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JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES RESEARCH REPORT



Partisan journalism: Examining Fox News' coverage of Donald Trump during 2020 US Presidential elections.

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the University of Witwatersrand's Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in Journalism and Media Studies.

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Abstract

The research probes how Fox news' coverage of Donald Trump during the 2020 United States elections changed between the day before the calling of the elections and the day after. The study teases out how Fox 'repositioned' itself after calling Joe Biden the winner, while still maintaining its Republican partisanship. Using qualitative textual analysis, a thematic content analysis of news broadcast by the channel on 6 and 7 November 2020 was conducted. 16 television broadcast videos from various Fox News programmes consisting of interviews, panel discussions, a news bulletin and an editorial opinion that took place over the two days were analysed. To find the difference in their reporting, the study looked at content and form themes that emerged and how they changed on both days. Research findings show that Fox had a partisan approach to news on both days by promoting propaganda and a Trump-centred political agenda in their newsroom. Despite being Republican supporters, the channel still wanted to show that they were 'good journalists' on 7 November 2020. The channel used ambivalence in its reporting to maintain its support for the Republicans while acknowledging Biden's victory. From a normative approach to media, this research highlights the unethical nature of the relationship between Fox and the state in journalistic terms. The study emphasises the kind of reporting that promotes personal politics instead of being an independent voice, which does not satisfy the demands of journalistic norms.

Keywords: Donald Trump, Fox News, media-state relations, themes, news genre, propaganda, objectivity

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signed at University of Witwatersrand on 20 of September 2022.

PS Shabalala

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Chapter 1

Background

The 2020 United States (US) presidential elections marked the end of an era when political norms were repeatedly violated and defined by scandals, conspiracy theories, misinformation, and fake news. As the election was considered one of the most significant in contemporary US history (Luke 2021: 2) its 'calling', a tradition dating back to 1848 with the declaration of Zachary Taylor as the 12th US president (Olson & Koenig, 2020), was a major news event. The media's declaration of the election carries authority, leading to a presidential candidate declaring victory. Major news networks declared Joe Biden the winner on 7 November 2020, with the Fox News Channel (FNC) being the last network to report the results (Olson & Koenig, 2020). This was the breaking point for Donald Trump's relationship with Fox News, criticised for its ultra-right-wing stance supporting conservative values, despite long-established partisan divisions within American news media. It highlighted the power the channel had afforded Trump over the years, and how he had become used to setting their agenda. Fox's rejection and narrative challenge of the former president's voter fraud claims caused a "fracture in their long-standing relationship" (Serioli, 2020). As Fox News is a primary source of political information for many Americans, this research examines how it reported the pre- and post-calling of the 2020 presidential election. It will do this by exploring the relationship between the former president and the channel which appeared unusual in the context of normative journalism practice. The main significance of the study is to understand how the pro-Trump channel was able to 'switch sides' from one day to the next.

In his observation of how the relationship between the two parties has evolved over the years, media scholar Sean Illing (2019) writes: "world leaders as well as members of Congress quickly learned that one of the best ways to communicate a message to Trump is to say it on Fox News". This association between the two parties raises questions about ideological positioning and the kinds of meanings that Fox constructed about Trump and his administration. In an ideal world, political journalism, especially during the lead up to presidential elections, is supposed to transcend political cleavages to ensure that citizens are adequately informed about issues of the day. The media are meant to be as objective as possible throughout this process and to "separate

facts from values and to report only the facts" (Schudson 2001: 150). Anything other than this journalism practice tends to restrict the range of voices in news stories. Although a balance must be struck between covering the state and other voices, Bennett (1990: 104) suggests that the media should hold to the norm of objectivity. It is this value that is the ethical basis ensuring that news outlets do not distort the truth or disseminate false information.

Although predecessors Democratic Barack Obama and Republican George W. Bush laid the foundation for silencing the media, particularly with prosecuting leakers of information and censoring government files, Trump was relentlessly hostile to the media and undermined its role (Carpenter, 2021). This is in spite of cable and network television contributing to his rise to the White House. Despite promising to be transparent and allowing the media to do its job, the relationship the former president had with the industry was marred by the emergence of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' (Lehtonen 2018: 213). Trump's reference to mainstream media as the enemy of the people and discrediting the industry for opposing his views accelerated with his continuous public disagreements with news outlets and individual journalists (Tracy, 2021). Denouncing the media publicly using social media enabled the former president to strengthen his message, constant criticism, and attacks against the press. Digital networks enabled him to have a political public life that influenced his followers, potentially creating a powerful Trumpian public sphericule (Gitlin 1998: 170).

According to a report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the United States' standing in the annual press freedom index declined during the four years when Donald Trump was president. In 2019, the country ranked 48 of the 180 countries (Ingber, 2019). RSF attributed this trend to Trump's continued threats to journalists and his anti-press attitude towards the media industry. When Fox News called the election in favour of Joe Biden (Sheth, 2021), Trump made it justify its editorial decisions to himself as the sitting president, and his administration. Director of the channel's election decision desk at the time, Arnon Mishkin, was put on air to defend the call (Karni & Habberman, 2020), while Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, asked Fox News' owner Rupert Murdoch to explain why they had declared the results (Karni & Habberman, 2020). Soon after the elections in January 2021, now former Fox News politics editor Chris Stirewalt was fired from the network because of his role in the network's decision to

call Arizona for President-elect Joe Biden on election night (Battaglio, 2021). At the same time, Bill Sammon, an executive who was also involved in calling the Arizona election, was forced into retirement. Fox News was the first media outlet to make the early state call, which was ultimately declared to be correct and certified, while CNN and other major networks only called those election results days later. Faithful Trump supporters were upset by this, leading to a decline in the channel's ratings soon thereafter. Election aftermath decisions made by the owners of the channel due to newsroom editorial processes focussed attention on the relationship between Trump and Fox. The former president's reaction to the network raises questions about media-state relations, while also confirming previous accusations that he and the channel had a "dysfunctional relationship" (Stelter, 2020). Fox demonstrated its willingness to disassociate itself with decisions that were not in favour of Trump. Despite doing what was right by calling the election, the network was willing to drop its editorial standards by proving its loyalty to a sitting president.

Fox News

Fox News is a 24-hour American cable news television network founded by media mogul Rupert Murdoch in October 1996. The channel has been a Republican-centred alternative for millions of right-wing American viewers. Fox has been accused of media bias in its reporting since its early days, most notably when George Bush and Al Gore were contesting the 2000 elections (DellaVigna & Kaplan 2007: 1187). The channel was always harsher on Al Gore who later described the channel as "24/7 propaganda masquerading as news" (Huffpost, 2013). Its reputation as a conservative network was reinforced when Fox hired Bush's first cousin, John Ellis, as the head of Fox News's Election Night decision desk (Kurtz, 2000). He was tasked with the role of calling the election for his relative. Since then, Fox News has been central to, and at the forefront of, promoting and coordinating Republican presidential election events. In 2018, the night before the midterm elections, Fox News talk show host Sean Hannity went on stage at a rally to urge Donald Trump's supporters to vote and accused other news networks of spreading fake news (Darcy, 2018)**.** His actions were viewed as the channel's way of "bending its ethical standards" (Maza, 2018) to accommodate the then president's ideologies and enable him to shape the news agenda during his term in office. This event and others have called into question the channel's journalistic role (Darcy, 2018).

The establishment of Fox News in 1996 was welcomed by many conservatives who were seeking a 'fair and balanced' news source of information. This tagline helped the cable network gain popularity for being objective and functioning as a neutral voice. Although Fox has always been regarded as a partisan network (Illing, 2019), in terms of consistency in reporting, the channel was in the same league as the "the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and the rest of the elite media" (Barlett 2015: 1). Until recently, with the introduction of social media, the channel had a viewership with an average age of 68 years, with journalists in the early Fox newsroom being reportedly independent, with very few Republicans (Barlett 2015: 1). Being non-partisan meant that the media network did not advance the agenda of a specific political party when reporting the news (Ekowo, 2017). Fox journalists took a liberal stance and approach to their profession. For the network to be regarded as one of the best in the media industry, Fox presented their news objectively (Barlett 2015: 6). Their reporting had 'two sides' to the story, and they were open to reporting different political views (Jones 2012: 179). In its early days, most American citizens were happy with Fox News for cementing its "fair and balanced" narrative (Jones 2012: 179). But for Barlett, the above description of Fox News and how it operated was never legitimate. He argues that "Fox News has always functioned as the propaganda arm of an extremist political ideology with brazen disregard for what is factual, right, fair and balanced" (2015: 17).

During George W. Bush's presidency, media observers noticed a shift in tone at Fox News (Stelter, 2009). Various changes were made within the channel, which became evident after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. These included instructing on-air personalities to stop using the term "public option" when discussing health reform (Pickett, 2010). The network also started reporting on global warming as just a theory and appeared to be supporting most decisions the Bush administration was making (Barlett 2015: 10). Fox was accused of downplaying some issues and reporting inaccurate information about important issues like climate change, gun violence, and Muslims and Islam, amongst others (Barlett 2015: 10). The network blacklisted some experts and professionals for criticising it and being critical of George W. Bush. With Donald Trump at the helm more than ten years later, similar actions were taken at the network. During Trump's presidency, Fox News became a channel producing misinformation and

disinformation, propaganda, and omitting facts that did not fit the former president's preconceived narrative (Froehlich 2020: 16). His administration took a hard-line on getting Fox to frame Republican beliefs on the channel. The close relationship between Trump and Fox became evident over the years, with the channel exercising "such powerful control over the GOP that it has become the party's kingmaker in presidential primaries" (Barlett 2015: 17).

While Fox News has always been known as a partisan network, it leaned towards being a propaganda operation during Trump's term in office (Illing, 2019). Darcy (2018) suggests that Trump's close ties with Hannity supports prior arguments that the channel did not play the role of holding his administration to account, and "cemented the unofficial relationship between Trump and the right-wing news network" (Illing, 2019). The former president's association with Fox has been described as "unethical and incredibly alarming" (The Pitt News Editorial Board, 2019) because he enjoyed "preferential treatment that was a too-close-for-comfort relationship", leading media analysts Froehlich (2020: 16) and Thompson (2020: 121) to question Fox's journalism ethics, and the channel being labelled the government's mouthpiece (Illing, 2019). Fox has been known to fuel propaganda, fake news, and conspiracy theories in favour of then president, Donald Trump, since he announced his presidential ambitions on 16 June 2015 (Froehlich 2020: 11). It is the spread of misinformation on social media since the 2016 US presidential election that "has generated extraordinary concern, in large part because of its potential effects on public opinion, political polarization, and ultimately democratic decision making" (Watts, Rothschild & Mobius 2021: 2). The relationship between Trump and Fox News took a knock when the channel practised 'real journalism' by declaring President Joe Biden the victor of the Presidential elections on 7 November 2020, as they had, until the 6 November, entertained the former president's allegations of voter fraud.

Theoretical Orientation

Understanding the role of media in a democracy necessitates understanding media-state relations (Hammond 2007: 3; Bennett 1990: 104). Originally, Siebert et al. (1956) identified four theories that demonstrate the link between different kinds of societies and the media that emanate from them: *libertarian, authoritarian, social responsibility,* and *soviet communist theory*. McQuail (1987) added the *democratic participant theory* and *developmental media theory*. These

theories recognise different ways that society thinks about itself and its relation to the media (Pickard 2015: 187; see also Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 66-86). The research focuses on the libertarian normative theory which argues that the media should not be constrained by government regulation (Christians et al. 2009: 6). Most democratic countries operate within this framework because the basis of their economies is capitalist with private ownership of the media, but they also adhere to the social responsibility theory's acknowledgement that the media has a responsibility to the society in which it operates. As an ideal media system, normative media theories have been criticised, mostly from a Marxist perspective as economic interests continue to undermine journalism and undermine its values. Countries like the US that function within the liberal system are said to belong more "to the business world rather than the world of politics" (Gasparyan 2018). Raising arguments relating to the deteriorating quality of journalism, McChesney (2003: 299) also emphasises that the profession continues to be shaped by the economy, thereby affecting the flow of information. This refers to how ideologies shape journalism, making the norm of objectivity an ideal and not a reality. Iyengar (1996:62) discusses how normative journalism underestimates political discourse and weakens the accountability of politicians, while Lichter & Rothman (1986) alludes to how journalists tend to apply normative media theories with the intention of being liberally biased. Because libertarian normative theory acknowledges the government, rather than business, as the main hindrance to the press being independent, its core aim is to "maximize individual human freedom" (Benson 2008: 2593). The US media is regarded as libertarian, meaning that it enjoys independence from the government (Hadland 2015: 20). Libertarian theory argues that the media should always be self-governing to ensure that it holds government to account (Christians et al. 2009: 6).

Normative theory helps us understand "the complex inter-relation between communicative (philosophical) traditions, democratic models, and journalistic roles" (Benson 2008: 2595), including Fox's news practices that have been described as fake news and propaganda (Barlett 2015: 11). The theory encourages the role of journalists to be analysed in terms of what its ethical obligations. Because maintaining social values is supposed to be an overarching responsibility of the media, they are supposed to maintain impeccable moral standards and ethics. The research explores the channel's journalism ethics from the perspective of a normative, libertarian framework that considers the media's responsibility in a democratic

society (Christians et al. 2009: 18), and citizens' expectations of the media (McQuail 2010: 18). Normative theory will assist in determining the nature of the relationship between Fox and Trump and "consider what the role of journalism ought to be in a democratic society" (Christians et al. 2009: 18). This enables the study to make sense of Fox's coverage of Trump during the elections and determine whether the channel conducted itself in a way acceptable to democratic press standards. Elements of "socially responsible journalism which provide truthful, complete, and accurate information" (Christians et al. 2009: 18) will be fleshed out throughout the research. Using this theory enables the research to draw conclusions and develop a particular conceptualisation of the media-state relationship.

Research Objectives

Despite striving towards independence and objectivity, the media continues to be accused of being biased towards the state instead of holding governments to account and blamed for encouraging political activities instead of playing a watchdog role in public discourse (Pigott 2020: 2). These accusations come from the perceived relationship between political actors and mainstream media, making the media seem like an extension of those in power. The media generally has a moral right to provide an objective approach to the news, and in this case, Fox appears to be highly politicised because they did not hold the government to account during Trump's presidency (Jutel 2015: 2). Instead, they supported not only the Republicans, but Donald Trump himself. He was thus upset when Fox finally called the election for Biden. This raises questions about the overall relationship between Trump and Fox, and the ethics of reporting on the former president before and after the calling of the 2020 election. The aim of this research is to probe media-state relations through this empirical case. As "media outlets help set discursive parameters around political debates during elections" (Pickard 2016: 118), this research will explore Fox's ethics as a right- wing conservative news broadcaster focussing on its understanding of 'objectivity' vis-à-vis its use of 'fake news' and 'propaganda'.

The research is significant because it probes the ethics of Fox's reporting 'paradigm', and the ways in which it was able, almost seamlessly, to move from supporting Trump on the 6th to 'abandoning' him on the 7th November 2020. It will tease out aspects of the relationship between Trump and the channel, as broadcaster and presidential source. While some literature explores

the role of the media in democratic countries, the area of presidents being co-dependent on the industry is not very well researched (Shelley et al. 2016: 365). Because "journalists themselves have fuelled popular expectations about the news as a window on democracy" (Bennett 1990: 105), it is important to look at how they report and create a platform for public debate, especially on issues pertaining to the state. In looking at 2020 presidential election interviews that were broadcast on Fox, and round table discussions that were held within the channel's newsroom, the study examines how journalists conveyed subjective commentary and analysis which sometimes tends to result in conflicting narratives of journalistic norms. The notion that Trump and Fox are co-dependent will be explored by looking at Fox's role in relation to normative media-state relations. The study also explores Trump's influence on Fox's reporting about his administration. The research cannot examine press-government relations without "some sort of normative guideline about how the press ought to do its job" (Bennett 1990: 103). The study thus explores the normative role of the channel in providing an objective approach to the news. The research examines whether Fox News, tasked with attaining public accountability, lived up to acceptable journalistic standards on 6 and 7 November 2020.

Research Questions

In a democratic country like the US, the media plays a crucial role during elections (Kelley 1962: 307). Not only does it inform or educate society on current affairs, but "media's function within electoral contexts often focuses on their watchdog role" (The Electoral Knowledge Network, 2012). With an additional role of calling the elections, in 2020 the US media was part of an unusual election that was not settled in one day, as is traditionally the case. Even so, the mandate for the media remained "clear and factual and transparent in determining the winner" (Jackson 2020: 63). Considering how the calling of the election played out, the research examines how Fox crossed the line by going overboard to prove their loyalty to Donald Trump despite making a decision that was unfavourable for him and his administration. Fox's conduct to enable the former president to use the network to his advantage is not only "an active collaboration, that is conscious and direct" (Illing, 2019), but also calls into question the ethics of journalism in a digital age. Trump's watching of Fox News and tweeting its claims about himself made journalists conscious of his presence and expectations of them. Media scholar and executive director of the American Press Institute, Tom Rosenstiel, noted how Fox News focussed more on

supporting Trump than covering his presidency. He calls the practice in the Fox newsroom "tilting from journalism to becoming propaganda: when your goal is no longer informing the public but promoting a particular political outcome" (Illing, 2019).

The four years of Trump's presidency saw Fox News build its audience around his ideology (which became known as 'Trumpism'), helping build a rapport with his political supporters. It is this kind of journalism that made him feel justifiably upset when the channel finally decided to follow other media networks on 7 November 2020. Bennett (1990: 124) suggests that such journalism leads to the public losing confidence in the media, thereby negatively impacting the newsroom.

Drawing on the above reasoning, this research focuses on Fox news' coverage of Donald Trump in relation to the following main research question:
How did Fox news' coverage of Donald Trump change between the day before the calling of the elections and the day after?
Sub-questions:

1. What are the foundations of Fox's approach to news as an avowedly Republican supporter?
2. How did Fox draw the line between being a 'Republican' broadcaster, rather than a Trump supporter?

Minor questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump, and how did it change after the 'calling' of the elections?
2. Can one speak of Fox News and Donald Trump as co-dependent on each other? What does this mean?

Theoretical Approach

This research is concerned with making sense of the changes in Fox's pre- and post-calling of the elections. Existing research relating to the study is reviewed and key concepts clarified. Literature relating to Trumps' relationship with the media is reviewed, followed by an analysis

of literature concerning media-state relations, the public sphere, normative media theory, objectivity, genre theory and fake news.

The state and the media can coexist when roles of both actors are clearly defined. When government refrains from setting the political agenda then the media can inform the public and exercise independent judgement (Bennet 1990: 124). From this perspective, media constitutes a 'public sphere', defined by Habermas (1964) as a "realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas 1964: 49). In a modern public sphere, freedom of expression, open debate and access for all private and public citizens is guaranteed. Although the media commits to serving the public's interest, it cannot always claim to foster objectivity in its attempt to be unbiased and unprejudiced in its reporting (Christians et al. 2009: 18). Lichtenberg (1996: 225) notes how the media in democratic countries tend to have a liberal bias towards government and business. While the fundamental notion of a democratic state is dependent on an informed community (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 18), it also "entails strengthening organised groupings of civil society and the political system" (Curran 2007: 38).

Instead of relying largely on mainstream media to communicate his views, Donald Trump used Twitter as an important source of his media strategy, creating a well-defined 'public sphericule' of supporters. As opposed to Habermas' (1964) idea of a single unified public, social media enables public sphericules which are the "development of distinct groups organised around affinity and interest" (Gitlin 1998: 170). Trump's supporters connected through his 2,520 anti-media tweets (Sugars, 2021) since launching his first presidential election campaign in 2015 until 2021 when he left office. The former president's fixation on controlling all views about him posed unique challenges and a significant threat to America's democracy (Kalb 2018: 13), perhaps evidenced by the assault on the Capitol on 6 January 2021. Violent riots took place at the Capitol building following the defeat of then-U.S. President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

Despite digital changes, normative theories of the media still provide the basis of what the media thinks ought to happen. Normative theories describe media ideals that enforce moral obligations within the industry and are a reminder of society's expectations of it. Christians et al,

recognise the need for normative theories as "cognitive maps for media professionals" (2009: viii). Portraying itself as an independent, objective, and reliable source, the media represents society and serves as its voice. Because the industry is held accountable by the public for accurate reporting of news, it seeks objectivity and understands it as a norm within the newsroom (Schudson 2001: 155). As a normative ideal of journalism practice, objectivity embraces the notion of fairness and accuracy (Wien 2005: 3; Schudson 2001: 155). It is an ideal in mainstream media and one of the core journalism ethical values which Schudson describes as a "moral deal" that sets the standard for journalism (2001: 149). Recognising the pressures of meeting deadlines in the newsroom, Tuchman (1972: 660) describes objectivity as a "strategic ritual" that protects the media from being accused of being biased. Having embraced the objectivity norm as fundamental, Lichtenberg argues that questioning the concept of objectivity should not lead to "denying that it is possible to tell an objective, or at least a more objective story" (1996: 228).

In recent times, the media has become comfortable with bending the truth to suit political agendas (Beckett 2017: 2). Widespread misinformation and disinformation led to an increase in 'fake' news, a term which became prominent in 2016 during the US election campaign (Brown 2019: 145). Described as "a range of misinformation", fake news is a threat to democracy, economies, and mainstream journalism (Beckett 2017: 1). "The deliberative spread of misleading and false information that contradicts the facts" (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 3) is likened to propaganda because of its association with words such as lies, distortion of the truth, false and misleading reporting (Brown 2019: 148). Disregarding the norm of objectivity is fast making fake news and propaganda part of some newsroom practice, thereby planting a seed of mistrust in society. Amid the propaganda and fake news that has infiltrated the newsroom, the need remains for journalists to be impartial in the face of daily criticism (McLaughlin 2016: 33) because it is their moral duty to tell the truth, however inconvenient (Bell 1998: 102).

Closely linked to media's performance and providing information for viewers to make up their own minds about issues, is propaganda a term associated with "control and is regarded as a deliberate attempt to alter or maintain a balance of power that is advantageous to the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 3). Using the media for political propaganda means

that journalists are complicit in promoting ideas that do not necessarily benefit society. Propaganda intentionally tries to shape society's perceptions and encourage belief, rather than critical engagement. By so doing the media compromises the news, giving society "propaganda disguised as news" (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 114). For four years the US was subjected to misrepresentation and many untruths as Trump and Fox consistently manipulated their audience's trust by providing false political information (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 3). The unethical behaviour by Fox has made distorting the truth its normal practice, destroying its credibility amongst some, and denying Americans critical reflection on policies proposed by Trump's administration.

Methodology

In this research, the period of news coverage of Donald Trump by Fox News will be limited to 6 and 7 November 2020. This two-day window was chosen because that was when Fox switched from supporting Trump's claims of fraud on the 6th, to calling the elections in favour of Biden with other media outlets on the 7th. A qualitative content analysis of broadcast news stories on Trump obtained from the Fox News archive was conducted. Although both qualitative and quantitative methods are important for gaining different kinds of knowledge, quantitative research is "structured and can be represented numerically" (Goertzen 2017: 12), whereas a qualitative approach is "used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" (Hammarberg et al. 2016: 498). Rather than looking at the influence or effects of how Fox News covered Trump, the research explores how they covered his changing fortunes in the period under study. Qualitative methods are ideal for "investigating beliefs, attitudes, and concepts of normative behaviour, and analysing texts" (Hammarberg et al. 2016: 499). Reliability, which refers to similarities, accuracy, and uniformity in the data, is a key aspect of the research to ensure the findings are reliable and trustworthy. It assesses both the objectivity and credibility of the study. Combined with validity which highlights "honesty and genuineness" of the study, reliability will ensure "the reproducibility and stability" of the data that will be gathered (Anderson 2010: 2; Yonge & Stewin 1988: 61).

Textual analysis was used to understand how Fox News changed its reporting after the *New York Times* called Joe Biden as president. Textual analysis is the study of "language, symbols, and/or

pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life experiences" (McKee 2003: 1). This method enables us to understand how Fox hoped to sway its audience to a certain way of thinking. A thematic analysis determines themes prevalent in the selected televisual texts (Nowell et al. 2017: 2). Thematic analysis helps us understand which topics Fox journalists discussed most, and how they discussed them. This analysis provides insight into how Trump was spoken about during the election period, and why he was spoken about in that way on Fox News (Fairclough & Wodak 1997: 9). It also examines the journalists' positions on Trump, newsroom dynamics, and Fox in relation to other media companies and broader socio-political conditions. The research will explore the relationship between Fox and Trump by analysing how they contribute to our understanding of the channel's reporting.

Chapter Outline

This chapter has given a background to the whole study. The purpose and rationale of the research has been outlined while also describing the main problem that it addresses. The chapter contextualises the Trump-Fox relationship and explains why and how the 2020 presidential elections were different from previous ones. In exploring the role of the media in democratic countries, the chapter explains the gap it hopes to fill regarding presidents and media co-dependency. It also offers a short history of Fox to contextualise the study.

Chapter 2 will review literature related to, and which will underpin the research. The chapter reviews theoretical frameworks of media-state relations (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 141, Hadland 2015: 20), normative theory including objectivity (Christians et al. 2009: 6, McQuail 2010: 18), and discusses concepts like misinformation and disinformation, fake news, alternative facts, and propaganda as deviant from journalistic norms.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach and methods used in the study. The chapter will outline the qualitative approach as the most suitable method to address the proposed research questions. Textual analysis is used to analyse the data, and issues of validity and reliability will be discussed.

