

XENOPHOBIC RHETORIC IN TRUMPS' MADISON SQUARE GARDEN SPEECH: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE APPROACH TO GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EROSION

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Abstract: This study situates Donald Trump's October 2024 rally speech at Madison Square Garden within the escalating global rise of far-right politics and the corresponding erosion of cosmopolitan global citizenship ideals. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the paper examines how Trump's xenophobic populism systematically undermines core ethics of global citizenship such as social equality, cultural respect, human dignity, solidarity, shared responsibility, and mutual understanding. To address this objective, the methodology employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model across textual, discursive, and social practice levels. At the textual level, the study scrutinizes lexical choices such as dehumanizing metaphors and rhetorical repetitions that construct a stark "us, the real Americans" versus "them, the invaders" binary. Discursive practice reveals intertextual allusions to historical nativism and media echo chambers, amplifying these elements through performative rally dynamics and viral social media dissemination. Finally, the social practice dimension exposes how this rhetoric reinforces hegemonic power structures in society. Findings reveal that Trump mobilizes socio-economic anxiety among voters in his favour by redefining nationhood as a defensive identity against perceived destructive outsiders, transforming citizenship from a universal democratic right into an exclusionary national privilege. In conclusion, by weaponizing fears of cultural dilution and economic displacement, the speech entrenches polarization, erodes cosmopolitan solidarity, and legitimizes far-right ideologies that threaten democratic pluralism. The significance of this analysis lies in contributing to discourse studies by illustrating CDA's potency in unpacking post-truth populism, offering insights for educators, policymakers, and global citizenship advocates to counter xenophobic narratives in an era of resurgent nationalism and political polarization.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism; Donald Trump; far-right politics; global citizens; immigration; xenophobia

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1. Introduction

Donald Trump has become a key figure in far-right American politics, embodying the convergence of populism, conservatism, neo-nationalism, and authoritarian tendencies that prioritize “America First” over any international considerations. Since his first election in November 2016, Trump was perceived as a threat to global governance order which has been established by the United States and was the basis of stability and prosperity across the western world for over 70 years (Curran, 2018). His scepticism towards Europe and Asia was translated into the U.S. withdrawal from the 2016 Iran nuclear deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris accords, and from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, in addition to his fierce attacks on the United Nations and other international institutions. Trump simply rejected the idea of Pax Americana – emphasizing U.S.-led international peace and security in a unipolar world order--and replaced it by “America First”. To successfully implement the latter doctrine. Trump combines populism, securitization, and realist foreign policy (Magcamit, 2017), in order to prioritize national interests, accentuating protectionism over internationalism. This tendency probably reflects the rise of scepticism about globalization since the 2007-2008 economic crisis, particularly in high-income democracies (Chivvis & Kapstein, 2022). The global rise of far-right politics since the mid-2010s represents a visceral reaction against cosmopolitan ideals of open borders, multiculturalism, and shared global responsibilities, fuelled by xenophobic leaders who exploit socio-economic anxieties, cultural dislocations, and anti-elite sentiments. In Europe, figures like Marine Le Pen in France and Viktor Orbán in Hungary deploy discourses framing migrants as existential threats to national identity—“invasions” that dilute “pure” European heritage—while rejecting EU cosmopolitanism as elite betrayal. Similarly, in Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro's rhetoric vilified indigenous peoples and refugees as “enemies within,” portraying cosmopolitan environmentalism and human rights as obstacles to sovereign “Brazilianness”. He also repeatedly warned against Chinese investment--particularly in the Brazilian presidential election in 2018--claiming that foreign acquisition of national assets and resources would erode economic sovereignty and hand control to “communist” outsiders (Urdinez, 2023). In India, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist narrative constructs Muslims as historical invaders undermining a unified Hindu civilization, deepening religious polarization in the country (Sinha, 2021). These leaders’ populist discourses systematically binarize “us” (authentic nationals) versus “them” (cosmopolitan outsiders), eroding democratic pluralism amid resurgent nationalism.

