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# Göç Bağlamında Amerikan İstisnacılığına Yönelik Meydan Okuma: Donald Trump'ın Söylemlerinin Göçmen Toposu Çerçevesinde Eleştirel Bir Analizi

*The Challenge of American Exceptionalism with Migration: A Critical Analysis of Donald Trump's Discourses in the Context of the Migrant Topos*

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**Enes Doğukan SAMUR*** **Gökhan KURT****

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*American exceptionalism, Critical Discourse Analysis, Donald Trump, Migration, Ruth Wodak.*

**ABSTRACT**

*Immigration remains a significant issue on both the national and global agenda. The United States is known for its multicultural structure, where various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups coexist—a concept closely tied to the idea of American exceptionalism. However, immigration policies and rhetoric vary greatly depending on political leadership. In this context, Donald Trump has emerged in recent years as two opposing figures on immigration. Trump frequently portrayed immigrants as a threat, using terms like "illegal immigrants," "border wall," and linking immigration to "drugs and crime." His approach, rooted in national security and sovereignty, contrasts with the ideals of multiculturalism and American exceptionalism. The aim of the study is to analyze Donald Trump's discourses, which includes campaign rallies, campaign speeches, television interviews, presidential debates, press statements, and official social media posts, on migrants between 2016 and 2024 by closely scrutinizing the discourses that portray migrants as a threat and target specific cultural groups, especially Mexican, Latin American, and Muslim immigrants. The conceptual and historical framework will be clarified to reveal the historical origins and basic characteristics of the concept of American exceptionalism. Then, the discourses used by Trump in the context of the immigrant topos will be closely scrutinized and critical discourse analysis will be applied. In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis is employed not merely as a method of linguistic analysis, but rather as a theoretical and methodological approach grounded in the critique of power policies directed toward immigrants, with the aim of revealing the ways in which Trump's discourse has reshaped the narrative of American exceptionalism.*

***Anahtar Kelimeler:***

*Amerikan istisnacılığı, Donald Trump, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi, Göç, Ruth Wodak.*

**ÖZET**

*Göçmen sorunu, tüm dünyada olduğu gibi Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde de önemli bir gündem maddesi olmuştur. Amerika, çokkültürcülüğü savunan ve çeşitli etnik, kültürel ve dini grupların bir araya geldiği bir ülke olarak bilinmektedir. Fakat göçmen politikaları ve söylemleri, liderler arasında büyük farklılıklar göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda Donald Trump ve Joe Biden son yıllarda iki zıt kutbu temsil eden figürler olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Trump'ın söylemleri, göçmenleri genellikle bir tehdit olarak göstermiş, "Yasadışı göçmenler", "sınır duvarı" ve "uyuşturucu ve suç" gibi ifadelerle göçmenleri kriminalize etmiştir. Trump, göçmenlik politikalarını ulusal güvenlik ve egemenlik çerçevesinde ele almış, böylelikle de aslında geçmişten günümüze çeşitli etnik, kültürel ve dini grupların bir arada yaşadığı ve çokkültürcülüğü savunan bir devlet olarak kabul gören Amerika'nın tarihine ve özellikle Amerikan istisnacılığına ters düştüğü gözlemlenmiştir. Çalışmanın amacı, Donald Trump döneminde (2016-2024) göçmenlere yönelik söylemlerinin yakın mercek altına alınarak, göçmenleri tehdit olarak gösteren ve belirli kültürel grupları hedef alan söylemlerinin analiz edilmesidir. Söz konusu amaç için, öncelikle kavramsal ve tarihsel çerçeve netleştirilerek Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramının tarihsel kökeni ve temel nitelikleri ortaya konulmaya çalışılacaktır. Sonrasında Trump tarafından göçmen toposu bağlamında kullanılan söylemler yakın mercek altına alınarak eleştirel söylem analizi uygulanacaktır. Çalışmada eleştirel söylem analizi salt bir dil analizi olarak kullanılmamakta, aksine göçmenlere yönelik uygulanan iktidar politikasının eleştirisine dayalı bir metot olarak yararlanılarak Trump'ın söylemlerinin, Amerikan İstisnacılığı anlatısını hangi yönlerden yeniden şekillendirdiğini gözler önüne sermektir.*

* Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Disiplinlerarası Göç Çalışmaları Ana Bilim Dalı, enesdogukansamur@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0000-2592-5710
** Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Kangal Meslek Yüksekokulu, Pazarlama ve Reklamcılık Bölümü, Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım Programı, gokhankurt@cumhuriyet.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-9439-0331

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Migration, which is at least as old as the history of mankind, is defined as the permanent or temporary change of a certain community or subject to the area where it is located or lives due to various reasons (Dingle & Drake, 2007, p. 113). International migration, on the other hand, is a migration that transcends national borders and means that the subject finds himself in a social system with different culture and language (Geis, 2004, p. 8) and today, international migration is a phenomenon that occupies the agenda of governments and the world and brings many debates and disputes, because migration mobility is increasing day by day and makes the current situation more complicated. At this point, the problem of migration affects all countries deeply and is among the important topics of political parties and party leaders. In this respect, migration plays an important and decisive role in politics, as it takes its place in politics as an attribution and justification of 'foreignness' that repeatedly turns migrants and even their children and grandchildren into problematic 'others' of 'their' societies and acculturates them, and thus migration appears as an element that shapes society and forces it to act.

The phenomenon of migration is linked to the social and social structure of human beings. In line with this definition, both the content and the way in which needs and requirements are met are realised through human-made forms. As a social being, man's way of existence and identity acquisition is based on the acceptance that man is a social being. From this point of view, all meaningful imagery about the human being must also include his/her being a social being. As a matter of fact, the only condition for questions such as 'what kind of being is man' and 'what is man?' to be understandable and explainable includes the acceptance that he is a social being. In this context, Castles associates the fact that man is a social being with the fact that he is a political being and brings it closer to the fact that the phenomenon of migration is a political movement (Castles, 2010, p. 1567), and therefore migration is also a part of political discourse.

The aim of the study is also to make a theoretical contribution to the existing literature as well as to apply the analysis qualitatively and empirically. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that, much like migration itself, everyday life does not consist solely of habits, routines, repetitions of the familiar, and taken-for-granted assumptions; rather, it is also shaped by scientific, moral, and political external demands (Poferl, 2022, p. 421). In this context, the aim of the study is to analyze Trump's discourses concerning immigrants between 2016 and 2024. The discourses in question will be examined in accordance with Ruth Wodak's critical

discourse analysis. For the analysis, the strategies will be examined in detail, and representative examples for each strategy will be provided without limitation. Thus, the study seeks to determine how Trump's discourses contributed to the escalation of the immigration crisis and whether the narrative of American Exceptionalism underwent a transformation in its orientation.

## 2. THE ROLE OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN MIGRATION STUDIES

Migration, which is an important socio-political issue, is addressed by many scientific disciplines in an interdisciplinary manner and often with different focal points. When analysing the phenomenon of migration, very different models with relevant dependent and independent variables play a role. While fields such as anthropology, demography, economics, history, history, law, political science and sociology contribute to migration studies (Geis, 2004, p. 14-15), concepts such as xenophobia and racism related to migration are also among the areas of critical discourse analysis. In this respect, it constitutes the methodology of the study.

Discourse is closely linked to everyday life. In the English- and French-speaking world, the concept is used in the sense of 'speech' or 'utterance', whereas in the German-speaking world, discourse is not only a natural part of everyday life, but is also used in the media as a synonym for everything that is publicly spoken and written (through the media) on a particular topic of social importance. However, the ambiguity of the concept is not only due to its everyday use; it is related to the fact that even the sciences dealing with terminology often fail to provide a standardised concept (Kajetzke, 2008, p. 29-30). In other words, discourse is used inflationary and heterogeneously in different contexts - academic, public policy or everyday language - so it is necessary to explain from which theoretical perspective the concept is used. Accordingly, in the academic context, the term has various dimensions of meaning, some of which are linked to different theories of discourse (Spieß, 2011, p. 73-74).

The etymological roots of the word 'discourse' go back to the Latin discurrere and the concept has been used in the German-speaking area since the 16th century to describe speech or explanation. As a scientific term, discourse belongs to many humanities and social sciences. Starting with the modern philosophy of Descartes, the concept has found its way into the sciences of the 19th and 20th centuries in linguistics, history, political science, cultural studies, (social) psychology and sociology. With Ferdinand de Saussure, the foundations of the concept of discourse were identified with linguistics rather than philosophy (Kajetzke, 2008, p. 31-32).

