

Migration Policy in the Era of Trumpism and Media Spectacle: What a 2024 Trump [or other] Presidency could mean for Mexico-U.S. Relations

Política migratoria en la era del Trumpismo y del espectáculo mediático:
El significado de una presidencia de Trump u otro candidato en 2024
para las relaciones México-Estados Unidos.

Terence Garrett*

Abstract: Donald Trump may be the Republican presidential nominee for the 2024 election and is facing multiple indictments for alleged crimes committed during his presidency. If convicted, this would make a Trump election victory unlikely, although he is the master of the media spectacle and populist authoritarianism – essential components of Trumpism. I focus on U.S. migration policy consequences affecting Mexico and other states in the Americas if Trump wins in 2024. With a Republican win, the migration policy could revert back to a Title 42 migrant expulsion scenario, with attempts to harden the border using more personnel, infrastructure, and surveillance technology. President Biden, if reelected, is on a course towards increased militarization of the southwest border that is a long-term bipartisan trend with globalization – accelerated by Trumpism down to the U.S. state level. Analyzing these scenarios, the border securocracy theoretical concept is employed in keeping with Trumpism migration policies.

Keywords: Border Security, Migration Management, United States-Mexico Border. Migrant Detentions, Electoral Process.

Resumen: Donald Trump podría ser el candidato presidencial republicano para las elecciones de 2024 y enfrenta múltiples acusaciones por presuntos crímenes cometidos durante su presidencia. Si es condenado, una victoria electoral de Trump sería improbable, aunque es un maestro del espectáculo mediático y del autoritarismo populista, ambos componentes esenciales del trumpismo. En este artículo me enfoco en las consecuencias de la política migratoria de Estados Unidos que afectarían a México y otros estados en el continente americano si Trump gana las elecciones en 2024. Con una victoria republicana, la política migratoria podría revertirse a un escenario de expulsión de migrantes bajo el Título 42, con intentos de fortalecer la frontera mediante más personal, infraestructura y tecnología de vigilancia. Si el presidente Biden es reelegido, seguirá una tendencia hacia una mayor militarización de la frontera suroeste, una tendencia bipartidista a largo plazo con la globalización, acelerada por el trumpismo hasta el nivel estatal en Estados Unidos. Al analizar estos escenarios, se emplea el concepto teórico de securocracia fronteriza de acuerdo con las políticas migratorias del trumpismo.

Palabras clave: Seguridad fronteriza, gestión migratoria, Frontera Estados Unidos-México, detenciones de migrantes, proceso electoral.

Introduction: Trumpism and Criminality

Former president Donald J. Trump is running for the third time to become president of the United States again in 2024, having won previously through the electoral college in 2016 and subsequently losing his re-election bid in 2020. In this article, I will be making an analysis of what the differences would be if Mr. Trump were to win once again, or perhaps if one of his Republican opponents were to get past Mr. Trump and defeat President Biden, and what this may mean for U.S. immigration policy, especially with its relationship with Mexico and the Western Hemisphere, in general. To get a sense of the scale of commitment, the United States since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 through fiscal year 2021 has spent \$333 billion on immigration policy enforcement (American Immigration Council, 2021). Additionally, I will assess and define the impact of the political spectacle (Kellner, 2016) phenomenon of “Trumpism” with its immigration policy impact on the current president, Joseph R. Biden, especially since President Biden inherited Title 42 and other policies and programs from former president Trump, along with an escalation of increasing numbers of “encounters” and apprehensions during his first two years in office.

There are questions as to whether Mr. Trump will be the Republican Party nominee in 2024 due to criminal indictments. Firstly, Mr. Trump has 4 indictments and a total of 91 federal and state felony charges that he is facing (see Table 1). Although these charges are not directly related to immigration policy, they have the effect of establishing the character of the man and his potential for criminality. Secondly, due to legal maneuverings prior to the trials that are preliminarily scheduled, there are questions as to when or if the court trials and any convictions that may be forthcoming will take place prior to the November 2024 election. And finally, Mr. Trump presently insists that he will run in any event as there are few legal provisions that would prevent Mr. Trump from participating in the 2024 presidential if he were the Republican nominee.