In the United States, Trump controversial domestic and foreign policies, particularly regarding race, immigration, religion, and democratic norms have ignited intense academic debates among scholars, arguing that they eroded U.S. exceptionalism. The securitization of southern borders (U.S.-Mexican frontier), for instance, has been constantly covered both by media and academics. Scholars primarily criticize the violation of human rights like family separation, increased immigrant deaths (due to the deterrence), and vulnerability to violence and extortion (Canizales & Vallejo, 2021). Asylum seekers were denied their legal right in the United States under “the zero tolerance” policy by the Migrant Protection Protocol (known as “Remain in Mexico”). These measures may stem from a growing fear among Americans that the ageing and declining white population is being replaced by coloured communities. According to the U.S. census projects, Latinos make up the largest minority in the country (18%), and by 2026 they will constitute 30% of the population in the USA (Canizales & Vallejo, 2021). Similarly, Islamophobia escalated following Donald Trump’s elections, fuelled by rhetoric that stereotyped Muslims as an existential threat to national safety and western values. Trump made many executive orders to ban travel from Muslim-majority countries. This measure was perceived as a violation of the First, Amendment of the U.S.

constitution, which stresses the fundamental right of religious liberty (Nacos et al., 2020). This led to the rise of discrimination against Muslims, harassment in schools, and even threats against mosques (Acim, 2019). Media also played a significant role in normalizing toxic xenophobia and “extreme nationalism”, particularly after 9/11 (Jones, 2011). Most studies emphasized xenophobia as a central theme in Trump’s populism, dealing with its effects on immigrants and American exceptionalism, considering Trump as an “aberration” (Haass, 2021, p. 1) whose foreign policy has departed from decades of globalism and internationalism that shaped U.S. relations with the world.

The present study extends the analysis of Trump’s xenophobic discourse by spotlighting the Madison Square Garden (MSG) speech through critical discourse analysis (CDA). The paper investigates how Trump’s xenophobic rhetoric undermines key values of global citizenship--such as ethical cosmopolitanism, inclusivity, and transnational solidarity--and elucidates how this discourse mobilizes voters to endorse neo-nationalist agendas. Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework is used as a multi-layered analysis to systematically expose hidden ideologies. The text dimension enables scrutiny of Trump’s anti-globalist lexicon, while the discursive practice dimension examines the rally production, intertextuality, and circulation among voters. The social practice dimension discusses ideological reproduction and power relations, revealing how these exclusionary ideologies undermine global citizenship norms. The paper begins by a solid theoretical foundation in literature review, covering the notions of “xenophobia” and “global citizenship” in recent scholarly studies, and tracking the rise of far-right politics in the United States in general and Donald Trump’s populism in specific. The paper then proceeds to the methodological section, explaining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Fairclough model, in addition to describing and justifying data selection and the sampling of quotations. The study analyses six different quotations, with each quotation analysed separately through Fairclough’s three dimensions (text description, discursive practice, and social practice). It concludes with a discussion section summarizing data analysis and linking the MSG speech with the decline of global civic values, using tables.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Xenophobia*

According to Sundstorm (2013), xenophobia is closely linked with civic ostracism and nativism. It denotes the banishment of those regarded as not belonging to the country, and suggests making nativist claims by the dominant majority in the nation. The sovereign right to determine membership is controversial. Civic membership (citizenship and residency) depends largely on meeting some constitutional criteria implemented mainly by the judicial branch, while ethnic membership is subject to complex social processes of inclusion and exclusion shaped by cultural norms, shared heritage, and other factors. Xenophobia and racism are closely linked, but according to Bernasconi (2014) Xenophobia tends to be more excusable. He argues that everyone is innately xenophobic to a certain degree, what should be opposed is taking this degree to the extreme. He also suggests that xenophobia is the foundation of racism, and even if racism is eradicated, xenophobia still persists as an instinctive tendency. Philosopher Kelly Miller admits that there is “a spontaneous dislike of the different, and a shrinking from the strange, on first sight” (quoted by Bernasconi, 2014, p. 9), but this feeling may diminish through better acquaintance and familiarity. This claim is supported by many empirical studies. For instance, less racial prejudice and xenophobic tendencies towards the blacks have been recorded in France than in Britain. One of the justifications was the different colonial contacts (familiarity) in the two countries (Banton, 1996). Xenophobia is motivated by feelings of insecurity, being threatened, and fear from the unknown (Csepeli & Örkény, 2021). In the United States, xenophobia has increased during the last decades. It is

associated with border defence and used to foster support for some political parties and architect exclusionary immigration policies. During Trump's first presidential term, for instance, refugee admissions have dropped from 110,000 in 2016 to 18,000 in 2020 (Saito, 2022).