Discourse is a controversial concept, as there are now at least three distinct types of discourse analysis, each with quite different understandings of discourse. The first of these is Foucauldian discourse analysis. This analysis is based on the works of Michel Foucault and, according to this approach, discourse is understood as the totality of all linguistic expressions (both written and spoken, in the form of monologues and dialogues) circulating within a society regarding a specific subject. The aim of this analysis is to examine how and for what purpose linguistic expressions convey ideological, political, social, economic and other positions, or how they influence people's thoughts and behaviour. The second type of analysis is critical discourse analysis, which is closely related to Foucauldian discourse analysis. This approach, too, is not primarily concerned with linguistic tools and structures in their own right. Rather, it focuses on how the use of language contributes to the creation, maintenance and legitimisation of power and social structures (Imo & Lanwer, 2019, pp. 14–15). One of the first names that comes to mind when discussing critical discourse analysis is Norman Fairclough, as Fairclough has established his place in the existing literature as one of the founders of critical discourse analysis. His theory encompasses work focusing on identities and representations. What is meant by representations is what is included and what is excluded. According to Fairclough, the concept of discourse has two meanings. One of these is the linguistic meaning; here, discourse is treated as a social act. The other is the poststructuralist meaning, in which discourse is regarded as a form of knowledge production. According to Fairclough, discourse should be understood as 'a form of social practice and social interaction' (Vilppu, 2025, p. 25). Furthermore, Foucault's work on power-knowledge relations and genealogy also exists and is primarily recognised within critical discourse analysis approaches. With reference to Foucault, critical discourse analysis defines discourses as supraindividual, institutionalised and regulated forms of speech that are linked to actions and exercise power. Meanwhile, the concepts of knowledge and truth are the focus of attention. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis, knowledge is (re)produced through discursive (thinking and speaking) and non-discursive practices (action and its manifestations) and functions as truth if it can achieve hegemonic validity (Bartel et al., 2015). Linguistic discourse analysis, however, is the third type of analysis. It adopts a different approach compared to the first two forms of discourse analysis. Whilst the first two approaches are primarily sociological in nature and use language merely as a subject of study, linguistic discourse analysis does not view language solely as a source of data; rather, the focus of this approach is directly on language itself (Imo & Lanwer, 2019, p. 15).

Discourse studies has not only been a source of methodological innovation, but has also significantly inspired theoretical debates in the social sciences and humanities. The most important difference between discourse studies and critical discourse studies lies in the problem-oriented interdisciplinary approach of critical discourse analysis, as critical discourse analysis does not analyse a linguistic unit in itself (such as sentence structure, metaphors, pronouns, etc.), but instead aims to examine social phenomena that are complex and therefore require a multi-/inter-/trans-disciplinary and multi-method approach (Wodak, 2018, p. 6-7). In other words, critical discourse analysis is a bundle of research approaches based on language use that exhibit theoretical, methodological, methodological and practical research family similarities, but are generally heterogeneous. Since the mid-1980s, the field has become increasingly differentiated and now comprises at least six or seven varieties. One of these is the Vienna School, which adopts a discourse-historical approach. The form of Critical Discourse Analysis known as the 'Discourse-Historical Approach' in Austria, the UK, Sweden and other countries has been practised since the second half of the 1980s by Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Michal Krzyzanowski, Bernhard Forchtner, Markus Rheindorf, John E. Richardson, Martin Reisigl and others, and has been continuously further developed in the process (Reisigl, 2018, p. 164).

The critical discourse analysis of Vienna consists of three phases. In the first phase (1986-1993), the focus is on post-war Austrian anti-Semitism. In the second phase (1993-1997), the research topic was discourse analysis research on the relationship between history and politics and the elaboration of guidelines for gender equality formulations. The third phase of development covers the years 1997 to 2003 and focusses on politics, discourse and identity. After 2004, the approach continued with Ruth Wodak, who holds a chair in discourse studies at Lancaster University (Reisigl, 2007), where she and her circle work on migration, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia. For this purpose, five strategies are utilised. In this context, referential strategies are primarily realised through linguistic naming. Predicative strategies are concerned with how the positive or negative characteristics of certain individuals and groups are reflected. Comparisons made with adjectives, prepositional phrases and relative clauses, metaphors, metonyms are especially evaluated in the context of this strategy (Wodak, 2017, p. 57). For argumentative strategies, topos is at the forefront because it contains inferences about the content and no evidence is required for these inferences (Wodak & Köhler, 2010, p. 37). In this context, the concept of topos in this study is understood as the discourse that offers the opportunity to evaluate the social knowledge and thought patterns of

a certain time. Topos is also used to legitimise positive or negative discourses (Heinemann, 2011: 40). However, the concept of topos does not constitute a statistically validated analysis. Rather, it will be used to describe tendencies in the construction of structures of thought. Intensifying or mitigation strategies are used to determine whether the claims and discourses in question are strengthened or not. Finally, the strategy of perspectivisation shows whether the statements are conveyed directly or indirectly and to whom they are attributed (Wodak, 2017, p. 57; Wodak & Köhler, 2010, p. 38).