Table 1: *The New York Times* Trump Criminal Investigation Tracker (as of 8/14/2023)

Case	Status	Federal/State	Charges	Prosecutor
January 6, 2021, Insurrection	Charges filed 7/31/23	Federal – U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia	4 counts related to efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election and obstruct the certification of the electoral vote.	Jack Smith, Special Counsel
Election Inquiry	Charges filed 8/13/23	State – Fulton Superior Court, Georgia	13 counts related to efforts to reverse the 2020 election results in Georgia.	Fani T. Willis, Fulton County District Attorney
Classified Documents Case	Charges filed 6/8/23; Trial date April 2024	Federal – U.S. District Court, Southern Florida	40 counts related to possession of classified documents and obstructing efforts to retrieve them.	Jack Smith, Special Counsel
Manhattan Criminal Case	Charges filed 3/29/23; Trial date February 2024	State – Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York	34 counts related to falsifying business records	Alvin L. Bragg, Manhattan District Attorney

Source: Smart, et al. (2023)

The legal peril shown in **Table 1** makes Mr. Trump's candidacy appear to be daunting in terms of winning in 2024. Whether Mr. Trump wins the Republican nomination or not, he has had a long-term impact on U.S. immigration policy that will be discussed and analyzed subsequently.

The other Republican candidates for president have essentially followed Mr. Trump's lead regarding political positions on immigration policy. Astor (2023: para. 1) examined where the nine major Republican candidates stand on the issues (see **Table 2**) and noted "policies are now standard Republican fare: Calls to 'build the wall' once set apart the right-wing fringe, but several Republican candidates now support even more exceptional measures, such as using military force to secure the border or ending birthright citizenship." Border security and immigration policy are now in a radical, right-wing, militant, and white nationalist, place held by the U.S. Republican party. These positions are the basis, as well, for setting the radical agenda in other policy areas including suppression of women's health (denial of abortion), voter suppression, and acceptance of practices and activities in denial of democratic elections resulting in the insurrection violence experienced with the counting of the Electoral College votes from the states' electors at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. **Table 2** shows that the GOP candidates in most instances are attempting to run on immigration policy issues to the right, or more extreme, than the former president.