Chapter 4 and 5 analyse and discuss the results of the data analysis which are aimed at answering the following research questions noted above:

How did Fox news' coverage of Donald Trump change between the day before the calling of the elections and the day after?

Sub-questions:

1. What are the foundations of Fox's approach to news as an avowedly Republican supporter?
2. How did Fox draw the line between being a 'Republican' broadcaster, rather than a Trump supporter?

Minor questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump, and how did it change after the 'calling' of the elections?
2. Can one speak of Fox News and Donald Trump as co-dependent on each other? What does this mean? Public sphericule….

Chapter 6 concludes the research by summarising it, noting its aims, research method, and key findings.

Chapter 2

Introduction

When Donald Trump first announced his intentions to become the president of the United States of America on 16 June 2015, there was a mixed reaction: some media networks embraced him, while others rejected him outright (Wignell et al. 2019: 185; Piggott 2020: 1). Under Trump's presidency some mainstream media networks were banned from attending his rallies and his supporters were encouraged to disrespect journalists at gatherings. In response to critiques of him after his first press conference as president in 2017, he tweeted that the American media was "the enemy of the people" (Dunkle-Polier 2019: 2581). Trump's prominence in mainstream media during his presidency was centred more around his words and actions than on his policies (Kalib, 2017). With him at the helm, the US media has undergone several changes that have seen it focus more on controversies and political figures than its core function of informing the public about public issues. Kalib (2017) describes the Trump years as "Trumpery," a term used to describe "a style of governance utterly unfamiliar to the American experience". Although the media has played a vital role in improving the functioning of democracy in the US for decades, it had come under much scrutiny in recent years for its close association with politics. As an extreme case of the *North Atlantic* or *Liberal Model*, in recent years the US has seen a growing tendency for politics to exercise increasing influence over the media system. This downplays efforts by the media to preserve its own power as an institution that operates in a formally autonomous system in "which political neutrality or partisanship prevails" (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 207).

This chapter reviews theoretical frameworks useful for examining the relationship between the state and media systems. It outlines the nature of the state, providing a systematic analysis of the differences and similarities of relationships between media and politics. The chapter also provides a conceptual approach to normative media frameworks, setting out how the media 'ought' to act, and what their role 'ought' to be in a liberal capitalist state. This philosophical approach outlines media practice including objectivity, genre theory, misinformation and disinformation, and concepts of fake news and propaganda. The chapter probes the concept of

the public sphere in the context of a well-defined Trumpian public 'sphericule' of supporters. A detailed background of the Fox News channel and its interaction with previous US presidents will be included to contextualise the research, using the network as a key case study.

Normative approaches to the media

Educating, entertaining, informing society, and promoting good governance are key general roles that the media play (Media Development Investment Fund 2014: 2). Normative values shape how the industry ought to conduct itself. These journalistic practices "concern ideal functions of the press, what the press should do" (Benson 2008: 2591). Normative media theories encourage the media to have authority over itself and make independent editorial decisions that are in line with journalism ethics. By so doing, the industry endorses accountable and transparent governance. Normative media theories reflect the social role that the media plays, depending on each countries' location and history (McQuail 2010: 27). Although some states interpret the theories differently, journalism values practised in most newsrooms are common and in line with understanding the core pillars of democracy. In principle, the media is expected to adhere to these ideals as moral orders that exist to "mediate between possibly conflicting interests" (von der Pfordten 2012: 450). For the media to maintain its professionalism and as a guide to its practice, Benson recommends that "normative theorizing can continue to play a key role in communication education and news research" (2008: 2596). Normative theories help maintain the media system that is constantly under attack by the state. The norms and habits that the industry has built up over time form the basis of authority for what is and is not allowed in the newsroom. Normative media theories enable the media to conduct itself as an independent voice of public sentiment and maintain social order. The theories "mirror the ideology and values of the society in which the media operate and help exercise control of information media" (Pionek 2016: 51).

The four theories of the press developed by Siebert et al (1956) highlight different viewpoints that exist in media systems and emphasise a morally charged history that governs different countries. These remain relevant because "the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (Siebert et al. 1956: 2). By reflecting the system and how the media is generally controlled, the theories look at how each state adjusts

its practices to its ideals. The *Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility,* and *Soviet Communist* theories demonstrate the premises on which different societies think about themselves and the media's role in their society. These continue to be dominant in the current media landscape. The central ideology guiding the behaviour of governments within democratic countries is that the media should not be restricted by the state in its reporting. The media in democracies like the United States is therefore characterised by the libertarian normative theory stating that the government does not have the right to control the media and can expect to be continuously challenged and held to account to society. According to Hallin & Mancini, in the US an "informational style of journalism has become dominant, and traditions of political neutrality tend to be strong" (2004: 198). This research focuses on the libertarian theory which appears to retain significant influence over the media in a democracy (Nerone 2018: 1).

The above-mentioned media theories are journalism norms and ethics which are standards meant to ensure responsible behaviour within the newsroom. The aim of the normative theories of the press and the libertarian approach relating to news media governance should be to ensure that political information is not distorted, and that the news is reported in an objective manner. The libertarian normative theory enables the media to be independent players, ensuring that public opinion is included in news content. The theory "sees the government as the primary if not the only threat to press freedom" (Benson 2008: 2593), and limits political involvement in news media. One of the main responsibilities of the libertarian media is to articulate all views, not only those that are in harmony with the dominant ideology. This approach to media practice operates alongside the social responsibility theory that acknowledges the media's social role, not only its commercial interests. The social responsibility theory speaks to the need for the media to represent "relatively weak individual citizens in the face of increasingly powerful government and business organisations" (Nerone 2018: 2). Its underlying principle involves the media's role to respond to the needs of society by properly informing it, and for the industry to exercise its independence responsibly.

The social responsibility theory comprises a set of ethics that serve as a reminder that journalists have a civic duty to society. McQuail cites the core guiding principles that underpin this theory, including balance and accurate reporting, objectivity, and accountability (1987: 117). The social

responsibility theory is based on the idea that "media have a moral obligation to society to provide adequate information for citizens to make informed decisions" (Ostini & Fung 2020: 42). This theory also encourages freedom of the press with no restriction, making sure that any society-related topic is openly discussed in public. At the same time, it also encourages the media not to be under any obligation to allow interference from the public. The social responsibility theory promotes the idea that the media be held to account and encourages it to "move beyond the simple objective reporting to investigative reporting" (Bajracharya, 2018). It advocates for a free and responsible press that reports the truth and strives for objectivity. This theory encourages journalism that is responsible to society, emphasising that the "press has the right to criticize government and institutions but also has certain basic responsibilities to maintain the stability of society" (Bittner 1989: 49).

Genre Theory

Although news organisations are generally known to report a mixture of stories that are of interest to the public, how they define and categorise their content is largely dependent on a specific structure, its style, purpose, content, and the audience it is intended for. Because characteristic features of media texts vary, they often use narratives that are classified into more than one genre containing similar conventions (Chandlier 1997: 2). Theo van Leeuwen refers to a genre as a "type of text or communicative event that embodies particular types of interaction that come with particular relationships between the interactants and with particular communicative functions" (2009: 345). Genre is also described as "a set of expectations" (Chandlier 1997: 8), and as "an instrument not of classification of prescription, but of meaning" (Fowler 1982: 22). News genres are characterised by several patterns of similarities evident in arguments, themes and topics, and form, which is how they are communicated orally and visually. Even though texts tend to reveal more than one genre, how they are defined is mostly dependent on who and what they are intended for (Chandlier 1997: 3). Genres offer ways of framing texts, positioning their audiences' expectations, assumptions, and potential meanings (Fowler 1982: 18).

Genres provide meaningful departures for interpretation, and Fowler argues that "when we try to decide the genre of a work, then our aim is to discover its meaning" (1982: 37). News has

different sub-genres, classified either as hard or soft news indicating how news is 'graded', with 'hard' news deemed more important than 'soft' news (Sjovaag 2015: 101). This hierarchy, which is never fixed, ensures that newsrooms produce content that is relevant to a specified audience. The nature of genres is that they tend to evolve over time in response to the needs of those who are communicating and what needs to be communicated (Paltridge 2007: 932; Fowler 1982: 18). These changes in genres influence the appearance of new sub-genres and play a role in defining the identity of the audience (Chandlier 1997: 9). As they primarily serve "not only as information, but as instructions for interpreting other coded information" (Fowler 1982: 23), understanding genres and how they work is key to any analysis of the meanings that media offers their audiences.

Media-state relations

The unconventional association that Donald Trump had with the media brings into question the overall role that the industry ought to play in democratic countries, and what the ideal relationship between the two entities should be. Several factors are said to influence media-state relations including politics, social structures, and the economy. Youksel (2013: 58), argues that because this relationship "is never fixed", the two entities relate differently in different countries. While some scholars argue that media state relations have implications for public opinion (Carey 2002: 71; Norris 2004: 115), others emphasie the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of each country's media system and how it is applied. Youksel (2013: 68). The US is a liberal democratic state with minimal media restrictions. The country operates within *The North Atlantic* or *Liberal Model* that Hallin & Mancini discuss, emphasising that "state intervention is limited, and the media are left primarily to market forces, and systems" (2004: 44). Although this model features conditions that were more relevant during the early development of the press, characteristics of journalistic autonomy remain appropriate in the current media-state landscape. While the role of the state in the media does in principle remain restricted in the US, political influence and monitoring have seen the country experience a new shift in media regulation (Gasparyan 2018: 3). Political neutrality in a time of social media has been a force of change that has flawed relations between the US media and its political system. To link democratic countries to the historical, social, and political context of media institutions and practices, Hallin & Mancini identify three media systems that explain how and why the media plays a different role

in politics: the Polarized Media, Democratic Corporatist, and the Liberal Models (2004: 17). These media systems are "shaped by the wider context of political history, structure, and culture" (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 46). They propose four major dimensions for their comparative analysis: the development of media markets; journalistic professionalism; the role of the state; and political parallelism. Under Trump, the dimension of political parallelism seemed to come to the fore prominently in the US with the close relationship between Fox News and the Republican Party; and the CNN, Washington Post and New York Times 'favouring' the Democratic Party.

Political parallelism refers to a relationship between the media and political parties reflected by similarities in operations. Hallin & Mancini describe this dimension as "the degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system" (2004: 27). This is when a particular media network closely aligns itself with a specific political party to represent its views to society. Political parallelism is what Selvik & Hoigilt describe as a "contradictory influence on journalistic practices" because it goes against characteristics of the liberal model which is considered a normative deal (2021: 1). The opposing ideology of this dimension restricts reporting news from a partisan viewpoint. The liberal media system should be independent of the state which restricts the media from giving politicians a voice to echo their position, policies, and agenda. Although the original concept of political parallelism refers to particular parties, it has broadened its view to include political tendencies in general (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 29). According to Hallin, there has been an increase in political parallelism in the US media system resulting from "changes in the party system and political culture" (2016.) The existence of close relations between some media and political actors has altered the ideals of traditional media, suggesting the development of a "polarized liberal model" which in this case is characterized by its centrality in electronic media (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 73). In their analysis of the media system in the US, Hallin & Mancini (2004: 217) note how Republicans and conservatives have been represented to audiences of Fox News, in comparison with three other traditional networks and CNN, whose audiences are not politically differentiated from other citizens. This analysis supports reports of the relationship between Donald Trump and Fox News which presents him very differently from any other politician.

Despite most democratic countries having long embraced the freedom of the press, the state has nevertheless shaped political messages, framed and put in place parameters on media freedom, and set the news agenda. It is precisely in this "realm of power that media and state clash and contest" (Hadland 2015: 204). The power struggle between the two parties usually arises when questions of objectivity and greater scrutiny arise, with journalists having to negotiate their independence from the government. The state's attempt to suppress the media and ensure that it overlooks its shortcomings has led to a decline in confidence when it comes to the media. Writing about foundations and limits of press freedom, Lichtenberg argues that freedom of the press in democratic countries is a "nearly unchallengeable dogma—essential, it is thought, to individual autonomy and self-expression" (1987: 329). This view highlights how crucial the role of the media is, or ought to be, as an agent that must be defended in its pursuit of the truth. Although the media continues to be the connection between politicians and the public, the development of new technologies has enabled the state to expand its access to citizens in their countries, allowing politicians to communicate directly with the public via social media instead of relying on mainstream media. With social media, politicians can directly influence citizens with their political messaging and openly criticise the media. Although the advancement in how the public receives the news has 'expanded' the newsroom, "the post-third wave rejuvenation of the mass media has not necessarily resulted in a free press that has advanced the cause of democracy" (Hadland 2015: 19). If anything, mass media has put a spotlight on the fundamental principle and element of upholding and strengthening democracy. It reveals the extent to which some news organisations are aligned with a certain political party whose ideology it shares in the public sphere (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 73). During Trump's tenure, Fox news exposed its position by appealing to a particular section of the public, the channel's own 'sphericule' (Gitlin 1998: 168).

The public sphere and the Trumpian public sphericule

A public sphere as defined by Habermas is a "realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (1964: 49). The concept proposes a space where individuals from different walks of life 'come together' to deliberate on issues of national importance. The mass media currently creates such a space by contributing to how we understand the world through 'rational critical debate'. Central to the public sphere is openness,

inclusivity, and uncoerced conversations, where everyone, no matter their political affiliations, can participate. Public spheres are where public opinions emerge and as McAfee (2019) notes, "under the right conditions, can hold power accountable". She likens elections to a public sphere, a space for those who have been marginalised to exercise their power and express their views on a public platform. Public opinions in public spheres include being critical of governments who try to impose their authority and influence on the public. It is within public spheres where social problems are discussed, solutions are debated and collective ideas and goals are agreed upon (Foust & Pratt, 2021). The media's relationship with public spheres is grounded on its responsibility to reinforce acceptable behaviours and fulfil the public's interests. The media reflects on the legitimacy of state policies and scrutinises related activities to report the findings to the public so that they can draw their own conclusions and hold governments to account. News media brings to the fore issues that arise when ordinary citizens come together to have informal conversations. All these interconnected discussions produce insights and public opinions that governments ought to consider and address instead of avoiding scrutiny (Hess & Gutsche 2017: 487). The introduction of open digital spaces has made the process of holding governments accountable simpler, possible, and a bit faster than previously.

Social media has become a modern form of a public sphere: a space where many people, mostly with similar interests, learn new ideas and skills and share information on various topics. But unlike mass media public spheres, social media enable the creation of many public sphericules. It has allowed important, long-neglected issues to be put on the global agenda. In explaining the modern public sphere, Gillwald notes that "re-examinations of theories of the public sphere have inspired new and innovative ways of examining current developments in the media and have been used to overcome the theoretical deadlocks of the past" (1993: 65). It is through social media that some publics make their concerns known and openly debate and engage with government officials, and politicians have come to rely on social networks to find out what the public thinks. Social media has made the world small enough to notice that many people are dealing with similar challenges. The emergence of hashtags like *#BlackLivesMatter* and *#MeToo* that the public connected with on a global scale demonstrated that a public sphere is "not a place, it is an occurrence" McAfee (2019). The advancement of technology is believed to have contributed to a collection of 'public sphericules' that are "made up of a variety of small interest

groups" (English 2013: 139). These groups consist of individuals who have opposing views, conflicting discourses, and different interests from other public spheres. Donald Trump, who relied more on Twitter than mainstream media to communicate his opinions, used the online platform to create his own well-defined public 'sphericule' which consumed and disseminated his views during his presidential term. His supporters gathered on his social media platforms to consume his content. Instead of Trump's social pages being a space of rational critical debate as per Habermas' idea of the public sphere, they were a place of belief and propaganda. This speaks to Gitlin's perspective which suggests that the modern public sphere is fragmented with distinct interests (1998: 173) – not all of them politically progressive. Trump's online growth and presence led to a set of concerns that included his incitement of violence and encouraging hate towards his opponents (Byers, 2021). This and other social media-related activities led to some of his social media accounts being permanently suspended and banned (Byers, 2021).

In the wake of violent riots that took place at the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021, leaving four people dead, Facebook and Twitter banned and suspended Trump's accounts (Byers, 2021). The social media giants accused the then president of violating their terms and conditions by promoting a rally fuelled by his inability to accept the 2020 presidential election results (Morris, 2021). In the weeks leading up to the violent event, Trump repeatedly claimed that the election had been stolen despite this being rejected as unfounded by several courts (Williams & Rada, 2020; NPR, 2021). Although he did not explicitly call his followers to attack the country's institutions, he did make statements that encouraged the "*Stop the Steal*" movement to take direct action to march to the Capitol. Trump's supporters have argued that suspending and banning his social media accounts was a violation of his freedom of speech and his right to formulate public opinions online (Noor, 2021). A survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre shows that Americans remain divided along partisan lines on whether action taken by Facebook and Twitter was appropriate (Pew Research, 2021). Most Democrats supported the decision to ban Trump, while Republicans were undecided on this move. For Trump, social media became a platform to perpetuate media criticism, dismiss every news story about himself and his administration, and spread misinformation that caused a lot of damage in the US media landscape. Some of the political tactics he adopted included the use of 'fake news', 'alternative

facts', propaganda, and widespread misinformation and disinformation, which will be discussed later.

Objectivity

The application of journalism standards comprising impartial, balanced, and truthful news is linked to the concept of objectivity. In the 1960s, objectivity was what Pressman (2018) calls "the bedrock principle of American journalism". In addition, Larson argued that the concept of objectivity is about "sorting out fact from fiction" (1965: 17). Although there was a time when objectivity was not an official fundamental value of journalism, it was an ideal that enabled the media to draw a line on 'biased' practices in the newsroom. The concept is defined by Schudson as "a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing" (2001: 149). It is a fundamental norm that is "entrenched in journalistic culture" (Lichtenberg 1996: 225). Objectivity is the opposite of bias: it requires the media to represent all sides of the story fairly without taking sides. This kind of reporting forces journalists to remain neutral without commenting on the news they are writing about, but to report on events that people can then interpret differently (Hackett 1984: 232). The concept highlights ethical journalistic patterns of behaviour that give the media some sort of direction when conveying and presenting information. While recognizing this normative understanding of 'objectivity', Tuchman also notes that it "stands as a bulwark between journalists and critics" (1972: 660). She explains further:

> attacked for a controversial presentation of 'facts', newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits. (Tuchman 1972: 660)

In other words, she suggests that journalists also use 'objectivity'—the quoting of other sources—as a defense against being 'biased' and taking sides.

When seeking objectivity as an ethical aspect of journalism, newsrooms should be as detailed, analytical, and critical of news as possible in pursuit of the truth, and unprejudiced in their reporting (Larson 1965: 17). Objective reporting makes society trust journalists and deem the profession legitimate, thereby preventing news from being fragmented. Used "defensively as a strategic ritual" (Tuchman 1972: 678), objectivity represents characteristics that protect

journalists from future critics. This ensures that partisan journalism does not exist in the newsroom where journalists are sometimes deemed to be closely affiliated to certain political parties. Not reporting objectively is referred to as a "failure in the news media system that threatens democratic self-governance" (Pickard 2016: 120). Since the introduction of social media where freedom of speech and public debate are not formally regulated, the media has had to navigate challenges that come with remaining neutral in an ever-changing information landscape.

Misinformation and disinformation

Credible journalism is what makes the media industry a reliable and believable source of information (Benson 2008: 2596). Thus, information shared with the public should always be accurate, fair, and trustworthy. When social media was first introduced to news media "trust in information accessed through social media was lower than trust in traditional outlets" (Allcott & Gentzkow 2017: 211). Over the past few years however, news consumers have realised how social media has changed the news (Harper, 2010). This is said to have "further weakened institutions that provide real news" (Pickard 2016: 119). Research conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) shows that there has been an increase in disinformation and misinformation because of social media (2018: 56). Distinguishing between disinformation and misinformation, Froehlich writes (2020: 1):

> disinformation occurs when the originator of the information intends to deceive. Misinformation need not involve intent; it is merely false.

More than anything, misinformation and disinformation mislead society and destabilise efforts to maintain democratic governance (Tufekci 2018; Mitchell et al. 2019; Zhuravskaya et al. 2020: 417). In considering the negative impact of misinformation and disinformation, Pickard (2016: 120) suggests that social media should be held to the norms of social responsibility just like the legacy media. As maintaining a social media presence becomes more prevalent in the newsroom, it has become increasingly important for journalists to have a standardised approach when it comes to using these digital networks (Bowd 2016: 132).

An increasing number of disinformation-misinformation campaigns dominated Trump's presidency compared to previous years. The statements and claims of widespread election fraud

was a key theme. Froehlich (2020: 1) concludes that "the rhetoric supporting Donald Trump is disinformation". Trump's administration and his supporters were the enablers that encouraged his behaviour by continuously defending his actions. Research conducted by analytics firm, Zignal Labs, in January 2021 found that online misinformation about the 2020 election as fraud dropped by 73 percent on Twitter and other online platforms following Trump's ban from Twitter (Dwoskin & Timberg, 2021). Although the former president does not own up to the role he played in the disinformation- misinformation debacle in the US, it is known that he reinforced inflammatory rhetoric throughout his presidency (Pilkington, 2021). The content he spread relates mostly to the credibility, competence, and trustworthiness of the media and the opposition party.

Fake news

Fake news is "false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting" (Greifeneder et al. 2021: 1). It is any news that is different to 'real news' produced by journalists who adhere to normative standards of journalism ensuring that their reporting is factual. Tandoc et al. (2021: 111) note that the term fake news is not new, having been used as political satire by comedians. Fake news not only compromises journalism, but also threatens principles of democracy and undermines the groundwork that has been set in maintaining the credibility of the industry (Hallin & Mancini 2004: 203). The promotion of information that is not true is mostly motivated by the need to "advance (or prevent) particular political outcomes" (Tandoc 2021: 111). Although fake news has been around for decades, it only gained prominence in 2016 during Donald Trump's presidential campaign. According to Allcott & Gentzkow (2017: 212), it is the influence of fake news that enabled him to win the 2017 elections. Fake news about Hillary Clinton was circulated more often than 'real news' about her during the weeks leading up to the election to discredit her. Also, any unflattering news reports or polls that showed that the former president was not as popular as he believed himself to be, were dismissed by him as fake news (Sullivan, 2020). According to Trump, only positive news about him and his administration was truthful and reliable. He became famous for calling out and having arguments with journalists and accusing them of spreading fake news about him on a regular basis during his presidency. Journalists thus found him "aesthetically offensive—tacky and boorish in the way he talks, runs his businesses, and views the world" (Piggott 2020: 1).

In her analysis of the upsurge of fake news, media commentator McAfee (2019) writes that "Trump seems instinctively to understand the power he has to use lies to create an alternative reality". Not only did the former president's hate speech and spread of lies cause confusion and discredit the media, but it also led to the incitement of violence. He and his administration labelled any news reports about them as 'alternative facts'. Just like fake news, 'alternative facts' are the basis of a "statement(s) known to be false but deliberately presented as being true, or an error or something mistakenly accepted as true" (Lehtonen 2018: 213). When Trump stopped relying on mainstream media to assist his election campaign, social media became his best tool to circulate his belief systems and promises to his supporters. He shared manipulated statements and sensationalised information to deceive and mislead audiences and reinforce his narrative, while also promoting propaganda for political gain.

Propaganda

When considering factors that tend to have an influence on what people believe, the concept of propaganda is central to an unethical discourse in the newsroom (Walton 1997: 384). In their early work, Herman & Chomsky (1988) consider the propaganda model by focussing on understanding why the media behaves and performs the way it does. The model, Klaehn (2009: 44) suggests, "stresses the symbolic relationship between the journalists and agents of power". The framework considers systematic patterns that sees the media function within a capitalist economy and produce news that aligns with and benefits the interests of certain political and economic elites. Propaganda carries negative connotations because it "challenges basic premises and suggests that the media serve antidemocratic ends" (Herman 2000: 101). As a concept, propaganda is associated with words such as misrepresentation, manipulation, distortion and lies (Herman 2000: 104; Walton 1997: 384; Fitzmaurice 2018: 64). Jowett (2019: 2) defines it as "means to disseminate or promote particular ideas". It has to do with deliberately presenting misleading claims to promote a particular agenda. Propaganda is motivated by power, greed, profit, and authoritarian ideologies with the aim of promoting political messages. Described as "organized persuasion" (Jowett 2019: 3), propaganda is associated with control to acquire power. Characteristics of propaganda include controlling, influencing, reinforcing, and changing the audience's behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes (Walton 1997: 396). In assuming its social

responsibility role, the media promotes "factual accuracy and open debate, represents diverse views, protects individual rights and guards against government abuses of power" (Benson 2008: 2593). The concept of propaganda involves systematically manipulating information and messages to promote a particular belief system. It borders on accepting and conforming to a particular one-sided dominant ideology in favour of a political view (Fitzmaurice 2018: 64). Mare et al. (2019: 4) are of the view that what they call 'cyber-propaganda' – a term that refers to the spread of propaganda using digital media - and fake news used by political actors, are a threat to the newsroom and to democracy.

To better understand propaganda, the concept was analysed to see how propagandists use emotional appeal as a key technique to make people adopt a particular way of thinking. Under the auspices of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, the following seven propaganda devices were constructed in 1937 (Rawlins, 2019; Sproule 2001: 136):

1) *Card-stacking* – this is when a propagandist over emphasises certain information and chooses to omit details that could possibly affect their image or that of a particular politician negatively. The words they use are meant to lure people and influence them into seeing the good in that specific person. To ensure that they influence people's thinking, the propagandist does not tell the whole truth about the politician (Rawlins, 2019; Sproule 2001: 136).