## 3. AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND DONALD TRUMP

American Exceptionalism, which has long been a controversial topic in academic and popular culture, is a concept that has existed since the founding of the United States and represents the American faith and ideology as a grand narrative. American exceptionalism expresses a belief that the United States is unique and even superior to others in international relations. American exceptionalism is associated with a mission or duty, and therefore America believes that it should lead in world affairs with this understanding. Exceptionalism, which is associated with liberalism, progressivism and pragmatism, encourages American expansionism, leadership and interventionism (Delloul, 2021, p. 1). At this point, the understanding of American Exceptionalism plays an active role in the legitimization and rationalization of American interests, and the belief that forms the basis of American Exceptionalism is the belief that God has clearly given America the task of developing, spreading and defending the values of freedom, democracy, justice and progress against all forms of despotism and that this American mission is "God's manifest will" (Şener, 2014, p. 411-412). In the context of American exceptionalism, it is frequently emphasized that Americans are the "chosen people" of God. The source of these emphases is the feeling that they are "the people specially chosen by God" and this feeling has permeated the souls of Americans so much that it is clearly reflected in the slogan printed on every dollar bill: 'In God we trust'. America, which sees itself as the country closest to God, also accepts itself as God's representative on earth (Garaudy, 1999, p. 305). It has often been stated that Americans are a natural leader for the rest of the world's societies because of this mission. Indeed, in this context, as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger put it, "The United States has the best system of government in the world and the rest of humanity can only achieve peace and prosperity if they abandon traditional diplomacy and accept its respect for international law and democracy" (Kissinger, 2002, p. 10), he summarized his pioneering stance in the world.

According to Lipset, the essence of American exceptionalism is the grand narratives in the American Constitution. These are principles such as freedom of expression, private property, personal liberty, equality before the law and religious tolerance (Lipset, 1966, p. 133). When we look at the history of the American Exceptionalism discourse, according to some authors, the history of America becoming a global power or establishing global hegemony dates back to 1873. By the end of the 20th century, with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, the American State became a "superpower" (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 19-22). During this period, discourses such as "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 2012), "unipolar world", "new world order", "globalization" etc. were circulated. In all these discourses, by establishing a world order in which American exceptionalism was legitimized, the USA was given the leading and guiding role for the rest of the world in the economic, political, cultural and military fields. When we look at the recent emergence of the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, as Wallerstein also stated, with the Second World War, America became a dominant state in all world societies as a new political and economic power. Since then, the USA has had a different place in the international arena as the most successful great power of the last two centuries. Today, America has managed to take a prominent place in world politics not only as the center of the world's largest economy but also as the ideological leader of liberal capitalist democracy, a powerful form of political and social organization. As a great power, the USA also has the ability to shape the world in terms of how it should be organized; this preference also stems from its ideological and special mission. Its success and influence make understanding the USA and its agenda vital to understanding the fundamental characteristics of today's world politics. Understanding how the USA is different and exceptional, for better or worse, is necessary not only for understanding US foreign policy but also for understanding the fundamental aspects of contemporary world politics (Deudney & Meiser, 2008, p. 25).