Table 2: 2024 Declared Major Republican Candidates for President of the United States*		
Candidate	Immigration/Border Security Policy and GOP Vote % as of 8/18/23.*	
Donald J. Trump	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Policies cemented hard-line immigration stances in the G.O.P. mainstream" (Astor, 2023). 2. Established the Zero Tolerance Policy (ZTP) – separating migrant children from parents. 3. Promoted the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) – the "Remain in Mexico" Customs and Border Protection (CBP) policy and programs to force refugees and asylum seekers to stay by the tens of thousands along the Mexico-U.S. border in squalid and dangerous encampments awaiting permission to enter the U.S. to make claims. 4. Implemented Title 42, providing CBP agents on the border (not immigration judges) authority to immediately assess whether border crossers encountered had legal asylum claims and expel them through the Asylum Cooperation Agreements (ACA). 5. Wanted 30-ft. high border walls (bollard construction) built and spent billions of dollars mostly replacing other barrier infrastructure (Garrett, 2023). 6. Banned travelers from Muslim countries. 7. Denied public assistance to migrants mostly from Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia (Astor, 2023). 	54.50%
Ron DeSantis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mostly agrees with Trump but wants more expansion of the border wall. 2. "...outlined an aggressive policy that includes mass deportations, indefinite detention of children (in violation of a 1997 consent decree known as the Flores agreement), and license to kill some border crossers." 3. "'We have to have appropriate rules of engagement to say, if you're cutting through a border wall on sovereign U.S. territory and you're trying to poison Americans, you're going to end up stone cold dead,' he told Fox News, referring to fentanyl, shortly after saying while in Texas that he would authorize 'deadly force' against people 'demonstrating hostile intent.'" 4. Wants to end "birthright citizenship" which is based on the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment (Astor, 2023). 	15.40%
Chris Christie	<p>"[He] has proposed sending the National Guard to the border to stop illegal crossings and intercept fentanyl (though fentanyl mostly comes into the U.S. through official ports of entry, hidden in legitimate commerce).</p> <p>At a campaign event in July, he hinted at military action beyond that, saying he would give the president of Mexico 90 days to combat drug cartels before he would 'avail myself of the tools that I have available as the president of the United States and the commander in chief of the greatest intelligence agency and the greatest army in the world'" (Astor, 2023).</p>	3.30%
Nikki Haley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "She is largely aligned with the bulk of the field and supports most of Trump's policies." 2. "...she wants to restore Mr. Trump's 'remain in Mexico' policy, add 25,000 Border Patrol and ICE agents, withhold funding from 'sanctuary cities' that limit cooperation with immigration officials, and immediately deport migrants" (Astor, 2023). 	3.70%
Tim Scott	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports most of Trump's policies. 2. Wants Title 42 to remain place but switching the rationale for the policy to the fentanyl epidemic instead of Covid-19 as the health crisis justification. 3. He would not rule out sending troops into Mexico to combat drug cartels (Astor, 2023). 	2.90%
Mike Pence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "He is largely aligned with the bulk of the field and supports most of Trump's policies." 2. "[Supports] a return to Mr. Trump's immigration policies, including continuing to build a border wall, banning the establishment of sanctuary cities and reinstating the 'remain in Mexico' requirement for asylum seekers." (Astor, 2023) 	5.10%
Vivek Ramaswamy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "He has proposed some of the most aggressive stances of any candidate." 2. "...called for securing the border by any means necessary, including military force. This could violate an 1878 law that forbids the use of federal troops for civilian law enforcement, but Mr. Ramaswamy argues that securing the border isn't civilian law enforcement." 3. "...wants to 'universally' deport undocumented immigrants and opposes any path to legal residence because 'we are a nation of laws,' he said at a campaign event.'" (Astor, 2023). 	7.90%
*Note : Candidates who did not register 1% or below on the <i>FiveThirtyEight</i> (2023) poll were not included in this table.		

Trumpism Defined Theoretically and Methodologically for U.S. Immigration Policy: Donald J. Trump and the Manifestation of the Media Spectacle

"Explaining the Donald Trump phenomenon is a challenge that will occupy critical theorists of U.S. politics for years to come... Donald Trump ... is the master of *media spectacle* ...Trump reveals the threat of *authoritarian populism*, a phenomenon

that is now global in scope, and the dangers of the rise to power of an individual who is highly destructive, who represents the worst of the 1 percent billionaire business class. Trump masquerades as a ‘voice of the forgotten man,’ as he advances a political agenda that largely benefits the rich and the military and is a clear and present danger to U.S. democracy and global peace, constituting an American Nightmare for the world.” – Douglas Kelner (2016, p. 1, italics added for emphasis)

“It is always a mistake to try to explain something by opposing Mafia and state: they are never rivals.” —Guy Debord (1988, p. 67).

The concept of *border securocracy* encompasses policy, administration, globalization, and politics whereby the sovereign submits life and death decision-making to agents on the border to fulfill and combine neoliberal objectives for authoritarian power, racist nationalism, and corporate profit-making. Fear is designed to cow the masses, based on commodification (Seaton, 2001; Sementelli, 2020), perception (Correa-Cabrera & Garrett, 2014), and politics (Correa-Cabrera, et al., 2014). Its core theoretical insights are conceptually based on Agamben (1998; 2005; 2009), Schmitt (2006), Halper (2015), Duncan (2014), Oswick, et al. (2008), Neocleous (2007), Brown (2019), Walia (2013; 2021), Miller (2019) and Feldman (2004) – as constructed in Garrett (2023). Human rights and democracy globally are among its casualties. As conceptualized previously,

The concept of *border securocracy* is “defined to mean the expansion of the law enforcement/border security bureaucracy (or apparatus) from the state (the U.S.) throughout the world specifically by way of the Department of Homeland Security and its agencies, most especially the Customs Border Protection (CBP), Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) to expand U.S. and other global corporate interests” (Garrett 2023, pp. 6-7). *Border securocracy* combines the sovereign authority given to border agents to make judicial decisions as to whether asylum seekers have legitimate claims made on site whereby most border crossers are immediately expelled without appearing before a judicial magistrate or other legal authority. The phenomenon is expanding globally through DHS and its subsidiaries, primarily BORTAC (Border Patrol Tactical Units), in terms of training other states’ border agents, and

effectively preventing migrants from global south states gaining access to territories in global north states on a systemic basis (Garrett, 2023).

