

Analysing Journalists Written English on Twitter

A comparative study of language used in
news coverage on Twitter and
conventional news sites

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Abstract

The English language is in constant transition, it always has been and always will be. Historically the change has been caused by colonisation and migration. Today, however, the change is initiated by a much more powerful instrument: the Internet. The Internet revolution comes with superior changes to the English language and how people communicate. Computer Mediated Communication is arguably one of the main spaces for communication between people today, supported by the increasing amount and usage of social media platforms. Twitter is one of the largest social media platforms in the world today with a diverse set of users. The amount of journalists on Twitter have increased in the last few years, and today they make up 25 % of all verified accounts on the platform. Journalists use Twitter as a tool for marketing, research, and spreading of news. The aim of this study is to investigate whether there are linguistic differences between journalists' writing on Twitter to their respective conventional news site. This is done through a Discourse Analysis, where types of informal language features are specifically accounted for. Conclusively the findings show signs of language differentiation between the two studied medias, with informality on twitter being a substantial part of the findings.

Keywords

Computer Mediated Communication, Electronic Discourse, Electronic English, Internet English, Twitter Journalists, Discourse Analysis, Twitter, Twitter News Coverage.

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1. Introduction

The Internet revolution has caused an English evolution. Internet communication has seen a substantial increase over the last 30 years. English is the lingua franca language used online and with native speakers from different continents, second-language learners and polyglots, the written English found online is very capricious. The rapid development of communication online has led to a new variety of English, often referred to as *Internet English*.

Internet English, *Internet Linguistics*, *Electronic English (ED)*, and *Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)* are all concepts that originate from research in Internet communication or *Electronic Discourse*. Communication via Internet platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and email are nowadays arguably the main place for interacting with others. Conversations and information on these platforms are often accessible for anyone to read, opening a door for language researchers or linguists to easily collect data.

Twitter is one of the largest social media platforms on the Internet, with roughly 330 million people using it every month (Statista, 2020). The content is highly diverse spanning everything from media coverage to poetry. Journalists are a large part of Twitter's users, and news covering every possible field finds its way into Twitter. Sometimes news reaches Twitter faster than conventional news sites, which makes Twitter influential in terms of spreading information around the globe. The approach in this discourse analysis is to acknowledge the contrastive features in English linguistics among news coverage on Twitter compared to conventional news sites. The general assumption is that written English on Twitter is informal compared to written English found on conventional news sites. This study attempts to prove the aforementioned thesis by comparing news articles on Twitter to traditional news sites, focusing on Contractions, First Person pronouns, Acronyms, Initialisms, and Other Abbreviations in the discourse analysis. The study includes data from several journalists who write for larger American news sites such as CNN, The New York Times, and The Washington Post while simultaneously post tweets relating to their original articles. The chosen news topic is politics, with a focus on the 2020 election campaign in the United States.

Apart from personal affiliations Politics is often presented and discussed formally and with accurate source criticism.

2. Background

2.1 Literature review

2.1.1 News as Discourse

Scholar Teun A. van Dijk has been studying media with a discourse analytical approach. His discourse analyses consider news as individual types of texts, with its own specific linguistic features. Linguistic discourse analyses commenced during the 1960's and 70's, and in the last 30-40 years larger studies in discourse analysis of media discourse have been conducted. However, during the 90's van Dijk proclaimed a limitation in the amount of systematic discourse studies of media and news coverage, especially in media from the USA. In 1989 van Dijk analysed an article from the British Daily Mail with extra attention to the semantic features of the text. In his findings van Dijk motivate an underlying ideological positioning of the author to the reported event through patterns of linguistic features found in the text. Successively van Dijk argues that the Daily Mail sets extra attention to aspects of the event that can be seen as important to the Mail. Furthermore, van Dijk emphasises that "we need to spell out the cognitive representations and strategies of journalists in the production of the news report and those of the reader when understanding and memorizing it" (Van Dijk, 1996). The interest within this study is much related to van Dijk's earlier studies of news as discourse, except with contemporary corpora from Electronic Discourse in newly commenced news coverage on the social media platform Twitter.

2.1.2 Computer Mediated Communication

In the *Internet Journal of English Linguistics* published by the Canadian Center of Science and Education, Electronic Discourse (ED) or Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is discussed as a "new variety of language". ED/CMC is described as a sort of "semi-speech" because of its features that categorize it somewhere between speech and writing. The revolution of Internet mediated language has resulted in new varieties of written English. A study by AbuSa'aleek (2015) identified nine categories to focus on in the discourse analysis: shortenings, clippings, contractions,

unconventional spellings, word-letter replacement, word-digits replacement, word combination, initialisms, and emoticons. Their corpus was 350 messages containing a total of 4670 words. The results indicated that 25% of the collected data was electronic discourse, but did not agree with the collective belief that students' ED is an exceedingly shortened type of writing. Still, the corpus data displayed a variation of different noticeable features such as shortenings, clippings, contractions, unconventional spellings, and word-letter replacements (AbuSa'aleek, 2015).

Luddy et al. (2014) studied 13 different features of ED in university students' text messages to acknowledge the linguistic irregularities in 'SMS language' by young adults. 13 features were identified in the study (see table 1).

Table 1 Types, descriptions and occurrences of nonstandard types of spelling in order of frequency

Type	Definition	Examples	Number of occurrences	% of total nonstandard spellings
Missed capitalization	A words is spelled without appropriate capital letter	john, i'd	728	22.09
Accent Stylization	A word is spelled as it is pronounced in casual speech	wantz, wanna, gona, cuz, dis, ds	615	18.66
Letter/number homophones	A letter or number used to take the place of a phoneme, syllable, or word of the same sound	2 (to), 4 (for), l8r, u, r (are), c (see), gr8, ru, 2ni (tonight), 2gether	429	13.02
Missed punctuation	Omitted periods, and spelling with missing apostrophe	dont, cant, wont, ill	360	10.92
Contractions	Omitting letters from the middle of words	Txt, wknd, dnt, plz, bday, gng	168	5.10
Phonetic/ nonconventional spellings	A spelling of a word from sound	fone, nite, luk, buks, cum	183	5.55
G Clippings	Omitting the final g in a word ending 'ing'	goin, talkin, comin	171	5.19
Other clippings	Omitting other final letters	tel, l'v, hav, wil, com	156	4.73
Onomatopoeic/ exclamatory	A nonword sound-based exclamation	Ha, arrrh, woohoo, yay	156	4.73
Shortenings	Omitting the end of a word, losing more than one letter	Prob, bro, mon, tues	138	4.19
Misspellings	Misspelled words	don't (don't), juut (just), remeber (remember), thought (taught)	126	3.82
Initialisms	A word or group of words represented by initial letters	tb = text back, gf = girlfriend, poa = plan of action, nntr = no need to reply	39	1.18
Semantically unrecoverable	Words apparently not correct in current context, or where texter's intended word is not clear		27	0.82
Total			3296	100

The results indicated that 25% of the messages contained unconventional spelling, and the most regularly occurring error was forgetting to use capital letters when required (Luddy et al. 2014). A study from 2008 by Tagliamonte and Denis looked into the linguistic features of instant messaging (IM), over one millions words were included in the study. IM refers to conversation made via chat functions on various social media platforms and is characterised as a type of Electronic Discourse. The findings showed that language used in IM are strongly related to the 'present language', meaning that language is in constant change and that individuals adjust their language to the context.

The study describes IM as a new type of language due to its special individualities (Tagliamonte & Denis 2008). Muniandy (2002) also discusses IM and ED to be a new variant of language with unique characteristics of both spoken and written discourse and that teachers should be aware of this when teaching languages.

Historically the English language has always been in constant change due to colonization, migration, and technology. In the past 20 years the latter has surely been the most prominent factor with the increasing use of Internet and its resources. One noticeable change has been the increased informality of both spoken and written English caused by the Internet revolution. “Development of English language from bricks to clicks – from its origin as a collection of tribal dialects of Anglo-Saxon that over time would gradually form a common language, having its standard forms until it has been reshaped under the influence of the Internet and other information and communication technologies” (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018).

Further qualities of ED found in research is the concept of linguistic economy. The research displays different practices used in ED to shorten written language, such as clippings, contractions, abbreviations, orthographic reduction and ellipsis (Ferrara et al., 1991). Furthermore, researchers accuse the features of ED to be damaging the English language. In a book written by David Crystal released by Oxford University Press in 2008, the increased use of texting and its consequences were exhibited and discussed.

“Texting has evolved as a twenty-first-century phenomenon – as a highly distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations and deviant uses of language, used by a young generation that doesn’t care about standards. There is a widely voiced concern that the practice is fostering a decline in literacy. And some even think it is harming language as a whole “text messages destroying our language” (Crystal, 2008).

Several reports and studies have worked on characterizing and exemplifying ED; these studies also contain discussion on how ED is affecting the English language. Carrington (2004) found in his corpus that different types of shortenings are common in ED; writers do so by removing vowels, conjunctions, and articles and/or by using abbreviations and substituting letters for numbers. For example, *gr8* instead of ‘great’

and *sum1* instead of ‘someone’. To fully exemplify the strong opposition to Electronic Discourse as well as its influence on the English language, a journal by the Department of Linguistics at The University of Michigan presented a list of Facebook groups concerned in the topic. The different groups are not entirely alike but share a joint stance against the linguistic practices of *Netspeak/Chatspeak* in Electronic Discourse/Computer Mediated Communication.

“Humans Against Netspeak Death to Netspeak.
The Anti-netspeak League
Anti-Netspeak Coalition (A.N.C.)
Netspeak is the spawn of the devil
People Against the use of Netspeak in Real Life
Y R PPL TLKING LYKE THIS?!
Chatspeak Crusaders
people against chatspeak
Chatspeak makes me die inside
I Think Chatspeak is Annoying
Stop the Chatspeak! Save the Vowels!
The United Anti-Chatspeak Coalition
I Don’t Like Chatspeak.
People Against Bad Grammar and ChatSpeak!
Everyone that uses internet chatspeak in everyday life Chatspeak marks a
decline in the intellect of society
Chatspeak Makes Me Want to Shove Dinner Forks in My Eyes ‘ppl hu
tok lyk dis’ are annoying.
Supporters of Proper English on the Internet” (Squires, 2010).

There is no uncertainty that the Internet revolution, and the accompanying evolution of English, provokes a lot of people. As Computer Mediated Communication is still relatively new it is difficult to comprehend just how much impact and what type of changes in the English language we can expect to see in the future. The implications of CMC and potential impacts will be commented on further in the ‘discussion’ part of this study.

Conclusively, two scholars at The University of Memphis conducted a register study, including various studies within the field, and the findings showed that studies of language research show confirmation of language change (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018).

2.1.3 Twitter and news coverage

Information finds its way onto Twitter fast: news is often tweeted before the news organisations have posted the information on their blogs or in an article. An example is the Mumbai bombings in 2008, an event that was extensively reported ‘live’ on Twitter and later news organizations used these tweets as references when broadcasting the story (Hermida, 2010). Twitter has been praised for its ability to quickly spread important news worldwide and connect people. On Twitter people connect through instant communication and share/discuss information. This phenomenon has been entitled “collective intelligence” by scholars researching the field (Malone et al., 2009). Even though Twitter is an accepted and widely used global news source, there is a lot of criticism coming Twitters’ way. When discussing Twitter in the media, scepticism and questioning regarding the contents’ legitimacy has been raised. Some journalists have even mocked Twitter and the people who use it. Maureen Dowd from The New York Times labelled Twitter as “a toy for bored celebrities and high-school girls” (Hermida, 2010). That being said it is worth mentioning that the President of The United States, Donald Trump, uses Twitter daily to circulate information and make statements.

As early as 2009 news organizations in The United Kingdom already had 121 accounts on Twitter with over one million followers. This showcases the significant role Twitter plays in the sharing of news (Hermida, 2010). Twitter boasts a wide variation of users, which explains the comprehensive content found on the platform. Some groups of verified users are significantly larger than others, for example journalists. A report states that journalists make up for almost 25% of Twitters’ verified users. The report also claims that journalists, or news organisations, are the most active group on Twitter with reference to the amount of posts (Kamps, 2020). An article from 2010 discusses the increased use of Twitter by journalists and how this might affect the conventional news networks. For many journalists and news networks or papers Twitter is primarily a marketing tool to sell more print copies or increase the amount of online readers. Additionally, both editors and journalists are using Twitter as a research tool for information gathering when working on stories. The use of Twitter also offers opportunity to retain feedback on their work in the form of comments, re-tweets and likes. Ahmad asserts that Twitter should be seen as complementary and not as a substitution to the conventional news channels (Ahmad, 2010).