2.2 Global Citizenship

According to the United Nations Academic Impact (2022), global citizenship is an inclusive concept that encompasses the economic, political, and environmental actions of individuals and communities who share the same global perspective. It emphasizes the notion that people live in an interconnected world rather than isolated separate societies. Thus, it is a shared responsibility to contribute to the welfare of all humanity, beyond their own national and cultural boundaries. Modern understanding of the concept stress concerns for marginalized groups within and between communities (Galpin, 2013). These definitions suggest global versus local view of citizenship, where civic responsibility expands beyond the local nation to address transnational issues serving all humanity.

The need to advance human well-being and the world's stability has been recognized mainly after World War II to deal not only with global peace, but also with issues related to poverty, hunger, income inequality, health and epidemics, social exclusion, and environmental challenges (Reimers, 2013). Since its creation, the United Nations worked on fostering democracy, understanding, tolerance, and cooperation across borders through initiatives such as UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education and its diversified agendas for sustainable development. Democracy is regarded by many scholars as one of the main conditions of global and supranational citizenship, arguing that without democracy, global citizenship cannot possibly exist (Auvachez, 2009). Indeed, without democracy, individuals cannot enjoy the freedom of speech necessary to act as global citizens, nor can they actively participate in decision-making that affects transnational issues such as immigration and trade.

A counter-perspective in the existing literature suggests that global citizenship is merely a myth in the absence of a global state and one-world government (Lough & McBride, 2014). Furthermore, since identity and citizenship are closely related, it is argued that global citizenship cannot exist as long as there is no global identity. Even if identity becomes increasingly multicultural, true global citizenship is still unattainable in practice. Global citizenship has faced growing opposition amid the rise of nationalism and far-right politics that prioritize national sovereignty over global solidarity. In the United States, populist leader, such as Donald Trump, reject cosmopolitan ideals and frame international institutions and migration as a threat to national identity and economy.

2.3 The Rise of Far-right Politics in the USA and Trump's Populism

Scholars tend to use interchangeably terms such as "far right", "radical right", "extreme right", and "right-wing populism", making the conceptualization of far right more chaotic (Perliger, 2012). Van Spanje (2011) and Mudde (2007) notice the lack of conceptual clarity, as there is no consensus on a single definition. While Mudde emphasizes nativism (xenophobic nationalism), authoritarianism, and populism, Perliger stresses ultranationalism and internal homogenization (i.e. the idea that citizens share the same origin and cultural identity) (Perliger, 2012). Some previous studies, particularly in political science, sociology, and psychology, analysed the concept from different perspectives. Most early scholarly studies focused on intellectual history, analysing the history of ideas. The far right was simply defined as an extreme version of conservatism. However, contemporary studies use behavioural data, critical discourse, and socio-cognitive models to highlight issues such as anti-immigration stances and opposition to multicultural societies (Van Spanje, 2011), rather than relying solely on old intellectual history.

In the USA, the rise of far-right politics is a result of complex socio-economic grievances--notably after the 2008 economic crisis, cultural anxieties over globalization, international institutions, immigration, and demographic shifts, alongside perceived political polarization between the Republican and Democratic parties. Donald Trump played a significant role in amplifying these issues through his populist rhetoric in the 2016 campaign and the 2024 re-election, normalizing nativism and ultranationalism. Within the USA, populism is closely linked to Christianity and white supremacy as cultural determinants of nationalism (Agostinone-Wilson, 2020). Populism is also associated with restoring the lost glorious past, an idea which can be found in Trump's "Make America Great Again". Populism, as a political philosophy, places in its core the "people" against "the elite". Trump's populist rhetoric was fiercely criticized by many scholars and politicians who question his right to speak as a voice of the ordinary while he is classified in 2016 as the 156th richest American (Gounari, 2018). His efforts to restore capitalism to add more power and wealth to the top 1% was attacked, arguing that his true intention is simply replacing the political elite by an economic elite, not empowering the ordinary citizen (Fuchs 2016). Trump was even accused of embodying neo-fascism for promoting authoritarian tendencies, undermining democratic institutions, and fostering a culture of intolerance (Gounari, 2018; Kellner, 2018; Cox, 2021). Despite the rich body of scholarship on far-right rhetoric and Trumpian populism, notable research gaps persist that this study addresses. Recent scholarship has extensively documented nativist themes in Trump's discourse, yet few studies apply Critical Discourse Analysis specifically to his Madison Square Garden Speech (MSG)—a pivotal 2024 re-election rally symbolizing peak nativist consolidation. Also, the erosive impact on global citizenship ideals remains underexplored, particularly through Fairclough's three-dimensional. This paper fills these gaps by providing a systematic analysis of MSG rhetoric across textual, discursive, and sociocultural levels, tracing its ideological mechanisms and global citizenship implications.