Trumpism, accelerated through *authoritarian populism* (Kellner, 2016; 2021), is a process that had been well underway before the creation of the Department of Homeland Security – emphasizing the spectacle of hindering, stopping, injuring, or *killing* migrants (Garcia, et al., 2023) crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, while maintaining enough migrant personnel to work and be exploited in primarily the agricultural and service sector industries for cheaper wages (Garrett, 2013). While under the Department of Treasury, the formerly known U.S. Customs Service had policed incoming and outgoing goods and services and the U.S. Border Patrol, under the Department of Justice, had set in motion the tripartite policy of border enforcement with emphases on surveillance - the *panopticon* or *ban-opticon* based on Bentham (1995), Foucault (1977), Bigo (2006), personnel (boots on the ground, or agents), and infrastructure (the border wall) (Garrett, 2023; Garrett, 2020a; Garrett, 2020b, Garrett, 2018). Always ever-present in U.S. border security policy used against border crossers, the key additive from Trumpism is the overt emphasis on white nationalism particularly aimed at prohibiting the immigration into the U.S. refugees and asylum seekers from Mexico and Latin America (Garrett & Sementelli, 2023; Garrett & Sementelli, 2022) among others – the *homo sacer* (Agamben, 1998). The most recent “Trumpism-related” *border securocracy* programs and policies are exhibited in **Table 3**.

In the sections that follow, I will be analyzing the conditions and environment of immigration policy into the United States focusing primarily on the Mexico-U.S. border. I will begin with an assessment of deceptive practices of Trumpism at the national level followed by additional sections on U.S. state actors – governors in states such as Arizona, Texas, and Florida – as to how Trumpism is employed as part of the overall *media spectacle* designed to legitimize *populist authoritarianism*, including the influence of propaganda techniques and action against migrants employed by the right-wing populist authoritarian Hungarian prime minister, Mr. Victor Orbán being incorporated to U.S. right-wing politics. This article will conclude with a discussion and conclusion of the implications of Trumpism on the United States regarding immigration policy.

Table 3: Trump-Biden Administration U.S. *Border Securocracy* Programs and Policies (in Brief)

Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), “Remain in Mexico” – Title 8	Title 42 – Encounter and expel based on a state of emergency	Asylum Cooperation Agreements (ACA) Deportation Program – Title 8, Title 42	End of Title 42, MPP (return)? Wait in Mexico or country of origin, or transit band, combined with <i>CBP-One</i> Program – Title 8
January 2019 to January 2021	March 2020 – May 11, 2023	Summer 2019 to February 2021	May 11, 2023, to present
Trump	Trump / Biden	Trump	Biden
<i>Primary</i> : CBP, ICE, DHS/DOJ immigration judicial magistrates; increased usage and <i>secondary</i> presence of state national guard troops, and states’ department of public safety troopers	<i>Primary</i> : CBP, ICE / DOJ immigration judicial magistrates (reduced role due to high number of CBP encounters and expulsions); increased usage and <i>secondary</i> presence of state national guard troops, and states’ department of public safety troopers	<i>Primary</i> : CBP, ICE, DHS/DOJ immigration judicial magistrates	<i>Primary</i> : CBP (<i>CBP-One</i> program <i>securo-technocrats</i> and contractors); ICE; DHS/DOJ immigration judicial magistrates; increased usage and <i>secondary</i> presence of state national guard troops, and states’ department of public safety troopers