2) *Name-calling* – this technique is similar to assassinating someone's character by negatively portraying the other person in comparison to the politician they are promoting. This includes the use of hateful words to describe them or demean them in one way or another to make the other party appear to be better than them. The propagandist uses this technique to support their ideas and destroy the reputation of the other person (Sproule 2001: 136).

3) *Glittering generalities* – this device is the opposite of name calling where the propagandist makes use of common vague words to describe a person they are in favour of. Words like 'fair, good, progress, trust, honest, freedom or democracy' are used to make that particular politician more favourable and dignify their character to the targeted audience (Sproule 2001: 136).

4) *Bandwagon* – influencing the audience by convincing them that everyone is doing what you are telling them about, and they should therefore also follow suit. This is the propagandist's way of offering information by making it to appear as if it has already been accepted by mass audience using the "everybody is doing it" cliché phrase (Rawlins, 2019).

5) *Testimonial* – using something or someone that society has a positive association with to endorse and promote a certain cause. It involves advancing a specific person's objectives using a credible source as testament (Rawlins, 2019).

6) *Transfer* – this is a method used to transfer the propagandist's approval of something that society respects and admires for them to also approve and accept it, by highlighting its positive qualities. It also works when the intent it to get the audience to disrespect or reject something that the propagandist rejects and disrespects by promoting its negative factors (Sproule 2001: 136).

7) *Plain folks* - the propagandist presents themselves as relatable to the audience by convincing them that his/her ideas are better because they are in line with ordinary people. In order to garner support, he/she adopts a demeaner of being one with 'the people' and concerned about their needs and what is right for them (Rawlins, 2019).

Some of the above-mentioned techniques were evident in the Fox newsroom during Trump's presidency. His administration made unconventional inroads on the channel to promote the Republican party, "glorify its leader, motivate their citizens and demonise their enemies" (Jowett 2019: 2). They took an aggressive position towards influencing conservative and Republican opinion while at the same time making the channel perform norm-breaking behaviours. Since becoming president, Trump was often interviewed on Fox News with the aim of reinforcing his political values and promoting half-truths that the channel was suspected of embracing during his presidency (Brown 2019:148). As a result, Fox audiences, particularly Trump supporters, "believed whatever appears on it as the gospel truth" (Froehlich 2020: 12). Fox is one cable

network repeatedly accused of reporting propaganda instead of maintaining the conservative stance it had initially adopted. By so doing, "Fox News has contributed to the uncivil discourse in American society, the undermining of American democracy and democratic institutions" (Froehlich 2020: 12). Due to the one-sided political content reported by Fox, the channel is said to have ceased being an objective news platform. It has been described as a "news source that was functioning as a propaganda arm of the Republican Party" (Barlett 2015: 1). As a partisan cable network, Fox is 'allowed' to take a Republican party position.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored key concepts that serve as the theoretical foundation of the study. It has reviewed existing literature that will help make sense of the research questions and data gathered to answer them. This includes media-state relations, normative media theory, and research on 'fake news', 'alternative facts', and propaganda as deviants from journalistic norms. The chapter also looked at theories of the press, normative theory, the history of Fox and the concept of genre. The emergence of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump was also touched on.

Chapter 3

Introduction

This research attempts to clarify the relationship between the state and the media by looking at Fox News's coverage of Donald Trump when the 2020 presidential election results were announced. As Fox was highly politicised during Trump's presidency (Illing, 2019), the research focuses on how the channel shifted from supporting the former president to declaring Joe Biden the winner, rather than continuing the myth of a 'stolen election'. It analyses how Fox manoeuvred its position from extreme support for Trump to not taking his side when the elections were announced, while, in its view, still retaining its reputation as an ethical news channel. The research also explores how partisan journalism is presented in the news coverage. This chapter outlines the qualitative methodological approach as the most suitable method for this study to explain and interpret texts. The proposed research questions are addressed through an analysis of textual data, and issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research will be discussed.

The first step in this research is to establish the nature of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump. On this basis, an examination of the channel's coverage of the pre- and post-calling of the victor will be an indicator of how it changed after the 'calling' of the elections. In effect, the research question is probed through an examination of Trump's election coverage by Fox, focussing on recurring themes, images, sounds, and words to identify their reporting approach pre- and post- the election results. Although scholars like Ford et al. (2017: 360) and Harris & Gonchar (2017) have looked at the special relationship between the media and the executive, they mostly focus on the press secretary within the White House, not major news networks. There seems to be few empirical studies that directly probe the co-dependency between the media and presidents and what this means for previous research on media-state relations.

The study probes the different perceptions, meanings, and truths that emerge from the selected data. The qualitative method of research will offer insights into diverse views by the different Fox journalists on 6 and 7 November 2020. Although the research does not look at Trump's influence or the effects of how Fox covered him and his administration, it will scrutinise a shift in reporting in the period under study. It focuses on a news bulletin, an editorial opinion piece, and round table discussions and interviews that were broadcast on various Fox news programmes (Fox News, 2020). This will help clarify how journalists conveyed subjective commentary and analysis, which sometimes results in conflicting narratives of journalistic norms, which is what the research seeks to achieve.

Qualitative Methodology

As television news is conveyed through voice, facial expression, and words, a qualitative research approach was used to probe their meanings. The study pays particular attention to understanding people's experiences by using language to understand meaning and concepts while it "attempts to create a sense of the larger realm of human relationships" (Brenen 2017: 4). Qualitative research considers a variety of meanings and value created in media by interpreting and making sense of "natural settings" (Aspers 2019: 142). It is a method "used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" (Hammarberg et al. 2016: 499). The approach focuses on explanations to answer questions, rather than testing theory, quantifying the problem, and adopting measuring tools for data collection—as the quantitative approach does (Queiros et al. 2017: 369). Instead of being concerned about variables that must be quantified, qualitative research is interested in answering how and why Fox News related to Trump the way it did on the days under review. The qualitative methodology provides insight into, and understanding of, aspects of reality and the relationship between the two parties by "investigating beliefs, attitudes and concepts of normative behaviour" (Hammarberg et al. 2016: 499) regarding partisan journalism practices within Fox News. The objective of qualitative research is to come to a reflective understanding of the proposed problem with the aim of providing in-depth and illustrative evidence of various aspects under analysis.

The qualitative research method consists of "meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes" (Queiros et al. 2017: 370). These are ideals that relate to understanding the context of the problem and serve as fundamental models of a deeper flexibility and exploratory analysis of relationships. Meanings will be determined by the research as differences and similarities are detected from the collected data. This subsequently leads to finding themes and developing categories to come to an understanding of the dynamics in the relationship between Trump and Fox. As qualitative research is "interdisciplinary, interpretive, political and theoretical in nature" (Brenen 2017: 4), it is ideal for exploring patterns in reporting about the former US president. Collecting data with the aim of making sense of human interaction and unpacking meanings contained in messages is the main feature of the qualitative approach. The method analyses texts using various methods to interpret them. This research will analyse a range of texts through a close reading and use a thematic analysis.

Research Methods

To probe how the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump changed, the researcher conducted a content analysis of news broadcast by the channel on the selected dates. Before the 2020 presidential election, Fox News had "long occupied an unusual position in the Trump orbit" (Grynbaum & Koblin, 2020). The channel's coverage during all stages of the presidential campaign was more favourable to the former president. Data for the research focused on the period of 6 and 7 November 2020 because Fox News called the elections with other media outlets (Battaglio, 2021), instead of supporting Trump's claims of election fraud. Selected data consists of the following:

1. One news bulletin where the channel calls the election in favour of Joe Biden on 7 November 2020;
2. One editorial opinion piece: journalist and anchor Laura Ingraham provides an overall perspective of the Trump presidency and her views on the 2020 election;
3. Four panel discussions: three on 6 November 2020 and one on 7 November 2020 where various views on Trump and his time in office were deliberated; and
4. Ten broadcast interviews: six on 6 November 2020 and four 7 November 2020 with Fox journalists and individuals from different groups of society, including political parties,

and law and media experts about the former president's anticipated stance to the results and reaction.

Data Sampling

To collect relevant news broadcasts related to Trump during the two-day research period, the selection of data included searching the official Fox News website (www.foxnews.com) and the Fox News YouTube channel, which served as a base for gathering the data. The search contained the following filtering keywords: *Donald Trump, 2020 elections, 2020 election results, Trump, election projection, 2020 presidential election, 2020 presidential results and election night coverage*. The "2020 US presidential elections" were the most searched words on Google worldwide, coming first on the news search trending list (Google Trends, 2020). The search using these keywords yielded 8710 results. The search on YouTube produced a total of 283 videos. Most of the content found on both sites was in relation to general election reporting, predictions, and reactions. Ballot counting, visuals of Americans casting their ballots, media briefings and interviews with both Republican and Democratic party representatives formed part of the content. It was necessary to narrow the sample and select content relevant to this study's investigation. The search on the website was then filtered by content type i.e., video, which yielded 1830 videos. On YouTube, the search was sorted by Date added (oldest) resulting in 104 videos. Together, both sources yielded 782 items that did not fall within the generated search despite the filtering words. The remaining 1048 videos were reduced to 218 by excluding media briefings, duplicates, transcripts, and including only one opinion editorial and one news bulletin video broadcast. Videos of panel discussions, news bulletins, opinion editorials and interviews were watched to eliminate those that did not focus on Donald Trump or the projected election results on days under review. A replay of videos that focused on previous Trump utterances about the expected elections results, fake news and election fraud were removed from the sample. Only coverage that focused on the events of and reactions to the 6 and 7 November 2020 were selected. Sixteen video broadcasts remained. Most of the selected data was taken from the Fox News website, with seven selected from the YouTube channel. Ten videos from 6 November and six from 7 November 2020 were collected and sampled for analysis. Of these, ten were interviews with fellow Fox News journalists, channel contributors, correspondents, and Republican and Democratic representatives. Four were panel discussions from various Fox News

programmes that took place over the two days. The last two selected videos were of a news bulletin and an editorial opinion. Selected videos ranged between two and ten minutes in duration.

The selected 16 television broadcast videos consisted of the following genres of texts:

(a) Ten interviews taken from various news programmes, each on average two minutes long;
(b) Four panel discussions;
(c) One editorial opinion piece; and
(d) One news bulletin video clip.

All of these were subjected to thematic analysis which included aspects of critical textual analysis.

Thematic Analysis

Once all relevant interviews and panel discussions were gathered, a thematic analysis was conducted to interpret data for the presence of themes (Nowell et al. 2017: 2). This qualitative method of analysis centred on finding out what the views, opinions and values of Fox News were on the two days critical to this research, and how they changed in their focus and presentation.

A thematic analysis is "a foundational method for qualitative analysis that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 5). This method of analysis involves extracting key themes from texts to identify and construct meaning. It is described as a flexible research tool that can be modified to suit various kinds of research by enabling the study to look, classify, and interpret themes and patterns. A thematic analysis is underpinned by its ability to "identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data by minimally organising and describing data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 6). The process comprises closely looking at texts to highlight similarities and differences, with the aim of identifying common features that repeatedly summarise and arrive at a meaningful conclusion (Nowell et al. 2017: 2). Braun & Clarke (2006: 10) describe a theme as a significant detail about the collected data that is derived from patterned responses meant to answer proposed research questions. By thoroughly investigating qualitative data for recurring themes, the

researcher can answer questions about people's positions, behaviours, and experiences (Brenen 2017: 4).

Thematic analysis outlines interesting and significant details to address research questions and make a statement about an issue that has arisen. It is not only about reviewing and summarising data, but also unpacks it to make sense of it. Thematic analysis looks beyond people's reactions and what they had to say to adequately shape the research. Varying forms of texts undergo thematic analysis to tease out and clarify key themes and basic perceptions that are contained in them. An inductive or data-driven approach was adopted which provided the research with ideas on some of the themes that could be explored, while reading theory offered other potential themes to look for when analysing data. The inductive method is defined as an organised process used to analyse qualitative data where the study is guided by the data (Selvam & Collicutt 2012: 89; Thomas 2003: 2). Its main purpose is to let research findings occur from themes that are common and dominant in the data without imposing limits from structured methodologies. The analysis also took on the latent approach to scrutinise underlying concepts, ideologies, and assumptions and "seek[s] to identify the features that gave it that particular form and meaning" (Braun & Clarke 2006: 13).

Conducting a thematic analysis involves "familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming theme, and writing up" (Caulfield, 2019). All 16 television texts were analysed in this way to identify common themes. The research used the following six-step framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006: 15) to conduct a trustworthy thematic analysis.

1. *Familiarising yourself with your data*

Qualitative research data which comes in various forms requires researchers to take note of initial analysis observations (Tuckett 2005: 76). To find themes, all data must be viewed holistically more than once, making notes, and jotting down possible ideas and potential themes. Actively reading the data repeatedly enabled the researcher to be aware of patterns and search for meanings early on to be able to begin the process of coding (Braun & Clarke 2006: 17). All 16 television texts used as data for this research were closely read and accurately transcribed to become familiar with them, engage with them a bit more, and to establish an in-depth

understanding of the data. This step aided the process of narrowing down the focus and possible key aspects of the data relevant to the analysis.

2. *Generating initial codes*

The process of coding begins once the data has become familiar and the researcher is aware of what they contain, including the main points that are relevant to the research. This step of coding involves organising and simplifying the data by reducing it into smaller parts that make sense (Maguire & Delahunt 2017: 3355). Based on prior knowledge of Fox and its coverage of Trump, the researcher had some idea of what would be found in the data but remained open to having other themes unravel themselves as the research process proceeded. The approach of working through the data using emerging ideas allowed the researcher to code only the section of data that was pertinent to, or highlighted, something captivating about the proposed research question (Maguire & Delahunt 2017: 3355). This process forms the basis of identifying possible repeated connections or patterns that inform the development of themes across the entire data set (Braun & Clarke 2006: 18).

3. *Searching for themes*

Searching for themes involves organising all relevant coded data and collecting components which highlight something significant in relation to the research question. This step is about analysing the different identified codes and considering how these come together to make up a predominant theme (Braun & Clarke 2006: 19). Visual illustration is helpful in this phase to assist with categorising diverse codes into themes. A table was used for this research to organise various themes that emerged from the data. It is at this stage that the researcher can classify the main themes and sub-themes and the relationship between the two. The researcher constructed themes by mapping out how the identified codes relate to each other and combining significant links within the data (Kiger & Varpio 2020: 5). This enabled the researcher to determine which of these different levels of themes is not coherent and does not meaningfully contribute to the research question.

4. *Reviewing themes*

Step four involves refining already identified themes, and when it becomes apparent which of these should not be regarded as themes. The researcher makes a clear distinction between them and extracts the ones that meaningfully adhere together (Braun & Clarke 2006: 20). In this phase it will become evident that some of these themes do not have enough data to support them, possibly leading them to being collapsed into one, while others are broken down into isolated themes. This step involves two levels of refinement with the first one seeking to evaluate whether the potential themes relate to each other in a way that forms a coherent pattern. If they do correlate then the researcher can move to the next level of this phase, but if they do not fit, then they would need to be reworked or discarded (Braun & Clarke 2006: 20). The second level of this stage applies a similar process as the first level although in this case it does this in relation to the entire data set. The validity of the identified themes is dependent on how well "the thematic map accurately and adequately represents the entire body of data" (Kiger & Varpio 2020: 6). This step is what the thematic analysis process is generally about, with the constant revision and re-reading of codes and themes.

5. *Defining and naming themes*

In this step, researchers define and provide a detailed explanation of each identified theme, including its importance to the broader research question. Each theme is given a short, descriptive name aligned to the narrative that contributes to the general understanding of the research (Nowell et al. 2017: 10). In this phase the researcher not only addresses proposed research questions, but also clearly outlines what each theme is about and what they find interesting about it (Braun & Clarke 2006: 22). A detailed analysis and consideration are key for each theme in relation to the others. At the end of this step researchers should be able to concisely describe the overall scope of each theme, identify its essence, and the story it tells.

6. Producing the report

Selecting representative data extracts, taking notes, and describing themes throughout the process of analysis forms part of the writing process. This step involves "weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualising it in relation to existing literature" (Braun & Clarke 2013: 121). This phase includes the interpretation of fully worked out themes in such a way that they connect in a

logical and meaningful way. It forms part of an analytic process that goes beyond describing the themes and offers an argument with regards to the research question. It makes a captivating account of the data inside and across themes, while attempting to convince the reader of the reliability and validity of the analysis.

Textual Content Analysis

To assist with understanding the meaning of messages conveyed in Trump's coverage by Fox, a textual content analysis was conducted, to understand the selected texts. A textual analysis is "the method used to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message" (Frey et al. 1999: 1). It assists with making sense of the visual and spoken content, and is "an effective way of assessing, comparing and understanding media texts" (Bainbridge et al. 2011: 224). Textual analysis allows the researcher to evaluate media content and understand underlying meanings. It opens-up media texts for scrutiny, enabling the research to discover various types of content patterns. Textual analysis enables a close reading of how people communicate their ideas, choose to portray issues, and how they express their thoughts and opinions. This method of analysis explores languages, images, and symbols that are present in texts with the knowledge that not all readers will make sense of them in the same way. It emphasises the cultural and ideological assumptions of a text (Arya 2020: 173). All interviews and panel discussions from the 6 and 7 November 2020 were analysed in this way. The televisual texts were chosen for this more in-depth analysis because the dialogue and word choice used by journalists and contributors offered a contemporary narrative structure and perspective that provides a fundamental political context of the relationship between Fox and Trump. The selected texts covered critical issues of partisan journalism more extensively.

Hall (1980: 509) theorises communication as a process of encoding and decoding meanings. The concept of encoding and decoding highlights meaning making as an 'active', rather than 'passive' process. The model challenged then dominant views of audience's meaning making processes by giving the power of making meaning to the audience. It demonstrates how meanings encoded into messages by producers are decoded and made sense of by receivers of

the messages. Hall (1980: 509) argues that as meaning making by both 'producers' and 'consumers' is a social process, studies concerned with how the media is consumed daily by audiences should be centered around the social and political context of both processes of production and consumption of texts. When it comes to media audiences and how they decode proposed televisual meanings, Hall proposes three positions that television audiences can take up when decoding texts; agreement, negotiation, and opposition (1980: 580). These highlight different interpretative options available for audiences from which texts can be read in relation to their own social positions.

Reliability and Validity

Concepts of reliability and validity ensure that "researcher bias does not interfere with or alter their perception of the data and any insights offered" (Anderson 2010: 2). Their function is to ensure the "accuracy, consistency and equivalence in research" (Yonge & Stewin 1988: 61). Reliability and validity have been closely associated with quantitative research because of its ability to address research questions using statistical and empirical calculations. Because these concepts come from quantitative research, it has been suggested that they are not applicable in the qualitative approach. Healy & Perry (2000: 10) contend that it is essential that each research paradigm is assessed on its own terms. This means that reliability and validity in qualitative research should be applied and evaluated based on its own approach. Qualitative research which involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting data to understand complex reality, applies these concepts differently to enhance the credibility of the research. Often regarded as subjective, prejudiced, unreliable, and lacking in accuracy, Anderson (2010: 2) argues that when reliability and validity are applied appropriately, qualitative research is unbiased, dependable, and effective. The concepts of reliability and validity illustrate the practicality of identifying and examining certain key emergent ideas, themes, and patterns in qualitative research. They challenge the researcher and examine the study for any discrepancies. Both qualitative and quantitative research aim to be rigorous, which can be established by considering the reliability and validity of the method and its findings.

In qualitative research, validity refers to the suitability of "processes, tools and data" (Leung 2015 :325) to answer research questions. Validity is the truthfulness with which research

methods are applied and the accurate presentation of findings (Noble & Smith 2015: 34). It is established when all the elements of the research data are defined in the same conceptual way as previously used by other researchers. Validity is grounded in the process of ensuring that the research has integrity, is believable and credible. Yonge & Stewin (1988: 64) suggest that the best way to assess credibility in qualitative research is when researchers can positively define their interaction with research participants. Research is valid when data is plausible and can be defended when confronted.

Combined with validity which highlights honesty and genuineness of the study, reliability ensures the reproducibility and stability of the data that was gathered (Anderson 2010: 2; Yonge & Stewin 1988: 61). In qualitative research, reliability is established by the quality of the study and its ability to make sense of, and "help us understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner 1991: 59). It is only when data responses are unchanging and constant, and the research generates understanding that it is regarded as reliable. The 'soundness', consistency and dependability of the data and how fundamental concepts are undertaken makes research findings trustworthy.

The research has appropriately applied all the methods as outlined to ensure that it is reliable and truthful. Definitions of concepts used in this research have been clearly detailed and the units of analysis have been well-defined to ensure that the study is valid. There is a conceptual link between what the research says it will examine and what it does. Ultimately, questions about how credible, appropriate, and verifiable the research results are, is more significant than how reliable and valid research methods of qualitative research are (Yonge & Stewin 1988: 64).

Conclusion

The chapter has outlined and explained in detailed which research methodologies were undertaken for this research. Qualitative methodology was defined, followed by research methods used that are appropriate to this study. The chapter detailed how the research obtained the data and what methods were used to get the information that would ultimately help the research answer the proposed research questions. Textual analysis, thematic analysis and reliability and validity were explained, and their application outlined.

Chapter 4: Issue Themes

Introduction

This is an introduction to Chapters 4 and 5. Both chapters analyse the data described in the previous chapter, the news media coverage of Donald Trump by Fox News the day before, and the day of the announcement of the election results. The 2020 presidential elections were considered one of the most significant in the history of the United States (Hirsh 2020). First, because they were held against the backdrop of a global coronavirus pandemic, and second, in the 21st century they were the first since 1992, and the fifth in the past 100 years, when a sitting president failed to secure a second term in office. What also made the 2020 presidential polls different was the counting of mail-in votes which led to a delay in the announcement of results.

This chapter and the next one present an analysis and discussion of the collected data. They probe the nature of the relationship between Fox and Trump, and how it changed after the calling of the elections. The findings are based on a content/thematic analysis of 16 videos: ten from 6 November, and six from 7 November 2020. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 deal with an analysis of the content and form themes respectively. The former will be dealt with in chapter 4 and the latter in chapter 5. For analytical purposes, a distinction is made between 'Issue (content) themes' and 'Stylistic (form) themes', although both of them work together to create meaning of the data that was analysed to make sense of how Fox conveyed their views.

Data classification Genre

The table in Appendix *Table 1* represents the data collected on the two days of the study, highlighting television programmes and key words used to identify the main themes discussed. The following genres and themes were identified and analysed:
Four news genres were identified: Hard news; Magazine/Lifestyle; Current Affairs; Talk Show. The distribution of these genres is as follows (See *Table 1* in Appendix):

6 November 2020		7 November 2020	
Hard news	2	Hard News	4
Magazine/Lifestyle	2	Current Affairs	2
Current Affairs	1	**TOTAL**	**6**
Talk Shows	5		
TOTAL:	**10**		

Discussion of genre classification

Van Leeuwen defines genres as a "type of text or communicative event" (2009: 345) which brings out the features of texts. Genres are classified according to characteristics including the subject matter, target audience, their purpose, the intended effect and the form or style that they tend to adopt. Different forms of journalism consist of various genres depending on the specific medium.

This analysis offers a picture of how Fox News structured its programming, and the kind of programmes that were broadcast during the election period. These television programmes were identified in the chronological order in which they were broadcast. The differing times and themes in the analysis suggests a discussion of an evolving narrative of how Fox positioned itself. The categorisation demonstrates the frequency of themes as per newsroom discussions, and links them to the changing coverage of Donald Trump over the two-day period. This enables an entry point to the discussion about how these themes are related to key arguments that played a role in the changing coverage.

The analysis in Appendix *Table 1* shows that an extensive spread of soft and hard news programmes was broadcast on 6 November 2020 compared with 7 November 2020 when there appeared to be more hard news and current affairs programmes. Of ten programmes broadcast on the 6th, there were only two hard news programmes and one current affairs programme; the other seven programmes comprised a magazine/lifestyle show and talk shows. On the 7th four hard news and two current affairs programmes were broadcast. Normative news theory suggests that news is made up of hard news where facts feature prominently, whereas soft news is more

opinion based. This could account for the distribution of genres over the two days and the themes that were discerned and analysed. This shows the significance of the Talk Show genre on the day before the calling, and News and Current Affairs on the day of the calling. This could tell us something about how Fox was positioning itself on those days and the kind of identity (political and journalistic) that they were constructing for themselves. On the day before the election was called, most Fox news journalists and contributors presented their opinions of the polls and predicted the outcome and possible action by the opposition party. On the day when the elections were called, however, the channel focussed on hard news. In this way Fox could maintain face with Trump supporters while satisfying journalistic norms of objectivity. This possibly illustrates Tuchman's (1972: 660) concept of objectivity as a strategic ritual with the channel demonstrating that they were not responsible for their position and how they called the election on 7 November 2020, they were merely reporting 'the facts'. On that day, Fox focused on the 'facts' of the election results, rather than commenting on speculations. The channel seemed to have prioritised factual news, thereby maintaining its credibility as a news station.