3. Methodology

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used in this study to reveal xenophobia in Trump's populist rhetoric and explain how it undermines global citizenship. Critical Discourse analysis is a perfect framework that views language as a site of ideological struggle. It critically analyses discourse to unveil not only hidden ideologies, but also power dynamics, possible manipulation and domination, in addition to injustice and racism. It bridges linguistic micro-analysis (vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, metaphors) with macro-level analysis, emphasizing that texts are ideologically loaded as a form of social practice. According to Van Dijk (1993), this multidisciplinary approach should take an explicit socio-political stance, emphasizing dominance by elites and social inequality. Wodak (2009) explains that Critical Discourse Analysis is used to remove structural obscurity in discourse that conceals power relations and power abuse. CDA was pioneered by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak, each of them developed a separate approach. Key approaches include Norman Fairclough's three dimensional model, which examines the dialectical relationship between language and society to reveal how discourses reproduce/challenge ideologies and power relations. Fairclough's approach suggests three levels of analysis including text analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural analysis to uncover how language shapes and is shaped by social power. Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) emphasizes the historical and social context (Pan et al., 2025), prioritizing diachronic evolution of discourses alongside synchronic analysis. This problem-solving approach focuses on historical depth and combines history, linguistics, and ethnography to propose social change. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

(FDA), inspired by Michel Foucault, examines how discourses construct knowledge, truths, and subjectivity. Although it is methodologically challenging as an approach (Sam & Gupton, 2023), FDA questions taken-for-granted norms by tracing historical contingencies. Other variants, such as multimodal CDA, extend the analysis by examining not only linguistic features, as is the case with previous standard CDA models, but also the incorporation of visuals, colors, and sounds to fully reveal ideological effects.

3.2 Fairclough Model

This study applies Fairclough's approach of CDA, using three distinct dimensions to comprehensively analyse the Madison Square Garden (MSG) speech and reveal xenophobic rhetoric. Fairclough model is ideal to revealing opacity through text description, discursive practice, and social structure (Fairclough, 1995). At the textual level (micro-linguistic analysis), we describe language use, shedding light on Trump's choice of words, repetition, grammar, pronouns, and dehumanizing metaphors, which describe immigrants as existential threats. At the level of discursive practice (meso analysis), we study the production, distribution, and consumption of the MSG speech. Intertextuality is also examined, discussing the speech's connection to political slogans such as "Make America Great Again", "America First", and "Build the wall". At the level of social practice (macro analysis), an interpretation is made within a broader socio-political context, linking the speech to some corresponding ideologies, focusing particularly on how nativism and transnationalism erode global citizenship.

3.3 Data Selection and Sampling of Quotations

The study examines the transcript of Donald Trump's Madison Square Garden speech, which was delivered on October 27, 2024. The speech was held during the final week of his re-election campaign 2024, and it summarizes Trump's key notions and ideologies. The speech, which lasting approximately 90 minutes and attended by 20,000 supporters, exemplifies peak nativist discourse. From the full transcript of Donald Trump's October 2024 Madison Square Garden rally speech, over 20 quotations explicitly invoked xenophobic themes, including dire warnings against immigrants, depictions of their "uncontrolled flow" as a national crisis, and direct portrayals of migrants as "invaders" and criminals. While thematically and stylistically overlapping—often reiterating hyperbolic threat narratives—only six quotations were purposefully selected for analysis to ensure thematic diversity, eliminate redundancy, and represent distinct claims. These excerpts were chosen for their robust linkages to core ideologies of populism (anti-elitism), far-right nationalism (nativist exclusion), and xenophobia, as theorized in the literature review. However, the study acknowledges that its purposeful sampling emphasizes depth in selected excerpts over comprehensive coverage. This standard CDA approach aligns with the research objectives, while suggesting quantitative follow-up for broader validation.