2.1.4 Informal language

There is a slight disagreement of what the critical features of informal language are. Biber (1988) approached the matter with a factor analysis, which is a correlational statistical technique, to identify what people recognise as informality. Features of informality in language involved an increased amount of: verbs, pronouns, adverbs, and interjections. “Higher frequencies of nouns, adjectives, prepositions and articles are said to reduce the level of background information needed to understand a text and so make a text more formal while more verbs, pronouns and interjections refer more to the immediate context and make it less formal” (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Furthermore, Chang and Swales (1999) studied 40 published style manuals of recommended grammatical features to incorporate in formal writing. First person pronouns, contractions and variants of abbreviations were listed in the section of “informal elements” in those manuals.

2.2 Purpose of study

2.2.1 Problem formulation

Politicians and journalists are more frequently discussing Twitter and its impact on journalism. However, since micro-blogging services like Twitter are relatively new there is a limited amount of research made in the area. This analysis proposes to acknowledge the linguistic features, more specifically the informal language in news-related tweets compared to ‘standard journalism’ on news sites. Subsequently a discussion will be conducted in relation to the findings and their possible impacts from a wider perspective. If the hypothesis of augmented informality in news coverage on Twitter is proven to be true, uncertainty of how this might affect language acquisition and incite changes to the English language increases. Acknowledging if and what type of informal features that appear more frequently on Twitter compared to news sites/papers can help analyse Internet’s role to the on-going transition of the English language.

2.3 Research questions

1. What contrastive linguistic features emerge in a comparison of journalists Twitter posts and their conventional news articles on news sites?
2. How is informal language used in tweets compared to conventional news articles?

3. Methodology

3.1 Method for Data Collection

The discourse was collected from four different websites: Twitter, CNN, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. The tweets included in the analysis could not be selected randomly since it was essential that the tweets related to news stories written by the journalist for their current employer (news site). The collection of data can therefore be categorized as purpose selection, with limitations to practical factors within a bachelor thesis. The tweets were selected first and the articles thereafter; the articles were selected from links found in the tweets, which also supports the tweets' relevance to the specific news story. All of the included data is accessible for anyone to read.

3.2 The Corpus

The study examines the linguistic features of Computer Mediated Communication, also known as Electronic Discourse, from journalists active on well-known American news sites and on the social media platform Twitter. The data collected for this study consists of several news articles from three major news sources in the United States covering the 2020 election campaign between the main presidential candidates Donald Trump (Republican) and Joe Biden (Democrat). The selected sources were CNN, New York Times and The Washington Post. The involved news sites were selected because of their high amount of readers in the US (Mickel, 2020). One writer from each news site was selected. The time frame for included corpora (tweets & articles) spans from September 1st to November 22nd. The journalists were selected based on their active use of Twitter, in regards to posts or comments, directly relating to their article on CNN, The New York Times or The Washington Post. The selected writers include Kevin

Liptak, a White House reporter for CNN based in Washington DC, Paul Krugman, an opinion columnist for The New York Times, and Jenna Johnson, a national political correspondent for The Washington Post. The analysis' key focus was calculating the amount of Contractions, First Person Pronouns, Acronyms, Initials, and Abbreviations. The corpus from Kevin Liptak contains a total of 6520 words, 584 from tweets and 5936 from CNN news articles. The corpus from Paul Krugman contains a total of 2164 words, 453 from tweets and 1711 from The New York Times news. The corpus from Jenna Johnson contains a total of 4325 words, 362 from tweets and 3963 from The Washington Post news articles. In grand total the study included 13009 words, 1399 from tweets and 11610 from news articles.

3.3 Analysing the Data

A discourse analysis of written corpora containing 13009 words was conducted. The linguistic features of value to the study were Contractions, First Person Pronouns, Acronyms, Initialisms and Other Abbreviations. These features are categorized and known as less formal and should be avoided in academic texts and in formal instances (The London School of English, 2020). Contractions, Initialisms, Acronyms and Other Abbreviations are all varieties of shortenings. Shortenings on Twitter are common due to Twitters' word limitation but not mandatory since Twitter users can (and often does) combine several tweets to write one longer texts.

4. Findings

Table I displays the five different types of features concerned to the study, including a definition and example of each. The five linguistic features also have a column showing the number of occurrences followed by the types' frequency rate. As we can see, the most regularly occurring type of informal language found in the corpora of the tweets are Contractions, with 45 total occurrences and a frequency rate of approximately 3%. Second most occurring is Other Abbreviations with 33 occurrences and an approximated frequency rate of 2%. Third most occurring is Initialisms with 32 occurrences and a frequency rate of approximately 2%, following which, in fourth, First Person Pronouns with 22 occurrences and an approximately 1,5% frequency rate. Subsequently, the least common type of informal language found in the corpora from

the tweets were Acronyms with 7 occurrences and a frequency rate around 0,5%. A total of 139 informal language features were found in the tweets, corresponding to a frequency rate of almost 10%.

Table I. Types, definition and occurrences of informal features found in tweets worth of 1399 words.

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>	<u>EXAMPLES</u> <u>(FROM TWEETS)</u>	<u>NUMBER OF</u> <u>OCCURENCES</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u> <u>RATE</u>
Contractions	Omission of internal letters, replaced by an apostrophe.	Don't, I'm, We're, Doesn't.	45	One occurrence every 31,1 word, which account for $\approx 3\%$
Initialisms	Abbreviation consisting of initial letters pronounced separately.	CNN, U.S., HQ, GOP, NBC.	32	One occurrence every 43,7 word, which account for $\approx 2\%$
Acronyms	Abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word.	Covid	7	One occurrence every 199,8 word, which account for $\approx 0,5\%$
First Person Pronouns	Words used by the writer, which refer to him/herself, or a group they are a part of.	I, Me, We, Our, Us.	22	One occurrence every 63,5 word, which account for $\approx 1,5\%$
Other Abbreviations	Shortening of a word not defined as an Initialism or Acronym, made up by the writer to reduce the amount of letters.	W, LS, DT, Y'day, Thx	33	One occurrence every 42,4 word, which account for $\approx 2\%$
Total			139	One occurrence every 10,1 word, which account for $\approx 9,9\%$ of the words in total.

Table II follows the same structure as Table I in presenting the data extracted from news articles, concluding the analysis of the selected texts. As found in the tweet analysis, the most occurring form of informal language in the news articles is Contractions. A total of 103 Contractions were found in the corpora, corresponding to a frequency rate of 0,8%. Second most occurring were First Person Pronouns with 70 occurrences and a frequency rate of approximately 0,6%. The third most occurring type was Other Abbreviations with 26 occurrences and a frequency rate of approximately 0,2%. Fourth, and second least occurring, were Initialisms with 16 occurrences and an approximate 0,1% frequency rate. The most seldom occurring type of informal language feature was Acronyms with 3 occurrences and a frequency rate of approximately 0,03%. The total amount of occurrences in all articles combined were 218, a frequency rate around 1,8%.

Table II. Types, definitions and occurrences of informal features found in news articles worth of 11 610 words.

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>	<u>EXAMPLES (FROM TWEETS)</u>	<u>NUMBER OF OCCURENCES</u>	<u>FREQUENCY RATE</u>
Contractions	Omission of internal letters, replaced by an apostrophe.	It's, Weren't, They'd, Couldn't, Don't, Shouldn't	103	One occurrence every 112,7 word, which account for $\approx 0,8\%$
Initialisms	Abbreviation consisting of initial letters pronounced separately.	CNN, GOP, F.D.R.	16	One occurrence every 725,6 word, which account for $\approx 0,1\%$
Acronyms	Abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word.	Co-author, Covid	3	One occurrence every 3870 word, which account for $\approx 0,03\%$
First Person Pronouns	Words used by the writer, which refer to him/herself, or a group they are a part of.	We're, I, I'm, Ours,	70	One occurrence every 165,8 word, which account for $\approx 0,6\%$

Other Abbreviations	Shortening of a word not defined as an Initialism or Acronym, made up by the writer to reduce the amount of letters.	Yrs, Sen., Rep., u, msg, Dr.,	26	One occurrence every 446,5 word, which account for $\approx 0,2\%$
Total			218	One occurrence every 53,2 word, which account for $\approx 1,8\%$ of the words in total.

Figure I displays a comparison of Kevin Liptaks' tweets to his writing in articles for CNN. The figure indicates a comparatively low use of all five features in articles from CNN. Contrariwise all five studied features occur more frequently on Twitter, with a particularly increased use of Contractions and Other Abbreviations notable.

Figure I. Informal features found in Kevin Liptaks' news coverage on Twitter versus the news site CNN.

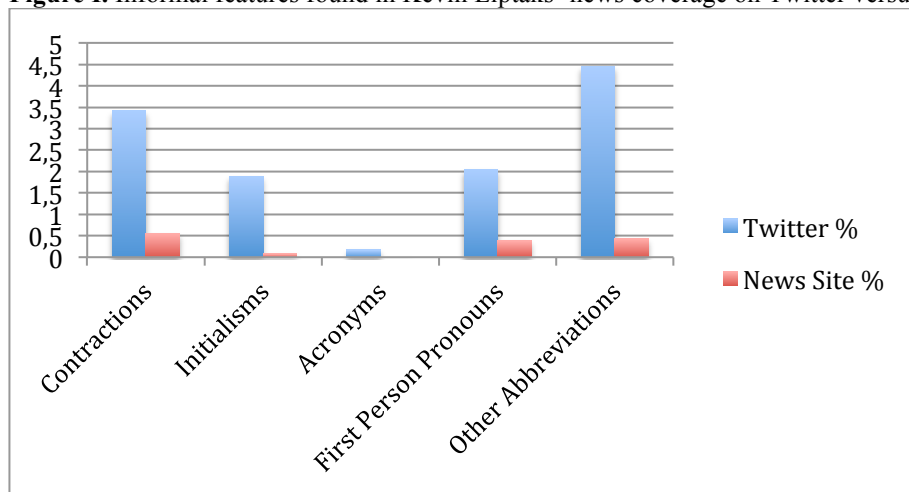


Figure II displays a comparison of Paul Krugmans' tweets to his writing in articles for The New York Times. Contractions and Initialisms are particularly apparent in tweets with a 3,5% frequency. However, the most interesting entity of the findings is the comparatively frequent use of Contractions and First Person Pronouns in articles for The New York Times, which is not apparent with data from Kevin Liptak and Jenna Johnson. This occurrence will be conferred to further in the findings discussion.

Figure II. Informal features found in Paul Krugmans' news coverage on Twitter versus the news site The New York Times.

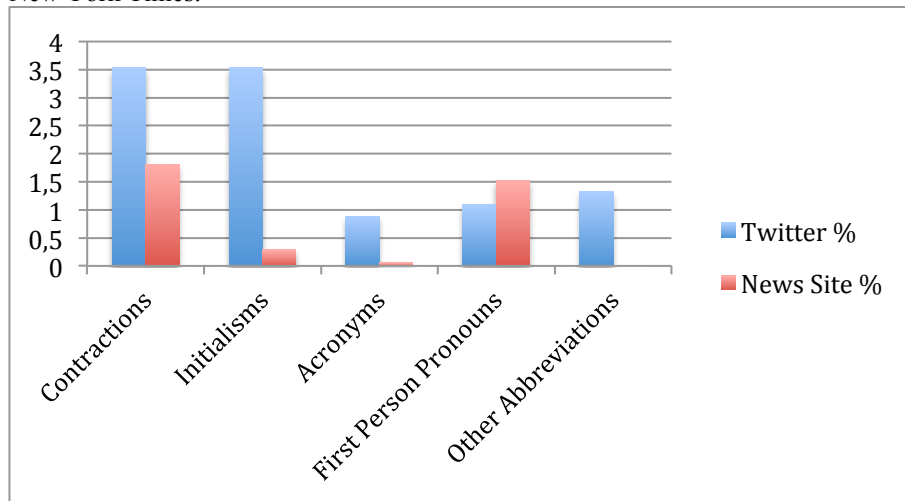
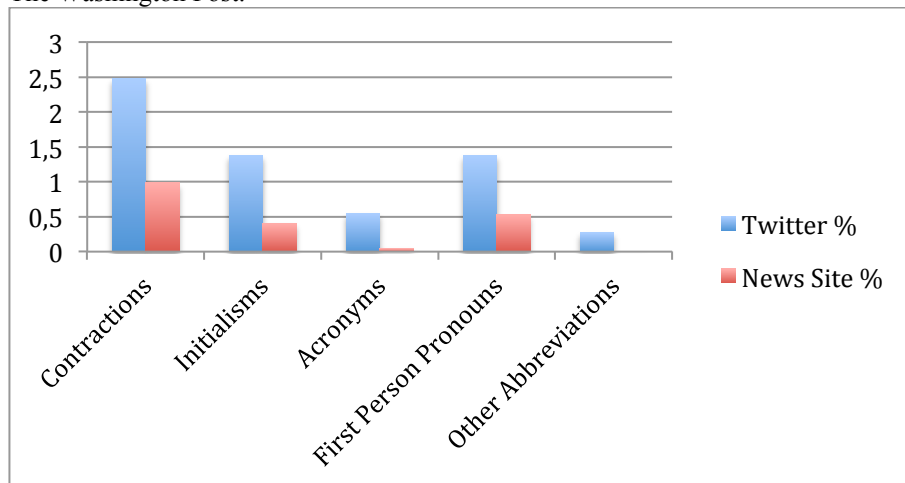


Figure III displays a comparison of Jenna Johnsons' tweets to her writing in articles for The Washington Post. All five features occur more often in tweets, and an augmented use of Contractions is visible. Nonetheless, in relation to Liptak and Krugman, Johnson uses notably less informal features in both tweets and Washington post articles.