Discussion of news sub-genres

News is regarded as an accurate report of events, providing the public with information that is objective and balanced (Sjovaag 2015: 101). It is the reporting and dissemination of everyday 'happenings' that are fair and factual (Schudson 2003: 4). News is usually divided into two categories, soft and hard news. Hard news includes "war reporting, political exposure and investigative journalism", while soft news comprises "entertainment, features and human-interest stories, family life, consumer journalism and sports" (Sjovaag 2015: 101). The function and narrative of each genre, its structure, and features set up a certain level of interaction that is relevant to a particular news programme (Van Leeuwen 2009: 345).

According to Britannica, a fact-checked encyclopaedia, Fox is a news channel that reports hard news with content consisting of politics, the economy, and international current affairs (2021). Its regular programming, however, is formatted to accommodate other genres that serve an informative purpose in the form of soft news. This is for audiences who strive to stay socially in touch with the latest updates in lifestyle and entertainment, which is considered useful for their everyday lives (Neuts, 2018). During the 2020 presidential election, the channel's

Magazine/Lifestyle Shows, and Talk Shows adjusted their content to broadcast the election which was the most topical event at the time. Four news genres were identified when analysing the data: Hard News, Magazine/Lifestyle, Current affairs and Talk shows. Hard news and Current Affairs are the main programmes reporting on leading events of the day. Soft news in the form of Magazine/Lifestyle and Talk Shows have angles that are newsworthy and relevant to the interests of the audience (Sjovaag 2015: 104). The genre follows the "classical complication-resolution pattern, and the hard news action story and opinion story formats" (Van Leeuwen 2009: 357). Soft news mostly deals with opinions of either the journalist or its audience. Given these differentiations, it is not surprising that Fox focused on soft news on the day before the election was called, and on hard news the day on which it was called. The choice of news genre to broadcast on the day before, and when the election was called, can be seen as one of the subtle ways in which Fox adjusted its programming to keep the support of its Republic viewers, while satisfying the demands of journalistic norms. Themes that emerged in the data within the above-mentioned genres, are discussed below.

Themes

A total of fourteen themes informed narratives about Donald Trump, revealing ways in which the former president was covered by Fox, and how the coverage changed over the two days under study. The following six 'issue' themes:

1. Election credibility
2. Election fraud
3. Politics and the law
4. Media credibility
5. Fake news
6. The concept of 'the people'

and eight 'stylistic' themes were identified:

7. Normative media values
8. Objectivity
9. Misinformation and disinformation
10. Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
11. The position of Fox journalists and contributors

12. The kind of argumentation used
13. Propaganda
14. Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber.

Twelve themes were identified on 6 November 2020 (five issue themes and seven stylistic themes):

Issue themes:

1. Election credibility
2. Election fraud
3. Politics and the law
4. Media credibility
5. The concept of 'the people'

Stylistic themes:

6. Normative media values
7. Objectivity
8. Misinformation and disinformation
9. Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
10. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
11. The kind of argumentation used
12. Propaganda.

Ten themes were identified on 7 November 2020 (five issue themes and five stylistic themes). Included in these were two new themes: one issue, 'Fake news', and the other that has stylistic implications, 'public sphericule':

Issue themes:

1. Election credibility
2. Election fraud
3. Politics and the law
4. Media credibility
5. Fake news

Stylistic themes:

6. Normative media values
7. Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
8. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
9. The kind of argumentation used
10. Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber.

Hard news and Current Affairs, share the following four issue themes with soft news genres of Talk Shows and Magazine/Lifestyle programmes: election credibility, election fraud, politics and the law, media credibility; and the following three stylistic themes: the position of Fox journalists and contributors, the kind of argumentation used, and journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin). But the hard news programmes also tackled one other issue theme, namely, fake news, and two stylistic themes: normative media values and the public sphericule. In contrast, soft news programmes additionally carried the following issue themes, the concept of 'the people'; and three stylistic themes, namely, objectivity, propaganda, and misinformation and disinformation. This distribution can be summed up in the following table:

	Hard News	**Soft News**
Issue Themes	Election credibility	Election credibility
	Election fraud	Election fraud
	Politics and the law	Politics and the law
	Media credibility	Media credibility
	Fake news	
		The concept of the people
Stylistic Themes		Objectivity
		Propaganda
	Normative media values	
	The kind of argumentation used	The kind of argumentation used
	Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)	Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)

		Misinformation and disinformation
	The position of Fox journalists and contributors	The position of Fox journalists and contributors
	Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber	

This chapter will discuss the six issue themes using a thematic analysis as discussed in the previous chapter. Chapter 5 will proceed in the same way, analysing and discussing the stylistic themes.

Issue Themes:

Election credibility

The concept of election credibility is largely characterised by "inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability and competitiveness" (Brown et al. 2016: 11). It serves as a basis for a legitimate democracy that ultimately plays a role in restoring public confidence in the leaders of the country. In line with this is the media's responsibility to strengthen and entrench democracy. The theory of media and democracy emphasises the industry's responsibility to provide the public with a voice to raise issues of concern (Curran 2011: 82). These expectations of the media are based on the assumption that the media serves as a public watchdog, enabling the country's citizens to become active participants in democratic states. Fox news has been accused of contributing to a decrease in dependability when it comes to mainstream news (Guess et al. 2020: 1). Given this, it is important to consider the kind of reporting offered by the channel, and whether we can accept their statements as reliable. Fox did not raise any matters relating to Biden's campaign but played "an important part in shaping political reality" (McCombs & Shaw 1972: 181) when it came to Trump's position on the credibility of elections. Election credibility is linked to media credibility as it relates to transparency and the truth offered by the provider of information. The theme was constructed as a core news item for discussion because it had never been an issue in previous US elections. In fact, most election processes and transition of power were reasonably peaceful from one party to another.

Election credibility emerged in various conversations on Fox as per the agenda set by Donald Trump during his election campaign. On 6 November 2020 the channel appeared to have placed strong emphasis on this theme in soft news programmes compared to hard news, suggesting that it wanted its viewers to pay particular attention to this matter that was of importance to a specific favoured candidate. Relying on the testimony of its journalists and contributors who have a conservative mindset or worldview that the channel also offers, Fox implied that the elections were not reliable. In her statement about the credibility of elections, contributor Mollie Hemmingway highlighted the general principle that should apply in every election to ensure that Americans fully trust the election process. She seemed to imply that debates about election credibility were a result of a lack of responsibility by election officials in ensuring that the way in which ballots were counted was not reliable and dependable. On a hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream* she suggested that not all votes were 'legal' stating that

> and all these things that happen to be happening in battleground states where Donald Trump was big on election night and ballots keep getting found, that keep going in favour of his opponent, it makes Trump supporters feel like this is a rigged system. (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

In this way, Fox undermined the mail-in vote system which they had discouraged Republicans from using.

A total of eleven of 16 broadcast videos from both hard and soft news programmes mentioned the credibility factor in the 2020 presidential elections. Among some of the questions raised were the time it took to count the ballots, the inclusiveness of Republican and Democratic party representatives in the counting process, and the transparency and accountability by government and election officials. According to Hemmingway:

> that's not just about voting, but also about having transparency and accountability in the counting of the votes. As counts drag on for days upon days upon days, and as for some reason these Democratic controlled areas do not want people in observing the counting of ballots. That would be one thing if counting of the ballots was coming in fairly evenly for Joe Biden and Donald Trump. When they are coming in overwhelmingly for Joe Biden it's not unreasonable for Republicans to be extremely upset about their lack of access to the counting of ballots.

(https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

Discussions about election credibility were mostly centred on the confidence that citizens should always have in elections and their outcome, ensuring that the process of counting votes was credible. A media statement released by the Trump campaign that was read on 7 November 2020 on the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020 by* Chief White House correspondent John Roberts stated:

> The American people are entitled to an honest election, that means counting all legal ballots, and not counting any illegal ballots. This is the only way to ensure the public has full confidence in our election.
>
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE).

It is not insignificant that Fox used the then Chief White House correspondent to raise the issue of what kind of election Americans are 'entitled' to. By doing this, they were placing it on the news and political agenda, which was then echoed by Fox. The channel thus became the loudhailer for Trump's strategy to undermine the election: setting it up long before it was an issue, following the former president's address to his supporters on August 18, 2020, in Wisconsin, where he said (Telegraph, 2020)

> we have to win the election. We can't play games. Go out and vote. Do those beautiful absentee ballots, or just make sure your vote gets counted. Make sure because the only way we're going to lose this election is if the election is rigged.
>
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR5VO9FAGDc).

Fox gave election credibility the time and attention that the former president hoped it would. He set the agenda on what the channel thinks about this theme as an issue and how it ought to report on it (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007 :14).

Election credibility is fundamental to ensuring the acceptance of its outcome in a democracy. According to a policy brief produced by the Kofi Annan Foundation (2016: 5):

> the basis for public trust is shaped by the broader political context in which elections take place, not just by the quality of the electoral process itself.

In a panel discussion on the soft news programme *The Five* on 6 November 2020, Fox anchor and panellist Dagen McDowell referred to a need for

> extreme fairness and rigor and transparency in this count, in any recount that happens. The American people need to believe in the legitimacy of the election. (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207884718001#sp=show-clips).

McDowell's emphasis on accuracy in the counting implied that there is a need for consistency in the process of voter counting to put voters at ease. Additionally, in a soft news editorial opinion piece on *The Angle* talk show on 6 November 2020, Laura Ingraham mentioned some of the allegations that brought the credibility of the elections into question. The delay in the arrival and counting of mail-in ballots made her query whether the election and the results could be relied on. She also went on to personalise her address to her viewers, seemingly taking 'their side' in her scepticism about the arrival of 'bags of votes' that 'turned up just when Biden' needed them:

> I know many of you cannot believe that bags of votes, almost all for Biden seem to turn up just when Biden needs them the most. (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

Ingraham's view was that of someone who had already concluded that allegations levelled against Biden's camp were true and brought the elections into disrepute. Her tone suggests and undermines the notion of fair elections with her emphasis on illegal votes that were said to mostly be in favour of Biden.

Fox journalists and contributors' viewpoints on the theme of election credibility were mostly in line with Trump's thinking following his 18 August 2020 speech saying that the only way the Republicans were going to lose the election was if it were rigged. They highlighted and acknowledged that questions about the electoral process fuelled suspicions, and this made the party feel that the election was under attack, resulting in allegations of fraud.

Election fraud

Stemming from questions about election credibility is the issue of election fraud which is defined as the "manipulation of the electoral process" (Alvarez et al. 2008: 1). This theme came from words emphasised and repeated by Fox news journalists and contributors when discussing claims made by the Trump campaign. Republicans alleged that the elections were fraudulent, using the following terms:

a) '*stealing an election*' was quoted by anchor Bret Baier on a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 6 November 2020,

> As he's saying that Democrats are *stealing an election* and that it's a corrupt system, on the other side of the screen, literally the votes are going down in Georgia, now at 36 hundred votes spread between President Trump and former vice president Biden. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley)*;*

b) '*suppression polls*', noted by Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts on a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 6 November 2020:

> What he calls *suppression polls*, polls that showed that the president was gonna lose certain states by anyway from 7 to 15 points or 17 points in the case of Wisconsin. And that the results were anything but what had been projected. The president calling those *suppression polls*.
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE)*;*

c) '*rigged system'*, was used by contributor Mollie Hemmingway on 6 November 2020 on a hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream:*

> it makes Trump supporters feel like this is a *rigged system*. Rigged not just because of the counting but because of how the entire campaign was handled from the very beginning to right now.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips)*;*

d) *'fraud'*, was cited by anchor Steve Doocy on a soft news programme *Fox & Friends* on 6 November 2020:

> So, the president last night demanded that they stop counting the ballots because he said there's *fraud*. He's talking about lawsuits.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/where-the-race-stands-biden-erases-trump-lead-georgia-count-makes-gains-pennsylvania);

e) '*abuse ballots / abuse of the system'*, was mentioned by Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts on a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 6 November 2020*:*

> Now in terms of fraud, or *abuse or found ballots* that the president talked a lot about, we haven't seen any widespread evidence that that is the case.

He continued:

> I haven't really seen anything that would constitute any kind of flagrant fraud or *abuse of the system*. Perhaps I just haven't heard about it. Perhaps Fox News hasn't heard about it. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley)*;*

f) '*corrupt system*', was quoted by Bret Baier on a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 6 November 2020:

> As he's saying that Democrats are stealing an election and that it's a *corrupt system*, on the other side of the screen, literally the votes are going down in Georgia, now at 36 hundred votes spread between President Trump and former vice president Biden. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley).

The above-mentioned statements highlight concerns by Republicans over how the election was conducted. Among the people interviewed about the Trump campaign's stance on the allegations of fraud was Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts who covered news from the White House. He was the most reliable source to discuss the theme of election fraud on that day because of his immediate first-hand experience with the president. Following a media briefing by Trump on 6 November 2020 Roberts highlighted some of the election fraud points that he had raised:

> Now in terms of fraud, or abuse or found ballots that the president talked a lot about, we haven't seen any widespread evidence that that is the case. I did forward around a short time ago a letter from the Trump campaign to the district attorney in court county Nevada in which it is alleged that thousands of people who were not legal residents of Nevada cast votes in count county. I mean that could be some evidence of fraudulent voting. We don't know, it's a claim at this point.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley).

Just like the theme of election credibility, election fraud was discussed in great detail on 6 November in soft news programmes where journalists and contributors had detailed conversations about the claims and how they affected the overall elections. On 7 November election fraud was mentioned in both hard and soft news to remind viewers about an issue that the channel and Trump had emphasised leading up to the elections. Although on this day the theme was mentioned in passing and not emphasised in discussions in both news genres, it was the channel's way of highlighting the importance attributed to it by Trump.

Fox kept repeating claims of fraud as set out by Republicans, while also mentioning that there was still no believable evidence provided to back them up. On 6 November 2020, anchor of the *Fox & Friends* soft news programme Steve Doocy commented on Trump's 5 November 2020 press conference claiming that his campaign had evidence of election fraud. Instead of going with the election fraud narrative, Doocy commented:

> he says there's so much evidence as we've just heard. I think at this point we need to see the evidence, right?

Contributor Jonathan Turley also noted that,

> we haven't seen that evidence and until we do, they're hunting elephants with Derringers.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/where-the-race-stands-biden-erases-trump-lead-georgia-count-makes-gains-pennsylvania).

On the same day, Bret Baier anchor of hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* noted:

> *w*e have not seen the hard evidence. He claims that his campaign is going forward with these legal lawsuits, and they are going to produce it.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley).

In other words, these Fox journalists were preparing their audiences for the worst. When Trump's campaign released a statement following the calling of the election on 7 November 2020, Chief White House correspondent John Roberts on hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* highlights the need to see some real hard evidence that there was in fact voting irregularities.

On the same programme, Fox News Sunday anchor Chris Wallace added:

> It seems at this point that the Trump camp is filing and pushing the idea of lawsuits in search of evidence. Usually, you have evidence of something and then you follow with lawsuits.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/rachel-maddow-trump-laughable-pitiful-irrevelant).

Although also repeating utterances by Trump supporters as if they were 'facts', Mollie Hemmingway distanced herself from their views on a hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream* on 6 November 2020. She covered herself journalistically by repeating unproven 'facts', while distancing herself from their position. This is the presentation of

an ‘objective account’ that Tuchman (1972: 660) describes as a “strategic ritual”. Hemmingway put across the Republican opinion but was not explicit about whether she agreed with their sentiments:

> That would be one thing if counting of the ballots was coming in fairly evenly for Joe Biden and Donald Trump. When they are coming in overwhelmingly for Joe Biden it’s not unreasonable for Republicans to be extremely upset about their lack of access to the counting of ballots.
>
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

Trump planted doubt in the election system when he addressed his supporters in Wisconsin on 18 August 2020, saying that the only way Republicans were going to lose the polls were if they were rigged. He perpetuated this narrative until, and even after, the election results were announced. The issue of election fraud was a myth that Trump imbedded in advance in case he lost the election. He made his supporters believe that holding a free and fair election was not possible if he did not win. The election was marred by claims of people voting illegally and the counting of ‘illegal’ mail ballots because that was the anticipated outcome entrenched by the former president himself.

Politics and the law

Matters relating to the counting of mail-in ballots and alleged fraud raised by Republicans leading to them describing the electoral process as a rigged system, were decided upon by the courts. Trump’s campaign also took to court complaints about Republican representatives not being allowed inside the vote counting areas and speculations about deceased people voting (Pengelly, 2021; Beer, 2020). This theme of politics and the law highlights the reliance on legal arguments, thereby making the law, an apparently neutral arbiter, an integral part of the democratic electoral process. The media, election officials, and politicians naturalised litigation as a new norm in the mediation of election issues. Having Republicans resort to litigation to resolve political issues is a conversation that was raised by Fox journalists and contributors in 11 out of 16 televisual texts. In both hard and soft news programmes held on 6 November 2020, legal challenges were a key factor that was given much time and explained in-depth. Anchor Steve Doocy replayed a video clip of Trump on 5 November 2020 on the soft news programmes *Fox & Friends* to remind viewers what Trump’s stance was, whatever the outcome:

> We think there's gonna be a lot of litigation because we have so much evidence, so much proof and it's going to end up perhaps at the highest court in the land. We'll see. But we think there will be a lot of litigation because we can't have an election stolen like this.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/where-the-race-stands-biden-erases-trump-lead-georgia-count-makes-gains-pennsylvania).

On the same day, during a panel discussion in a hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream,* anchor Shannon Bream spoke to John Yoo a legal expert to expand on the importance of court cases and what they could mean for Trump's campaign. She emphasised the need to discuss this issue:

> I wanna stick to some of these legal fights and what's going on. I wanna bring John Yoo in. And I think it's important to know that, as Leslie mentioned, these cases are in the Supreme court. John, for the most part, they've not ruled on the merits of these cases and that Pennsylvania case is still pending there.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

Bream made the issue of litigation "more salient in peoples' mind" (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007: 11) to elevate the urgency that came with the Republican's bid to contest the poll results.

On 7 November 2020 litigation was also mentioned in both soft and hard news as the channel's way to appear somewhat objective by distancing itself from the elections that were called in favour of Biden. Despite taking the approach of not tackling issues in depth on this day, Fox ensured that every conversation included court battles and discussions about how Republicans were planning to challenge the results. In a hard news programme *America Reports*, during an interview that looked at celebrations by Democrats and the media's relationship with the former president, anchor Sandra Smith threw in a comment about legal challenges:

> You wonder what the days and weeks look like knowing that the Trump campaign is making very clear, we just had one of their legal strategists just a short time ago. They still plan to fight this.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6208048869001#sp=show-clips).

This shows that the channel was saying that even though they had called the election, they would, at every turn, remind their viewers that those were not the final results because there was

looming litigation. The channel appears to be suggesting that they were simply reporting facts like everyone else, but the 'correct' set of results were still to be confirmed after all the legal challenges.

The Republicans' anticipated efforts to enlist the courts in their campaign to overturn the election results was also highlighted when Fox announced the results on 7 November 2020. W*hen* anchors Martha MacCallum and Bret Baier called the election on the hard news *FOX News Democracy 2020* programme, they reminded viewers:

> Keep in mind the Trump campaign is in the midst of waging legal challenges in several states, but the path is clear for the new president elect. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-wins-presidency-trump-fox-news-projects).

The above statement is double-edged with the first part taking note of the legal challenges, which suggests uncertainty, while the second part of the report confirms Joe Biden's win. Here we see how Fox strategically uses ambiguity to call the election. As a key figure of speech, strategic ambiguity accepts the presence of various viewpoints in one statement while acknowledging the possibility of having several interpretations (Eisenberg 1984: 231). The channel's reporting style in this instance could be interpreted as being vague, carefully guarding against being one sided in case the mentioned litigation was successful. On the same programme, Chief White House correspondent John Roberts read a statement from the Trump campaign that confirmed their intentions to approach the courts:

> Beginning Monday our campaign will start prosecuting our case in court to ensure election laws are fully upheld, and the rightful winner is seated. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE).

As expected, the Trump campaign had already decided that litigation was the best route to overturn the election results. Considering some of the statements that had been issued before, it was evident that there was never any intention to accept the results without seeking a resolution from the courts.

Legalities surrounding the elections and how they were conducted reveals a connection between law and social issues. Trump's reliance on the courts shows how wealthy and powerful people like him use the law to maintain their place and power in society. This is evidence of the critical

legal theory view that the law "supports a power dynamic which favours the historically privileged and disadvantages the historically disadvantaged" (Legal Information Institute, 1992). But by applying the law independently in cases that involved powerful interests, the US judiciary seemed to argue and disprove this view. A total of 61 out of 62 cases filed to challenge the presidential election were failed lawsuits (Cummings et al. 2021). Although the Trump campaign seemed to have received more unwarranted judicial support and attention, they were nevertheless left high and dry by the courts which demanded evidence of electoral law-breaking.

Media credibility

In the US, the media's role during the election period goes beyond reporting on news events. The industry also has the task of calling the election accurately (The Electoral Network, 2012). During the 2020 presidential elections, news media credibility was at its lowest when it came to how it was viewed following Trump's utterances of distrust during his presidential tenure (Piacenza, 2020). Discredit of the media was heightened by the former president's conflict with the industry, labelling it biased and 'the enemy of the people' (The Guardian, 2019). The theme of media credibility does not feature much on 6 November 2020 with it being more prominent on the day the election was called when Fox had to appear to uphold its journalistic standards. On 7 November 2020 media credibility features in all four hard news programmes and one soft news interview with Fox journalists and contributors referring to challenges Trump had with the industry during his tenure. The channel spoke of the media more as a third party that did not include them.

On 6 November 2020, in an interview on the hard news current affairs programme *America's Newsroom* then Fox News Editor Chris Stirewalt became an independent voice that would ensure transparency in reporting the election results:

> But I'm not listening to partisans when they are claiming big advantages in here, but we're gonna scramble everybody's eggs. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/where-the-race-stands-biden-erases-trump-lead-georgia-count-makes-gains-pennsylvania).

Stirewalt went on to assure viewers that his desk would call the election based on factual numbers and not what anyone else thought:

> whatever numbers are gonna come in, we're gonna count, that's why we have a decision desk. We are gonna look through all this stuff.

While Fox news spent some time trying to convince viewers that they would stand their ground on reporting the election results fairly on this day, in her editorial opinion piece on *The Angle*, a soft news programme, anchor Laura Ingraham seemed to distance herself from the media as she reflected on the industry's role in the coverage of Trump when he was in office. While mentioning everything the former president had accomplished in four years, she stated how he had to endure constant assault from various forces, including the 'corrupt media'.

> Of course, the deep state, the molar team, the corrupt media, the grifters at the Lincoln project, social media CEOs, the Antifa BLM rioters and even the virus that originated in China.
>
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

On this day both the hard and soft news programmes served the purpose of laying the foundation for what was to come the following day. While Stirewalt indicated that they would remain factual in their reporting, Ingraham created an image of Fox as being different from other networks and should thus be treated as such, whatever the election outcome.

The Fox news desk appeared transparent, objective, and accountable when anchor Bret Baier called the election in a hard news programme, *FOX News Democracy 2020*, on 7 November 2020:

> The Fox News decision desk can now project that former vice president Joe Biden will win Pennsylvania and Nevada putting him over the 270 electoral votes he needs to become the 46th president of the United States.
>
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-wins-presidency-trump-fox-news-projects).

The channel appeared to be a credible media network on this day with its willingness to stand by its decision to call elections in favour of Biden leading to Republican protests against this. Correspondent Alicia Acuna, who was at the Press Office in Arizona, was interviewed on the hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream* on the same day. She told anchor Shannon Bream:

> *y*ou could hear them yelling 'Can Fake Fox News'. They are very frustrated that the Fox News channel decision desk, which stands by its decision, called Arizona yesterday evening. The Trump campaign and the Republicans felt the call was too soon. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-campaign-files-lawsuit-in-arizona-alleging-maricopa-county-rejected-votes-by-in-person-voters).

On both the 6 and 7 November 2020, in hard news programmes Fox was firm in their decision-making, appearing to have their credibility intact. In soft news programmes however, the channel reminded us that we should not associate them with other networks just because they had called the election as they had.

In their coverage and statements about the media, Fox journalists suggested that the channel, despite being part of the industry, separated itself from mainstream media to appear independent and neutral. This type of reporting might also mean that the channel wanted to be a presenter of 'true facts' or 'alternative facts' as opposed to mainstream media's fake news. Ingraham's reporting on *The Angle* seems to align with a press statement released by the Trump campaign following the calling of the election. Read by Chief White House correspondent John Roberts on the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 7 November 2020, it alleged:

> Joe Biden is rushing to claim victory and there is complicity with the media to hide the truth.
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE).

In an interview on the hard news programme *America Reports*, *MediaBuzz* host Howard Kurtz also evidenced the channel distancing itself from other networks, when he said:

> once again it comes down to President Trump versus the media.

He also touched on the media's right and responsibility to be tough on future presidents despite Trump's tantrums:

> because the former vice-president Biden gave relatively few interviews, and I think the press was pretty soft on him and gave him a pass on a whole lot of things, I think the press will have the responsibility to show that as president they will be tough on him as with any other president.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6208048869001#sp=show-clips).

Despite Trump's campaign being furious with its decision to call the election in favour of Biden, Fox was willing to stand by the Arizona results. Although these were yet to be formally confirmed by the Electoral College, the network was confident in its pronouncement based on the numbers they were seeing. The channel's journalists seemed to have taken a stance towards maintaining their journalistic credibility while also calling on its viewers to remember that they are different from the other networks, and their reporting should be treated as such.