4. Data Analysis

This section analyses six key quotations from Donald Trump's speech (six out of total of eleven quotations which directly address global citizenship issues; only six have been chosen to avoid repetition particularly that some quotations are almost the same in content and form). The six quotations are arranged in three escalating clusters: anti-globalization (Quotation 1), criminal victimhood (Quotation 2 and Quotation 3), and invasion crisis (Quotations 4, 5, and 6). This progression builds systematic rhetorical intensification from policy critique through sovereignty and identity loss to freedom and prosperity restoration.

4.1. *Quotation 1: Global Obligations vs. America First*

"After years of building up foreign nations, defending foreign borders and protecting foreign lands, we are finally going to build up our country, defend our borders and protect our citizens. It's called America first" (Trump, 2024, 01:10:13).

4.1.1. *Text Description*

At the textual level, the quotation includes two sentences. The first long sentence uses parallel structures to sharply contrast “building up foreign nations, defending foreign borders and protecting foreign lands” with “build up our country, defend our borders and protect our citizens”. This comparison emphasizes “our” vs. “foreigner” others narrative. The use of “after years” constructs shared victimhood and depicts globalism as an exhausted burden, while the use of “finally” suggests “America First” to be a relief and promises certain future actions to promote nationalism.

4.1.2. *Discursive Practice*

At the level of discursive practice, Trump uses rhythmic parallelism and repetition and ends with a slogan to make it an easy rally chant by the audience. It almost recycles his 2016 presidential campaign ideas and the 1940s isolationist perspectives, normalizing ultranationalism over global commitments particularly among MAGA supporters, while being interpreted as a shameful abandonment of global leadership by globalists.

4.1.3. *Social Practice*

As social practice, Trump’s rhetoric implies zero-sum logic; he insists that prosperity demands isolation while global citizenship means sacrificing the nation’s well-being. It suggests that engaging in protecting foreign lands and security is a naive elite waste that is purchased at the expense of the country. This directly clashes with the culture of global citizenship and hegemonizes ethnic nationalism while marginalizing cosmopolitan values.

4.2. *Quotation 2: Immigration as Criminal Influx*

"More than 13,000 illegal immigrants convicted of murder have been caught at the border and then released into the United States. An Afghan national is in custody today after being accused of plotting an Election Day terrorist attack. The suspect entered the US on a special immigrant visa" (Trump, 2024, 00:37:40).

4.2.1. *Text Description*

Textually, the passage opens with a shocking statistical hyperbole about “illegal immigrants” being released into the country. Trump insists that besides being “illegal immigrants”, they were also “convicted of murder”. The use of precise quantification presents it as a convincing, uncontested fact. The second sentence provides an example of an Afghan immigrant who was entered via “special immigrant visa” and was later accused of terrorism, implying state betrayal. The use of “illegal”, “terrorist”, “plotting”, and “the suspect” depicts immigrants as potential pre-criminal threats.

4.2.2. *Discursive Practice*

At the level of discursive practice, the passage is produced for rally consumption. The use of numeral precision facilitates its repetition by the audience. This discourse aims at outraging the listeners, demanding to act against such border policies. Intertextually, referring to the Afghan immigrant in particular and terrorism reminds the audience of the 9/11 attacks, Ben Laden, and years of stereotyping Afghanistan as a terrorist country plotting against the USA, suggesting that similar scenarios might happen if no serious actions are taken. This discourse activates “never again” schema and Islamophobia. While the passage can be interpreted as a legitimate call for stricter border control by nationalists, it may disappoint globalists as an attempt to use 9/11 trauma against humanitarianism and ethnic equality.

4.2.3. *Social Practice*

At the level of social practice, the passage hegemonizes migrant criminality as stories of illegal immigrants convicted of crimes are repeatedly referred to by Trump. It also naturalizes strict border policies as necessary measures to defend national security, even at the expense of humanitarian visa programs. Afghan nationals are seen not as war victims seeking asylum, but as pre-terrorists and pre-criminals exploiting the USA. The discourse reproduces Islamophobic ideology and encourages discrimination against brown, Muslim people, marginalizing cosmopolitan inclusion and supporting xenophobic zero-tolerance policies towards immigrants.