Figure III. Informal features found in Jenna Johnsons' news coverage on Twitter versus the news site The Washington Post.



Finally, a confidence interval (CI) was conducted to statistically test the data in tweets and articles. The features of interest in the analysis were tested separately, presented in five CI line charts below (see figure IIII-VIII). In none of the five CI's can we see the two lines intersecting, meaning that there is a 95% probability that the features occur more regularly in tweets compared to articles. Contrariwise if a CI would have been

containing intersecting lines, an assumption of higher occurrence probability in tweets could not have been justified. The feature with the lowest CI percentage is First Person Pronouns, which is visible by observing the line charts: Figure VII includes the closest to intersecting lines by any of the tables. This will be conferred to further in the findings discussion.

Figure III. A linear confidence interval of the *Contractions*’ frequency rate in tweets (green), and in articles (red).

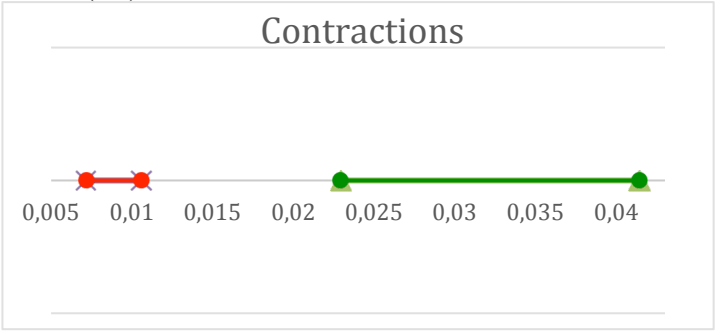


Figure V. A linear confidence interval of the *Initialisms*’ frequency rate in tweets (green), and in articles (red).



Figure VI. A linear confidence interval of the *Acronyms*’ frequency rate in tweets (green), and in articles (red).

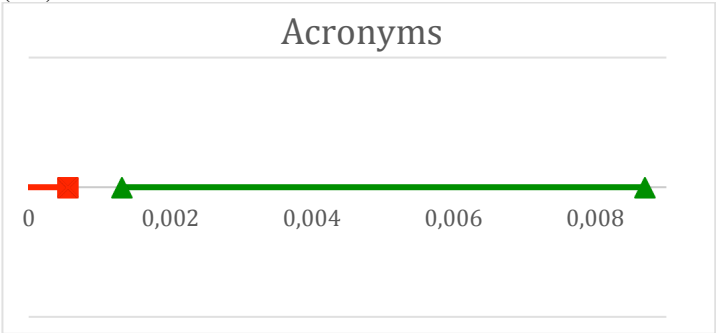


Figure VII. A linear confidence interval of the *First Person Pronouns*’ frequency rate in tweets (green), and in articles (red).

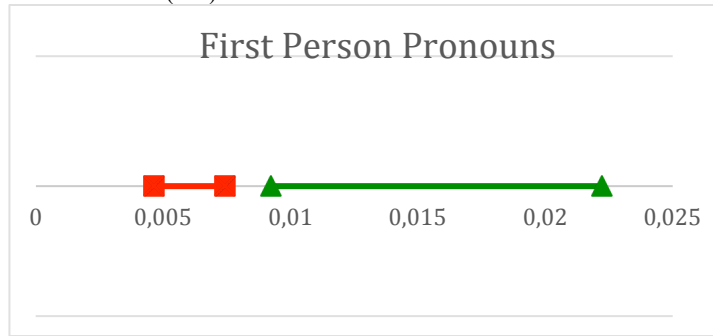
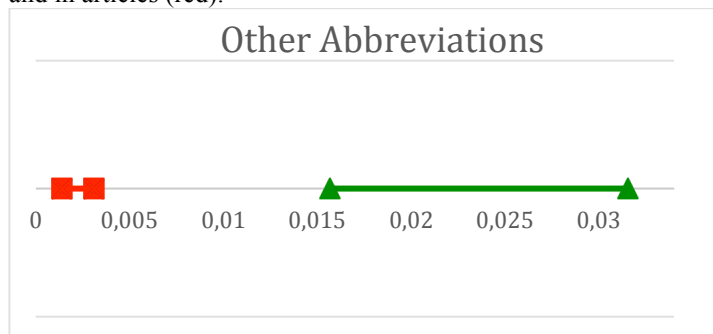


Figure VIII. A linear confidence interval of the *Other Abbreviations*’ frequency rate in tweets (green), and in articles (red).



5. Discussion

5.1 Method discussion

A study of quantifiable data has the ability to objectively acknowledge correlations between several variables. This study conducted a discourse analysis of Electronic Discourse and its linguistic features in terms of informality, which is suitable to identify patterns and irregularities in discourse/communication. For a deeper understanding of why these patterns or irregularities occur, other research methods can be of notable worth, for example a more pragmatic-centred analysis with extra interest to the specific journalists individualities. The possible impacts of informal writing on the evolution of the English language found above are limited due to the methodology and data in this study. The selected group of journalists cannot be generalized to any wider group, whether that be American political journalists or journalists in general. For research results to be generalizable the sample must be representative of the population it wishes to draw conclusions about (Shaughnessy et al., 2014). This study only included three journalists from the major news sites in one country covering one specific field of news,

which limits the generalizability of the research findings. A more extensive study should include additional journalists from more diverse news organisations in more than one country in order to increase the generalizability and legitimacy of the findings.

5.2 Findings discussion

The findings show that journalists Kevin Liptak, Paul Krugman, and Jenna Johnson use remarkably more Contractions, First Person Pronouns, Acronyms, Initialisms and Other Abbreviations covering news on Twitter compared with their job at a conventional news site. These features of language appear as informal while conventional news covering veers towards formal writing in newspapers and articles. 1,399 words in tweets contained 139 occurrences of informality, approximately 10%. A more extensive study with further varieties of informal language would undoubtedly identify additional occurrences. In contrast the findings presented 218 occurrences in 11,610 words worth of news articles, roughly 1,8%. Extra noteworthy distinctions between the Twitter numbers and numbers from the news articles were the amount Contractions, Initialisms and Other Abbreviations. Contractions occurred almost four times as much in news on Twitter compared to news sites, Initialisms occurred almost 20 times more often on Twitter and Other Abbreviations approximately ten times more often. This study analysed Electronic Discourse from Twitter identifying five features of informal language. Findings showed that all five counted features constituted about 10% of the total text. The most frequently occurring discourse features were Contractions, which constituted for approximately 3% of the total text. In perspective one study that made similar analyses but also included the occurrences of Clippings, Unconventional spellings, Word combination and Emoticons showed that the selected features composed around 25% of total words included in their discourse analyses (AbuSa'aleek, 2015). However, AbuSa'aleek included additional features in his analysis and text from the study was not collected from a source with word/character limitation like Twitter.

An interesting entity in the findings is the augmented use of First Person Pronouns (FPP's) in tweets by Kevin Liptak and Jenna Johnsons. Nevertheless this is not the case for Paul Krugman who apparently has a more evident use of First Person Pronouns in his articles on The New York Times, however Krugmans' tweets also contain a relatively high amount of FPP's. Unlike Contractions, Initialisms, Acronyms, and Other

Abbreviations, the increased use of First Person Pronouns cannot be explained by the word limitation on Twitter. FPP's indicate personal affiliation and opinion to the topic and is generally avoided in formal texts. Data from Paul Krugman shows, in relation to Kevin Liptak and Jenna Johnson, a high usage of Contractions and First Person Pronouns in tweets and news articles. This suggests distinct characteristics of Krugmans' writing, incorporating a more personal narrative.

“And while I’m optimistic about the immediate outlook for a post-vaccine economy, we’ll still need to invest on a large scale to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, improve the condition of America’s families (especially children) and, above all, head off catastrophic climate change” (Krugman, 2020).



Paul Krugman 
@paulkrugman

...

What a terrible election. As far as I can tell from the vote analysts, Biden is highly likely to pull this out — the outstanding votes in WI/MI/PA and, for different reasons, GA are likely to be very Democratic, he's probably won AZ and NV. But then what? 1/

[Översätt tweeten](#)

13:07 · 2020-11-04 · [Twitter Web App](#)

2 148 Retweets 658 citat-tweets

11,7k gillamarkeringar

Ken Hyland and Feng Jiang conducted a study to recognise whether academic writing is becoming more informal. They noticed a shift away from the typical impersonal styles of writing, and a trend towards more informality in written communication. Furthermore, the findings indicated a particular increase of first person pronouns (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Interestingly is that findings in Hyland and Jangs study correlates to the discoveries in this study. *Figure VII* shows the rate of FPP usage in tweets and articles. A relatively frequent use of FPP's in tweets were expected, the

interesting entity is instead the almost equally high frequency of FPP's in articles on conventional news sites. This discovery corresponds to Hyland and Jiang's results of a shift away from impersonal writing were noticed. Consequently, it suggests that journalists might drift towards incorporating less formal writing in news articles regardless of media context.

An evident reason for the extensive amount of different word shortenings on Twitter is the character limit. Tweets can only contain up to 280 characters, this causes problems for users who wish to post longer texts. All kinds of shortenings such as word-digit replacement, word-letter replacement, contractions, initialisms, emoticons and abbreviations can function as a problem solver and decrease the amount of characters needed to communicate the same message significantly. Writing a story in one single tweet and not uniting numerous tweets conveying the story bit by bit is motivated by the will to reach out to as many readers as possible. A tweet on its own has a better chance of being spotted via likes, comments and re-tweets. Twitter's character limit is possibly the main reason for the more informal way of writing on Twitter. Subsequently the historical evolution could help explain the findings further. As stated earlier, the Internet revolution has resulted in less formal English and created more probabilities for informality with the large amount of Computer Mediated communication today. It is possible that informality becomes more and more widely accepted in society, even though many people want to declare war against the characteristics of Electronic Discourse and the progression of it. An important question to discuss is how the Internet evolution has, and will, effect language acquisition. Today platforms on the Internet make up a large part of language learning, both intentional and unintentional Extramural English (Leona et al., 2020). If language learners, especially second-language learners, regularly come in contact with reshaped English in Electronic Discourse they might interpret this as the correct form and consequently learn incorrect practices of English. Today, Internet function as a tool for both intentional and unintentional language learning. Social media platforms such as Twitter mainly generate unintended acquisition of language. Consequently, the individual interpretation of Internet encountered language has a significant impact on language education (Taskiran et al., 2018). This can result in both positive and negative consequences, where the specific persons' source criticism plays a major part. Not acknowledging language errors on social media

and thus interpret the errors as the correct form results in poorer language skills, especially amongst second-language learners.

Worth evaluating is the variable interpretations of Twitter as a news forum, journalists who actively use Twitter for news coverage have different intentions with their practice. Some might use it for the sole purpose of assigning personal affiliation to their news articles originally written elsewhere. Some might recognise Twitters' news coverage today to be equal to the traditional news sources, and others may use Twitter to advertise articles on conventional news sites. How journalists on Twitter interpret the platforms role in the reporting of news can of course affect the linguistic features in their writing. It is worth circling back to the findings in this study and look at why the specified differences occur. It is possible that the included journalists simply view Twitter as a social media platform where there is no place for formal language and therefore adjust their writing to the context and readers.