Deceiving the Public: The Legacy of Trumpism and Immigration Policy Consequences

The primary driver behind Trumpism with regard to immigration policy was his longest serving senior advisor, Stephen Miller. Miller was the creator of most of former president Trump’s immigration policies, and has written most of his extreme scripts (Miroff & Dawsey, 2019) espousing harsh immigration policies, and the force behind the implementation of MPP, ZTP, Title 42, and ACA (see **Table 3**). Before he became an advisor to Trump, Miller had made a name for himself as an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim staffer for the right-wing former member of Congress, Michelle Bachmann. When he joined the Trump administration, Miller made it his focus to “[pore] through not just existing immigration laws, but the entire federal code to look for provisions that would allow the president to halt the flow of migrants into the United States” (Dickerson & Shear, 2020: para. 11). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Miller, for example, was devising a number of ways to invoke Title 42 to halt immigration into the U.S. including such

relatively common diseases as mumps and the flu that occurred on or before the onset of the coronavirus. Since March 2020, the U.S. government “has misused the order to kick out people seeking asylum more than 1.7 million times” through March 2022 (ACLU, 2022: para.1). The impact of Title 42 is denoted here to demonstrate the lingering effects of Trumpism immigration policy since the inception of the policy through the onset of the Biden administration. Gerson (2023) noted in a critique of the Biden administration’s use of Title 42 (while imposed to some degree by the U.S. judicial system) ...

...the notion that a targeted and specific parole program can replace asylum is inimical to the very idea of asylum. As many Democrats and human rights organizations have articulated since the proposed asylum rule was published in the Federal Register, under U.S. and international law people have a fundamental right to seek asylum. This means that the government must do everything in its power to ensure people can seek asylum’s protection. No ifs, ands, or buts... However, through this proposed rule, the Biden administration has shown that they do not believe asylum access to be a human right. Rather, the government is putting asylum access on a balance with state capacity and, arguably, politics. By extension, this analysis of asylum allows for the return of Stephen Miller’s policies. Most notably, this new proposal is virtually indistinguishable from a transit ban Miller proposed during his tenure at the White House, which at one point was considered a red line for even the hardline Trump administration (2023: para. 7).

The lack of a human rights element is essential to understanding Trumpism and immigration policy whether it is pre-, during, or post-, Trump as president of the United States. The effects of Stephen Miller’s racism continue with regard to U.S. immigration policy. While the effects may have been latent, or hidden, prior to Trumpism, Miller has added an accelerated dimension that continues the *political* and *media spectacle* of rampant discrimination. This aspect is central to the onset of *authoritarian populism* (Kellner, 2016) as aided by *border securocracy* (Garrett, 2023). The discourse of *authoritarian populism* is temporally and spatially cemented as a feature of right-wing American politics. Immigration policy and *border securocracy* in the U.S. are part and parcel to the overall spectacle.

Since May 11, 2023, the Title 42 *encounter-and-expel* policy is no longer in effect in the United States with regard to border crossers coming through the southwest border. In the next section, there will be an analysis of how the *media spectacle* and *authoritarian populism* have moved to the lower reaches of the U.S. federal government to gubernatorial and state legislative levels – also furthering the phenomenon of *border securocracy*. If these aspects of *populist authoritarianism* continue to be unchecked by the remaining institutional vestiges of democratic rule, the U.S. will continue its downward spiral as a flawed democracy (*The Economist*, 2022).