4.3. *Quotation 3: Asserting Citizenship Boundaries*

"Over the last month, 181 countries violated our laws. And she has resettled them into your communities to prey upon innocent American citizens. But the day I take the oath of office, the migrant invasion of our country ends" (Trump, 2024, 00:11:58).

4.3.1. *Text Description*

The quotation includes three sentences. It begins with accusing 181 countries of “violating” U.S. immigration laws during a period of just one month. The use of “our” implies depicting the 181 countries as unlawful, unwelcome “others”. The second sentence blames Kamala Harris for legalizing their status and letting them in the country, allowing them “to prey upon innocent American citizens”. The discourse depicts immigrants as criminals who freely live among American citizens and are likely to attack any innocent civilian. Migration influx is described as “invasion”. The final sentence presents Trump as a national hero who will unhesitatingly put an end to Kamala’s immigration policies. The use of the present simple tense reinforces fulfilling his promise as soon as he is re-elected as president.

4.3.2. *Discursive Practice*

The passage is produced for MAGA rally consumption. The use of hyperbolic enumeration, “181 countries”, facilitates its repetition by media and the audience, demanding urgent actions to stop the “invasion” and the persistent violation of American laws. At the intertextual level, as Trump attacks Kamala Harris, he re-activates the memory of Reagan’s “welfare queen” – the black woman fraudster who exploited white generosity. It also reminds of Biden’s border crisis. While this rhetoric outrages nationalists and mobilizes them to demand stricter border control, it undermines humanitarian resettlement programs.

4.3.3. *Social Practice*

The discourse depicts migrants from 181 countries not as legitimate refugees who need humanitarian assistance, but as predatory invaders exploiting the country under the passiveness of Harris. The passage reproduces nationalist and nativists ideologies, excluding non-Americans who threaten communities’ purity and ethnic hegemony. It naturalizes mass deportation as necessary national salvation while positioning global citizenship culture as a threat to national survival

4.4. *Quotation 4: Immigrants as Occupiers*

"We're not going to have a country any longer. That's who we're allowing it. The United states is now an occupied country, but it will soon be an occupied country" (Trump, 2024, 00:15:11).

4.4.1. *Text Description*

The text uses military discourse to turn immigration into “invasion”, using alarming words such as “occupied”, “not going to have a country” to create panic and urgency. The use of “is now” and “will be soon” suggests that the situation is increasingly deteriorating. The second sentence, “That’s who we’re allowing it”, blames unnamed leaders for the catastrophe. The repetition of “occupied nation” reinforces consistent existential threat.

4.4.2. *Discursive Practice*

The discourse is designed for MAGA consumption. Repetition facilitates the circulation of the possible future nightmare of being “occupied” by immigrants, particularly among nationalists who consume it as urgent sovereignty and identity loss alarm. Intertextually, the quotation reactivates collective historical memories about imperial powers conquering native people and establishing colonies (as happened with Native Americans and the Australian Aborigines). Globalists register panic escalation as strategic fearmongering to curb contemporary multicultural projects.

4.4.3. *Social Practice*

The passage demonizes immigration and depicts even legal immigrants as occupying forces assisted by the complicit, naive elites to destroy the country. These fears stem from alarming demographic statistics revealing that white population is shrinking while immigrant population is increasing. Some studies, based on the demographic statistics, Forecast that in the coming years immigrant will outnumber local citizens. Trump’s discourse reproduces nativist ideology, legitimizing ethnic exclusion while marginalizing ethics of global citizenship.

4.5. *Quotation 5: Resisting the Migrant “Invasion” to Restore the American Dream*

"I will stop the invasion of criminals coming into our country. And I will bring back the American dream. We need the American dream to come back home. Our country will be bigger, better, bolder, richer, safer" (Trump, 2024, 00:01:38).

4.5.1. *Text Description*

Trump, again, insists on viewing immigration as “invasion” and immigrants as “criminals”. He uses strong modality, “will”, to stress his readiness to put an end to what he called “invasion”, presenting himself as a saviour. Trump implicitly blames immigrants for losing the American dream and promises to restore it. The lexical chain “bigger, better, bolder, richer, safer” uses asyndetic listing and phonological patterning to construct a promising future without immigrants.