5.3 Strengths & Limitations of study

The strength of the study is its high replicability, implying that anyone who collects the same data will conclude with the same findings. The data was processed objectively analysing quantifiable data in order to answer the Research Questions. The study and its findings can be of worth in future studies within this field of research as it acknowledges some linguistic differences between conventional journalism and news coverage on Twitter. The study has its limitations in generalizability and reliability because of the small amount of included participants (journalists) and the relatively minute amount of collected data. The findings can therefore only be generalized to the three studied journalists Kevin Liptak, Paul Krugman and Jenna Johnson. However, with the trends visible in the findings one could presume similar results in a larger study. In future and more extensive studies in this field a greater amount of journalists and discourse needs to be explored in order to make generalizable conclusions in good conscience. In order to improve research reliability additional linguistic features should be included in the discourse analysis.

6. Conclusion

Findings in this study show signs of linguistic differences in terms of informality between news covering on Twitter and conventional news reporting on major news sites. Comparing journalists' twitter posts and their articles on conventional news sites shows contrastive language features in the use of Contraction, First Person Pronouns, Initialisms, Acronyms and Other Abbreviations. All of these features notably occur more in tweets compared to articles on news sites, with a frequency rate more than five times higher in total. The completion of confidence intervals indicated a >95% probability rate for all five features, which predicts a 95% likeliness of features to occur more frequently in tweets. Subsequently, it is found that informal language features are more evident on Twitter, and more unnoticeable on news sites. Informality in language on Twitter is characterised by the journalists increased use of shortenings and personal references, First Person Pronouns which is evident in findings from all three journalist included in the study. Corpora from Paul Krugman displayed the most repeated use of FPP's, responding to more personal affiliation in his writing on both Twitter and The New York Times.

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Appendix A

Kevin Liptak data from tweets on Twitter

NBC says it required a statement from the NIH and signed off on by Fauci stating “a high degree of confidence” that the President is “not shedding infectious virus” before scheduling their town hall

There was a (very short) window when some thought Trump's coronavirus might allow for a campaign reset. Back on the campaign trail, the President is making clear he's changing nothing.

Has there been a definitive explanation for why YMCA replaced You Can't Always Get What You Want as Trump's walk-off song

Whither the task force amid another surge? Depends who you ask. WH press sec. today: “The task force is meeting each and every day.” Fauci on Thurs: “We're down to about, I would say, a consistent one day a week.”

In last 2 days, Trump called Fauci a "disaster," accused the press of being criminals and "dumb bastards," said Barr must move before election to investigate Biden and (per [@kaitlancollins](#) [@abdallahcnn](#)) abruptly cut off 60 Minutes. As he said himself y'day, he's "running angry."

One of several attempts by Stahl to ask Trump about mask-wearing at rallies: Q: I'm asking you about masks, not about the size of your rallies. A: You commented on the size of the rallies. You said they're not as big as they used to be and I'm telling you they're much bigger.

DT We tell them to wear the masks. LS But you don't and they love you. DT Oh I don't know Lesley, I tell them. I have no problem. LS They love you. DT Next question. LS They pay attention to anything you say. DT I hope you're right. Go ahead.

LS I'm looking at Wisconsin, which is a hot spot. DT A lot of people had masks, it was outside LS And you don't get up there. DT Ok what's your next question Lesley.

While Biden has been kept abreast of the work his transition team is doing, he (like Trump) is superstitious and not inclined to make any major decisions before he knows that he has won the election W/

[@merica](#)

[@ArletteSaenz](#)

[@mj_lee](#)

Trump, describing the bitter cold in Michigan, also seems to have found an apt description of this election: "It's really a contest to see whether we can all stand it," he said. "And we're loving it."

The last incumbent to spend election night at the White House was GWB. His chief strategist Karl Rove set up a temporary office in the family dining room on election day with links to campaign HQ and the RNC. He called it the "bat cave."

Our rolling story on Trump's efforts to force a victory, or at least stall a loss. He's being encouraged so far to dig in and he's doing so aggressively but some in GOP don't see his efforts as legitimate

Last week it was a GOP-leaning law firm forced to distance itself from Trump's legal challenges. This week it's a conservative think tank forced to disavow the top WH health adviser

Summary of Biden foreign call readouts: wants to rebuild trans-Atlantic relationships, affirms EU/NATO support, talked Ukraine w/ UK and France, Iran with France. Most specific thing is his backing for Good Friday agreement, which he's said before could affect US-UK trade deal.

Even facing a disappearing pathway to victory, President Trump is not prepared to concede defeat, leading those around him to wonder who might be able to reckon with a leader who has given virtually no thought to leaving the White House. W
[@kaitlancollins](#)

Kevin Liptak data from News articles at CNN

Facing a disappearing pathway to victory, President Donald Trump offered little indication on Friday he was prepared to concede defeat, leading those around him to wonder who might be able to reckon with a leader who has given virtually no thought to leaving the White House.

Even as vote totals now show him trailing former Vice President Joe Biden in key battlegrounds, Trump has not prepared a concession speech and in conversations with allies in recent days has said he has no intention of conceding the election, people familiar with the matter said.

So far he has been bolstered in his stance by those closest to him, including his senior advisers and his adult sons, who have mounted an aggressive effort in the courts to challenge the results and have pressured other Republicans into defending him.

Top aides, including his chief of staff Mark Meadows, have not attempted to come to terms with the President about the reality of what is happening. Instead, they have fed his baseless claim that the election is being stolen from underneath him. That has led to some annoyance among staff, who believe Meadows is feeding the President's baseless claim that the election is illegitimate.

Vice President Mike Pence -- who has not been seen since the early hours of Wednesday morning -- is doing his part to appease Trump by soliciting funds for his legal defense fund.

Trump is not scheduled to appear in public on Friday, though an appearance at some point has not been ruled out. He spent the morning angry and frustrated, watching television while griping more people weren't defending him on the airwaves.

In a written statement on Friday afternoon, Trump signaled his intentions to continue waging legal battle.

"This is no longer about any single election. This is about the integrity of our entire election process," he wrote. "We will pursue this process through every aspect of the

law to guarantee the American people have confidence in our government. I will never give up fighting for you and our nation."

A source familiar with some of the legal discussions behind the scenes said the President is starting to tell advisers he may not be able to pull out a come-from-behind victory.

The source pointed to Trump's more modulated statement, that was drained of the bluster from Thursday night's performance in the briefing room.

But even as Trump has acknowledged to some allies he recognizes the electoral math will not work in his favor, according to people familiar with the conversations, he has maintained that a prolonged court battle and corrosive rhetoric about election fraud would sow enough doubt to allow him to refuse to accept the results.

Two campaign advisers and one source close to the President said Trump will exhaust his legal avenues for fighting the results in several key battleground states before giving any consideration to conceding.

"He's in fighting mode," one source close to the President said. "He thinks it's in his benefit to fight."

While the reality of Trump's impending loss has set in for many people close to the campaign, others are advising the President to continue fighting the outcomes and investigate claims of fraud.

Biden's campaign voiced little concern at the prospect of Trump clinging to power.

"As we said on July 19, the American people will decide this election. And the United States government is perfectly capable of escorting trespassers out of the White House," campaign spokesman Andrew Bates said in a statement.

The Trump campaign released a statement Friday morning making clear it will refuse to concede the election, calling any projections of Biden as the winner "false" and the race "far from final."

"This election is not over," Trump campaign general counsel Matt Morgan said in a statement.

Still, some of the President's allies have grown concerned that someone will eventually have to reckon with him that his time in office is likely coming to an end. It is a possibility the President did not consider in a serious way during the election, despite polls showing him with only a narrow path to victory, believing that looking past Election Day was bad luck.

The delicate matter of a loss -- and a potential post-presidential life -- was not discussed widely among his team and was not raised often with the President, who believed adamantly he would win.

Trump spent much of the campaign claiming Biden was the worst presidential candidate in history -- and suggesting that losing to him would amount to abject humiliation.

"Losing is never easy," he said at his campaign headquarters on Election Day. "Not for me, it's not."

Now, people around Trump are working to identify who might be able to communicate to him the stark reality. There has been talk of potentially Jared Kushner or Ivanka Trump, though their willingness to lead a difficult intervention wasn't clear.

One idea being floated is framing potential conversations with Trump around the idea of preserving his brand for life after being president -- and explaining that dragging out an election he clearly lost would ruin his businesses and forestall whatever political future he's hoping for.

Before the election, Trump raised the prospect of running for President again in 2024 if he were to lose, though only in a joking manner. Even in likely loss, Trump garnered more votes than he did in 2016 and his future role as a Republican kingmaker seems secured -- though some fear a drawn out and ugly loss could damage his standing.

Trump has spent the days since election night ensconced at the White House, angrily phoning allies and demanding that more people come out to defend him. He has complained that his legal team is ill-prepared to wage an effective battle in courts, according to one person who spoke to him.

At the same time, his legal team's efforts have appeared somewhat slipshod. Some in the campaign questioned the Trump team's decision to dispatch the likes of Rudy Giuliani and Trump's sons to make unfounded allegations of voter fraud, arguing they likely diminished the President's claims of wrongdoing.

Trump sounded downtrodden during an evening statement from the White House on Thursday and departed the room without answering for his false claims about voter fraud.

In meetings with his team in the Oval Office and the White House residence, Trump has asked why more Republicans weren't coming out to allege voter irregularities or make the same claims he was making about votes being counted after Election Day.

He also pressed them into arranging a public statement, something he'd been itching to do since Wednesday. Aides had successfully stalled, believing anything the President said would damage his standing and make matters worse.

But after Biden spoke from near his home in Wilmington, Delaware, on Thursday afternoon, Trump insisted a statement be added for him to detail his legal case.

Afterward, several advisers said the performance was precisely what they'd hoped to avoid.

The morning after he declared from the White House East Room that "all voting must stop," President Donald Trump's strategy of undermining the democratic process was coming into sharper focus, even as it failed to gain widespread traction among Republicans and he seemed resigned to it falling short.

With millions of ballots still being counted, Trump awoke in an agitated state, tweeting or retweeting messages that sought to undermine confidence in the vote counting process. At least three were labeled by Twitter as "disputed" or "misleading."

Several top Republicans, including those close to Senate Republican leaders, were privately dismissive of Trump's suggestion that ballots shouldn't be counted after Election Day.

And even his own campaign said in a call with reporters that Trump's remaining path to victory will rely on those still-uncounted ballots in places where the process of tabulating results has taken longer.

What emerged was a picture of a President intent on using all the tools at his disposal to force a victory, including wielding misinformation about the integrity of the vote and an onslaught of legal maneuvers, even as the results were still coming in and his advisers insisted the math would turn in his favor.

As the day unfolded, Trump's legal strategy was becoming clearer, though it contained contradictions.

In states where Trump appears to be losing, such as Wisconsin, the campaign said it would request a recount. CNN has projected Biden will win in Wisconsin.

But in other states, where current results show Trump winning but outstanding mail-in or early votes could tilt the race in favor of Biden, the campaign is demanding the vote counting be halted.

In Michigan and Pennsylvania, Trump's campaign filed lawsuits demanding a stop to the count until their campaign observers have better access to locations where the tallying is occurring. CNN also projected Biden would win Michigan.

In addition, the campaign said it was asking the US Supreme Court to intervene in a pending case challenging a Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision that allowed ballots to be counted after Election Day. The justices refused to expedite the appeal before the election, but they are still considering whether to take up the case.

A team of Trump advisers mobilized to Pennsylvania, which the President had signaled would be the site of intensive legal efforts should results show him losing. Trump supporters began receiving a barrage of fundraising solicitations to finance what will amount to an expensive and drawn-out legal fight.

Trump's advisers believe he does still have a path to victory that includes wins in Pennsylvania and Arizona, though acknowledge privately it will be an uphill battle. "If we count all legal ballots, the President wins," campaign manager Bill Stepien told reporters on a quickly arranged midmorning conference call.

Trump, however, has projected less optimism in those routes and has instead sought to question the large batches of outstanding votes that have tipped some states toward Biden.

"They are finding Biden votes all over the place -- in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan. So bad for our Country!" he wrote on Twitter.