Trumpism: Populist authoritarianism and border securocracy in Texas and Florida

Prior to the 2024 presidential election, there are two governors that are potential Republican nominees with Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, who has already declared his intent to run for the GOP nomination, and the possible candidacy of Governor Greg Abbott of Texas (as of the date of this writing, Governor Abbott has not yet declared, but may have ambitions to run in 2028). Both governors have extensively engaged in the *media spectacle* of immigration policy although states constitutionally have no legal or formal authority over the U.S. federal government regarding immigration policy. Governors DeSantis and Abbott are not the only state executives who have tried to circumvent federal authority in this regard. For example, the now-former Republican Arizona governor built a “a project that [placed] double-stacked old shipping containers through several miles of national forest, attempting to fill gaps in Donald Trump’s intermittent border fencing” through U.S. federal and tribal property violated several laws and costing Arizona taxpayers over \$95 million (del Bosque, 2022: para. 2). This was Governor Ducey’s attempt to intervene and shape U.S. immigration policy. The federal government forced Governor Ducey “to remove the barrier after the Biden administration sued, accusing the state of trespassing on federal land and damaging the environment” – the barrier was a makeshift wall that also had razor wire attached to it (Healy, 2022: para.2). In effect, in this particular case, the federal government did not use the 1980 Refugee Act to challenge the Arizona governor, using other federal laws available to change the outcome. The *populist authoritarianism* style exhibited by the Arizona governor is akin with other Trumpism movements in its evasion of civil liberties and rights characterized by the political right wing as against federal laws. Also, by these actions,

the “Trumpism”- style attempt at using *border securocracy* infrastructure (the cargo container wall), and the movement by the state of Arizona into areas of law where the U.S. federal government is sovereign, were thwarted. After the November 2022 elections in Arizona Governor-elect Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, replaced Governor Ducey in 2023, who was ineligible to run for a third consecutive term.

Much of what Florida Governor Ron DeSantis advocates in terms of immigration policy is delineated in **Table 2** above. In addition to those Trumpism-based political positions, DeSantis has used Florida taxpayer money to fly refugees from Texas, for example, to Democratic-led states like Massachusetts, particularly areas where he thinks that the destination is a “sanctuary city” receptive to sheltering migrants. In September 2022, DeSantis obtained over \$1 million to fly 48 Venezuelan refugees from San Antonio, Texas to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. A human trafficker recruited by the state of Florida named Perla Huerta, a former U.S. Army counterintelligence agent, deceived the refugees by telling them they would be received in the area with the promise of a free flight, job support, money, food, and housing – but they were simply dropped off in the middle of town with no initial support from the community, until the community realized that the migrants had been deceived. The whole setup was a scam, and a political ploy – a *media spectacle* – designed to embarrass and shame the people of Martha’s Vineyard, using refugees legally in the U.S. as commodities (Sandoval, 2022). Political stunts like these were repeated by DeSantis and his Texas counterpart, Governor Greg Abbott (more below). Additionally, Governor DeSantis and the Republican legislature passed a law restricting legal immigrants out-of-state driver’s licenses “designed specifically for unauthorized immigrants and deemed invalid by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, [and] are from Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Vermont” (Nostrant, 2023: para. 3). Also, the law “locks counties and municipalities from providing funds to individuals or organizations that issue identification documents to people without proof ‘of lawful presence in the United States’” and that “hospitals are required to collect patients’ immigration status as part of their intake process” (Nostrant, 2023: para. 4). The Mexican government said that the Florida law was racial profiling and a hate crime.

Governor Greg Abbott of Texas is another exemplar and progenitor of the *border securocracy*, *populist authoritarian* and *media spectacle* phenomenon of “Trumpism” regarding migration policy in the U.S. All of these elements are utilized, sometimes simultaneously, by Abbott. Abbott has used several tactics devised by Victor Orbán, the right-wing racist, and white nationalist Prime Minister of Hungary. And del Bosque (2023) notes Texas' Operation Lone Star is not unique and is part of a global movement. Strategies and tactics employed by Abbott through Operation Lone Star include ...

1. A psychological operation in the form of an aural assault with messages in Spanish and Mandarin. Sirens and spotlights were used on a refugee encampment by Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) troopers. The attack emanated from Brownsville, Texas, across the Rio Grande/Río Bravo into Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, for three weeks – warning them not to cross into the United States.
2. The authorization of coiled razor wire on the riverbank with DPS troopers and national guard military troops in an attempt to stop refugees from crossing.
3. Since 2021, Texas arrested thousands of border crossers for trespassing on private land, incarcerating them in revamped prisons and other detention centers, thus attempting to evade U.S. federal immigration laws.
4. Installed a floating buoy barrier reinforced with circular saws on the Rio Grande/Río Bravo near Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedras Negras, Coahuila (see Figure 1), most of which is now in Mexico's territory, beyond the middle of the river, about 80 percent. (del Bosque, 2023; Diamante, 2023).
5. Placed shipping containers, lined with razor wire, along the Rio Grande as a makeshift barrier, as well as building miles of border wall (del Bosque, 2023: para. 1-5).