In the new world system built after 1945, the US was seen by its allies as the natural representative of a liberal international order and the defender of liberal values. Wallerstein described the sentiment that led to this situation among groups of people in countries allied with the US as follows:

> *"The US played a necessary leadership role and defended their values within the world system. For these people, American power was legitimate because it served the needs of the world system as a whole. Even in the poor and oppressed parts of the world, there was often a sense that American power, despite its negative aspects, also*

*had a valuable aspect that helped to establish some of its universalist values" (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 11).*

It is known that the US was more successful than other states in acting strategically and using its power in a targeted and purposeful way in line with its national interests. This included securing its own supremacy and shaping a liberal international order. However, the picture changed after the Cold War, as the US lost its strategic course, political polarization increased and public support decreased. Barack Obama tried to reorganize the US's international priorities, balance domestic and foreign policy needs and respond to the rise of China. But the constraints of domestic politics increasingly limited his ability to manage foreign policy. Under these conditions, it was difficult to respond decisively to global challenges. When it came to the Donald Trump administration, the administration was found to be unsuccessful, and indeed, Trump's presidency was seen as a result and accelerator of the current dysfunction of the political system. The reason for this is that Trump's actions were not directed at national interests and the realities of the international system, but at the electorate. In other words, Trump conducted foreign policy as a continuation of his election campaign by other means, and the "America First" motto was not suitable for making the country great again. It caused the once exceptional superpower to shrink into a diminishing power, and therefore Trump's presidency was even considered as a harbinger of the end of the US era in global politics (Groitl, 2017, p. 221-222).

After Obama, Donald Trump served as the 45th president of the United States between 2016 and 2020. Trump, who was the candidate of the Republican Party, made radical statements against immigrants, especially during his election campaign, and emphasized that the US-Mexico border should be built with a wall in order to control immigration to the US, and his statements in this direction played a major role in his election as the 45th President of the United States (Gülada, 2019, p. 80). Thus, he actually started a new era in American Exceptionalism, as he defined himself or as it was defined in political history.

With the Trump era, it can be said that the narrative of American exceptionalism has ended (Oğuz, 2019, p.120) or weakened in terms of values. Because the state of being a society with an immigrant spirit that forms the American identity (Huntington, 2004, p. 39) has started to lose its validity today. Trump's recent discourses are parallel to this perspective (Oğuz, 2019, p. 120-121).

## 4. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S DISCOURSES DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

Although all approaches to critical discourse analysis differ from one another, they share certain fundamental similarities. These include: offering researchers the opportunity to examine the dialectical relationship between society and discourse; the prominence of understanding, interpretation and explanation as a hermeneutic cycle; and, in this context, the definition of hermeneutics as a method for grasping and interpreting meanings. Furthermore, the fact that this process is both theoretical and empirical is among their common features (Wodak, 2017, p. 55).

It is possible to see in every period of American politics the tendency to promote the values of freedom, democracy, justice and progress and to oppose despotism as much as possible, a mission believed to be given to America by God. Therefore, it is possible to find discourses embellished with the values of freedom, democracy and peace in classical American foreign policy discourse (Şener, 2014, p. 412). It is also possible to find the aforementioned values in the discourse of US Presidential candidate Donald Trump, as he shaped his election campaign with the discourse of “Great America” and underlined that the main principle he defended with this discourse was to protect America's own interests and emphasized that Americans have the right to live in peace and tranquility in their own country. However, during the Trump era, it is possible to come across very harsh discourses mostly against Muslims and immigrants (Karakuş, 2019, p. 53-54). In this context, Ruth Wodak's critical discourse analysis will be utilized to make the position, worthiness/worthlessness of immigrants exposed to the discourse of otherness more understandable, as it is a school that continues its research on racism, immigration, antisemitism and xenophobia (Çakmak & Bilişli, 2019, p. 119).

In this section, Donald Trump's discourses on immigrants will be analyzed through Wodak's critical discourse analysis. In this context, the strategies are analyzed in detail and the most striking examples for each strategy will be given without any limitations.

As mentioned above, five strategies are utilized in the application of Wodak's discourse analysis and first of all, the referential strategies will be discussed. In the referential strategies realized through nominalizations, metaphors, metonymies as well as prepositional phrases and adjectives are at the forefront, especially in German. referential strategies are primarily realized linguistically through nominalizations and appear as a strategy that aims to show how people are categorized in the discursive construction of actors, objects/phenomena/events and

actions, and in fact correspond to the I/he, we/them distinction and dialect (Wodak, 2018, p. 8; Wodak, 2017, p. 57; Kienpointner, 2017, p. 201) In this context, it is possible to evaluate Trump's discourses below in the context of referential strategies:

> *"At this very moment, large, well-organized caravans of migrants are marching towards our southern border. Some people call it an "invasion." It's like an invasion. They have violently overrun the Mexican border. You saw that two days ago. These are tough people, in many cases. A lot of young men, strong men. And a lot of men that maybe we don't want in our country. But again, we'll find that out through the legal process. But they've overrun the Mexican police, and they've overrun and hurt badly Mexican soldiers. So this isn't an innocent group of people. It's a large number of people that are tough. They've injured, they've attacked, and the Mexican police and military has actually suffered. And I appreciate what Mexico is trying to do" (National Archives, 2018).*