Aides were encouraging Trump to stay in the fight, though Trump hardly needed the nudge, a campaign adviser said on Wednesday. The President was livid watching Biden's lead increase in states such as Michigan and Wisconsin.

"He feels it's being stolen from him," the adviser said.

But Trump offered a less-than-enthusiastic endorsement of his team's legal strategy in phone calls with some of his allies on Wednesday, sounding resigned to the plan falling short and questioning why his team hadn't successfully challenged voting rules before the election, even as he remained willing to see it through.

According to a person who spoke to him, the President seemed tired after spending the night watching election returns. He spoke to several of his supporters behind closed doors at the White House as his team mobilized to begin the post-Election Day effort. The President told one person he was willing to let the legal maneuvering proceed but suggested he did not believe it would be successful in the end. While he said he believes

he will win in Arizona, Pennsylvania and Georgia, he was skeptical of the lawsuits filed by his team.

Trump hinted at his views in a tweet on Wednesday afternoon: "Our lawyers have asked for 'meaningful access', but what good does that do?" he wrote. "The damage has already been done to the integrity of our system, and to the Presidential Election itself. This is what should be discussed!"

Trump's campaign has been feverishly soliciting funds for the legal effort, and after his tweet, one campaign adviser questioned why the President would undercut the effort at the same moment he is seeking money to support it.

Trump's grip-like command of the Republican Party remains firmly in place, and does not appear poised to loosen after Tuesday night's results. Few Republican elected officials spoke out against Trump's attempts to delegitimize the vote counting process. Instead, most were silent or at least circumspect as the situation plays out.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who won his own reelection race on Tuesday, suggested at a news conference in Louisville that Trump's premature declaration of victory was not binding.

"Claiming you win the election is different from finishing the counting," he said.

Privately, however, those within Trump's party were beginning to undercut his claims that fraudulent voting was leading to late Democratic surges in critical battlegrounds.

"No, we don't agree with what's coming out of the White House," a senior GOP official said. "We see no credible reports of fraud or anything improper."

Trump had long signaled he would not accept the results of a close election that showed him losing. He said in his wee-hours statement from the East Room that he would challenge the results in the US Supreme Court, and his legal team was moving swiftly to execute plans in individual states where the margins remain razor-thin, including in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump's campaign signaled to its allies it plans to launch extensive legal challenges in those states. Stepien told campaign surrogates in a telephone call Wednesday morning that campaign lawyers are already on the ground in anticipation of filings, a person familiar with the matter said.

Trump campaign officials told allies on the call that the first likely step would be requesting recounts in states including Wisconsin and Michigan.

A few hours later, the campaign said in a statement it would request a recount in Wisconsin, though under Wisconsin law a campaign can't petition for a recount until the state's Election Commission completes the canvass from county election boards.

How much a recount would aid Trump's efforts isn't clear; a recount of the presidential vote in 2016 only netted Trump an additional few hundred votes. Biden was leading Trump by more than 20,000 votes as of Wednesday.

The Trump campaign also released a statement saying it had filed a lawsuit in Michigan asking the state to halt vote counting until it receives "meaningful access" to observe the opening of ballots and the counting process.

Trump signaled before the election his lawyers would intervene in Pennsylvania shortly after voting concluded, and officials told Trump allies on Wednesday morning they anticipated a filing there imminently.

Later, the campaign announced it was suing the commonwealth, claiming Democratic election officials are "hiding the ballot counting and processing" from Republican poll observers.

Trump deputy campaign manager Justin Clark said the campaign is "suing to temporarily halt counting until there is meaningful transparency and Republicans can ensure all counting is done aboveboard and by the law."

Pennsylvania's attorney general Josh Shapiro, appearing on CNN, called the lawsuit "more a political document than a legal document."

A large cadre of Trump advisers, including his son Eric, senior advisers and daughter-in-law Lara Trump, former Florida attorney general Pam Bondi and senior adviser Corey Lewandowski were traveling to Philadelphia ahead of expected legal challenges. Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani also tweeted he had mobilized to Philadelphia. Trump had no events on his schedule Wednesday, and Vice President Mike Pence's schedule was similarly empty. Both were expected to remain in Washington to consult with campaign and legal teams about their next steps.

The previous evening, deliberations over what Trump would say when he emerged after midnight were at times intense, according to people familiar with the matter. Trump's speech came around 2:30 a.m. ET, well after his rival spoke from Wilmington, Delaware. While teleprompters were set up for him to read from, he appeared to ad-lib much of his speech.

"This is without question the latest news conference I've ever had," Trump said.

Speaking after him, Pence seemed to offer a drastically different message, saying that "while the votes continue to be counted, we're going to remain vigilant."

Trump openly acknowledged that he had felt better earlier in the evening on Tuesday, as invited guests nibbled on pigs-in-a-blanket and French fries on the State Floor of the White House and early results showed him edging former Vice President Joe Biden. "Literally we were just all set to get outside and just celebrate something that was so beautiful, so good," he said.

While 400 people had been invited to the party, far fewer actually attended, including several Fox News personalities and members of the President's cabinet.

Trump made a brief appearance at the party early in the evening before retreating upstairs to his private residence. There, he conferred with a smaller group of campaign and White House advisers about how to proceed. A campaign "war room" had been established on the White House campus to provide Trump and his senior team real-time updates.

Other members of Trump's inner circle, including members of his family, held a more private results-viewing party from the family dining room, where large televisions had been wheeled in and a sofa set up.

Trump's early confidence turned to indignation when Fox News, the network airing on large televisions set up throughout the White House, projected Biden would win Arizona. Trump's campaign publicly called on the network to retract the projection and on Wednesday morning, the President's campaign manager insisted to reporters that Arizona remained in play.

"Late-arriving votes cast closest to Election Day are the ones being counted now," Bill Stepien said, adding they expect between two-thirds and 70% of the remaining uncounted ballots would be "coming to the President."

"That math adds up to a margin of around 30,000 votes in the President's favor," Stepien said, adding that Arizona "will come the President's way."

Biden's campaign offered an entirely different assessment on its own briefing call, saying they believed the former vice president had won in Arizona and was on track to win Michigan and Wisconsin.

Despite the confidence projected by the Trump campaign, not everyone on that team was feeling optimistic waking up on Wednesday.

"We are clearly in a corner here," one senior official said.

But the official cautioned that the campaign is not yet out of the game, and campaign officials have continued to claim both publicly and privately that they think they have shot if they can get Arizona and Nevada into their column.

Meanwhile, the Trump campaign was desperately fundraising the day after the election for resources to wage legal battles against election results. The campaign sent out six emails to supporters after midnight asking for money. Each of the solicitations included the false claim that Democrats are trying to "steal" the election.

There is no evidence of nefarious activity surrounding the election count.

At a rally in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the eve of the election day, Trump said campaign lawyers "will be going in and they'll be fighting."

This story has been updated with additional reporting on Trump's state of mind.

President Donald Trump has cast doubt on whether he will commit to a peaceful transfer of power should Democrat Joe Biden win the election, but the secretive process to prepare a would-be Biden administration has been underway for months with help from top Trump officials.

The legally mandated transition happens every four years and ensures that, should a transfer of power be needed, the incoming president is able to use the less than three months to stand up a government and hit the ground running on Inauguration Day. But experts on transitions tell CNN that a possible transition from Trump to Biden -- because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the differences between the two candidates and the economic downturn gripping the nation -- could be among the most consequential in modern history.

And Trump has not made the consequences of that possible transfer any less tense, regularly dodging questions about a peaceful transition of power to Biden and baselessly questioning whether the election will be fairly decided. But his administration, led by chief of staff Mark Meadows and deputy chief of staff for policy coordination Chris Liddell, has been working with Biden's team to prepare for the possible handover.

Even with the White House's current cooperation, however, the Biden team is making preparations for potential roadblocks from Trump and his administration, multiple sources familiar with the work of the transition team have told CNN.

Given the slew of legal ramifications, much of these preparations has fallen under senior adviser and former White House Counsel Bob Bauer. CNN has previously reported that the Biden team has assembled an expansive legal team, led by Bauer and the Biden campaign's general counsel Dana Remus, to focus on potential voting and election issues.

A diverse team

Biden's transition team, which began its work over the summer, is a robust operation with two of the multiple co-chairs, Jeff Zients and Ted Kaufman, taking the primary lead in overseeing these ongoing efforts. Kaufman, a close Biden ally who has advised the former vice president for decades, is also an expert on presidential transitions:

During the short time he served as a senator from Delaware after Biden became vice president, he passed a bill aimed at streamlining the transition process.

Anita Dunn, a senior adviser to the Biden campaign and former White House communications director, is another one of the co-chairs, along with New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, and Louisiana Rep. Cedric Richmond.

Biden's effort has been growing for months and, according to a source, is up to at least 150 people. Another source familiar with transition staffing plans tells CNN that the effort could get as large as 300 people by the inauguration, should the transition be needed. Biden's transition team is technically housed at the Department of Commerce's headquarters in Washington, but, like most of America during the pandemic, they have been working virtually. This will likely continue after the election, said a transition official.

Similar to past transitions, the Biden transition team is currently doing everything from preparing for personnel changes to generating lists of potential appointments to reviewing potential policy implementation to researching executive orders that a President Biden could issue in the earliest days of his presidency.

Biden, when asked about a possible cabinet, has said he wants a cabinet that "looks like the country," meaning a body that is racially diverse, comprised of a number of top women, and ideologically and geographically varied. And discussions about senior

administration roles, including Cabinet appointments, have taken into account the importance of that diversity.

Biden's transition advisory board includes a number of people considered frontrunners for top administration posts, like former national security adviser Susan Rice, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and former deputy attorney general Sally Yates.

Satisfying the ideological factions of the Democratic Party will be another challenge for Biden's team. Progressives will be keeping close track of both his appointees and those who help choose them. The presence of Jared Bernstein, who was once Biden's top economic adviser and recently took part in the Biden-Sanders "unity task force" on the economy will give progressives some comfort. The same goes for Cecilia Martinez, the executive director at the Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy, and a respected voice on climate and environmental justice.

Multiple people have told CNN that while Biden has been kept abreast -- in a broad sense -- of the work that the transition team is doing, he is superstitious and not inclined to make any major decisions before he knows that he has won the election.

Transition teams have been fully built out before the election only to have their plans be quickly scrapped in the days after a defeat, including Hillary Clinton's in 2016 and Mitt Romney's in 2012.

Under the radar

At the White House, planning for a potential transition began months ago, even as Trump ramped up his attacks on Biden and refused to say whether he would welcome a peaceful transition should he lose.

Liddell, the deputy chief of staff for policy coordination and a close ally to Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, has worked from the West Wing to prepare transition reports for Congress and to coordinate with federal agencies on making their own preparations for a potential influx of new political appointees in January.

That has included ensuring the Justice Department and the FBI are prepared to process security clearances for key Biden advisers who would need access to classified briefings during the transition period, officials familiar with the matter said.

Liddell had previously served on the opposite side of a transition effort: He was the executive director of Mitt Romney's presidential transition planning team in the lead-up to Romney's loss in the 2012 election.

So far, his efforts have gone mostly under the radar in the White House, which last month was gripped by a coronavirus outbreak and lately has been entirely focused on Trump's reelection, according to officials familiar with the matter said.

Meadows, who has accompanied the President on much of his campaign travel and has recently caught internal flack for his handling of the recent Covid outbreak, is officially the top White House official on the transition team. But it is Liddell who is overseeing most of the day-to-day work. Other West Wing officials are also involved, including White House counsel Pat Cipollone and the budget chief Russell Vought. They are partnering with career government officials to ensure they meet legal requirements ahead of November 3.

A consequential transition

Dave Marchick, the Director of Center for Presidential Transition at the Partnership for Public Service, said the law guiding transitions -- the 1963 Presidential Transition Act -- "does contemplate the possibility that there is a delay" in a transition and ensures that the "whole suite of services that the government provides the candidates remain available to the candidates post-election in the event of delay."

But, he said, there are only 78 days in a transition, so every day matters. Marchick said this transition, because of the health, economic, social justice and political crises, mean this "could be the most consequential transition since 1932," when President Herbert Hoover and President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt struggled to cooperate in the midst of the Great Depression.

Biden himself is clearly keenly aware of those stakes. Biden recently revealed he was re-reading Jonathan Alter's "FDR'S Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope," as he has sought to draw parallels between the state of the country today and that which Roosevelt dealt with during his time in office.

The relatively smooth pre-election transition planning doesn't necessarily presage a smooth handover in the event of a Biden win or an uncertain result. The longer a final result is unknown, the less time an incoming team would have access to federal dollars and resources to stand up an administration.