Fake news

With social media as one of the main drivers of fake news, peddling false narratives was a growing trend that marred both the 2016 and 2020 US elections (Bovet & Makse 2019: 2). The concept of fake news, defined as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers" (Allcott & Gentzkow 2017: 213), was cited as one of the main factors that contributed to Donald Trump winning the presidency in the 2016 polls (Centre for Digital Society, 2021). Various misleading and fake news stories shared across social media during those elections included the following (Ritchie, 2016):

- *"Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president";*
- *"Donald Trump sent his own plane to transport 200 stranded marines";*
- *"#Pizzagate";*
- *"Ireland is now officially accepting Trump refugees from America";*
- *"WikiLeaks confirms Hillary sold weapons to ISIS … Then drops another bombshell";*
- *"FBI agent suspected in Hillary email leaks found dead in apartment murder-suicide";*
- *"FBI director received millions from Clinton Foundation, his brother's law firm does Clinton's taxes";*
- *"ISIS leader calls for American Muslim voters to support Hillary Clinton";*
- *"Hillary Clinton in 2013: 'I would like to see people like Donald Trump run for office; they're honest and can't be bought"; and*
- *"RuPaul claims Trump touched him inappropriately in the 90s".*

Trump maintained his leadership with the fake news ideology throughout his presidential tenure. For his campaign, fake news comprised any news reports that they did not like, rather than it being about fabrications of the truth.

Fabricated information presented as factual also became mainstream in the 2020 US elections intended to promote incorrect reports to discredit political figures and the media (Carson & Farhall, 2019). Using his personal Twitter account and in public appearances, the former president spread fake news about Democrats and the election process (Wright, 2020). Some of the fake news disseminated during the 2020 polls included the following (Timm, 2020):

- *"A very sad group is working to 'disenfranchise' those who cast ballots for Trump";*
- *"Trump wrongly says he is winning battleground states that NBC News has not called";*
- *"Democrats are attempting to steal the election by 'going to court'";*
- *"The ongoing count 'is a fraud on the American public'"; and*
- *"Trump suggests he'll go directly to the Supreme Court to 'stop' counting".*

When the election was called in favour of Biden on 7 November 2020, Trump continued to share messages that contained false information in an attempt to dismiss the outcome. His social media posts on Twitter read (Rattner, 2021):

- *"I won the election, by a lot"; and*
- *"71,000,000 legal votes. The most ever for a sitting president".*

The fake news theme manifested on that day in a hard news programme *America Reports* during an interview about the former president's relationship with the media. In his analysis of the push back by the Trump campaign, Howard Kurtz the host of *MediaBuzz* noted:

> Trump was casting this as another fake media narrative. (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6208048869001#sp=show-clips).

Fox journalists dealt with the subject of fake news by reminding viewers that the narrative was dominant before, during, and after the election period. In both soft and hard news programmes the channel did not say outright that what Trump was spreading was indeed fake news, but instead mentioned instances when the former president repeatedly made questionable statements directed towards specific groups in society. In an interview on the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* conducted soon after Fox called the election, anchor Chris Wallace mentioned some of these claims:

> the election had been stolen, talked about fraud, talked about conspiracy of big media, big money and big tech. (https://www.foxnews.com/media/rachel-maddow-trump-laughable-pitiful-irrevelant).

Spreading fake news and sharing messages that contained falsehoods is one of the main ways that Trump tried to discredit and undermine, not only his opponents but also the whole, election. The use of fake news to manipulate people's perceptions raised arguments about the ways and extent to which the former president was willing to hold onto power.

The concept of 'the people'

Putting society first is a general notion that is important within the social and political context of a democracy. In democratic countries like the US, the wellbeing of all citizens of the country underpins the quality of governance. Taking care of the needs of all citizens by government is seen as a "fulfilment of the promise of the American experiment in popular government made in the Declaration of Independence" (Church 1992: 259). In contrast to this is a political idea that the right-wing rhetoric adheres to, and was adopted by Richard Nixon the 37th US president, in 1968 (Winberg 2017: 3). This populist rhetoric is "often used as a kind of shorthand political insult" (Molloy, 2018) where society is divided into two groups, namely, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' (Molloy, 2018). The political ideology combines right-wing politics and represents the views of 'common people'. Populists believe that they exclusively represent 'the people' who are not classified by what they possess or the kind of money they have, but on their values and quality of life. This is a group of ordinary people that work hard but is occasionally neglected and overlooked when important decisions about what affects them are made. Although Trump's policies were more favourable to the elite group, Republicans located themselves within the populist rhetoric throughout his presidency (Friedman, 2017).

The theme of 'the people' was present only on 6 November 2020 in soft news programmes. In their conversations, Fox journalists made use of Trump's rhetoric about the corrupt elite and how throughout his campaign, he had worked towards representing the forgotten men and women of America. Their coverage of the former president saw the channel adopt more populist arguments by framing the former president as the savior of 'the people'. Fox took a position that was more in line with this typical right-wing rhetoric which assumes the perspective of speaking on behalf of ordinary people. The channel seems to have adopted the approach of invoking 'the people', a key word in populist politics, and Trump's approach to Republicanism. Speaking on behalf of the military on the soft news programme *The Five,* journalist Greg Gutfield highlighted the importance of 'the people' casting their votes and being counted. He noted that people in the

military would feel prejudiced against if the media called the election in favour of Biden before they were able to vote. He seemed to empathise with them because of their important role of serving the country:

> You're suddenly suggesting or saying the president should probably pump the brakes while the media doesn't. So, the media declares the winner even before the military votes are cast in many, many states. Which is a terrible message to send to the people who are serving abroad that they are serving our country, but we are not counting your votes because it's not gonna matter anyway. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTfPsjstxrg&t=7s).

This statement is significant because Gutfield used the typical right-wing rhetoric as a good way to prejudice viewers against the media that was treating the military so poorly as if their vote did not count.

In another soft news programme, *The Angle*, Laura Ingraham also invoked 'the people' by showing empathy towards her audience when speaking about the possible loss for Republicans. She did this to advance the right-wing notion that it is the elite groups that hinder the progress of 'the people' and the country from improving (Bryant & Moffitt, 2019). Ingraham expressed her populist position by putting elites and the big media in opposition to the people throughout her editorial:

> Four years ago, the American people stuck it to the political elites and their media bootleggers by putting Donald Trump in the White House. Now Trump rode in on this populist agenda of putting American workers first. And his mandate was to take power from the corrupt political class in Washington and put it back in the hands of the people. (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

Addressing issues associated with 'the people', Ingraham spent considerable time highlighting all the odds against Trump in his effort to speak on behalf of ordinary people. Her editorial focused more on the former president than it did on 'the people' she invokes. Ingraham's approach was more a promotion of Trump's presidency than a critical engagement to make her audience aware of issues of political importance.

Conclusion

The themes discussed in Chapter 4 are issues that emerged while working through the data as the research process proceeded. They arose within the Fox newsroom as journalists touched on some of the issues raised in proposed research questions. Repeated connections and patterns informed the development of these themes across the entire data set. The issue themes that appeared on the 6 and 7 November 2020 included, election credibility, election fraud, politics and the law, media credibility, fake news and the concept of 'the people'.

The issue themes saw Fox present itself as a 'good channel' by asking for evidence and proof of fraud. The channel tried to avoid being criticised or labelled biased, considering that they had been regarded as a partner to Trump's speculative narratives before the election. These themes and how they were discussed, highlighted issues that Trump and Fox regarded as significant, reminding viewers about matters that were of particular importance to the former president. Fox journalists and contributors spent considerable time trying to influence their viewers to think a certain way, and substantiated their arguments related to election credibility, election fraud, politics and law, 'the people' and media credibility. The channel's approach of not treating issues independently, and closely linking them to that of election fraud as per the agenda set by Trump, demonstrates the close relationship between the two parties. Fox tackled these themes in a way that makes Democrats appear as the 'problem' while Republicans were the 'victims' that suffered an injustice. The change in narrative and coverage on both days was mostly due to discussions that were framed around fact-checking, while significant emphasis was also not placed on challenging claims made by Republicans.

Chapter 5: Stylistic Themes

Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis of the data begun in the preceding chapter. Whereas Chapter 4 discusses six 'issue' themes identified in the data, this chapter discusses eight 'stylistic' themes. A stylistic theme is one that looks at *how* Fox news presented/covered its 'issue' themes on the days under study. It looks at the journalistic measures Fox journalists used to construct the issues in the genres discussed in the previous chapter. With the analysed data revealing different aspects of the relationship between Fox and Trump, the chapter explores *how* journalists and contributors talked about the issues raised. The chapter focuses on how issue themes are constructed and what kind of journalistic practices are used by the channel to address their audience. A discussion on how Trump was covered during the elections is significant because it reveals the various styles of deploying all the thematic features over both days and in their use across genres. The following 'stylistic' themes will be explored in this chapter:

1. Normative media values
2. Objectivity
3. Misinformation and disinformation
4. Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
5. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
6. The kind of argumentation used
7. Propaganda
8. Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber

Normative media values

As a concept that legitimises media institutions and concerns itself with "ideal functions of the press" (Benson 2008: 2591), normative media theories govern what the media ought to do. The idea speaks to ways in which the industry's practices should be held to account to the public. Voters usually rely on the media to provide them with extensive information about election

campaigns and manifestos (Ergun & Karsten 2019: 2). The media should not form any opinion on political affairs but should analyse and have critical conversations about the promises made to the public. Its role is to emphasise "tactics that politicians use in pursuing political goals, as well as their performances, styles of campaigning, and battles in the political arena, whether in office, opposition, or during elections" (de Vreese & Elenbaas 2008: 285). During the 2020 presidential election, Fox had the responsibility of upholding ideal journalistic and social values in its reporting. The theme of normative media values was highlighted on both 6 and 7 November 2020 in hard news programmes relating to key professional journalistic values yielded by newsroom practices. The theme is covered in a way that made the channel appear as an independent voice that would report on the election results in an accurate and impartial manner.

Chris Stirewalt, Fox News Editor at the time, was confident that his election decision desk would call the election fairly and without fear or favour. In an interview on a hard news programme *America's Newsroom* on 6 November 2020 he told Sandra Smith:

> I'm not listening to partisans when they are claiming big advantages in here, but we're gonna scramble everybody's eggs.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-overtakes-trump-in-georgia-count-as-tally-nears-completion).

With this statement Stirewalt suggested that the channel would look at the election results with an independent eye and interpret them as such. He was responding to a video clip of Kayleigh Mcenany, the White House Press Secretary who stated that Republicans had won ten days straight of early voting, and that Trump would win the election. Stirewalt's statement, however, could also be open to more than one interpretation when we consider his use of language and choice of words. What made his words ambiguous, defined as "an expression that has more than one distinct meaning" (Chaicharoen 2015: 31), is him not disclosing whom he is prepared to listen to before calling the election. When he said, "I'm not listening to partisans", one wonders whom he would prefer to listen to instead, and whether his response would have been different had it come from Trump himself.

Fox went ahead to make an independent editorial decision to call the election in favour of Joe Biden despite making comments on a stolen election. To reinforce the stance taken by the

channel's decision desk, on 7 November 2020 anchor of the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* Bret Baier stated: "Our projection is our projection" (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-wins-presidency-trump-fox-news-projects).
On the same day on the hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream*, Correspondent Alicia Acuna who covered a protest against the early calling of elections by Fox in Arizona, reported that:

> protestors were frustrated that the Fox news channel, which stands by its decision, called Arizona yesterday evening.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-campaign-files-lawsuit-in-arizona-alleging-maricopa-county-rejected-votes-by-in-person-voters).

Fox decided to stand by its decision to call the election in favour of Biden. This made the channel appear credible and seen as a television network that practised journalistic ethics. This could have been their way of appearing to adhere to normative standards as per their social responsibility to the public. Fox's position was unanimous and unitary when it came to how the channel appeared as far as this theme is concerned.

Objectivity

With objectivity as a "cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalists" (Litchenburg 1996: 225), this theme is a normative ideal and prerequisite that must be applied in the newsroom. As a yardstick of credible journalism, the central notion of objectivity challenges practices and attitudes to maintain the legitimacy of the newsroom (Chong 2017: 5). During Trump's tenure, claims, accusations, and allegations were leveled against the media, politicians, businesses, and election officials. It was the media's responsibility to check the facts and report only on those (Pingree et al. 2018: 1) to uphold journalistic objectivity and remain free of bias.

The theme of objectivity only featured in four soft news programmes consisting of in-depth conversations on 6 November 2020. Fox journalists used certain words, linguistic forms, and a tone that showed their support for Trump. Including themselves in conversations that clearly showed support for Republicans, and using words like "us and we" contributed to a reporting style that did not present the channel as an independent journalistic voice. For example, in a

panel discussion on *The Five* a soft news talk show, Jesse Watters, Fox political commentator declared his support for Trump:

> Trump supporters in this country are having a difficult time processing what's been happening over the last three days. I include myself in that group of people.

He positioned himself as pro-Trump against the president's critics including, 'big media', 'big tech', the courts, and the Democratic Party:

> I mean you've tried everything. You've spied on his campaign. You've investigated him. You've impeached him. You blamed him for 2000 American deaths in the home stretch big tech, big media. And all this money poured in, and they just emptied the clip into the sky and he's still right there.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207884718001#sp=show-clips).

In his assessment of Trump, Watters clearly positions himself as a Trump supporter. On the same day, on *The Angle*, a soft news programme, Laura Ingraham's choice of words suggests that she is also a Republican party supporter. By constantly using the word 'our' in her editorial piece, she attaches her personal position to her report about the former president:

> and if there is no path for Donald Trump's second term, it doesn't mean the end of America First movement or his role in leading it. On the contrary, this is only the beginning. For now, it's time to take all our information, learn from our defeats, and confidently expand one of the greatest political movements in the past 100 hundred years. (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

In both the above instances, Fox journalists present a one-sided image of Trump and promote their personal politics, contradicting normative journalistic ethics. Their opinions, presented as facts, are not independent of their political interests. Instead of removing their opinions and interpretations of Trump and reporting in a fair and balanced manner, Fox journalists ignore the concept of objectivity. By not presenting their views objectively, they do not enable the audience to make up their own minds without being unduly influenced by the media.

As a key value of journalism, the ideal of objectivity is for journalists to present many sides of an issue, despite having their own position. Benson (2008: 2594) suggests that "the press should adopt a critical, serious tone in covering public affairs, defined as the activities primarily of government but also, in principle, of business or other powerful social institutions". Perilla

(2018) notes that being objective in the media is about being able to critique, highlight, and then represent crucial facts that are pertinent to the public. She adds that "objectivity is not being a mouthpiece for rich and powerful interests, neither is it just promoting journalists' personal politics" (Perilla, 2018). While the media has the right to have an opinion on news, they have a duty not to influence and not be influenced by their personal feelings.

Misinformation and disinformation

Along with the prevalence of fake news, misinformation and disinformation became forms of political 'information' during Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency in 2016, and again when it started to emerge that the 2020 election would be in favour of Joe Biden. Misinformation is defined as "misleading, inaccurate or completely false information that is communicated without the explicit intent to deceive" (LibertiesEU, 2021). It is information that has not been properly checked or verified that people believe and share anyway, not to cause any harm, but to inform the audience. The difference between the concepts of misinformation and disinformation is that the latter is spread with the purpose of insulting and defaming people. Disinformation is "false information that is shared with the intention of misleading people" (LibertiesEU, 2021). People who spread disinformation are always aware that what they are sharing is untrue and do it in bad faith to stir up anger and fear amongst the audience. The concept of disinformation is equated with "black propaganda because it is covert and uses false information" (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 23). The spread of misinformation and disinformation is destructive, not only because it poses a threat to American democracy, but also because it sometimes impedes a peaceful transition of power. An example of disinformation spread by Trump is a claim that in 2016, Hilary Clinton, the then Democratic candidate for president, approved a plan to stir up a scandal against him by tying him to Russian president Vladimir Putin and his country's hacking of the Democratic National Committee. The former president filed a lawsuit against Clinton which was later dismissed by a federal judge stating that the claim was fabricated information (Scannell, Cohen & Duster, 2022).

Stylistic examples of misinformation and disinformation are evident only on 6 November 2020 in a soft news programme interview on *The Five* with news anchor and reporter Eric Shawn dismissing numerous untrue claims made by Trump on his Twitter account

(https://www.foxnews.com/politics/philadelphia-mayor-trump-put-his-big-boy-pants-on-concede). Some of the claims he dismisses as misinformation include that the Philadelphia board of elections had barred Republican party poll watchers inside the venue where votes were being counted. This claim based on information that was untrue, became the basis of a lawsuit that was filed in court. Shawn interviewed a GOP Trump activist, a canvasser who had been inside the building in question, who had dismissed these claims as well. It emerged that canvassers of both the Republican and Democratic parties were allowed inside the building to watch the counting of polls but wanted to get closer than the six feet that was initially granted to them. Shawn confirmed that what was reported,

> seemed to conflict completely with the Trump campaign lawsuit and claims that poll watchers are not allowed in this room.

The spread of misinformation and disinformation was intended to promote misunderstanding through telling various untruths that included Trump's tweet from 5 November 2020 claiming that legal observers were not allowed inside the Philadelphia Convention Centre. Shawn dismissed this claim as well:

> That frankly is not true. That's not a true statement. There are legal observers here. You just saw one in Brian. We will see how this plays out. There's 7pm federal court hearing so we'll see what the Trump campaign brings to that court hearing and what the Philadelphia board of elections says and answer to that and see.

Spreading of misinformation and disinformation was potentially one of the ways Republicans attempted to delegitimise election results and create instability in the election process. Trump continued to spread misinformation using his social media pages throughout the election period with Twitter flagging his tweets. Using intervention strategies, the social media platform either blocked engagement or added disclaimers to a total of 200 tweets by the former president that week (Spangler, 2020). Disclaimers by Twitter included the following: "This tweet is no longer available because it violated the Twitter Rules"; and "Some or all of the content shared in this tweet is disputed and might be misleading about an election or other civic process" (Sanderson et al. 2021). Spreading disinformation and misinformation "has become a severe threat to public interests" (Muhammed & Matthew 2022: 271). It is one of the challenges that continues to confront the media because of its impact on socio-political situations, and its influence on

government elections. The rise of social media over the past few years has made misinformation and disinformation a dominant issue that has led to a surge in inappropriate journalism practices. It is one of the strategies used to weaken the role of the media as a traditional gatekeeper of reliable information (Muhammed & Matthew 2022: 277).

Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)

The accepted normative relationship between the media and politicians is referred to as 'watchdog' journalism (LibertiesEU, 2022). It is "a form of investigative journalism that often makes use of fact-checking, interviews, and research to bring greater transparency to issues or events" (LibertiesEU, 2022). The media's ability to maintain a neutral stance in their interaction with interviewees is one way of offering an objective account, and a main practice of displaying neutrality in journalism (Clayman 1988: 474). The purpose of conducting interviews in the newsroom is to have open and critical engagements on issues that are of societal importance. The nature of the relationship between Fox anchors and contributors, however, is one in which the channel is simply a 'loudhailer' for its interviewees. This stance was apparent on 6 and 7 November 2020 in both soft and hard news programmes. Looking at how the channel executed their moral and ethical duty, the analysis of the channel's coverage of the elections provides opportunities for reflective and critical debate on their professional practice of journalism. In soft news, there seemed to be no critical perspective that was evident in practice. In the soft news programme, *The Angle* anchor Laura Ingraham did not seem to have analysed information and did not play a watchdog function in her reporting. During an interview on her talk show on 6 November 2020, she gave House Minority Leader, Kevin McCarthy a free advertising platform to appeal to viewers of Fox to stand with Republicans during the counting process. Ingraham also took a position when she was talking about how the votes were not going in favour of the Republicans, which according to her was "the right direction":

> What we are saying with that Pennsylvania advantage in road, I don't think that looks good at all. Unless a court steps in, I don't see Pennsylvania going in the right direction at all. This thing is getting sliced and diced. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-warns-dems-aiming-to-take-the-senate-double-downs-on-final-victory).

The use of the words “this thing is getting sliced and diced” by Ingraham seems to suggest that the Pennsylvania votes that were meant to be going to Republicans were getting fewer. She was of the view that the only way the party could avoid losing these votes and guarantee that the state goes in the ‘right direction’ was to go to court. Her position here seems to be on the side of the Republicans, trying to help them to maintain their support in Pennsylvania. The kind of journalism that Ingraham practised on 6 November 2020 involved hyping Trump and elevating his status rather than being critical of his policies. She made claims about his success and was anti-Barack Obama when comparing the two presidents.

> And on issue after issue, he delivered. He delivered real results. American prosperity, record low unemployment, thanks to his tax cut and deregulation. Record increase in median household income. 65 hundred bucks. Far outpacing Obama. Of course, we renegotiated NAFTA. Obama said he’d fix that. And of course, in 8 years he never did. It took two years of work for Trump’s team, but the new USMCA levels the playing field with Mexico and Canada.
>
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

On the same soft news programme, *The Angle* talk show, on 6 November 2020, Republican representative, Kevin McCarthy echoes Trump’s claims of election fraud and also raises questions about the decline in Republican votes in favour of Joe Biden. Instead of critically engaging him further and opening these issues up for discussion, Ingraham responds to these allegations of fraud thus:

> Republicans better remember who helped expand this party. It wasn’t some of the moderates. It was Donald Trump. And they better stand and fight for him.

In this interview, as the anchor of the show, she does not “set up boundaries of socially acceptable values and actions” (Gajevic 2016: 871) as a key editorial function. Instead, she takes a position that suggests she is in favour of Trump, encouraging Republicans to support the former president in forging ahead with the fraud allegations and not standing on the side-lines. Ingraham structures her arguments by taking a pro-Trump position and does not challenge anything that had to do with the Republicans. The issues she questions are those raised by mainstream media, attributing their perspectives to fake news:

> And the absolute disgrace that is the American press corps and their incurious approach to all.

Ingraham occasionally separates herself from the media, attacking and discrediting it to indirectly gain support for her views on the former president.

> They are still on the racist thing even though he expanded in support of the minority voters. These people are absolute buffoons. Trump should make them eat their own words. But more importantly he should do it for the voters and those who expect their leaders to accept the will of the people. And to all you patriots who supported President Trump, stand tall and be proud of your efforts and his. It was all worth it. We all helped reshape the national conversation on China, on immigration, on trade, and political correctness, etcetera, etcetera.

Her angle and arguments make one wonder to what extent her programme was an editorial for opinion, rather than propaganda. She focuses on and continues to report claims of illegal voting and fraud cases that had already been dismissed by the courts (Sheth, 2020):

> These legal efforts are critical because the truth does need to come out to preserve the integrity and transparency of elections going forward. And if there is no path for Donald Trump's second term, it doesn't mean the end of America First movement or his role in leading it. On the contrary, this is only the beginning.

In her editorial, Ingraham also makes the following claims:

> Republicans also control Georgia. Yet sheer incompetence and foul play have compromised the integrity of the election results there as well.

Ingraham's take on the 2020 elections make her appear to have been a Trump propagandist using Fox as the medium. As one of the fundamentals, "propaganda generally has a human face. It has an emotional appeal to gain public support" (Kapoor, 2010). In her editorial opinion piece, she pleads with her viewers to stand with Trump whatever the election outcome.

> And to all you patriots who supported President Trump, stand tall and be proud of your efforts and his. It was all worth it. We all helped reshape the national conversation on China, on immigration, on trade, and political correctness, etcetera, etcetera. We don't have time to bury our heads in crying towels. There are two senate races to win in order to hold the senate. There's money to be raised, speeches to be written and delivered, ads to be made, and ballot canvassing events to be organized. (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

The channel's reporting on 6 November 2020 conveys a one-sided message favourable to Republican ideas. Instead of effectively scrutinising and offering an analysis of political processes and issues raised, Ingraham presents the viewers with spin. Gattan describes the concept of spin as "equally about defining and getting out the message — whether it's how good your team is or how bad the others are — and keeping the politicians, as the jargon goes, 'on message'" (1998: 34). Her general conduct, language, and tone is counter to normative journalism practices of maintaining objectivity and reporting only the facts.

On 7 November 2020 Fox practiced journalism that was equivocal, with no strong views on any topic of discussion. They did however call the mainstream media into question on a hard news programme, *America Reports* when Sandra Smith asked journalist Howard Kurtz about the future of media coverage after Trump's four-year tenure in office. Her line of questioning implies that mainstream media were against the former president and would probably treat Biden better than Trump.

> And now we wonder what it looks like to have the media cover a Joe Biden presidency. And it may be covered by various networks and newspapers and how different that may look.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6208048869001#sp=show-clips).

The channel shifts focus on this day, talking about other things related to the elections instead of Biden's victory itself. It is the important details that are not said that makes this day's broadcasts particularly interesting. Fox made sure to stick to some 'facts', while ignoring others, and not did not engage in debates or critical discussions that would make the channel appear to be taking political sides.