Abbott and Texas's version of border securocracy presents itself as an additional force to supplement to the federal Department of Homeland Security, promoting a media spectacle to prevent unwanted migrants from entering Texas, embarrassing the Biden administration (or other Democratic administrations) politically as being weak on immigration policy, and to show their mettle to Republican partisans and the U.S. public. Since November 16, 2022, Abbott

declared that Texas was under an invasion of the southern border (Office of the Texas Governor). The rhetoric is part and parcel to the ongoing media spectacle.

Figure 1: Placing Razor Wire and Buoys in the Rio Grande Near Eagle Pass, Texas.



New marine barriers are being deployed on the Rio Grande to further deter illegal immigrants attempting to cross into Texas. #OperationLoneStar continues to fill dangerous gaps created by President Biden's refusal to secure the border. Source: Photo from an “X” tweet from Governor Greg Abbott @GovAbbott Jul 14 [2023]) gov.texas.gov

The Abbott/Orbán comparison connection is made by del Bosque:

As thousands of Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugees fled war zones in 2015, Orbán blocked their way north with shipping containers covered in razor wire and built a border wall. He deployed police and military to detain asylum seekers, then bus them out of the country. Since then, Orbán has characterized refugees and asylum seekers as “invaders,” especially if they are Muslim. (2023: para. 10)

The Orbán-Trumpism script is closely being followed by Governor Abbott in terms of the strategies and tactics used against refugees coming across the Rio Grande to Texas from Mexico. Additionally, similar actions and promise of action is taken by the populist authoritarian presidential candidates for the 2024 election in the Republican Party (see **Table 2** above) as well as other Mexico-U.S. border Republican governors.

Discussion and Conclusion

Governmental corruption and human rights abuses have been supported through the bureaucratic and authoritarian political structure in the form of U.S. *border securocracy*, which is the primary implementor of immigration policy before, during and post-Trumpism. In the U.S., immigration policy such as it exists currently, is used by *authoritarian populist* Republican party politicians, and occasionally Democrats and their leaders, who are complicit by continually implementing essentially the same policy, at the state and national levels to victimize refugees, asylum seekers, and other border crossers – the *homo sacer* – who are themselves *real* victims of political upheaval, economic calamity, and environmental disaster in their home countries.

The *political* and *media spectacles* are also continuous regarding immigration policy. Right-wing *agitprop* and communication are key to purveying fascistic ideals and policies to the American public and globally through media. Fear of the other, whether through commodification, political discourse, and visual imagery, is used effectively by *populist authoritarians* to convert the susceptible to white nationalistic or other right-wing causes. Trumpism is the latest variation on this thematic road to dictatorship. Immigration policy in the U.S. is one of the primary drivers to the end result of *populist authoritarianism*; aided and abetted by *border securocrats* who are sympathetic and drawn to popular police-state autocrats. The political messaging, the *media spectacle*, draws into a vortex, other politicians who may not necessarily adhere to the message of dictatorship, but become consumed with political power. This phenomenon has reached deeply into today's Republican party, especially Trump and "Trumpism"- inspired presidential candidates fearful of alienating the up-and-coming rank and file Republican party adherents, with essentially no end in sight.

The U.S. presidential election of 2024 may be one of the most consequential in this century following the debacle of 2016. Trumpism in terms of immigration policy is a variable that has potency that may draw enough voters to the polls to thwart the future of democratic republicanism in the U.S. due largely to the anachronistic electoral college system which has allowed minority national vote collecting Republicans to win recently, most notably 2000 and 2016 that created increased legitimacy for *populist authoritarianism*. The United States is moving

incrementally with each election towards an authoritarian system based on white nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment. The U.S. political system as it currently exists as a flawed democracy is facing an existential crisis at the ballot box in 2024 with the possible election of Trump or one of the current slate of Republican colleagues.

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