4.5.2. *Discursive Practice*

The text circulates within MAGA interpretive communities. The use of alliterative b-sounds in “bigger, better, bolder” prompt chantability and rhythmic memorability among the audience, while the use of climatic escalation from size to security builds restoration euphoria. At the intertextual level, the discourse reactivates memories of past glory and prosperity during the 1950s. It reminds the audience of the American Dream and blames immigrants for curbing restoration and damaging one of the pillars of American culture. The passage mobilizes nationalists to stop “the invasion of criminals” while globalists perceive it as weaponizing nostalgia as a mechanism against migrant rights.

4.5.3. *Social Practice*

The discourse reproduces MAGA ideology, emphasizing that immigrant deportation is a prerequisite for prosperity and restoration of the American Dream. Immigrants are described again as “criminals”, reinforcing racist, nativist stereotyping. The discourse positions global citizenship as impediment to becoming “bigger, better, bolder, richer, safer”.

4.6. *Quotation 6: Defying the Invasion to gain the Stolen Freedom*

"We will not be invaded. We will not be occupied. We will not be overrun. We will not be conquered. We will be a free and proud nation once again." (Trump, 2024, 01:11:04).

4.6.1. *Text Description*

The passage uses strong modality “we will not”, repeated in fivefold to express firmness and absolute rejection of being “invaded” by immigrants. The use of “invaded”, “conquered”, “be overrun” frames immigration as existential battle that should be won. The emphasis on “we” creates a sense of unity and shared nationalism. The final sentence appears as restoration antithesis, rejecting all aspects of subjugation.

4.6.2. Discursive Practice

The anaphoric repetition facilitates crowd chanting and turns passive listeners into participatory warriors to reclaim sovereignty. Within rally discourse production, the text intertextually chains military victory speeches with nativist border crisis narrative, positioning Trump as martial saviour. Nationalists consume it as an urgent call for stricter immigration policies to stop the “invasion” and save the country. Cosmopolitan audiences may interpret it as militarized xenophobia, weaponized to fight immigrants.

4.6.3. Social Practice

The discourse hegemonizes immigration as an existential “occupation”, requiring martial reclamation of sovereignty and identity. The passage implies that the country is no longer “free” and “proud” because of the “invasion” of immigrants. The discourse reproduces MAGA ideology, promising to restore the country’s pride and freedom through borders’ securitization. It also naturalizes xenophobic policy demands while challenging multiculturalism and ethics of global citizenship.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the six quotations from Trump’s Madison Square Garden speech reveals direct opposition to the culture of global citizenship as cosmopolitan commitments are constantly delegitimized and attacked in favour of ultranationalism and nativism. Xenophobic attitude towards immigrants is constant throughout the quotations. At the level of text description, most quotations (Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6) depict immigration as invasion, using military language (“invasion”, “invaded”, “occupied”, “conquered”, “overrun”, “defending”, “protecting”). Some quotations (Q2 and Q3) repeatedly dehumanize and criminalize immigrants, using words such as “criminals”, “convicted of murder”, and “accused of” to refer to them. The quotations express migration catastrophes, using hyperboles to demand urgent securitization of borders. (“181 countries violated our laws” in Q3 and “more than 13,000 immigrants...” in Q2). “We” vs. “Others” dominate the discourse (Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6), emphasizing nativism and nationalism with the repetition of words such as “we”, “our country”, “our borders”, “our citizens” vs. “them”, “foreign nations”, “foreign borders”. Anaphoric modalities and slogans can be found in many quotations (Q1, Q3, Q5, Q6), to promise national restoration such as “America First”, “the day I take the oath...”, “I will stop”, “I will bring back”, “we will not be”, “we will be”, “bigger”, “bolder”, “better”, “richer”, “safer”.

