Trump administration and that of the ideologies of white supremacy and the far-right movement may be considered controversial, they are indeed linked through a variety of methods including that of data analysis through year-by-year statistics of refugee admissions and demographic changes and that of a growing trend of white supremacist

acts and propaganda being on the rise. These changes, specifically pertaining to that of demographic changes, indicate that with the increase of white supremacist events and additional ideological linkages to the Trump administration there are indeed correlating factors between both variables that can be explanatory for the overall changes to refugee admissions and the refugee resettlement program during this time.

## **6.2 Implications for Future Research**

Although Trump's administration has concluded and the Biden administration has been in office for a few years at the time of this research, the effects on the refugee resettlement program and the determinations for such will continue to be a large aspect of future research on the subject matter. Opinion articles will tend to be written by those involved in journalistic agencies with political intentions, however there will be those involved with academic and research-based intentions that will be required to study this topic in further depth in the future. Although the additions to future research in this article are not large or broad in depth, by attempting to answer the question of decreasing refugee admissions under President Trump's administration it can be further analyzed in the future to determine whether or not future policy changes in the United States or other major countries involved in refugee resettlement programs are based in similar correlations like that of white supremacy and far-right movement, or whether there is another aspect that is causal for future changes. These

implications do not only lie with that of the United States' policy, but with that of European nations involved in refugee policy of which have shown similar trends in recent years.<sup>114</sup>

Although these implications are not the major reasoning for this research, they are undoubtedly important in discussing the work and other works made previously on the subject. These include many works based on the executive orders 13769 and 13780 and refugee policy made as being “Islamophobic” or a “Muslim ban.”<sup>115</sup> These arguments are legitimate, although as previously discussed, they are not as descriptive of a reasoning and correlation on refugee policy in the United States during this time, as many other countries were involved that did not constitute a Muslim-majority. As further refugee crises like that of the Syrian civil conflict continue to occur around the world due to a number of reasons for persecution, including that of the Ukrainian refugee crisis of 2022,<sup>116</sup> more research must be done on situations similar in order to see future correlations between the current administration's ideologies and their immigration and refugee policies, and the research done in this project can serve as additional information to discuss these further works as other situations develop.

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<sup>114</sup> Martin A. Schain. “Shifting Tides: Radical-Right Populism and Immigration Policy in Europe and the United States.” (Transatlantic Council on Migration: 2018).

<sup>115</sup> Harsha Panduranga, Faiza Patel, and Michael W. Price. *Extreme Vetting & the Muslim Ban..* (Brennan Center for Justice: 2019).

<sup>116</sup> UNHCR. *Ukraine Refugee Situation.* (Operation Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation: 2022).

If the Trump administration were to ever return to office in future elections, this study could serve as a basis for future causation for future changes, as Trump's ideology has not changed since he has left office, and the social movement that led to his election only continues to become larger as the United States' political parties continue to become more polarizing. Previous administrations did not seem to have the same issues that the Trump administration did, especially regarding that of white supremacy and the far right movement, because the ideology was merely on the fringe. However, seeing as the movement has not decreased or slowed down despite Trump leaving office, these movements and policies may continue to happen in inevitable future elections as politics becomes more polarized and another conservative populist is elected to office.

In summation, the changes in refugee policy under the Trump administration have had far-reaching implications for refugee and immigration policy that will continue to have an impact even under new administrations, and although the ideologies that President Trump employed under his administration have less of an impact than they did previously, they will continue to have a correlation with changes to the refugee resettlement program in future years under other administrations. In the future, the Biden administration will have to undo the mistakes done the Trump administration in order to reclaim the title of the world's refugee host if the administration wishes to show its foreign policy is based in more

multilateral goals, as opposed to the previous administration's populist, isolationist ones. Although this study was very limited, its implications to future research are evident and worthy of discussing under subsequent presidencies and future political movements and ideologies under new political leadership.

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## Abstract in Korean

트럼프 대통령은 몇 가지 주요 방법으로 망명 신청자들의 입국을 적극적으로 제한했다; 비록 행정명령 13769와 행정명령 13780은 적절한 제목으로 미국 입국으로부터 국가를 보호, 시리아와 예멘의 주요 국가로부터 유입되는 난민들을 효과적으로 차단하고, 그리고 입국을 제한했다. 미국으로 가는 난민들을 식탁에 앉히다 취임 후 처음으로 당선된 극우 공화당원으로서 학자들은 대통령 임기 내내 난민 수용 감소와 난민 정책 변화에 대한 분석을 내놓기 위해 그의 정치 행보와 정책 변화를 비판적으로 분석해야 한다. 그러므로 이 프로젝트에서 나는 트럼프 대통령의 난민 정책이 그의 전임자들과 크게 다를 뿐만 아니라 그가 당선되도록 도왔던 이념과 극우 및 백인 우월주의 운동의 이념, 그리고 그에 따른 난민 정책의 변화 사이에 인과관계가 있다고 주장한다.

**키워드:** 난민, 이민, 트럼프, 국제, 외교 정책

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