The above quote emphasizes the difference between "us" and "them". While Trump refers to the American people by saying "our southern border", he positions migrants as them/the others with "migrant caravans" and clearly states that he is increasingly concerned about migration. At this point, the choice of the word occupation is particularly striking. Thus, the process in question is exaggerated to create a "crisis" situation. The word "occupation" constitutes a strong point of the discourse and this metaphor causes migrants coming across the border to be perceived as a threat. In this way, not only a negative view of migrants is conveyed, but also a perception is created in this direction. Expressions such as "large, well-organized migrant caravans" give the impression that the migration movement is regular, planned and powerful. Thus, the scale of the incident was exaggerated to create a "crisis" situation. Trump's negative perspective towards migrants or his discourses emphasizing otherness are not limited to this. He expresses his attitude towards migrants in the following way:

> *"We have people that are being released into our country that we don't want in our country, and they're coming in totally unchecked, totally unvetted" (Trump, 2024).*

In the discourse above, the distinction between us and them is again striking. In this context, it is possible to evaluate it in the context of referential strategies. When he says that we do not want in our country, he actually means the American people as the accepting society, whereas

the people we do not want are the immigrants. Thus, the distinction between us and them is clearly drawn.

Individual linguistic expressions do not stand alone, they are always part of discourses: They are embedded in linguistic and non-linguistic contexts of social action that can only be understood on the basis of socio-political, historical and situational knowledge (Wodak and Köhler, 2010, p. 35). This context supports the particularly frequent use of explicit and implicit persuasive language tools for the realization of political-ideological content. In this context, the predicative strategies is shaped by the question of what characteristics are attributed to actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes, and can lead to the exclusion of others, either positively or negatively, in the I/us, we/them opposition. The best indicator of this situation can be found in Trump's discourse:

> *"Immigrant gangs are animals not people" (BBC, 2018)*

With this statement, according to the predicate-sentence strategy, Trump has clearly and unequivocally used a negative and derogatory discourse against migrants. It is obvious that he has never tried to soften his language against migrants.

> *"They're poisoning the blood of our country. They're coming into our country from Africa, from Asia, all over the world" (NBC News, 2023).*

According to the predicative strategies, Trump's discourse creates a negative impression towards migrants. For the country, we see the danger topos as it conveys that it will have negative consequences.

Trump's rhetoric in 2018 is also noteworthy, because while he says that many people have been given green cards since 1970, he draws attention to the existence of people who break the rules, violate borders and enter the country illegally:

> *"We've issued 40 million green cards since 1970, which means the permanent residency and a path to citizenship for many, many people. But we will not allow our generosity to be abused by those who would break our laws, defy our rules, violate our borders, break into our country illegally. We won't allow it" (National Archives, 2018).*

In the above discourses, the distinction between us and them is very clear. While we are conveyed as generous and contributing to the citizenship of many people, some of them point to the existence of those who break the law, disobey the rules, violate borders and come to the

country illegally and are understood as the negative other. Therefore, it is understood that there is a conflict over migrants and that America is under threat. By saying "We will not allow this", it can be said that he is actually trying to emphasize that he is against those who harm America.

In the context of argumentative strategies, it is tried to determine which arguments are used in discourses (Wodak, 2015, p. 12). Complex arguments are concretized by recurring topoi in discourse (Spieß, 2011, p. 472-473). In this context, topos is taken as "topic, factual content or main theme" (Kienpointer, 2017, p. 187). In other words, topoi are at the forefront for argumentative strategies. In this section, the topos of danger and the topos of responsibility will be discussed and in the context of these topoi, the discourses that lead to the exclusion of others constructed as migrants will be focused on.

> *"We have people that are being released into our country that we don't want in our country, and they're coming in totally unchecked, totally unvetted. And we can't let this happen. They're destroying our country, and we're sitting back. And we better damn well win this election because if we don't, our country is going to be doomed" (Trump, 2024).*

The topos of danger above connotes a breach of security. In his rhetoric, Trump has used various means of amplification to frame migrants as a "threat" and emphasize the magnitude of this threat: "poisoning" and 'flooding'. With these expressions, he presents migrants to the audience as a threat and an element of danger. Such words aim to strengthen the impact of the message by evoking fear. "We better win this election, because if we don't, our country will be ruined" associates Trump's electoral success with the salvation of the country. This strategy places him in the position of savior by framing his leadership as the only solution.