The position of Fox journalists and contributors

Although "news with a point of view cannot be discounted from being journalism" (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007: 143), journalists have a responsibility to maintain their independence when it comes to those they cover. This means that despite everyone having a position on political affairs, newsrooms should be committed to presenting many sides of a situation instead of adopting a particular political position. Doing so makes journalists seem prejudiced in their story telling and goes against objective and impartial reporting. This theme of the position of Fox

journalists and contributors was prominent on 6 and 7 November 2020 in both soft and hard news televisual texts with not all Fox journalists and contributors blatantly claiming their support for Trump. It is their use of words and tone that indicates their position during the elections. The tone used by contributor Mollie Hemmingway in a panel discussion on a hard news programme *Fox News @ Night with Shannon Bream* on November 6, 2020, implies that she was in support of election fraud claims raised by Republicans. The words she uses also lean towards her taking Trump's side:

> When they are coming in overwhelmingly for Joe Biden it's not unreasonable for Republicans to be extremely upset about their lack of access to the counting of ballots. (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

Both journalists and contributors continue to raise questions about Biden's lead and seem to justify it by referring to some of the issues highlighted by the opposition. Hemmingway adds:

> and all these things happening in battleground states where Donald Trump was big on election night and ballots keep being found and keep going in favour of his opponent, it makes Trump supporters feel like this is a rigged system.

On the same day in a panel discussion on soft news *The Five* programme, discussing Trump's accomplishments, Fox journalist Greg Gutfield uses the words 'us' and 'them', thereby associating himself with Trump supporters. Instead of reviewing both the 'good' and 'not so good' accomplishments of his four years in office, he highlights only what was potentially positive, remaining silent on issues Trump had been criticised for.

> But I think that, if you're a Trump supporter you've gotta feel good. You won. The guy broke the system. He broke the mould. He broke the media. He broke the pollsters. He broke the entire political machinery. Nothing is ever gonna be the same. You're never going to see the same thing after Trump unless its Trump. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTfPsjstxrg&t=7s).

In the same programme, journalist Bill Hemmer questions an increase in Joe Biden's votes in Pennsylvania, but not that of Trump in Nevada.

> We went to bed last night Donald Trump had the lead throughout the morning and throughout the afternoon it kept increasing towards Joe Biden' favour. Why is that?

On the soft news programme, *The Angle*, Laura Ingraham's tone is familiar and informal as she promotes the Republicans in her editorial piece on 6 November 2020,

> Historians will know that in this election, Biden and the left were pumped up by a fortune from big businesses who are angry with the president who stood up for the average American. But history will also show that a time when so many intellectuals had given up on this country, Donald Trump and his supporters show that the American dream still inspires tens of millions, and that billions of dollars, the propaganda could not persuade us to abandon the faith.
>
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

Ingraham's use of the word 'us' in her utterances is a clear indication of her loyalty to Trump and his campaign. The logic of her argument above and the words she uses show a one-sided view of the political landscape.

> pumped up by a fortune from big businesses who are angry with the president who stood up for the average American.

She suggests that big businesses gave financial support to the Democrats for their election campaign only because they were angry with Trump for taking care of the working class. Meanwhile, she overlooks the fact that Trump himself is one of the richest people in the US, and that some of the policies favoured wealthy people like him and not the average American (Rushe, 2019).

In another instance, Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts did not completely take a position on the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 6 November 2020. He acknowledges the presence of 'suppression polls' and fraud as main issues raised by Trump. But in his attempt to be a good credible journalist, he does not include a personal commentary about this, but instead elevates what the former president said:

> The president calling those suppression polls. Designed to tell people that the cause is lost. Stay home. It is not even worth coming out. And I think all of this is gonna go into a big pot that the president's team is going to roll out as a way to challenge whatever election results, we see later this week. Now in terms of fraud, or abuse or found ballots that the president talked a lot about, we haven't seen any widespread evidence that is the case.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE).

The use of ambiguity by Fox journalists on this day allows them to support the election call on 7 November 2020 when they tried to position themselves as balanced as possible. When calling the election on hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020,* anchor Martha MacCallum reports on Kamala Harris and Trump with the aim of giving viewers both sides of the story. She acknowledges Harris' win but focuses on her gender and colour, not her party. MacCallum emphasises Trump's increase in votes since 2016 and ends with a statement about how the former president would respond to the loss - a word she does not use:

> Senator Kamala Harris will be the first woman, and the first woman of colour to become vice president of the United States. President Trump got 5 and a half million more votes in 2020 than he did in 2016 and closed the gap in the final days after bomb storming the nation. Whether he chooses to concede or decides to wait until these legal challenges play out is yet to be seen.
>
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-wins-presidency-trump-fox-news-projects).

MacCallum reports only the 'facts' about the election but does not include any congratulatory message. Later in the broadcast, her co-anchor Bret Baier notes, "We have a statement from the president and reaction from the Trump's campaign". He does not immediately say what it said, but instead notes:

> But right now, the president is playing golf at his golf course in Virginia. That's a shot from the Associate Press.

It is interesting that he acknowledges that the photo they used in their broadcast was taken from Associated Press—perhaps to distance Fox from being the source of information.

Although in some instances Fox contributors and journalists subtly shifted positions by suggesting two different viewpoints on the same issue, on several occasions they took a particular position which was mostly in favour of Trump on 6 November 2020. The use of ambiguity in their reporting can be seen as providing 'objective' journalism. On 7 November 2020 their reporting is less emotive and more factual, focusing on election numbers and details about Kamala Harris, without mentioning Trump's loss. Fox journalists did not take a position and did not provide any real commentary on the outcome of the election in favour of Biden on that day. They did the bare minimum by reporting only on what was expected of them and did not offer anything more. The channel practiced journalism of avoidance. They avoided talking

about the real issue at hand that Trump had lost the election and Biden had won it. They did not use these words in any of their conversations.

The kind of argumentation used

Arguments in the newsroom generally emerge from debates that are meant to improve and advance journalists' positions relating to different topics of discussion (Andone & Rocci 2017: 1). Various discussions held during the days under study were mostly grounded on what constitutes a credible election and the general election race. Choosing to bring its usual contributors to weigh-in on the election process, arguments raised within the Fox newsroom seem to cast doubt on increased mail-in votes which were mostly in favour of the Democrats. When considering the stylistics of Fox's journalism, the kinds of argumentation they used is significant and is illustrated in their reporting on 6 and 7 November 2020 on both hard and soft news programmes. For the most part, their arguments or explanations tended to drive an agenda that was set by Trump, specifically in hard news programmes. For example, in a hard news programme *FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream* on 6 November 2020, Fox contributors and journalists focus more on voting numbers than who they represent and question the increase in votes for Biden. Their argument is that the rise in numbers could only be a result of voter fraud and not due to voters choosing to vote for Biden over Trump. Mollie Hemmingway notes:

> That would be one thing if counting of the ballots was coming in fairly evenly for Joe Biden and Donald Trump. When they are coming in overwhelmingly for Joe Biden it's not unreasonable for Republicans to be extremely upset about their lack of access to the counting of ballots.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207593946001#sp=show-clips).

Hemmingway's choice of words in the panel discussion reveals the tone of someone who had already made up their mind about election fraud without any evidence. She contributes to the conversation by elevating an agenda that had been set by Trump that Republican observers were not allowed in counting venues and the number of days it took to count the votes.

> As counts drag on days upon days upon days, and as for some reason these Democratic controlled areas do not want people in observing the counting of ballots.

Her words imply that Democrats are somehow involved or had something to do with the number of days it was taking to count votes. She advances her standpoint by blaming the party for delays and all irregular election processes.

While interviewing House Minority Leader, Kevin McCarthy on a soft news programme *The Angle* on 6 November 2020, Laura Ingraham takes on the role of protagonist in the programme, rather than offering the viewers a balanced and evaluative perspective. She argues that Biden was leading the election race because he had financial backing from large corporates assisting him. But she is silent about where the Trump campaign was getting its money from.

> Well, you have huge amounts of money from Mark Zuckerberg and George Soros and others flooding into everything to local DA races to even school board races in some cases and then canvasing of states like Pennsylvania and these other efforts.
> And I think there's a huge effect on this.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-warns-dems-aiming-to-take-the-senate-double-downs-on-final-victory).

On the same day Fox journalist Jesse Watters reiterates the same argument on the soft news programme *The Five*, that Biden's campaign had the backing of corporate, which disadvantaged Trump.

> When you think about everything that they've thrown at this guy. I mean you've tried everything. You've spied on his campaign. You've investigated him. You've impeached him. You blamed him for 2000 American deaths in the home stretch big tech, big media. And all this money poured in, and they just emptied the clip into the sky and he's still right there. And it's not over yet and he's right there.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207884718001#sp=show-clips).

Arguments implying that Biden had an unfair advantage were reserved for 6 November 2020 only. On 7 November 2020 there was not much discussion on election claims and speculations as Fox journalists and contributors focused on Trump's view of the elections. In an interview with anchor Sandra Smith on a hard news programme *America Reports* MediaBuzz Host Howard Kurtz states:

> The president saying, we all know why Joe Biden is forcing to pose as the winner and why his media allies are trying so hard to help him. They don't want the truth to be exposed. Simple fact is that this election is far from over. Trump casting this as another fake media narrative.
> (https://video.foxnews.com/v/6208048869001#sp=show-clips).

The channel raises the above argument using Trump's utterances to ensure that their view on Biden's win is not clear. The use of the 'pose' implies that his win, called by the mainstream media, is not real or is temporary, while the Republicans fight for their victory. Fox also focuses on strategies that make it appear objective while still being 'pro-Trump' and giving him a voice. On a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* Chief White House correspondent John Roberts deals with the election results story by quoting Trump's words on social media instead of analysing issues and offering his own views:

> The president also started out the day defiant and Twitter sort of checking him along the way. Couple of tweets to share with you. The president tweeting quote "I won this election, by a lot". Disclaimer was slapped on that tweet by Twitter.
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE).

Because Fox's broadcasting is "a double-edged sword" (Eckert et al 2003: 19), the above statement could have been the channel reporting on the circumstances as they occurred. The statement could also have been the channel citing Trump and how Twitter responded to him as their way of calling the social media platform to order regarding their decision.

The way Fox journalists and contributors establish and frame their arguments indirectly demeans the Democrats. There are no opposing ideas in arguments raised by Fox journalists and contributors on both days under study. There is instead an element of agreement in viewpoints in conversations held on 6 November 2020 with anchors validating journalists' positions. This is significant because anchors are the main representatives of the channel, and their voice is often regarded as authoritative. Following Fox journalist Greg Gutfield's point of view on the possibility of a loss for Trump on the soft news programme *The Five*, anchor Juan Williams responds:

> What an adult perspective from Greg Gutfeld.
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTfPsjstxrg&t=7s).

The use of the word ‘adult’ in the above statement by Williams is his way of supporting Gutfield’s position of Trump. He implies that he agrees with how he articulately makes sense of his dominant viewpoint on the former president’s claims of election fraud. Williams makes Gutfield’s stance to appear as if it represents Fox’s opinion. Gajevic (2016: 867) describes this kind of response as an “ideological discourse that in many indirect and subtle ways reflects the ideological position of the organisation and their interests”. This means that it is in conversations within the newsroom that we are able to draw conclusions about who and what the channel is in favour of. In a broader sense and based on the dominant editorial views expressed by Fox journalists and contributors, the channel had predominantly taken a position to support Trump.

Propaganda

Reporting facts as accurately as possible, and presenting neutral information is what makes news credible. In Fox’s coverage of Trump during the election period, particular ideas that favoured the former president were endorsed. The channel demonstrated features of propaganda which refers to promoting information in a prejudiced way intended to elevate a specific political opinion (Fitzmaurice 2018: 64). It is a practice that activates and appeals to people’s strong emotions, encouraging them to believe a certain view. While propaganda may include “outright lies or more subtle misinformation and censorship” (Bergstrom, 2019), it is different from fake news, which is defined as misleading information presented as news and is intended to deceive the public (Brown 2019: 145). Although propaganda distorts facts by persuading public opinion to further a particular political agenda, it is not the same as media bias. Media bias involves reporting news that does not present both sides of the story. It is defined as “the unjust favouritism and reporting of certain ideas or standpoint” (Morrissette et al. 2017) using only the information that supports a certain view. The difference between these two concepts is in how the news is presented. Media bias results in stereotypes which lead to journalists misleading viewers and causing divisions due to incomplete information. Propaganda presents all the facts on a particular story, but purposefully promotes certain views to influence the public about a specific issue (Rawlins, 2019). In an overview about the propaganda model, Klaehn (2009: 173) notes “the role of journalists as agents of propaganda”. This is because of how they tend to promote a particular agenda with the aim of convincing people to support a specific political figure. In the analysed data, components of propaganda were identified on 6 November 2020 in

an interview and editorial opinion piece on *The Angle* a soft news programme, anchored by Laura Ingraham. She presented her views with no interruptions in a programme that was designed for her to voice her opinions on all issues pertaining to Trump and the elections.

Seven devices of propaganda (Rawlins, 2019; Sproule 2001: 136), discussed in chapter 2, make an appeal to mass audience's emotions. These are, a) card-stacking; b) name-calling; c) bandwagon; d) testimonial; e) transfer; f) glittering generalities; and g) plain folks. In Ingraham's coverage of Trump on *The Angle*, three of the seven propaganda devices were evident:
a) *Card-stacking* involves the manipulation of audience's perceptions on a certain issue by choosing facts that support an argument and using them to emphasise a one-sided view, suppressing others (Rawlins, 2019). This is evident in an interview with House Minority Leader, Kevin McCarthy when the anchor, Ingraham, suggests that Biden was winning votes only because his campaign was backed up by big corporate businesses:

> Well, you have huge amounts of money from Mark Zuckerberg and George Soros and others flooding everything to local DA races to even school board races in some cases, and then canvasing of states like Pennsylvania and these other efforts. (https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-warns-dems-aiming-to-take-the-senate-double-downs-on-final-victory).

In her editorial opinion piece, she also mentions Biden's campaign backers to affirm her view that Trump had to endure a lot of challenges that emerged from the Biden campaign:

> Of course, the deep state, the molar team, the corrupt media, the grifters at the Lincoln project, social media CEOs, the Antifa BLM rioters and even the virus that originated in China. Or and I almost left out all the personal lies, and smears and attacks on his family that he had to endure as well. For 4 years, that did not let up.

She continues:

> Historians will know that in this election, Biden and the left were prompted up by a fortune from big businesses who are angry with the president who stood up for the average American.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

Ingraham tries to justify why Trump was losing the election by deliberately choosing to omit facts about who had funded Trump's campaign, focussing her attention instead on the opposition.

b) *Testimonial* is a strategy that endorses and promotes a certain cause or person to confirm an idea (Rawlins, 2019). For example, in the middle of her opinion piece, Ingraham played a video clip of Trump's supporters expressing how much they love him to help promote her views on his greatness and to show viewers that Americans love the former president. She suggests that it does not make sense for Trump to lose when he still has so much support in the country.

> And on issue after issue, he delivered. He delivered real results. American prosperity, record low unemployment, thanks to his tax cut and deregulation. Record increase in median household income. 65 hundred bucks. Far outpacing Obama.

In addition, Ingraham echoes false claims of illegal voting that had been spread by the Trump campaign. She interviews House Minority Leader, Kevin McCarthy, who, like her, promotes Trump's pronouncements about the elections to help her endorse her views.

> But what's very interesting here and shows more of the fraud, not one Republican incumbent lost. We've already won 8 seats and we are heading 10 more. How would President Trump loose in an atmosphere like that? How is it possible that someone would claim that Joe Biden would win and not one Republican member of Congress lost the election, but almost 15 Democrats did?
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

The irony in her editorial opinion comes through when she refers to the mainstream media as propaganda, used to discredit Trumps' leadership, when she herself is a propagandist:

> But history will also show that a time when so many intellectuals had given up on this country, Donald Trump and his supporters show that the American dream still inspires tens of millions, and that billions of dollars, the propaganda could not persuade us to abandon the faith.
> (https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose).

In the above statement she uses the word 'faith', a biblical term that suggests belief, rather than rational argument, to confirm her confidence and trust in what the Trump campaign stands for.

c) *Plain folks* is another propaganda technique used to present the propagandist as a 'common' person that understands the plight of 'the people' (Rawlins, 2019). This term works well with the discourse of 'the people' discussed in Chapter 4. Here we see Ingraham presenting herself as an ordinary citizen and journalist who is concerned about the people of America and what is right for them.

> Four years ago, the American people stuck it to the political elites and their media bootleggers by putting Donald Trump in the White House. Now Trump rode in on this populist agenda of putting American workers first. And his mandate was to take power from the corrupt political class in Washington and put it back in the hands of the people.

In an effort to empathise with Trump she appeals to big businesses to support Trump's bid to have the election results overturned:

> Hey big donors stop giving money to think tanks in Washington that have accomplished next to nothing and start giving money to grassroot political and legal effort to stop this nonsense.

What makes Fox's coverage propaganda and not news on that day is Ingraham's prejudiced statements which seek to promote a position that not only favoured Trump's political views but also tried to move 'the people' to vote for him, and financiers to fund his efforts to overturn the elections (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 12). Her not being objective in her reporting suggests that she is intent on influencing the viewers to stand with Trump's campaign (Jowett & O'Donnell 2019: 6). Ingraham's reporting makes her seem like a journalist who is promoting a certain way of thinking. Her statements further the 'stolen election' agenda spread by Republicans because they did not win. Despite having no concrete evidence to substantiate it, Ingraham continues to report this claim that would influence public opinion. Her views are a one-sided Republican view to preserve the Trump administration, rather than critiquing and analysing news stories objectively.

Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber

Although American voters had been watching the election process and how election officials and politicians conducted themselves from the side lines, through social media they actively weighed in on matters that were of concern to them. The public not only exercised their democratic rights

by voting but gathered in mass demonstrations to show their support for Trumpism. They also "put long-neglected issues on the public agenda" (McAfee, 2019) like equality and health insurance (Pew Research Center, 2021) using hashtags on social media as the modern public sphere. Donald Trump also used his social media platform to engage with his own public sphericule throughout the elections and to react to the election results. A 'public sphericule' is a small public sphere: a space and place of public discussion on topical issues (Gitlin 1998: 168). The concept involves "creating a space where issues pertaining to different domains, such as politics, economy, justice or religion, emerge, are reconfigured and are played out publicly" (Andone & Roccie 2017: 2). While the twitter sphere itself might be regarded as a small 'public sphere', it is debatable whether the space Trump created for his viewers was a 'public sphericule' (a small public space for rational critical debate) or an 'echo chamber'. An echo chamber is "an environment in which the opinion, political leaning, or belief of users about a topic gets reinforced due to repeated interactions with peers or sources having similar tendencies and attitudes" (Cinelli et al. 2021: 1). Trump's supporters' beliefs about the 2020 US election were amplified on Twitter because of selective exposure to factual information, resulting in confirmation bias. With the seed of election fraud having been planted by the former president long before the election took place, his tweets made Republicans focus on, notice, and give greater credence to his social media posts that fitted in with their existing beliefs. Significantly, on 7 November 2020 in a hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* Fox relied on Trump's social media posts as a favourable source. These were used both to support the information that the channel presented to the viewers and a way to distance itself from any statements that would make them seem as if they were taking a position on the called election. In their attempt to appear independent and not taking a side, Fox was in fact giving Trump's viewpoint broader exposure. Their ambivalence enabled them not to support the former president's opinions directly, but also gave a space for his views to be broadcast.

Before the election was called on 7 November 2020, Trump made claims of election victory and fraud on Twitter early that morning. The social media giant reportedly flagged his tweet: "I won the election, by a lot" (Schwab et al. 2020). The social networking platform informed Trump's public sphericule (echo chamber) that "official sources may not have called the race when this was tweeted" (Graham & Rodriguez, 2020; Johnson & Goldsmith, 2020). Although this action

by Twitter was met with commentary about free speech and censorship from various people, the social media platform argued that the former president used it to spread misinformation about the elections (Johnson & Goldsmith, 2020). Naughton (2017) notes that Trump's tweets demonstrate "the extent to which social media now distort the public sphere". Instead of using his social media to encourage his supporters to hold the government to account responsibly, he was defiant and reinforced unacceptable behaviours and false claims. Trump's public sphericule also formed an online group called '*Stop the Steal*' that Facebook shut down because it was believed to be inciting violence (Johnson & Goldsmith, 2020). Twitter censored two more tweets from Trump read by Chief White House correspondent John Roberts on the hard news programme *FOX News Democracy 2020* on 7 November 2020, citing misinformation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE). In one tweet the former president wrote: "people were screaming stop the count & we demand transparency (as legal observers were refused admittance to court rooms)". In another one he said:

> tens of thousands of votes were illegally received after 8pm on Tuesday, election day, totally and easily changing the results in Pennsylvania and certain other razor thin states. As a separate matter, hundreds of thousands of votes were illegally not allowed to be observed. (Mercer, 2020)

The twitter-sphere was used by Trump to share false information and reiterate unsubstantiated claims to his supporters, ultimately leading to acts of violence.

Twitter added disclaimers to a total of 200 tweets by Trump during the election period (Spangler, 2020). Trump's denial of the legitimate electoral process and the results using his social media platforms was not an unexpected turn of events considering the many messages he had shared throughout the election. He promoted and influenced the Republican's negative attitude to the electoral system and incited his followers (a potential public sphericule) to rebellion in support of his pursuit to overturn the election outcome. A consideration of the 'twitter sphere' as an 'echo chamber', rather than a 'public sphericule' demonstrates the way in which propaganda, as a particular form of communication, is targeted at an audience to move it beyond rational critical debate to emotively generated action.

Conclusion

Common stylistic themes that appeared on the 6 and 7 November 2020 included normative media values, objectivity, misinformation and disinformation, journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin), the position of Fox journalists and contributors, the kind of argumentation used, propaganda and addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber. The differing themes, namely, election fraud, political and law, normative media values and the kind of argumentation used, and the nuances in reporting on both days under study suggest a discussion of an evolving narrative that was uncovered as the channel took a position on how they would cover Trump during this period. This was accounted for by the changing coverage that depicted a newsroom that was working towards laying the groundwork for fair reporting.

The Angle is the one soft news programme that contained characteristics of influencing and changing opinions through persuasion and perpetuating untruths on 6 November 2020. The talk show promoted, and detailed efforts taken by the Trump campaign to ensure that Republicans supported the former president. How Trump was talked about differed slightly after the calling of the election with everyone shifting focus from the logistics of vote counting to looking at what tangible evidence his campaign would produce to try to overturn the election results. Election fraud and political and law are two issue themes that are prominent in supporting this statement on 7 November 2020. When discussing election fraud, news anchors emphasised the need for the Republican camp to produce hard evidence to support Trump's claims. In the political and law theme, commentators stressed the need for the former president to challenge the election results legally as they distanced themselves from his victory statements. Stylistic themes that are in line with differing views on Trump are normative media values and the kind of argumentation used. Fox News reinforced their position on Joe Biden's election victory in their reporting throughout the day on 7 November 2020 in line with the normative media values theme. The channel stood firm on their decision to ensure that they appear credible. The kind of argumentation used theme also shows how Fox News focused on Biden's election victory versus Trump's claims of election fraud that were discussed in detail before election results were announced.

Chapter 6

Findings and Conclusions

The 2020 United States (US) presidential elections saw mainstream news media networks, including Fox News Channel (FNC), declare Joe Biden the winner on 7 November 2020. This led to a breakdown in Donald Trump's relationship with the channel because Fox had until the 6 November, entertained the former president's allegations of voter fraud. After calling the election, the channel was made to justify its editorial decisions to a sitting president, and his administration. Trump's reaction to the network raised questions about media-state relations and confirmed accusations that the two parties had an unethical relationship, by journalism standards. Fox saw it necessary to prove their loyalty to the then president despite making a decision that was unfavourable for him and his administration.

This thesis examines how the channel reported the pre- and post-calling of the 2020 presidential election to understand how it was able to 'switch sides' from one day to the next while maintaining its view of itself as a reputable news organisation. Fox was selected for the research due to its 'close' affiliation with the former U.S. government and its tendency to support and reinforce its views within its news discourse. In response to the above, this thesis probes the following questions:

1. What was the nature of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump, and how did it change after the 'calling' of the elections?
2. Can one speak of Fox News and Donald Trump as co-dependent on each other? What does this mean?
3. What are the foundations of Fox's approach to news as an avowedly Republican supporter?
4. How did Fox draw the line between being a 'Republican' broadcaster and Trump supporter?

Theoretically, the research problem was approached through these lenses: normative journalism versus propaganda, fake news, mis- and dis-information; and objectivity as a 'strategic ritual'/ defence (Tuchman 1972: 660). The data for the study consisted of:

a. Ten interviews taken from various news programmes, each on average two minutes long;
b. Four panel discussions;
c. One editorial opinion piece; and
d. One news bulletin video clip.

The data was selected for the coverage of the day before, and the day of, the calling of the 2020 Presidential election results. The study used a combination of qualitative methods of data analysis. First, a thematic analysis of all the selected texts was used to understand Fox's general approach to reporting the final days of the elections. This revealed the issues it considered most important, not only to its viewers, but also in terms of its own identity as a Republican-supporting broadcaster. Fourteen main themes were identified and categorised into 'issue' themes and 'stylistic' themes. The former refers to the main 'topics' discussed, while the latter to journalistic approaches underpinning reporting. The six issue themes identified were election credibility, election fraud, politics and law, media credibility, fake news, and the concept of the people. The following eight stylistic themes were identified: normative media values, objectivity, misinformation and disinformation, journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin), the kind of journalism used, propaganda and addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber. Having analysed the data, the research finds that there are fewer issue and stylistic themes in hard news programmes compared to soft news. There is a total of ten themes, five issue themes and five stylistic themes, within hard news. Soft news programmes have a total of eleven themes, five issue themes and six stylistic themes.