And if Trump himself does not accept the results, it's an open question whether his appointees at federal agencies would welcome Biden's team for meetings or handover planning.

That is why, according to Rebecca Lissner, an assistant professor at the U.S. Naval War College who recently wrote how Trump could easily damage a possible Biden presidency during the transition, believes that a transition between Trump and Biden would make what is "always the most perilous moment of American politics" even more perilous.

"The reason why we should be so worried because even in the midst of normal transitions, when you don't have a president who is hostile to the incoming administration ... even then often times things go dramatically wrong," said Lissner, who pointed to dramatic changes in policy during the lame duck period, miscommunications in intelligence sharing and most hostile actions like the Trump administration denying transition teams access to federal agencies as possible actions the President would take to slow the incoming Biden administration.

"Even in the best case scenario," said Lissner, "there is still a lot that can go wrong."

Contracting coronavirus a month before the election was not in President Donald Trump's political playbook.

But as word spread among his associates that Trump had tested positive, many in his circle tried accentuating the positive: a newly relatable experience for a candidate trailing in polls against a rival marketed for his empathy. Amid a campaign revolving around the President's divisive behavior, some also felt it couldn't hurt to have Trump out of public view for a few days.

More than a week later, hopes for that type of reset have been dashed. Instead of adjusting his message, Trump appears intent on ending the general election campaign the same way he started it: downplaying the pandemic's risks, mocking those who take it seriously and attacking his rival's fitness, despite his own recent stint in the hospital.

Instead of retreating from view, Trump has taken a maximalist approach through hours of interviews, nightly campaign rallies and an endless stream of tweets -- including one on Tuesday lashing out at the nation's trusted infectious disease expert.

And instead of embracing new empathy for his fellow coronavirus sufferers, Trump touted experimental "cures" available only to him and emerged from the hospital declaring the virus is nothing to be afraid of without mentioning the more than 215,000 Americans who have died of it.

That this precise strategy has dragged him to historic polling woes, particularly among women and senior citizens, does not appear to be weighing on Trump as he commences a three-week sprint to Election Day, mainly through states he won four years ago.

Convinced he can recreate the against-all-odds formula that initially propelled him to office, people around Trump say he has taken few lessons from his illness aside from a reinforced view of his own invincibility, both political and medical.

"I talked to him last night," Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, said on Tuesday. "He felt like he needs to get out on the campaign trail. I know Vice President Biden's out campaigning. I think it's good to be campaigning."

Instead of recalibrating, aides say Trump has ascribed his current political fortunes to bad polling, even as he questions decisions made by his campaign on television spending and travel. With many senior White House officials still working from home due to a viral outbreak in the building, Trump remains surrounded by only a small group of aides who have mostly reinforced his approach, including chief of staff Mark Meadows and social media adviser Dan Scavino.

Where a different approach might have garnered sympathy, Trump's refusal to change has opened him to fresh criticism from his opponents, including in a new Democratic ad openly suggesting his lax approach to the virus is what led to his own infection.

"He was warned, but ignored the evidence, holding rallies indoors, turning the White House into a super-spreader and contracting the virus himself," a narrator says in the spot, which the Democratic National Committee said would air in battleground states and on cable in Washington -- where it will surely catch Trump's eye.

Republicans who once hoped for a more serious focus from Trump in the final stretch of the campaign -- including on Judge Amy Coney Barrett's nomination to the Supreme Court -- are no longer looking to him for cues. Trump has found little support among Senate Republicans for the "big" new stimulus package he now wants after calling off talks last week. The Republican majority leader said last week he is avoiding the White House because of lax coronavirus protections.

Since returning from the hospital more than a week ago, Trump has held no official White House events except for an overtly political speech on the South Lawn over the

weekend. He has spoken to a few foreign counterparts, including the British and Canadian prime ministers. His closely tracked arrivals to the West Wing have typically come later in the afternoon before his departure for the campaign trail.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, a Republican from Iowa and an ally of Trump's, suggested on Twitter the President attempt some remedial last-minute message discipline.

"I suggest u use pocket card at podium w 5 short sentences on what u've accomplished 5 things that differentiate u from Biden 5 things u will accomplish in next 4 yrs," he wrote on Tuesday. "Focusing on these simple highlights will help ur msg & only take 5mins."

"Then say whatever u want," he concluded.

Only that last piece of advice was in evidence as Trump reemerged on the campaign trail in Florida on Monday. Trump delivered what by now is a fairly familiar litany of falsehoods and exaggerations about his rival and the 2016 election, with scant mention of how he plans to govern if reelected.

As usual, he took aim at Biden's mental acuity, an attack line that has gained little traction in the months Trump has been using it. Trump's campaign sought to buttress the claims a day later, organizing a conference call with Trump's former White House physician Dr. Ronny Jackson meant to raise questions about Biden's fitness for office. Jackson, who is running for a Texas congressional seat and also served in President Barack Obama's White House, has befuddled former aides to Obama and Biden, who say his right-wing attacks and willingness to flatter Trump bear little resemblance to the amiable doctor they knew. After 10 minutes spent detailing what he claimed was Biden's mental decline, Jackson was asked whether his appraisal amounted to a medical opinion on a subject he'd only examined on television.

"I'm not making a medical assessment," Jackson said. "I actually don't even practice medicine at this point."

Trump's freshest material Monday was about his own sickness, which he sought to use as evidence of his own stamina and not as a cautionary tale for ignoring public health guidelines. Though he tossed face masks into the crowd as he took the stage, few of his guests chose to wear them.

Trump's decision to cast his illness as both inevitable and a "blessing from God" has disappointed some of his allies, who had once hoped he might use the events of last week to adopt newfound seriousness toward the pandemic. Instead he has taken the

opposite route, saying he experience with the disease has only reinforced his impression that it shouldn't cause undue interruption to people's lives.

"The cure cannot be worse than the problem itself can. The cure cannot be worse," he said in Florida, repeating a mantra he first uttered in March as the pandemic was still in its easiest stages. "If you don't feel good about, if you want to stay, stay relaxed, stay. But if you want to get out there, get out."

He has abandoned his begrudging efforts to convey esteem for Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease specialist, whose respectability Trump's campaign attempted to harness in television ads.

After Fauci expressed his own unvarnished annoyance at being used in the spots, Trump mocked his wayward first pitch at Washington's Nationals Park earlier this year, writing on Twitter that his arm is "far more accurate than his prognostications."

After months of on-and-off sniping, the enmity between the two men bursting open right before the election hardly seems opportune for Trump. Far more Americans say they trust Fauci on the pandemic than they do Trump; in cutting the campaign spot that featured Fauci praising the President's handling of the virus, his campaign hoped some of that trustworthiness might rub off.

"I think it's really unfortunate and really disappointing that they did that. It's so clear that I'm not a political person. And I have never either, directly or indirectly, endorsed a political candidate," Fauci told CNN's Jake Tapper on "The Lead."

Asked about the prospects Trump's campaign cut a second ad featuring his out-of-context statements, Fauci issued a veiled warning.

"That would be outrageous, if they do that. In fact, that might actually come back to backfire on them", he said. "That would be kind of playing a game that we don't want to play."

Appendix B

Paul Krugman data from tweets on Twitter

Like I've been saying, winter is coming

What a terrible election. As far as I can tell from the vote analysts, Biden is highly likely to pull this out — the outstanding votes in WI/MI/PA and, for different reasons, GA are likely to be very Democratic, he's probably won AZ and NV. But then what? 1/

He will have won the popular vote by a large margin; he'll have a solid majority in the Electoral College; Rs in the Senate will represent a clear minority of Americans 2/

I knew intellectually that the Trump gang's response to defeat would be vile and grotesque. But somehow it's still startling to see it playing out. Never mind patriotism, or respect for democracy. Don't any of them worry about looking ridiculous?

It's just possible that Georgia runoffs will give Dems 50 seats in the Senate, making Kamala Harris the deciding vote. I hope Georgia voters will understand just how much that matters

America's states of denial. Remember when Covid was a New York problem? Now NYC may be the safest place in America, ND the most dangerous — but nothing is being done

But why did Dems take GA and still have a shot at its Senate seats, while losing NC? Two words: Stacey Abrams. Organization matters! Also why low-education NV is blue: it's the unions 3/

What we're seeing is that the divide in US politics now is more about education and metropolitan growth than traditional regional orientation. Thx to Atlanta, GA now more educated than most of the "blue wall" 2/

For a long time, the geographic battle lines in US politics were pretty much the battle lines of the Civil War. That's no longer true. Trump won Ohio by more than he won Texas; Biden appears to have won Georgia 1/

The GOP simply doesn't accept the right of anyone else to govern.

A play in four acts 1. Trumpists say the media will stop talking about Covid after the election, bc it's fake news 2. Election 3. Media keep talking about Covid, bc it's scary as hell 4. Trumpists say "See, media have stopped talking about Covid" Reality doesn't matter

This won't mean that things are OK. Investment demand will still be weak unless we ramp up public investment. Climate change is still looming over everything. But Biden's second year in office may look far better than most people imagine 3/

So basically we're looking at more sabotage by an administration on its way out. Never, ever suggest that Mnuchin was some kind of responsible player 4/

So what's happening? Trump is golfing while he tries to steal the election, while many of his supporters are denouncing efforts to save lives as tyranny 3/

Paul Krugman data from News Articles at The New York Times

Making the Most of the Coming Biden Boom

The economic outlook is probably brighter than you think.

The next few months are going to be incredibly grim. The pandemic is exploding, but Donald Trump is tweeting while America burns. His officials, unwilling to admit that he lost the election, are refusing even to share coronavirus data with the Biden team.

As a result, many preventable deaths will occur before a vaccine's widespread distribution. And the economy will take a hit, too; travel is declining, an early indicator

of a slowdown in job growth and possibly even a return to job losses as virus fears cause consumers to hunker down again.

But a vaccine *is* coming. Nobody is sure which of the promising candidates will prevail, or when they'll be widely available. But it's a good guess that we'll get this pandemic under control at some point next year.

And it's also a good bet that when we do the economy will come roaring back.

OK, this is not the consensus view. Most economic forecasters appear to be quite pessimistic; they expect a long, sluggish recovery that will take years to bring us back to anything resembling full employment. They worry a lot about long-term "scarring" from unemployment and closed businesses. And they could be right.

But my sense is that many analysts have overlearned the lessons from the 2008 financial crisis, which was indeed followed by years of depressed employment, defying the predictions of economists who expected the kind of "V-shaped" recovery the economy experienced after earlier deep slumps. For what it's worth, I was among those who dissented back then, arguing that this was a different kind of recession, and that recovery would take a long time.

And here's the thing: The same logic that predicted sluggish recovery from the last big slump points to a much faster recovery this time around — again, once the pandemic is under control.

What held recovery back after 2008? Most obviously, the bursting of the housing bubble left households with high levels of debt and greatly weakened balance sheets that took years to recover.

This time, however, households entered the pandemic slump with much lower debt. Net worth took a brief hit but quickly recovered. And there's probably a lot of pent-up demand: Americans who remained employed did a huge amount of saving in quarantine, accumulating a lot of liquid assets. All of this suggests to me that spending will surge once the pandemic subsides and people feel safe to go out and about, just as spending surged in 1982 when the Federal Reserve slashed interest rates. And this in turn suggests that Joe Biden will eventually preside over a soaring, "morning in America"-type recovery.

Which brings me to the politics. How should Biden play the good economic news if and when it comes?

First of all, he should celebrate it. I don't expect Biden to engage in Trump-like boasting; he's not that kind of guy, and his economics team will be composed of people who care about their professional reputations, not the quacks and hacks who populate the current administration. But he can highlight the good news, and point out how it refutes claims that progressive policies somehow prevent prosperity.

Also, Biden and his surrogates shouldn't hesitate to call out Republicans, both in Washington and in state governments, when they try to sabotage the economy — which, of course, they will. I won't even be surprised if we see G.O.P. efforts to impede the wide distribution of a vaccine.

What, do you think there are some lines a party refusing to cooperate with the incoming administration — and, in fact, still trying to steal the election — won't cross?

Finally, while Biden should make the most of good economic news, he should try to build on success, not rest on his laurels. Short-term booms are no guarantee of longer-term prosperity. Despite the rapid recovery of 1982-1984, the typical American worker earned less, adjusted for inflation, at the end of Reagan's presidency in 1989 than in 1979.