In the face of these processes and dangers, he states that something must be done:

> *"We have a lot of work to do. You know, when they allow 15, 16 million people into our country, I think we have a lot of work to do. They're poisoning the blood of our country. That's what they're doing. They're poisoning mental hospitals and prisons all over the world, not just in South America, not just in the three or four countries that we think of, but all over the world, they're coming into our country from Africa, from Asia, from everywhere. They're pouring into our country. Nobody even looks at them. They just come in. Crime is going to be huge" (NBC News, 2023).*

It is understood that Trump has again included the danger topos by stating that they are poisoning the blood of the country and that the country is receiving immigration from all sides and therefore the country is actually facing a big problem. Therefore, he emphasizes that something must be done against this situation. In this context, Trump's discourses can be evaluated in the context of the responsibility topos.

Discourses can be weakened by the choice of subjunctive constructions, euphemisms and verbs, or strengthened by superlatives and certain adverbs. These are called intensifying – mitigation strategies (Wodak, 2017, p. 57; Wodak & Köhler, 2010, p. 38).

In order to better understand Trump's divisive views and his propaganda based on intolerance, this section will apply intensifying – mitigation strategies. For this purpose, the adjectives, adverbs and verbs used by Trump will be closely scrutinized. In this context, Trump's remarks on illegal immigration are noteworthy:

> *"Illegal immigration affects the lives of all Americans. Illegal immigration hurts American workers; burdens American taxpayers; and undermines public safety; and places enormous strain on local schools, hospitals, and communities in general, taking precious resources away from the poorest Americans who need them most. Illegal immigration costs our country billions and billions of dollars each year. America is a welcoming country. And under my leadership, it's a welcoming country. We lead the world in humanitarian protection and assistance, by far. There's nobody even close. We have the largest and most expansive immigration programs anywhere on the planet" (National Archives, 2018).*

In the discourses above, we are characterized as American workers, American taxpayers, while they are characterized as illegal immigrants and they are conveyed as the negative other. Verb choices are important here: because they are conveyed as harming, burdening and undermining public safety. The harmful aspect of migrants is also reinforced by the adjective enormous. By stating that it is the poor people who need resources the most, he emphasizes that illegal immigrants are stealing from the needs and rights of the poor people. Therefore, it is understood that he strengthens his discourse and propaganda with these verbs and adjectives. In this respect, it can be evaluated in the context of the intensifying – mitigation strategies discourses.

When Trump's rhetoric is closely scrutinized, it is obvious that he is harshly critical of migrants. However, it is also possible to come across discourses in which he softens his attitude towards migrants in order to protect the existing consensus and balance the policy:

> *"Mass, uncontrolled immigration is especially unfair to the many wonderful, law-abiding immigrants already living here who followed the rules and waited their turn. Some have been waiting for many years. Some have been waiting for a long time. They've done everything perfectly. And they're going to come in. At some point, they're going to come in. In many cases, very soon. We need them to come in, because we have companies coming into our country; they need workers. But they have to come in on a merit basis, and they will come in on a merit basis" (National Archives, 2018).*

While emphasizing that there are many immigrants living in America, following the rules and waiting in line, he describes them with the adjectives wonderful, law-abiding. When he says that they do everything perfectly, he chooses the adverb perfectly. It is also understood that he softens his rhetoric against immigrants by saying that the country needs them.

In 2017, he also used a soft tone towards immigrants and stated that immigrants play a founding role for America:

> *"America is a proud nation of immigrants, and we will continue to show compassion to those fleeing oppression, but we will do so while protecting our own citizens and border. America has always been the land of the free and home of the brave" (Trump, 2017).*

By stating that America was founded by immigrants, Trump emphasizes that immigrants are also members and members of America and that he has been and will continue to be compassionate towards immigrants in a gracious manner. In this way, it can be said that he actually softens his attitude towards immigrants, and in this respect, he is an example of intensifying – mitigation strategies. The fact that he says that they will protect the people living in the country and the borders of the country while doing all these can be evaluated in the context of the responsibility topos.