	Hard News (5)	**Soft News (5)**
Issue Themes	Election credibility	Election credibility
	Election fraud	Election fraud
	Politics and the law	Politics and the law
	Media credibility	Media credibility
	Fake news	

		The concept of the people

	Hard News (5)	**Soft News (6)**
Stylistic Themes		Objectivity
		Propaganda
	Normative media values	
	The kind of argumentation used	The kind of argumentation used
	Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)	Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
		Misinformation and disinformation
	The position of Fox journalists and contributors	The position of Fox journalists and contributors
	Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber	

This total number of themes undertaken in each theme tells us that during the election period, hard news programmes on Fox News focused on matters of significance and relevance to the public at large, whereas the themes within soft news highlighted issues concerned with Trump.

06 November 2020	**07 November 2020**
Election credibility	Election credibility
Election fraud	Election fraud
Politics and the law	Politics and the law
Media credibility	Media credibility
	Fake news
The position of Fox journalists and contributors	The position of Fox journalists and contributors
The kind of argumentation used	
Normative media values	Normative media values

Objectivity	
The concept of the people	
Misinformation and disinformation	
Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)	Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)
Propaganda	
	Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber

The main genres of soft news are talk shows and magazine/lifestyle programmes, while hard news programmes consist of current affairs. On 6 November 2020 most news sub-genres were present with only hard news/ current affairs featuring on 7 November 2020. This could potentially mean that Fox News was intentional about providing its audience with only factual and reliable information on that day to enable the channel to maintain its status as a credible source of news. The methodological approach of using tables to distinguish the different genres and themes enables me to establish how Fox could move seamlessly from supporting Trump on 6 November to declaring Biden the winner on 7 November 2020, despite not mentioning that he had 'lost' the election.

There were generally similar narratives on 6 and 7 November 2020, within specific issue themes which shaped the direction the channel would take regarding how they ultimately presented and argued in favour of Trump. A common narrative in both hard and soft news genres pertaining to Joe Biden's lead in the run up to the announcement of election results was that the votes in his favour were fraudulent, thus questioning the credibility of the election on both days. This theme came up in most discussions as a reminder to viewers about an important issue to Republicans. Fox journalists and contributors underlined the theme of election fraud as means to justify Joe Biden's win. The vote rigging narrative became important, strongly suggesting an agenda-setting function by Trump (McCombs & Shaw 1972: 184). Election fraud was an agenda that was set by the former president months before the election took place in his 18 August 2020 speech in Wisconsin when he said that the only way the Republicans were going to lose the election was if it were rigged. Similarly, the theme of politics and law was mentioned in both soft and hard news

on both days as the channel's way of distancing itself from the election outcome, referring to the courts being the ultimate decider of the election. When it came to the credibility of the media, Fox took an ambivalent approach. The channel both separated itself from other media on the 6th, while supporting the call of the election results with other media on the 7th. Fox tried to maintain their journalistic credibility while also reminding its viewers that they are different from the other networks, and their reporting should be treated as such.

The issue of fake news did not feature at all on 6 November 2020. Although Fox journalists did not admit Trump's role in spreading fake news outright, they did mention its prominence before, during, and after the election period. The theme features in both soft and hard news programmes to highlight instances when the former president made questionable statements directed towards specific groups in society. The channel portrayed the former president as the saviour of Americans who were reportedly unfairly treated by the media and electoral system when discussing the theme of 'the people' on 6 November 2020. The channel took the approach of invoking 'the people' and appealing to their emotions to advance the right-wing notion. This was a way to prepare Republican viewers for the loss they were about to suffer, but also to remind them about the sacrifices Trump had made for them despite the election outcome. This was not only a promotion of his presidency but also some of the foundations of the channel's approach to news as an avowedly Republican supporter. The stylistic theme of misinformation and disinformation was also evident only on 6 November 2020 in a soft news programme, with the news anchor dismissing numerous untrue claims made by Trump on his Twitter account. Considering that his presidency was marred by constant misinformation and disinformation, the channel did not have in-depth discussions about what effect this had and would continue to have in future. This could be because Trump was the one at the centre of it and expanding on this matter would comprise their relationship with him. The theme of misinformation and disinformation also touches on that of journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin) which reveals the kind of journalism that Fox practices. The channel appears to lack open and critical engagement in matters of importance on 6 and 7 November 2020 in both soft and hard news programmes. The conversations they had only confirmed and promoted Republican views, instead of contributing to the overall news agenda about elections and politics.

The stylistic theme of normative media values is highlighted on both 6 and 7 November 2020 in hard news programmes to emphasise key journalistic values in the Fox newsroom. The channel appeared as an independent voice that would report the elections in an unbiased way. Standing by its editorial decisions made the channel appear credible and socially responsible to the viewers. Although the theme of objectivity only featured in soft news programmes on 6 November 2020, there was a clear display of support for Republicans by Fox journalists in the four in-depth conversations. The words they used presented a channel that was taking a one-sided approach to news instead of presenting an independent journalistic voice. The tone used by both journalists and contributors in soft and hard news programmes implied that they were in support of claims made by Republicans. On both 6 and 7 November 2020, the channel took a position that was partisan while trying to shift their position subtly by raising two different viewpoints on the same issue. The channel attempts to remain neutral after calling the election, but their lack of acknowledging Biden as a winner makes the position of Fox journalists and contributors evident. The kinds of argumentation used on 6 and 7 November 2020 on both hard and soft news programmes demonstrate reporting that justified Trump's actions, while presenting 'valid reasons' to explain why Joe Biden would win the elections. These arguments make the channel lean towards supporting claims of election fraud levelled against Biden's campaign. There are also components of propaganda that were identified on 6 November 2020 in a soft news programme where Fox's coverage contains partisan statements that supported Trump's political ideologies. The channel promotes a certain way of thinking about the former president and reports a prejudiced view of the elections. Lastly, with the theme of addressing the audience: it was clear that Fox created a Trumpian 'public sphericule' or 'echo chamber' evident in hard news programmes on 7 November 2020. The channel used social media to give Trump a voice to further influence viewers. The channel wanted to appear as if they were reporting news factually, and in so doing they advanced the former president's views and supported his opinions by repeating them.

Conclusion

The difference between how Fox covered Trump on 6 and 7 November 2020 is evident in how it was more interested in reporting that Biden had been 'called', than noting him as the 'winner' and Trump 'the loser' of the election. Their coverage on that day had no emotional attachment to

any issue or argument but was more about the election announcement and what it meant for Trump. This narrative was evident in the channel's unwillingness to acknowledge and comment on Biden's victory. None of the journalists congratulated him or expanded on his win, but instead focused on what Trump was doing when the elections were announced and his reaction to the announcement. On 6 November 2020, Fox reminded viewers about Trump's greatness and even went so far as to broadcast archive material of him during his first election campaign in 2016, and his manifestos that had shaped his presidency. At no point does the channel quote Biden on his promises during his campaign or seek his reaction. The channel continued with this narrative throughout the day by giving Trump a voice through quoting his tweets and statements. The difference between the two days is that on 6 November 2020 they clearly declared their support for Trump, but discreetly distanced themselves from the election results they declared on 7 November 2020.

Findings suggest that Fox journalists and contributors continued to defend Trump, and overlooked his strong attitude towards the US media, notably his unsupported claims of fraud. The channel concentrated on influencing viewers in favour of the former president on the 6 November while perpetuating untruths. The importance in detailing similarities and differences in the narrative is to show how journalists used political spin to justify their views about why and how Biden had won the 2020 election. They presented their arguments in a prejudiced way to endorse a specific political opinion (Fitzmaurice 2018: 64). From this perspective, the theme of propaganda is most prominent in this research as opposed to objectivity, normative media values and media credibility. In most interviews and panel discussions held on the 6 November, there seems to be a clear alignment with how the channel was positioned towards Republicans. Fox journalists and contributors appear to have been unable to draw a line between being a 'Republican' broadcaster and being Trump supporters. In a broader sense, anchors "directly express dominant editorial views, which in turn are faithful mouthpieces of the owners" (van Dijk 2006: 138). In her editorial opinion piece on *The Angle*, journalist and anchor Laura Ingraham met expectations of a partisan network and a propagandist by supporting Trump in her reporting. Her body language, facial expressions, use of words and tone are evident of her passion and support for the former president. In the programme she takes a strong stance in favour of Republicans and positions herself as a voice spreading the channel's underlying

ideologies. In a panel discussion on *The Five*, Fox anchor Greg Gutfeld shared Ingraham's sentiments of the former president and admitted being a Republican supporter, demonstrated by his association with the party using words like 'us' and 'them' in his storytelling.

Looking at the differences and similarities in coverage from a thematic point of view, we can conclude that there was a common narrative pertaining to the election process and how Republicans reacted to the results. Because US presidential elections are generally a media spectacle, on 6 November 2020 Fox news journalists and contributors were careful to mitigate risks that came with incorrectly proclaiming the winner of the election in the race to break a news story. The channel's coverage did however reinforce the right-wing rhetoric established towards the media, elite groups, big businesses, and 'the people'. Fox was the key disseminator of the Republican ideology, making them appear as a source of propaganda. It could also be said that by distancing itself from the media, the channel was confirming and presenting the industry as the 'enemy of the people' as per Trump's utterances. To gain public support and remain Republican loyalists, Fox played a key propagandistic function in presenting a one-sided approach to the elections, favouring the former president. His voice was thus maintained and to some extent exaggerated, creating the idea that he remained an important part of their coverage, no matter the election outcome. Fox did not shy away from intensive coverage of Trump after his election loss. In fact, they were empathetic towards his campaign and focussed on how he would retaliate instead of looking at what the future would look like under Joe Biden's leadership.

Although the analysis of identified televisual texts produced different views of experiences and interpretative practices, there was similarity in position or views about Trump, his administration and tenure in office. The channel seemed to lean towards the former president and had a supportive stance towards him. The research finds no evidence of neutrality in any of the analysed televisual texts. Continuous commendation and free advertising space to promote the Republicans is a more dominant feature in the coverage. Moreover, consistency in themes and patterns that are evident across texts strengthens the overall argument on partisan journalism practiced in the Fox newsroom. These results are consistent with prior accusations by media theorists who suggest that "Fox News has always functioned as the propaganda arm of an extremist political ideology with brazen disregard for what is factual, right, fair and balanced"

(Barlett 2015: 17). Research results do not rule out the possibility that Fox News and Donald Trump were co-dependent on each other: each party benefitted significantly from their association. Fox consolidated its association with the Republican party and extended it with Trump supporters. The former president had constant free publicity for his views and election campaign. It is evident that there are contextual factors that affected how Trump was reported by the channel. The network had a history of giving the former president the platform to express his views which made their coverage during the period under study align with how they had reported his past campaigns. Trump had voiced his dissatisfaction with the media throughout his presidency, but Fox was always excluded from his notion of 'the media', thereby becoming his voice, earning a special relationship with him.

In conclusion, Fox News ceased being an impartial and balanced news platform when it justified itself to a sitting president who was infuriated by the channel's decision to call the election for Joe Biden. The research has identified certain dimensions of the relationship between Donald Trump and Fox News which are consistent with statements that the channel "was functioning as a propaganda arm of the Republican Party" (Barlett 2015: 1). Fox presented news that was one sided on both 6 and 7 November 2020 in favour of Trump's campaign. Journalists and contributors spent considerable time praising and promoting the former president's views while reprimanding his political opponents and critics. On both days under study, Trump was the subject of relentless conversations and dominated every discussion. Although the channel's position was subtle on 7 November 2020 as compared to the 6th, the channel gave the former president an unattainable level of loyalty and continued to present him in a highly admirable format. The findings from this study allude to the fact that the nature of the relationship between Fox News and Donald Trump was unethical in journalism standards. The channel did not satisfy the demands of journalistic norms because they practiced the kind of journalism that promoted personal politics instead of being an independent voice. Fox's programming during the elections was more about swaying viewers towards issues that the former president had put on the political agenda during his presidency, to help him hold onto power.

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APPENDIX

6 November 2020

1. John Yoo: Trump-Biden presidential race could be decided by Pennsylvania case before Supreme Court

Supreme Court must resolve this key question in Pennsylvania | Fox News Video

Programme: FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream

Anchor - Shannon Bream: Despite Joe Biden's current lead in the race to get to 270 electoral college votes, the Trump campaign is feeling bullish today following a legal victory ordering meaningful access to Philadelphia ballet counting. Although you heard former Florida attorney general Piombini telling us how that's going, now one top official in the Trump campaign predicting not only reelection, but a reelection victory as early as tomorrow. So, let's bring in tonight's power panel Fox Contributor Fox contributor Leslie Marshall, Mollie Hemmingway and Former Deputy Assistant attorney general John Yoo. Welcome all of you. Mollie let's start with you because tonight in Pennsylvania, I believe it was the secretary of states press conference that said after we've watched these votes change and the president's leads under 25000 there in Pennsylvania, she announced that they now have a hundred and thousands of ballots still to count. What do you make of the timeline? I mean some states have it under control, they have it done, ahead of time. Pennsylvania it's always gonna be in the spotlight because it's a critical battleground state, but what do you make of the fact that we find out tonight that hundreds of thousands of votes still to go?

Mollie Hemmingway: I think it's not just that they keep finding ballots that still need to be counted, but also the manner in which they are being counted. The foundation of our republic is not that we just have elections but that we have elections that we can really count on and rely on. That's not just about voting but also about having transparency and accountability in the counting of the votes. And as counts drag on for days upon days upon days, and as for some

reason these Democratic controlled areas do not want people in observing the counting of ballots. That would be one thing if the counting of the ballots was coming in fairly evenly for Joe Biden and Donald Trump. When they are coming in overwhelmingly for Joe Biden it's not unreasonable for Republicans to be extremely upset about their lack of access to the counting of ballots. This is important because no matter who ends up winning this election, people need to have confidence in the results and as if they hear about things happening in Michigan, in Nevada, in Pennsylvania, and all these things that happen to be happening in battleground states where Donald Trump was big on election night and ballots keep getting found, that keep going in favour of his opponent, it makes Trump supporters feel like this is a rigged system. Rigged not just because of the counting but because of how the entire campaign was handled from the very beginning to right now.

Shannon: Pennsylvania secretary of states who we heard from early on tonight Charlie Kirk points this out in a tweet that she once tweeted that using the title president before Trump really demeans the office of the presidency. Charlie goes on to ask, is this is the person in charge of counting ballots in Pennsylvania? Does it make sense what's going on now? So, Leslie, to Mollie's point, if Joe Biden turns out to be the winner here, he's gonna walk into a very divide country. How tough is it gonna be for him when there are all these questions about why people can't get in to watch the vote as is provided by law? Why not just let them in and give people a little bit more comfort with the transparency of the process?

Leslie Marshall: Well, there's so much many things here Shannon. First, I've got to say some stuff regarding what Mollie said. The Supreme court ruled that in North Carolina and Pennsylvania if your ballot is post marked by election date, you have up to a certain date to have it counted and that's why these elections go on days and days. Specifically in Pennsylvania, the mail-in ballots are counted last, not first like in many states. Florida as an example. And that is not a Democratic, but a Republican legislature in Pennsylvania that did that. Shannon to your point about a woman who prior in her personal life when she was not in office, when she was not in this position did tweet that she did not like the president obviously by that tweet. But we also have people that are running elections in various states that are registered Republicans, and that are registered Democrats, I mean that's going to happen. Joe Biden has a very difficult task. I wouldn't want to be president. I don't understand why anyone would want the job, my son said

to me the other day. You have covid-19 wins, you have highest numbers, you have numbers just counting to grow. We are worried about winter. We have the crime issue.

Shannon: I wanna stick to some of these legal fights and what's going on. I wanna bring John Yoo in. And I think it's important to know that, as Leslie mentioned these cases are in the Supreme court. John for the most part, they've not ruled on the merits of these cases and that Pennsylvania case is still pending there.

John Yoo: Yeah, I just want to clarify one point, the US Supreme Court has neither blessed nor rejected what's going on in Pennsylvania right now. The case is still sitting there waiting for essentially any curing barrot to show up and decide whether the Supreme court is gonna hear this case. And there's a fundamental constitutional issue here underneath this, which is, the Pennsylvania legislature under the constitution has the sole right to set the rules about how to take an election and run an election. The Pennsylvania Supreme court changed the date when the ballots were due by three days. The constitution questioned the US Supreme court resolve, was that unconstitutional and should all the ballots that came after election day be thrown out.

Shannon: Yeah, because when the constitution says it's up to state legislatures, that is the question. That's the key that the Supreme court will have to go to if they take this case. Not whether judges outside the legislature can change the rules after they've been set by the legislature.

2. Where the race stands: Biden erases Trump lead in Georgia and Pennsylvania, nears 270 electoral votes.

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/where-the-race-stands-biden-erases-trump-lead-georgia-count-makes-gains-pennsylvania

Programme: Fox & Friends

→ *Video clip of Donald Trump – US President:* We think there's gonna be a lot of litigation because we have so much evidence, so much proof and it's going to end up perhaps at the highest court in the land. We'll see. But we think there will be a lot of litigation because we can't have an election stolen like this.

Anchor - Steve Doocy: There you got the president last night talking about how he's moving things to the courts, bringing the latest legal action in the state of Nevada. So how does this process work, and what happens next. Joining us now is law professor and Fox News contributor Jonathan Turley. So, the president last night demanded that they stop counting the ballots

because he said there's fraud. He's talking about lawsuits. He says there's so much evidence as we've just heard. I think at this point we need to see the evidence, right?

Jonathan Turley: Right. I mean when the president says there's gonna be a lot of litigation, all the legal analysts feel warm and tingly, and the angel gets its wings because litigation is a blood sport when it comes to elections. I think I'm the only attorney currently not under their retainer by one of the two campaigns which is why I'm speaking to you today. But this could get very intense because real challenges require very close scrutiny of votes. We're not seeing that. And what I really want to see is this Nevada lawsuit which does raise a systemic allegation of illegible voters, people who moved out of the state or people who are actually deceased. We haven't seen that evidence and until we do, they're hunting elephants with derringers. We need something with a little more high caliber if you're gonna take down an election result or determination. So, we're waiting for that evidence to come forward. Is it possible? Of course, it is. I'm not willing to rule that out. I find it odd that everyone is making judgement without seeing these fillings. If they have evidence of thousands of people voting improperly, that may be a systematic problem, not just a Nevada but other states. We are doing something that we've haven't done before. We are talking tens of millions of people voting on a system, relying on records that are really sketchy in terms of addresses and identifications.

Steve: And one of the things that is frustrating to the Republicans is the fact that, it seems like at the eleventh hour they threw out the rules. The signature doesn't have to match and there doesn't have to be a post mark and we are gonna take it a couple of days after. So that's going forward. But, when it comes to the state of Pennsylvania, the Trump team did sue and say there's no transparency because we are not allowed to be close to the counting process. So, they move them within 6 feet, Mr. Turley. But then according to Piombini who was one of the observers, they put the counting machines way in the back where you need high powered spectaculars to see it.

Jonathan: Ja I'm mystified as to why Pennsylvania officials are fighting this particular issue. It's not the type of thing that will change the result of an election. Many courts in fact will declare this moot. That's the problem. They can get away with this by finishing the count and then the court just shrugs and says yeah that was a violation, but its moot. And then it gets to the real concern I think from the Trump campaign. We saw this in 2000. And that it's not whether you win ultimately. It's whether you view the winner at the time of certification. In Florida a lot of Democrats said months later they thought that actually Al Gore won that election. But it came

way too late. So, we have to get this process started or we will run out of runway. We have a very short period to look at these ballots. And it really hasn't started.

Steve: Also overnight the president tweeted out something that has been flagged naturally by Twitter. He said that because of the allegations of illegal voting the Supreme Court should decide the election. At what point does the Supreme Court get involved if at all?

Jonathan: Well of course the Supreme Court was involved. It's just that it didn't do anything. It deadlocked 4/ 4 on the Pennsylvania question that is of the late processed ballots. That was part of the change ordered by the court. It seems to violate the rules by the legislature. Chief Justice Roberts affectively kicked that can down the road. Well, its back. I mean some of these justices still want to have answers and whether the law was changed literally right before the election. But once again Steve we don't know how many ballots are actually in play in that question. But it could very well end up back in Pennsylvania. There's a lot of work that still needs to be done and we have to see if any of these allegations have support. If they do, a couple of these could be a game changer.

Steve: Well, let's see of that comes today. Game changer, we've had about 8 of them this week so far. Jonathan Turley thank you very much for joining us from DC.

3. Trump 'undermining' his legal team with claims of stolen election: Turley

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/election-trump-legal-challenge-jonathan-turley

Programme: Fox & Friends

Anchor - Brian Kilmeade: Washington University Law Professor, Fox News Contributor Jonathan Turley. Jonathan, I know we're fanned down on in 2000. So, if you're fanned down in Nevada, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Arizona, should there be a coordination? And what should you do?

Jonathan Turley: Well first of all what you should not do have the president continuing to talk about stealing the election and these specific claims. He has an army of lawyers who are preparing to litigate these questions. He needs to leave it to them. This is undermining their effort. It makes judges less likely to take these issues seriously or approach them aggressively. So, he needs to just tamp down the rhetoric and focus on the theme that he wants all legal votes to count. That's fine. And leave the specifics to his lawyers.

Brian: Right, so having said that, time does matter. You don't want Joe Biden to sit there and say yes, I saw that network put me at the top so I'm president elect, high five me. Because it's hard to put that horse back in the barn. Having said that, you say look at Nevada again, that is the most ripe for analysis and legal challenge because of people voting from out of state, and dead people voting because this is the first time they ever did mail-in ballots. And when I say to you well its only 6 electoral votes you might have more than that. You come back and say this could ripple.

Jonathan: Well, it could because the question in Nevada is whether there is a system problem with mail-in voting. This was raised before the election. You're relying on voter lists that are notoriously unreliable. And also, you have sketchy authentication systems including signature machines that were set at lower levels of discrimination in confirming signatures or changes in state laws that say that if the signatures don't match, it doesn't matter. All of those things exist in a variety of states, not just in Nevada. There was just a criminal referral made to the justice department by the Nevada Republicans. They are very specific in these three thousand odd voters that they are identifying as possibly ineligible. The problem for a court looking at this is what to do when the unknowable comes the unacceptable because the way that Nevada has preserved the record may make it really impossible to look at these specific votes. So, what does the court do if it believes that thousands of votes of ineligible voters may have been counted? That could be where we are heading and it's not just a problem that could be confined in Nevada.

Brian: So, if I'm looking at Nevada, and then I got a problem with Wisconsin, Michigan did the same thing. And there was a lot of mail-in voting in Georgia. Can you work that? I mean does one judge look at what another state's judge is doing?

Jonathan: Well what judges do is they look at other decisions in states to see if there are systemic problems how those courts handled it. The problem we are facing is really is how do we make the determination because of the way these ballots were handled. Is there even a review possible to confirm that only eligible voters did vote. Earlier on in Nevada there was objections to the separation of these envelopes and to the discarding of envelopes that would assist in the process. That could create a problem in various states. So, it's not that we have to believe one side or the other. But we could be looking at a very difficult question for judges if they're being asked to confirm that there were not a large number of ineligible votes. We could face a situation where that type of certainty might not be possible.

Brian: Then what?

Jonathan: That's exactly right. And then what? That would be the most positive outcome.

Brian: Jonathan Turley thanks. Appreciated.

4. Biden overtakes Trump in Georgia count as tally nears completion.

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-overtakes-trump-in-georgia-count-as-tally-nears-completion

Programme: America's Newsroom

Anchor - Sandra Smith: The race for the White House kicking into high gear with both of the candidates heading to Florida today. President Trump and Joe Biden will appear in Tampa just hours apart as new poling for Florida shows them in a virtual tie. Chris Stirewalt is Fox News Editor and joins us now. Chris really important changes that we should discuss first before we dive into Florida. So, what can you tell us about Minnesota, Georgia and Wisconsin? Good morning, sir.

Chris Stirewalt: Good morning to you, my friend. So, we are rearranging the furniture a little bit before we go to the final days of the election. And we're gonna move for our battleground states. We're gonna take Wisconsin and move into a lean Democrat from a straight toss up state. The poling has been so consistent in Joe Biden's favour by margins and by margins of error sometimes. And given everything that we know and early votes, and Wisconsin looks like it's going toward the Democrats. Then we go down south. Let's look at Georgia, which is a state I was very skeptical about Democrats' chances just based on history and electoral. Remember electoral looks very different in a presidential year than it does in a mid-term election. And I was very skeptical about Democrats claims, but here at the end there's no way to look at it except for this that Georgia is a toss-up. And I can't tell you today whose gonna win that state. Hyper competitive, just as much so as Florida. And then Minnesota is the state that the Republican said once upon said they would be competitive in. They're not. And that's just a little house keeping.

Sandra: And so, with Wisconsin goes from tossup to lean Democrat, Georgia from lean Republic into tossup Minnesota from lean to likely Democrat. Ok, that being said, you can't tell us who wins Florida, but Kayleigh Mcenany was on earlier and she said this, listen.

→ *Video clip of Kayleigh Mcenany – White House Press Secretary:* As of yesterday, we have 6 percentage points ahead of Democrats in the early vote. That is historic. That is historic turnout

for Republicans. Statewide, we have won 10 days straight of early voting. And on election day, when the Trump coalition turns out, we will win the great state of Florida. We will win this election.

Sandra: So, on they go to Hillsboro County in Florida, both candidates will be traveling there today. How much in play is Florida this time around Chris?