And while I'm optimistic about the immediate outlook for a post-vaccine economy, we'll still need to invest on a large scale to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, improve the condition of America's families (especially children) and, above all, head off catastrophic climate change.

So even if I'm right about the prospects for a Biden boom, the political benefits of that boom shouldn't be cause for complacency; they should be harnessed in the service of fixing America for the long run.

And the fact that Biden may be able to do that is reason for hope.

Those of us worried about the future were relieved to see Trump defeated (even though it's possible he'll have to be removed forcibly from the White House), but bitterly disappointed by the failure of the expected blue wave to materialize down-ballot.

If I'm right, however, the peculiar nature of the coronavirus slump may give Democrats another big political opportunity. There's a pretty good chance that they'll be able to run in the 2022 midterms as the party that brought the nation and the economy back from the depths of Covid despond. And they should seize that opportunity, not just for their own sake, but for the sake of the nation and the world.

Is America Becoming a Failed State?

Mitch McConnell may make the nation ungovernable.

As I write this, it seems extremely likely that Joe Biden has won the presidency. And he clearly received millions more votes than his opponent. He can and should claim that he has been given a strong mandate to govern the nation.

But there are real questions about whether he will, in fact, be able to govern. At the moment, it seems likely that the Senate — which is wildly unrepresentative of the American people — will remain in the hands of an extremist party that will sabotage Biden in every way it can.

Before I get into the problems this confrontation is likely to cause, let's talk about just how unrepresentative the Senate is.

Every state, of course, has two senators — which means that Wyoming's 579,000 residents have as much weight as California's 39 million. The overweighted states tend to be much less urbanized than the nation as a whole. And given the growing political divide between metropolitan and rural areas, this gives the Senate a strong rightward tilt.

An analysis by the website FiveThirtyEight.com found that the Senate in effect represents an electorate almost seven percentage points more Republican than the average voter. Cases like Susan Collins, who held on in a Democratic state, are exceptions; the underlying right-wing skew of the Senate is the main reason the G.O.P.

will probably retain control despite a substantial Democratic victory in the presidential popular vote.

But, you may ask, why is divided control of government such a problem? After all, Republicans controlled one or both chambers of Congress for three-quarters of Barack Obama's presidency, and we survived, didn't we?

Yes, but.

In fact, G.O.P. obstruction did a lot of damage even during the Obama years. Republicans used hardball tactics, including threats to cause a default on the national debt, to force a premature withdrawal of fiscal support that slowed the pace of economic recovery. I've estimated that without this de facto sabotage, the unemployment rate in 2014 might have been about two percentage points lower than it actually was.

And the need for more spending is even more acute now than it was in 2011, when Republicans took control of the House.

Most immediately, the coronavirus is running wild, with new cases exceeding 100,000 a day and rising rapidly. This is going to hit the economy hard, even if state and local governments don't impose new lockdowns.

We desperately need a new round of federal spending on health care, aid to the unemployed and businesses, and support for strapped state and local governments. Reasonable estimates suggest that we should spend \$200 billion or more each month until a vaccine brings the pandemic to an end. I'd be shocked if a Senate still controlled by Mitch McConnell would agree to anything like this.

Even after the pandemic is over, we're likely to face both persistent economic weakness and a desperate need for more public investment. But McConnell effectively blocked infrastructure spending even with Donald Trump in the White House. Why would he become more amenable with Biden in office?

Now, spending isn't the only form of policy. Normally, there are many things a president can achieve for good (Obama) or evil (Trump) through executive action. In

fact, during the summer a Democratic task force identified hundreds of things a President Biden could do without having to go through Congress.

But here's where I worry about the role of a heavily partisan Supreme Court — a court shaped by McConnell's norm-breaking behavior, including the rushed confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett just days before the election.

Six of nine justices were chosen by a party that has won the popular vote only once in the past eight elections. And I think there's a substantial chance that this court may behave like the Supreme Court in the 1930s, which kept blocking New Deal programs until F.D.R. threatened to add seats — something Biden wouldn't be able to do with a Republican-controlled Senate.

So we are in big trouble. Trump's defeat would mean that we have, for the moment, avoided a plunge into authoritarianism — and yes, the stakes are that high, not just because of who Trump is, but also because the modern G.O.P. is so extremist and anti-democratic. But our skewed electoral system means that Trump's party is still in a position to hobble, perhaps cripple, the next president's ability to deal with the huge epidemiological, economic and environmental problems we face.

Put it this way: If we were looking at a foreign country with America's level of political dysfunction, we would probably consider it on the edge of becoming a failed state — that is, a state whose government is no longer able to exert effective control.

Runoff elections in Georgia may yet give Democrats Senate control; barring that, Biden might be able to find a few reasonable Republicans willing to pull us back from that brink. But despite his apparent victory, the Republic remains in great danger.

Appendix C

Jenna Johnson data from tweets on Twitter

A backlog in naturalization applications at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is threatening to prevent an unknown number of immigrants from casting their first ballots this year

“Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the NC State Board of Elections, issued a lengthy statement emphasizing that attempting to cast multiple ballots would constitute a Class 1 felony and that soliciting someone to vote twice is also a crime.”

On a weekend when it felt like so much had changed, many of Trump’s supporters reacted to his illness with a fatalistic shrug about what that meant for him and for them

Why couldn’t Trump say this himself in the video he released yesterday?

I can’t stop thinking about this article (which you should read) and how those who make bad decisions are not always the ones to pay for it...

Later, at the airport, Biden tried to clarify his comments, saying that he wants to end federal subsidies to oil companies. “We’re not going to get rid of fossil fuels,” Biden said. “We’re going to get rid of subsidies for fossil fuels.”

Union leaders have Biden’s back on fracking — but in Pennsylvania, their members aren’t so sure,

We are at the point in the night where President Trump is declaring victory (or kinda declaring victory) in states that definitely haven’t yet been decided.

Even as the U.S. faces yet another grim surge from the virus, exit polls suggest more voters ranked the economy at the top of their worries. □

[@pw_cunningham](#)

□ on why Trump’s covid response didn’t seem to hurt him as much as expected at the polls:

As president, Trump selectively revealed highly classified info to attack rivals, gain political advantage and impress/intimidate foreign governments. As an ex-president, there's every reason to worry he will do the same

Trump + GOP keep using suicide in arguments to keep economy open. But GOP + Dems alike have done little, even as suicide prevention groups beg for help

A wrongful death lawsuit tied to COVID-19 infections in a Waterloo pork processing plant alleges that Tyson Foods supervisors privately wagered money on the number of workers who would be sickened by the deadly virus.

Jenna Johnson data from News articles at The Washington Post

After Trump's remarks, election officials warn that trying to vote twice is a crime and could undermine the system

A chorus of election officials, legal analysts and social media companies on Thursday rushed to condemn and counter President Trump's suggestion this week that his supporters attempt to vote more than once, warning that doing so could constitute a crime and expressing fear that he was undermining the election system.

The pushback included pointed statements from an array of federal and local officials as well as direction action from Facebook and Twitter to attempt to limit the spread of the president's misinformation.

Trump had urged supporters during an official White House event in North Carolina on Wednesday to send in a ballot through the mail and then attempt to cast another one at polling sites on Election Day in an effort to test the system. He has stated repeatedly that universal mail-in voting would lead to rampant fraud, despite evidence to the contrary.

Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections, issued a lengthy statement emphasizing that attempting to cast multiple ballots would constitute a Class 1 felony and that soliciting someone to vote twice is also a crime. Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, both Democrats, vowed to prosecute those caught trying to vote more than once.

“It is illegal in all 50 states and under federal law to vote twice,” said Ellen Weintraub, a commissioner with the Federal Election Commission. “As any federal officeholder or law-enforcement official should know. And there’s still no basis for the conspiracy theory that #VoteByMail will lead to a rigged election.”

Facebook announced it would remove a video of Trump’s initial remarks, and Twitter appended a notice to two of the president’s tweets, ruling that they violated the site’s rules about “civic and election integrity.”

Trump and other administration officials, including Attorney General William P. Barr, sought to justify the president’s comments and minimize the political fallout. On Twitter, Trump wrote that he was instructing those who vote by mail to follow up at their polling place to make sure the ballots have been counted.

“The president is not suggesting anyone do anything unlawful,” White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said on Fox News. “What he said very clearly there is make sure your [mail-in] vote is tabulated, and if it is not, then vote.”

Democrats and state elections officials affiliated with both parties have pushed to make it easier for people to vote by mail to help protect against the spread of the coronavirus at crowded polling places. More than 183,00 Americans have been killed by the deadly pathogen. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden on Wednesday accused Trump of trying to delegitimize the U.S. election system.

The president’s remarks in North Carolina marked his latest attempts to impugn the integrity of mail-in voting, which Trump believes would favor Biden.

Trump, who has voted in Florida through absentee ballot, has railed against efforts by some states to broadly expand vote-by-mail, and he said this summer that he opposed additional funding for the U.S. Postal Service to deprive it from facilitating a surge in mail-in ballots.

Trump also has floated the possibility of dispatching federal law enforcement officials to polling sites across the country to monitor the election, a practice that has been used historically to intimidate racial minorities and other marginalized groups from casting a ballot. After losing the national popular vote to Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election, Trump insisted that millions of illegal immigrants had voted, even though a presidential commission led by Vice President Pence disbanded without finding any evidence.

Lawrence Noble, who served 13 years as the FEC's general counsel, said that it would cause "tremendous problems" if Trump supporters who had already voted by mail showed up en masse at polling sites on Election Day — taxing already strained poll workers and potentially intimidating other voters.

More broadly, Noble warned that Trump appears to be attempting to cast doubt on the election system to help him validate his prediction of fraud, especially if he loses to Biden.

"If he urges his supporters to vote twice, and a state does not show they voted twice, can he also say that proves fraud?" Noble said. "He throws out things that are totally inconsistent that give him the opening to claim later on, without evidence, that there was fraud and things were done illegally."

During his trip to Wilmington, N.C., on Wednesday, Trump responded to a reporter's question about whether he had confidence in the voting system by stating that voters should send in a ballot.

"If their system's as good as they say it is, then obviously they won't be able to vote" a second time at the polling sites, he said. "If it isn't tabulated, they'll be able to vote," Trump said. The president made nearly identical comments to supporters on the airport tarmac.

"So send it in early and then go and vote," Trump said. "You can't let them take your vote away; these people are playing dirty politics. So if you have an absentee ballot . . . you send it in, but I'd check it, follow it and go vote."

Trump's senior aides have provided cover for the president.

On CNN, Barr skirted a question about the legality of the president's suggestion, saying he was not familiar with election laws in every state. "Maybe you can change your vote up to a particular time; I don't know what the law is," Barr said.

The data in states that already have universal mail-in voting doesn't back up claims by Trump and Barr that voting by mail leads to rampant fraud. A Washington Post analysis of three vote-by-mail states found that officials identified just 372 possible cases of double voting or voting on behalf of deceased people out of about 14.6 million votes cast by mail in the 2016 and 2018 general elections, or 0.0025 percent.

"This is playing with fire," Barr said during a heated exchange with CNN host Wolf Blitzer. "We're a very closely divided country here. And if people have to have

confidence in the results of the election and the legitimacy of the government, and people trying to change the rules to this methodology, which, as a matter of logic, is very open to fraud and coercion, is reckless and dangerous.”

Vanita Gupta, former head of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, called the interview “absolutely astounding” and said it “reveals the degree to which the Justice Department is being and will be weaponized in Trump’s effort to hold power.”

His willingness to just defy all of the evidence before him and just participate in the president’s political agenda is staggering,” Gupta said of Barr.

In defending his position, Barr pointed to a report more than a decade ago from a commission led by former president Jimmy Carter and former secretary of state James A. Baker III, which noted the fraud risk with mail-in voting. He said news accounts and studies since that time had confirmed the risk, and added, “the only time the narrative changed is after this administration came in.”

The Carter Center said in a statement earlier this year that although the commission’s report had noted that voting by mail “creates increased logistical challenges and the potential for vote fraud,” improved planning and training, along with additional resources, have helped mitigate the problems.

In a statement, Carter, 95, said, “I urge political leaders across the country to take immediate steps to expand vote-by-mail and other measures that can help protect the core of American democracy — the right of our citizens to vote.”