Table 1

Linguistic Analysis of Trumps’ MSG Quotations (Fairclough Text Level)

Features	Quotations	Examples
<i>Military language, using invasion metaphors</i>	Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6	“Invasion”, “invaded”, “occupied”, “conquered”, “overrun”, “defending”, “protecting”
<i>Expressing catastrophes and urgency using hyperboles</i>	Q2 and Q3	“More than 13,000 immigrants...” “181 countries violated our laws”
<i>Dehumanizing and criminalizing immigrants</i>	Q2, Q3	“criminals”, “convicted of murder”, “released”, “terrorist attack”, “accused of”, “violated”, “prey upon”

“We” vs. “Others” narrative Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6 “foreign nations”, “foreign borders”, “foreign country”, “our borders”, “our citizens”, “our laws”, “we”

National restoration, using slogans, anaphoric modalities, and promises.	Q1, Q3, Q5, Q6	“America first”, “the day I take the oath...”, “I will stop”, “I will bring back”, “we will not be”, “we will be”, “bigger”, “bolder”, “better”, “richer”, “safer”
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Intertextually, the selected quotations reactivate the 1930s isolationist perspectives (Q1), and remind the audience of crises such as the 9/11 attacks (Q2), and the rise of colonial powers, imperialism, and Cold War occupation (Q4). Rhythmic clauses enable rally chanting, facilitating its circulation among MAGA communities. The shocking hyperbolic arguments outrage nationalists and mobilize them to urgently close borders to ensure the safety and sovereignty of their country, even at the expense of humanitarianism. Cosmopolitan audience register undermining multiculturalism and global citizenship ethics.

Table 2

Intertextuality, and Consumption in Trump’s MSG Quotations

Features	Intertextuality	Consumption
Q1	The 1930s’ Isolationist perspectives.	Nationalists consume the discourse as an urgent call to control borders to restore national sovereignty, identity, and prosperity
Q2	Reagan’ “welfare queen” and Biden’s border crisis	Globalists register using nostalgia, and fearmingering as mechanisms to fight migrant rights and undermine cosmopolitanism
Q3	The 9/11 attacks and Bin Laden.	
Q4	The Imperial Age and colonialism.	
Q5	The American Dream	
Q6	Military victory speeches	

At the level of social practice, the six quotations systematically hegemonize MAGA and “America First” ideologies, prioritizing national interests over cosmopolitan commitments. International cooperation and global peace are viewed as a heavy burden, distracting from building a strong, safe country (Q1). Equally, multicultural policies and social justice are considered as impediments to progress and prosperity (Q1 and Q5). More importantly, immigrants are constantly seen as existential threats to the safety and security of American citizens (Q2, Q3, and Q5), with immigration influx perceived as “invasion” (Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6). The quotations reproduces nativist ideologies, asserting national borders and constructing an American imagined community. To summarize, the discourse challenges global citizenship, legitimizing ultranationalism, ethnic exclusion, and

xenophobia. This Critical Discourse Analysis unmasks systematic erosion of cosmopolitan values.

While prevailing "invasion" metaphors might be interpreted as pragmatic border security discourse emphasizing possible empirical crime data, or mere rhetorical hyperbole typical of electoral spectacle, Fairclough's dialectical framework reveals their sociocultural hegemony in constructing immigrants as existential threats. Likewise, anaphoric modalities ("I will defend") could represent generic populist mobilization, yet their integration across textual description, discursive practice, and social explanation systematically reactivates nativist topoi of danger and restoration. Theoretically, this synthesis illuminates CDA's capacity to trace ideology dialectically from linguistic micro-features to macro-hegemonic shifts, demonstrating how Trump's MSG rhetoric meticulously exploits citizens' fears of demographic-cultural displacement to reproduce MAGA nativism—directly attacking the ideal of global citizenship agreed upon by scholars and exemplifying the alarming transnational rise of right-wing ideologies.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the analysis of Trump's Madison Square Garden speech using Fairclough's model demonstrates how "America First" discourse systematically redefines citizenship against global citizenship by fusing anti-globalism and crisis-oriented statistics into a coherent nationalist project that narrows the boundaries of belonging and obligation. Across the different quotations, migrants and perceived internal enemies are repeatedly framed as invaders, while "globalists" are portrayed as illegitimate usurpers of sovereignty, thereby legitimizing exclusionary border regimes and weakening support for multilateral governance and universalist human-rights norms that underpin global citizenship. These discursive strategies do not merely reflect existing anxieties about globalization and migration; they actively participate in the erosion of global citizenship ideals by recasting transnational interdependence as a mortal threat rather than a shared responsibility, suggesting that counter-discourses affirming inclusive, rights-based and multi-layered forms of citizenship are urgently needed within contemporary political communication.

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