On 12.01.2018, it was reported in the newspapers that Trump described some African countries and Haiti as "shitholes" and said that "immigrants should be taken from countries like Norway". The American newspaper Washington Post, on the other hand, reported that during a meeting on refugees in the Oval Office, Trump got angry and said to some members

of Congress, “Why are we accepting these people from these shithole countries?” (BBC News Türkçe, 2018). With this statement, he was not only accused of using harsh language, but also of encouraging racism and xenophobia. It is possible to evaluate Trump's rhetoric in the context of the predicative strategies, as he portrays some immigrants from Africa and Haiti as negative others. However, it can also be said that he uses such a metaphor to reinforce his current practice and direct his perspective. Therefore, this aspect can also be evaluated in the context of intensifying – mitigation strategy.

The strategy of perspectivization shows whether discourses are quoted directly or indirectly and to whom they are attributed (Wodak, 2017, p. 57; Wodak & Köhler, 2010, p. 38). In this context, it is possible to evaluate Trump's discourses, which have become the focus of intense reactions due to the visa restrictions, in the context of this strategy, since his discourses and especially his harsh criticism of immigrants have opened the door to many debates. In particular, the visa restriction application was criticized a lot and Trump stated that the decision to impose visa restrictions was actually taken by the Obama administration:

> *“We will keep it free and keep it safe, as the media knows, but refuses to say. My policy is similar to what President Obama did in 2011 when he banned visas for refugees from Iraq for 6 months. The seven countries named in the Executive order are the same countries previously identified by the Obama administration as sources of terror. To be clear, this is not a Muslim ban, as the media is falsely reporting. This is not about religion; this is about terror and keeping our country safe. There are over 40 different countries worldwide that are majority Muslim that are not affected by this order. We will again be issuing visas to all countries once we are sure we have reviewed and implemented the most secure policies over the next 90 days. I have tremendous feeling for the people involved in this horrific humanitarian crisis in Syria. My first priority will always be to protect and serve our country, but as President, I will find ways to help all those who are suffering” (Trump, 2017).*

With the discourses he uses in reference to Obama, it can be said that he actually wants to show that the visa application for immigrants is not the first time in the country, that the action in question should be looked at from this perspective, and thus, in fact, he tries to legitimize his own action. In this respect, he actually aims to give his action a perspective and depth. Consequently, when considering the rhetoric employed by Trump, it is clear that whilst he presents himself and us in a positive light, he portrays migrants—that is, the ‘other’—in a negative light. Even though he ostensibly justifies his rhetoric with concepts such as justice

and security, the fact that he presents migrants to the public as a negative 'other' and a threat cannot be overlooked.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Concepts and tendencies such as freedom, democracy, justice and progress have always been a part of American politics in the context of American exceptionalism. However, the issue of immigration has been an important agenda item in the United States as well as all over the world, and although America has historically been known as a country that advocates multiculturalism and where various ethnic, cultural and religious groups come together, Trump's statements against immigrants, especially the Mexican Wall, were the first signals that this understanding would be abandoned. Indeed, Trump's subsequent rhetoric against immigrants proves his case. It has become clear that, with Trump, the narrative of American exceptionalism has in fact taken a new direction, as his rhetoric can be seen not as unifying, but rather as an expression of a principle that is divisive, polarising and dismissive of the 'other'.

According to the results of this study, it has been determined that the US uses discourses that contradict the principle of unity based on multiculturalism and therefore pluralism, as it has been understood that it uses discourses that portray immigrants as a threat and target certain cultural groups. In Trump's discourses, which were accepted by the American people, immigrants were generally coded as a threat. In Trump's discourses, immigrants were criminalized with expressions such as "illegal immigrants", "border wall" and "drugs and crime". His discourses that immigrants harm America's cultural fabric and threaten American values were frequently expressed. Therefore, it is understood that Trump adopts a quite radical, targeting and labeling style towards immigrants in his discourses. It can also be clearly seen that Trump's use of language is based on emotional manipulation, polarization and a fear-based strategy. Measures such as the construction of a border wall and the deportation of immigrants were frequently expressed to solve the problem within the framework of national security and sovereignty. However, it has been seen that the "American Exceptionalism" discourses underlined in the conceptual framework of the study are not valid in reality and Trump advocates a monocultural national identity instead of multiculturalism. Consequently, it can be concluded that his discourses contradict the narrative of American Exceptionalism and, in effect, indicate that this narrative has evolved in a different direction.

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