As an ex-president, Trump could disclose the secrets he learned while in office, current and former officials fear

As president, Donald Trump selectively revealed highly classified information to attack his adversaries, gain political advantage and impress or intimidate foreign governments, in some cases jeopardizing U.S. intelligence capabilities. As an ex-president, there’s every reason to worry he will do the same, thus posing a unique national security dilemma for the Biden administration, current and former officials and analysts said. All presidents exit the office with valuable national secrets in their heads, including the procedures for launching nuclear weapons, intelligence-gathering capabilities — including assets deep inside foreign governments — and the development of new and advanced weapon systems.

But no new president has ever had to fear that his predecessor might expose the nation's secrets as President-elect Joe Biden must with Trump, current and former officials said. Not only does Trump have a history of disclosures, he checks the boxes of a classic counterintelligence risk: He is deeply in debt and angry at the U.S. government, particularly what he describes as the "deep state" conspiracy that he says tried to stop him from winning the White House in 2016 and what he falsely claims is an illegal effort to rob him of reelection.

White House was warned Giuliani was target of Russian intelligence operation to feed misinformation to Trump

"Anyone who is disgruntled, dissatisfied or aggrieved is a risk of disclosing classified information, whether as a current or former officeholder. Trump certainly fits that profile," said David Priess, a former CIA officer and author of "The President's Book of Secrets," a history of the top-secret intelligence briefings that presidents and their staff members receive while in office.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

As president, Trump has access to all classified information in the government and the authority to declassify and share any of it, for any reason. After he leaves office, he still will have access to the classified records of his administration. But the legal ability to disclose them disappears once Biden is sworn in January.

Many concerned experts were quick to note that Trump reportedly paid scant attention during his presidential intelligence briefings and has never evinced a clear understanding of how the national security apparatus works. His ignorance may be the best counterweight to the risk he poses, they said.

"A knowledgeable and informed president with Trump's personality characteristics, including lack of self-discipline, would be a disaster. The only saving grace here is that he hasn't been paying attention," said Jack Goldsmith, who ran the Office of Legal Counsel at the Justice Department in the George W. Bush administration and is the co-author of "After Trump: Reconstructing the Presidency."

"He probably doesn't know much about collection details. But he will have bits and pieces," said retired Brig Gen. Peter B. Zwack, who served as a military intelligence officer and was the senior U.S. defense attache to Russia from 2012 to 2014.

The chances are low that Trump knows the fine details of intelligence, such as the name of a spy or where an intelligence agency may have planted a surveillance device. But he almost certainly knows significant facts about the process of gathering intelligence that would be valuable to adversaries.

“The president is going to run into and possibly absorb a lot of the capacity and capabilities that you have in intelligence,” said John Fitzpatrick, a former intelligence officer and expert on the security systems used to protect classified information, including after a president leaves office. The kinds of information Trump is likely to know, Fitzpatrick, said, include special military capabilities, details about cyberweapons and espionage, the kinds of satellites the United States uses and the parameters of any covert actions that, as president, only Trump had the power to authorize.

He also knows the information that came from U.S. spies and collection platforms, which could expose sources even if he did not know precisely how the information was obtained. In a now infamous Oval Office meeting in 2017, Trump told Russia’s foreign minister and ambassador to the United States about highly classified information the United States had received from an ally about Islamic State threats to aviation, which jeopardized the source, according to people familiar with the incident.

By bragging about intelligence capabilities, Trump put them at risk. And he has been similarly careless when trying to intimidate adversaries. In August 2019, he tweeted a detailed aerial image of an Iranian launchpad. Such photos are among the most highly guarded pieces of intelligence because they can reveal precise details about technical spying capabilities.

Using publicly available records, Internet sleuths were able to determine which satellite took the image and identify its orbit based on the image Trump disclosed.

Experts worry that Trump’s braggadocio may lead him to spill secrets at a rally or in a tête-à-tête with a foreign adversary. One former official imagined Trump boasting about the technical features of Air Force One or where the United States had dispatched spy drones.

Trump has also demonstrated a willingness to declassify information for political advantage, pushing his senior officials to reveal documents from the 2016 probe of Russian election interference and possible links to Trump’s campaign.

Last month, Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, a Trump loyalist, made public a set of handwritten notes and a referral to the FBI concerning intelligence that the United States had obtained on Russia and its belief that Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign would try to tie the hacking and leaking of Democratic Party emails to Russia to deflect from the controversy over Clinton's use of a private email server.

Those declassified documents were heavily redacted. But according to people familiar with their contents, they may have revealed enough information to point the Russian government to a valuable source of intelligence the United States has and is now at risk of losing.

Experts agreed that the biggest risk Trump poses out of office is the clumsy release of information. But they didn't rule out that he might trade secrets, perhaps in exchange for favors, to ingratiate himself with prospective clients in foreign countries or to get back at his perceived enemies. When he leaves office, Trump will be facing a crushing amount of debt, including hundreds of millions of dollars in loans that he has personally guaranteed.

"People with significant debt are always of grave concern to security professionals," said Larry Pfeiffer, a veteran intelligence officer and former chief of staff to CIA Director Michael V. Hayden. "The human condition is a frail one. And people in dire situations make dire decisions. Many of the individuals who've committed espionage against our country are people who are financially vulnerable."

As a practical matter, there's little that the Biden administration can do to stop Trump from blurting out national secrets. Former presidents do not sign nondisclosure agreements when they leave office. They have a right to access information from their administration, including classified records, said Fitzpatrick, who served as the director of the Information Security Oversight Office at the National Archives and Records Administration, which houses former presidents' records.

They're expected to safeguard information, as they did while in office. "But outside the confines of the Presidential Records Act, there is no boundary except the president's behavior," he said.

As president, Biden could refuse to give Trump any intelligence briefings, which ex-presidents have received before meeting with foreign leaders or embarking on diplomatic missions at the current president's request.

"I think that tradition ends with Trump," Priess said. "It's based on courtesy and the idea that presidents may call on their predecessors for frank advice. I don't see Joe Biden calling up Trump to talk about intricate national security and intelligence issues. And I don't think Biden will send him anywhere as an emissary."

The last line of defense, like so many chapters in Trump's presidency, would pose unprecedented considerations: criminal prosecution. The Espionage Act has been successfully used to convict current and former government officials who disclose information that damages U.S. national security. It has never been used against a former president. But as of Jan. 20, 2021, Trump becomes a private citizen, and the immunity he enjoys from criminal prosecution vanishes.

Biden says the U.S. needs to move off oil to tackle climate change as Trump attacks the plan's cost, economic impact

President Trump and former vice president Joe Biden laid out starkly different visions Thursday night on whether the United States needs to transition away from fossil fuels to address climate change, in the lengthiest exchange two presidential candidates have ever had on the topic.

In the nearly 12-minute discussion, the Democratic standard-bearer pledged to move the United States away from oil in favor of renewable energy and predicted the strategy would generate millions of jobs. The president, in contrast, said Biden's plan would be costly and hurt the economy, particularly in oil-producing states where the two men are competing for votes.

Biden said climate change posed "an existential threat to humanity" and that in eight to 10 years, the country would "pass the point of no return."

"We have a moral obligation to deal with it," he said.

Moments later, Trump asked Biden, "Would you close down the oil industry?"

"Yes. I would transition," Biden said. "Because the oil industry pollutes, significantly. ... Because it has to be replaced by renewable energy."

Biden said the transition would occur “over time, over time. And I’d stop giving to the oil industry. I’d stop giving them federal subsidies.”

Trump seized on those comments. “Basically, what he is saying is he’s going to destroy the oil industry,” the president said. “Will you remember that, Texas? Will you remember that, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma?”

Later, at the airport, Biden tried to clarify his comments, saying that he wants to end federal subsidies to oil companies. “We’re not going to get rid of fossil fuels,” Biden said. “We’re going to get rid of subsidies for fossil fuels.”

Scientists say nations have only about 10 years to cut emissions of greenhouse gases — mostly produced by burning fossil fuels — to avoid irreversible, catastrophic damage to the planet.

On stage, Trump touted the fact that he withdrew from the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement, which aims to keep the globe from warming more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century. That’s the point beyond which scientists say the planet will be irreversibly damaged.

“We were going to have to spend trillions of dollars,” Trump said, adding: “I will not sacrifice tens of millions of jobs, thousands of companies.”

Biden said he would have the United States rejoin the Paris accord and that fighting climate change would “create millions of new good-paying jobs.”

While Trump claimed Biden’s plan would cost \$100 trillion, Biden has estimated the cost at about \$2 trillion over four years. He said Thursday night that it would cover the costs of 50,000 recharging stations for electric vehicles, improvements in millions of buildings’ energy efficiency and other infrastructure.

When asked about the fact that Americans of color are disproportionately exposed to pollution because they live near oil refineries and other energy operations, Trump said the health risks they face pale in comparison to the wage growth they’d seen from those polluting industries during his first three years in office.

“They’re making a tremendous amount of money,” the president said, adding that his administration “saved” the oil industry from collapse. “Now it’s very vibrant again and everybody has very inexpensive gasoline.”

Recalling his own childhood in Delaware growing up near oil and gas refineries, Biden argued that the government needed to do more to curb pollution from fossil fuels. “The

fact is, those front-line communities, it doesn't matter what you're paying them, it's how you keep them safe," he said.

Trump falsely said Biden supports a ban on fracking — a claim his Democratic opponent has repeatedly knocked down.

"I never said I oppose fracking," Biden said. Instead, Biden has said he wants to end permitting for fracking and other oil and gas drilling only on federal lands in the West — not on state or private lands such as those in Pennsylvania, a crucial swing state that both candidates are heavily courting.

And while Trump claimed, "We are energy independent," the United States continues to import a significant amount of foreign oil. He derided Biden's plans to improve energy efficiency, saying, "They want to knock down buildings and build new buildings with little, tiny windows."

Climate change had virtually disappeared from presidential debates for two decades until last month, when there was simply no avoiding it, in a year marked by record wildfires, devastating hurricanes and other climate-related catastrophes such as drought and floods.

"Today, climate disasters are up close and personal for Americans," said Jeremy Symons, a consultant to environmental nonprofit groups and former vice president for political affairs at the Environmental Defense Fund, who has closely followed U.S. climate policy for decades. "It's leaped out of the science books and into the communities where people have to deal with the deadly consequences of pretending it doesn't exist."

Extreme climate change has arrived in the United States

In a stark reminder of how climate change is already transforming Americans' lives, a Colorado wildfire expanded by 140,000 acres in a day, at an elevation of 9,000 feet, where snow would usually be falling this time of year. The East Troublesome Fire is burning largely in Grand County and has reached Rocky Mountain National Park. It has made it through dry, brittle trees ravaged by a bark beetle infestation and has prompted the evacuation of hundreds of Coloradans.

The blaze now ranks as the state's second-largest on record. Three of Colorado's five largest wildfires in history have occurred this year. The incident commander said Thursday that East Troublesome Fire's rate of expansion is "unheard of."

The Trump-Biden debate tracked much the same ground as the last time there was a substantive discussion about climate in a presidential debate — the 2000 match between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush.

“I think that in this 21st century, we will soon see the consequences of what is called ‘global warming,’” Gore said that evening. “The world’s temperature is going up, weather patterns are changing, storms are getting more violent and unpredictable.” Bush agreed the problem deserved attention, though he didn’t feel a similar urgency. “Global warming needs to be taken very seriously, and I take it seriously,” he said. “But science — there’s differing opinions. And before we react, I think it’s best to have the full accounting, full understanding of what’s taking place.”

“It’s a sea change to have this kind of attention on climate change,” Symons said.

The shift comes as Americans increasingly express concern about the warming planet. A poll last year by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation found that a growing number of Americans describe climate change as a crisis, and two-thirds said Trump is doing too little to tackle the problem. It also found that a strong majority of Americans — about 8 in 10 — say that human activity is fueling climate change, and roughly half believe action is urgently needed within the next decade if humanity is to avert its worst effects.

In addition, even as the coronavirus pandemic had dwarfed most other concerns, climate change emerged as a front-burner issue during the Democratic presidential primaries, in ways difficult to fathom only a few years ago. Voters in numerous states ranked it as one of their top concerns, alongside health care and economic issues.

Then there are the real-world effects that continue to mount: Record wildfires in California and throughout much of the West. A historic hurricane season in the Atlantic. Raging fires in Siberia. Massive amounts of ice melting across the Arctic. Rising seas that affect coastal communities around the nation. Both droughts and floods in the Midwest.

It is difficult to imagine that climate change will fade again anytime soon as an issue in presidential contests, Symons said.

“There’s no turning back,” he said, “because climate change isn’t going away.”

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