Chris: Florida is the swingingest swing state. It's the biggest swing state. It is the megillah. It is so big. It has so many electoral votes and it is so evenly divided. Remember when you think about Florida, you've got basically the northern half of the state is Alabama and the southern half is New Jersey. You've got Ohio in the middle. And every 4 years they do battle. They are in Hillsboro County for the very fact that there's the Pinellas County on the other side of Tampa Bay and then there's Orange County on to Orlando. That stretch in the middle of Florida, every 4 years they get to pick the president pretty much because a Republican can't really win the presidency without Florida.

Sandra: You gotta look at these numbers and the votes cast. This goes back to 2016. It was 4.8 million early votes were cast in Florida 5 days in the election. Here we are 5 days is out. And as of this morning, nearly 7 million early votes have been cast. What can we take away from that Chris?

Chris: Nothing. Everything and nothing. I don't pay attention to what Kayleigh Mcenany says about whose gonna win Florida because of early votes and I don't pay attention to Democrats who say they are gonna win Pennsylvania because of the early vote. I discount it all and here's why. We're gonna see about a 50 percent increase in early voting this year because of the pandemic. So that blows the doors off of all the assumptions. Whatever numbers are gonna come in, we're gonna count, that's why we have a decision desk, we are gonna look through all this stuff. But I'm not listening to partisans when they are claiming big advantages in here, but we're gonna scramble everybody's eggs.

Sandra: Ok give me a what if scenario to go practice on for my next touch up screen. Because you are looking at the northern what ifs, the southern what ifs, the tie. What is the really important what if scenario to look at this morning?

Chris: Well flip Pennsylvania and Georgia from the last time. So, let's say Biden wins both of those, can you get Donald Trump home from there. What needs to happen? What about Arizona? Can he really close the deal on Arizona? We're at the point now where there are a lot of what ifs

because we have so many states where the polls are closing within the margin of error. And who the heck knows. So, it's totally fun.

Sandra: Chris Stirewalt, this is a moment. 5 days out, really appreciate it. Chris thank you. We'll see you election night.

Chris: You bet.

5. Greg Gutfield: Trump broke the system, the mold, the, and pollsters

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTfPsjstxrg&t=7s

Programme: The Five

Greg Gutfield: Just remember that after the 2016 election there were a lot of Democrat leaders urging people to hit the streets. Marxin Walters remember what she said, it was about getting in people's faces. So I would be, I'm not so much worried or concerned about what is going on with these protesters and whatnot. I do think that it is time for a change. I mean, we are a first world country. We automate so many things. If robots can flip burgers, robots can count ballots. You don't have to stand 6 feet from AI or robot to do the counting. And I think that's where we are headed in the next couple of years. But I just want to mention that I am actually optimistic about what's gonna happen. We keep thinking about what's next. But remember how much Donald Trump accomplished within 4 years, ok. This was, probably one of the most consequential political phenomenons we have ever seen, whether you hate him or love him, or you're somewhere in between. You've got 200 federal judges. You've got 3 Supreme justices. You've got Middle East peace plans coming up. He brought in the appeal of the Republican party to blue collar and black voters. Let's hope the Republicans capitalize on that. And you know what. And this is something that the elect just should be thanking him for. He didn't start a single war. He upset you guys and kept you up at night with tweets. So, the good news is, this guy did a lot. And the even better news is, he's not going nowhere. So even if he loses this election, I said this yesterday and people laughed, but trust me, 2024, he's gonna be the nominee. And I'll be in my early 40s. So, I can consider being the VP. I'm not sure how I feel about it, but I think that barring any health issues, he's gonna be back and the fact that he doesn't drink means that he's not gonna change. But I think that, if you're a Trump supporter you've gotta feel good. You won. The guy broke the system. He broke the mold. He broke the media. He broke the

pollsters. He broke the entire political machinery. Nothing is ever gonna be the same. You're never going to see the same thing after Trump, unless it Trump.

6. Philadelphia mayor tells Trump to 'put his big boy pants on' and concede, even as key states remain uncalled

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/philadelphia-mayor-trump-put-his-big-boy-pants-on-concede.

Programme: The Five

Anchor - Dana Perino*:* We have somebody on the ground that can help us sort it out. That is Eric Shawn. Eric, what did you get from what she just said?

Eric Shawn: The most important two words, stay tuned Dana. That's a lot of speculation when she announces in the press conference that the state was ready to announce the results, the final results of this. Certainly, that's not happening yet. As we heard, 2 hundred thousand or so ballots still to be counted. And here at the Philadelphia Convention Centre there are right now inside they are counting to count those ballots. They have about 91 thousand ballots here in Philadelphia just for the city still to go. So we are certainly gonna be going on this through tomorrow if not perhaps through the weekend. This comes as the Trump campaign has launched 2 separate lawsuits and there's a lot of confusion tonight about one of them. Within the last hour we have learned that the Trump campaign has launched a lawsuit claiming that the Philadelphia board of elections has not allowed their poll watcher inside. The lawsuit claims that Trump Republican poll watchers have been barred from coming and seeing first-hand themselves. That appears not to be true because I had interviewed for 2 days now a GOP Trump activist who is a canvasser who has been inside this building. And a source tells me that right now as we are speaking, there are canvassers of both parties, a Democrat and Republican inside right now watching the counting. Although there is an interesting part about you can see. Let me show you a photograph. This is the view. This is the exact point of view that a poll watcher sees taken by a GOP Trump activist Brian McCafferty here in Philadelphia has been involved in Republican politics for a long time. And Brian was angry about this. He wanted to get even closer. They were barred for 22 feet away then the federal judge ruled they could go to 6 feet. The city board of elections is appealing that. This is the view exactly of what a Republican poll watcher is and has seen inside that room, which seems to conflict completely with the Trump campaign lawsuit

and claims that poll watchers are not allowed in this room. In earlier today Brian told me how angry he was that he couldn't get closer. Here he is.

→ *Video clip of Brian McCafferty - Poll watcher*: I would like the judge to come here and define 6 feet for me because we cannot see them. Even though they've moved the desks up. I don't have a tape measure, but I'm gonna tell the American public, it's still 25 feet we can't see anything.

Eric: The president also last night tweeted that they won't allow legal observers. That frankly is not true. That's not a true statement. There are legal observers here. You just saw one in Brian. We will see how this plays out. There's 7pm federal court hearing so we'll see what the Trump campaign brings to that court hearing and what the Philadelphia board of elections says and answer to that and see. If not, then perhaps they are right and their poll watchers have been barred from where they think the poll watchers should be and should play out in about 90 minutes from now here in Philadelphia federal court.

Dana: It sounds like its rush hour there. Thank you very much Eric.

7. 'The Five' brace for a legal battle over election results

https://video.foxnews.com/v/6207884718001#sp=show-clips

Programme: The Five

Anchor - Juan Williams: Former vice president Joe Biden and his running mate senator Kamila Harris are expected to speak tonight. As Biden leads in Pennsylvania, Nevada and Georgia inch him closer to the presidency. But many states remain still too close to call. President Trump not going down without a fight. He's ramping up his legal battles in multiple states and his campaign says the election is not over. So where do the races stand in key battlegrounds? Let's go to Bill Hemmer for more. Bill you at the billboard".

Bill Hemmer: "Yeah Juan I'm on the board. In the west and east of Nevada a court case is coming up. We will hear in matter of minutes actually at 5 o' clock east coast time. This number has increased for Joe Biden throughout the day. When we look at this overall difference between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in all of these states. Again, that lead has increased for Biden. In Arizona when we woke up earlier today the difference was larger than 39000. So, it's come down in Donald Trump's favour. At the moment Arizona has been called by our network by 11 electoral votes, but that number continues to decrease. A difference maker is something that our decision desk does not think will happen. In Pennsylvania meanwhile, this is the difference. We

went to bed last night Donald Trump had the lead and throughout the morning and throughout the afternoon it kept increasing towards Joe Biden' favour. Why is that? Philadelphia and another reason Pittsburgh. They keep on counting votes and adding from the Democratic tally to Joe Biden. Pop here to Georgia. Check this out. Juan are you ready for this. This is Georgia. There's 2.4 million votes and 2.4. 5 million votes cast in the state of Georgia. You're at 49.4 to 49.4. A difference of 1544 votes. There will be a recount in Georgia and there'll also be 2 hotly contested senate races in that state and in all likelihood if it remains the way it is now, the 5th of January so watch that. In North Carolina there seems to be pretty much where it's been now for several days which means North Carolina in all likelihood will stay red. Why is that important? It's important for the White House and also important for the Tom Tillis the Republican senate who seems to have fall off a challenge by the Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham. So given that the US senate will be a hot focus regardless of whether its president Trump second term or president elect Joe Biden in January 2021. Juan back to you"

Juan: Dana so what do you make of what you just saw? It looks like Vice President Joe Biden has a bunch of paths to get to 270 and President Trump almost none.

Dana Perino: Well, there's a path. I think that we just need to be patient and it's hard to be patient in a world where if you want something delivered from Amazon prime it takes two days and you just order on your phone and super-fast. This takes a little bit longer and it's taking longer because some states weren't used to mail-in ballots and they had to figure how to count those. And the problems with Pennsylvania, well not problems, the issues with how long it's taking Pennsylvania is that they were not allowed under the law to start counting those mail-in ballots until election day. So that's why it's taking long and now we are here on Friday. I do think that the numbers for Joe Biden when you woke up this morning and o he took the lead in Georgia, but that number 49.4 to 49.4 to me that encapsulates the entire year of 2020, the last four years. It feels like, I know things could really change, but this in a way has been a status quo election.

Juan: That's an interesting way to put it. So, Greg, the former vice president needs really to win Nevada and then whatever court action, potentially that could happen let's say in a place like Pennsylvania that sort of becomes moot.

Greg Gutfeld: What does moot mean? I think here's the deal. Imagine being a voter watching the news ok. You're suddenly suggesting or saying the president should probably pump the

brakes while the media doesn't. So, the media declares the winner even before the military votes are cast in many, many states. Which is a terrible message to send to the people who are serving abroad that they are serving our country, but we are not counting your votes because it's not gonna matter anyway. So, the same people that have been telling us for so long that this was gonna be a landslide are now telling us not to bother, he already got it, there's no fraud, there's no nothing everything is great. Well, I'm sorry you don't inspire after everything you've told us. I guess for the past four years with the Russian collusion hoax and trying to get us to believe that some poorly produced memes created by Russian bots for a couple of hundred grant managed to get Trump 307 votes or 306 electoral votes, I can't remember. I guess that doesn't matter anymore. You can't complain about recounts, right. Because remember, Bush was 20 years ago that was over one state. 20 years ago, I was in diapers. I was 35, but it was a fetish. The fact is people don't have long term memories anymore. And they don't remember. To Dana's point, they think that everything should happen now. Relax. It's like a turkey, set it and forget it. You voted. Let the process go. The good news is, if it's a recount its legal. You don't have to worry about it. What you see, everything is great. So let it happen and don't complain man because that other side, they put us through hell for four years with the Russian crap. You can wait a month for an actual recount especially with these razor thin margins.

Juan: What an adult perspective from Greg Gutfeld. So, Jesse, by the way I was just told that Biden's margin in Georgia just went up by two 4 thousand votes. So, it's a 4 thousand votes margin. So, Jesse, if the Trump administration thinks there's been some impropriety. Yesterday you were telling me you thought, hey what's going on in Philadelphia? Is it more appropriate for them to talk about wrongdoing in court than on Twitter and social media?

Jesse Watters: Yeah, the Trump supporters in this country are having a difficult time processing what's been happening over the last three days. I include myself in that group of people. If this had been a normal election and on election night that votes are in and Joe Biden is declared the winner, I think a lot of people in the country, the president included would say hey that's it, that's the race. But that's not what happened. It took three days; possibly four days and they are counting ballots and ballots and ballots in these Democrat precincts, and they've chewed away the president's lead and they flipped the president's lead in all these states. I'm sorry, but a lot of people just feel like this has left a bitter taste in their mouth. They have a right to be suspicious. That's a valid emotion, but that emotion doesn't necessarily change anything. I do understand

how the Democrats felt after 2000 in Florida. But now we're looking at like five Floridas, we're looking at five or six states where really thin margins and dicey outcomes. At this point the president needs to win at least three recounts to even get to 270 or maybe tie it at 269. It's a really tough uphill battle. When you think about everything that they've thrown at this guy. I mean you've tried everything. You've spied on his campaign. You've investigated him. You've impeached him. You blamed him for 2000 American deaths in the home stretch big tech, big media. And all this money poured in, and they just emptied the clip into the sky and he's still right there. And it's not over yet and he's right there. It's almost like a football game, you know, dirty plays, bad calls, some missed calls. It ends in a controversial play. There's a few seconds left, but the clock is ticking, but kinda lot of people see where this is going.

Juan: Dagen I wanna show you a clip that I think a lot of people will be talking about. It comes from the Mayor of Philadelphia

→ *Video clip of Jim Kennedy, Mayor of Philadelphia:* I think what the president needs to do is frankly put his big boy pants on. He needs to acknowledge the fact that he lost and he needs to congratulate the winner. Just as Jimmy Carter did, just as George Bush did and frankly just as Al Gore did and stop this and let us move forward as a country.

Juan: So Dagen everybody believes in the process but put your big pants on?

Dagen McDowell: Yeah, he's clearly auditioning for a job at CNN or MSNBC so he hit the threshold for loathsome and vertumnus in that little clip is indeed cute. He's the one that did a little jig for a century seating in the city of Philadelphia. But this goes to, it is up to the state and local officials to assure the American people who care about this country, who care about the Republic that there will be extreme fairness and rigor and transparency in this count, in any recount that happens. The American people need to believe in the legitimacy of the election and this enormity and importance of the moment clearly is being lost on these individuals. What's wrong with the people of Pennsylvania? So, the AG on Halloween tweeted out that if all the votes are added up at PA then Trump is gonna lose. That was over the weekend. And then the Philadelphia election officials today couldn't or maybe wouldn't say how many segregated ballots they are when they agreed to do that under the Supreme Court. I think that they need to stop watching other networks.

8. Trump alleges fraud, attempts to rig election

Trump 'undermining' his legal team with claims of stolen election: Turley | Fox News

Programme: FOX News Democracy 2020

Anchors - Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum

Martha MacCallum: Very remarkable news conference this evening from the president of the United States. He did not take any questions in there. Let's go back to our Chief White House Correspondent John Roberts who is there in the room. Good evening to you once again John.

John Roberts: Martha, Bret good evening to you. I think from the 30-thousand-foot level, what we saw here was a president looking at the numbers that are tightening in places like Georgia and Pennsylvania and looking at the results of what's coming in from Arizona even though his campaign says ultimately, he will prevail in Arizona. Looking at the numbers in Nevada, they are beginning to expand for Joe Biden. And I believe what we saw tonight is a president who believes that at the end of the day when all these votes are counted the election is not going to go his way, so he's trying to plan an alternate route to retain the White House. The president saying a couple of moments ago, I think we will win easily. There is going to be a lot of litigation and I believe that this is going to end up at the Supreme Court. That doesn't sound like a president whose waiting for 270 votes to be allocated to one candidate or the other and that candidates claims victory and the other one concedes defeat. This sounds like a president who is going to look at the results come in. It's just possible that Joe Biden in the end could end up with 270 or more electoral votes. At which point it looks like President Trump is going to pull a trigger on even more litigation we have seen so far. I told you going into this that if the Mr. president had a grievance, we were likely going to hear about it. He spent a lot of time Bret on your topic. What he calls suppression polls, polls that showed that the president was gonna lose certain states by anyway from 7 to 15 points or 17 points in the case of Wisconsin. And that the results were anything but what had been projected. The president calling those suppression polls. Designed to tell people that the cause is lost. Stay home. It is not even worth coming out. And I think all of this is gonna go into a big pot that the president's team is going to roll out as a way to challenge whatever election results, we see later this week. Now in terms of fraud, or abuse or found ballots that the president talked a lot about, we haven't seen any widespread evidence that that is the case. I did forward around a short time ago a letter from the Trump campaign to the district attorney in court county Nevada in which it is alleged that thousands of people who were not legal residents of Nevada cast votes in count county. I mean that could be some evidence of

fraudulent voting. We don't know, it's a claim at this point. But other than that Bret and Martha I haven't really seen anything that would constitute any kind of flagrant fraud or abuse of the system. Perhaps I just haven't heard about it. Perhaps Fox News hasn't heard about it.

Bret: Yes, we haven't seen any evidence, John. And I just wanna note something that was very stark. As the president is talking there about these various states. As he's saying that Democrats are stealing an election and that it's a corrupt system, on the other side of the screen, literally the votes are going down in Georgia, now at 36 hundred votes spread between President Trump and former vice president Biden. In Pennsylvania they spread now 64 thousand. It was happening as the president was talking. We have not seen the hard evidence. He claims that his campaign is going forward with these legal lawsuits, and they are going to produce it. But those spreads are getting much more narrow and possible will change as time goes on.

John: And again, all Joe Biden has to do is turn one of those states blue. Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania and he gets to 270. And so, when he gets to 270 clearly, I would think the Biden campaign, Joe Biden said let's wait for it. So maybe he'll wait for the vote to be complete in all the states. But the question I wanted to ask the president was, let's say over the cause of the next 72 hours the vote goes your way, and you end up with 270 will you claim victory? The president clearly didn't take any questions. I don't know if Joe Biden, if he wins one more state he'll come out and say that's it I'm the winner we're gonna start building a transition team, which I'm sure he's already doing as well because that would be the prudent thing to do. Because if a court decision goes your way you wanna make that you're not suddenly four or five weeks behind. I believe that even happened in 2000. Transition team rapid running on both sides. Certainly, President Bush said that he was doing it. But I don't know that the Trump campaign is going to respond to that favorably or if they're going to say, we're not accepting the results of this election and here's the litigation with which we are going to show that the election turned out a different way. And I have no idea what evidence they would possibly present to back up that case that any court would look at and say you know what you're right. Clearly back in 2000 when they had the recount in Florida there was evidence. There were ballots that you couldn't read properly, those butterfly ballots. You remember this all too well Bret. Depot chads, hanging chats. Solid evidence of votes that were either legitimate or not legitimate and they were arguments on both sides, and this was argued by two of the finest attorneys in the country at the time Ted Olsen and David Boys at the Supreme Court. And

ultimately the Supreme Court said 'stop the counting'. But in this case, we don't have any of that evidence that they had back in 2000. So, I'm not sure how the president makes the case. But I can tell you this, that he's go teams of legal people who are working on that at this moment.

Martha: Yes I see the letter you mentioned John with regard to Nevada. And this is the first piece of any evidence that we know that the Trump lawyers have put forward which says 3062 voters who moved from Nevada before the election still cast ballots in the election. They do not attach those lists here of who those voters are proving that they did actually place a ballot. But that's the kind of thing you would need to see in large numbers in all of these places.

Bret: You would have to attach the spread in those races. Right now, the Nevada lead for Joe Biden is 11438.

John: If I can just add to that, I'm told that there are thousands more names that will be submitted to the district attorney in court country as well. I have not seen that list. Someone is working on a redacted version of it that I hope to get at some point. But they do say that they have thousands of names. They are starting off with a tranche of 3000 names. They are likely to be thousands more. I'm also told that the Trump campaign has the names of people who are deceased that had a ballot cast in their name. So, we hope to see more about that as this case begins to unfold.

Martha: I mean that's the kind of thing you need to see. That's actual evidence of the kind of things that are being suggested here. John thank you very much.

9. Trump warns Dems aiming to take the Senate, doubles down on final victory.

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-warns-dems-aiming-to-take-the-senate-double-downs-on-final-victory

Programme: The Angle

Anchor - Laura Ingraham: Joining me now is House Minority Leader, Kevin McCarthy. Congressman, that's all well and good for miss Spenbegger to be saying in a conference call, but how many of them are willing to take on the squad in public, in the media, like on this show?

Kevin McCarthy: None of them. They are all afraid because they will be prime ad and they will lose. But what's very interesting here and shows more of the fraud, not one Republican incumbent lost. We've already won 8 seats and we are heading 10 more. How would President Trump lose in an atmosphere like that? How is it possible that someone would claim that Joe

Biden would win and not one Republican member of Congress lost the election, but almost 15 Democrats did? And you know what interesting happening, we are watching this going before our very eyes. Why is it that in these major states that the big city stopped counting to all the rural votes come in to know how many more they need? On my way here tonight, we were ahead in a seat in Ohio by a little less than 300 votes. I don't have the facts, but it was just reported, that they allowed a little over 300 people to revote and now we are behind. I don't have all the facts. Our attorneys are rushing there. This is what's transforming across America. And what's interesting to me, I just spent 4 years listening to the Democrats make false claims about voter infusion into the last election. It's happening before our very eyes, and they are staying silent. Even down to the city council races, they allowed people to observe votes. They allow people inside.

Laura: Well, you have huge amounts of money from Mark Zuckerberg and George Soros and others flooding everything to local DA races to even school board races in some cases, and then canvasing of states like Pennsylvania and these other efforts. And I think there's a huge effect on this. But congressman, the Republicans are watching, the voters. They are watching how the Republican leadership handles this. And I didn't like the silence I was hearing from people until tonight basically, when I heard more people are starting to speak out. I know you've been speaking out. But Republicans better remember who helped expand this party. It wasn't some of the moderates. It was Donald Trump. And they better stand and fight for him.

Kevin: This is Donald Trump. And I bet you this promise, the house Republicans are not standing back. They are out across the country in these facilities making sure. And I'll tell you, listen to this little fact, every Democrat that lost right now, lost to a woman, a minority, a veteran Republican. This president has expanded this party larger than we ever have. We have more women in the Republican house in the history of America. We'll have more minorities. It is President Trump who expanded it. This is what's moving forward. And I will tell you this, Republicans will not back down. We will not wait to 4 years now to change this. We are gonna fight this now. And we are gonna change it. For them to claim that Arizona won, at the end of the day, the president will carry Arizona. He will win Pennsylvania, and that will be more than 270 electoral votes. And every American should stand up. Whatever they see, go to team Trump on Twitter and tell us if they see something that's incorrect out there.

Laura: What we are saying with that Pennsylvania advantage in road, I don't think that looks good at all. Unless a court steps in, I don't see Pennsylvania going in the right direction at all. This thing is getting sliced and diced. Its congressman Jim Clyburn by the way, is in total denial about his party. Watch

→ *Video clip of Jim Clyburn House majority whip - Democratic Party:* I don't think anything went wrong. We are in a pretty good place. Joe Biden will be the president elect. And we do know that he's got over 72 million votes. That's a mandate to me to change the direction of this country.

Laura: That's a mandate. They have a mandate congressman? That's a great mandate they have, losing seats and didn't take the senate, we hope.

Kevin: They didn't defeat one Republican incumbent and lost 15. And president Trump won this election. Everyone whose listening, do not be quiet. Do not be silent about this. We cannot allow this to happen before our very eyes. We need to unite together. You don't need to be a Republican. If you believe in every legal vote needs to count. You believe in the American process, join together and let's stop this.

Laura: Congressman thank you so much for being out there and being vocal. I hope we see others.

10. Ingraham: Win or lose, Trump will be 'GOP kingmaker for 2022 and 2024, no doubt'

https://www.foxnews.com/media/laura-ingraham-trump-gop-kingmaker-win-or-lose

Programme: The Angle

Anchor - Laura Ingraham: But first, winning the future. That's the focus of tonight's angle. Four years ago, the American people stuck it to the political elites and their media bootleggers by putting Donald Trump in the White House. Now Trump rode in on this populist agenda of putting American workers first. And his mandate was to take power from the corrupt political class in Washington and put it back in the hands of the people.

→ *Video clip of Donald Trump's acceptance speech on November 9, 2016:* Ours was not a campaign. But rather an incredible and great movement. It's a movement comprised of Americans from all races, religions, backgrounds and beliefs, who want and expect our government to serve the people. And serve the people it will. The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

Laura: And on issue after issue, he delivered. He delivered real results. American prosperity, record low unemployment, thanks to his tax cut and deregulation. Record increase in median household income. 65 hundred bucks. Far outpacing Obama. Of course, we renegotiated NAFTA. Obama said he'd fix that. And of course, in 8 years he never did. It took two years of work for Trump's team, but the new USMCA levels the playing field with Mexico and Canada. It's about time. Tariffs on China and under huge pressure to back off on tariffs by big business. The president kept firm. Which brought China to the negotiating table. Was great. He forced our NATO allies to finally commit to paying their required share of GDP to pay for their own defence. He ended in catch release. He forced the issue of phony asylum seekers to the fore and he got a good start on that new border fence. He put 218 federal judges on the bench and 3 solid justices to the Supreme Court. I can go on and on. I can take the whole hour on the stuff that he's done in 4 years. But the important thing to remember is that he accomplished all of that while under constant assault by forces inside and outside the government. Of course, the deep state, the molar team, the corrupt media, the grifters at the Lincoln project, social media CEOs, the Antifa BLM rioters and even the virus that originated in China. Or and I almost left out all the personal lies, and smears and attacks on his family that he had to endure as well. For 4 years, that did not let up. But in the end, about 70 million Americans ignored these vipers and voted for Trump's policies.

→ Video clips of Donald Trump's supporters saying We love you / We love Trump.

Laura: I know how much so many of you might be hurting about how this election played out. The Covid fear mongering, the mail-in ballots fiasco, the fact that days after the American election, we are still counting ballots. And the absolute disgrace that is the American press corps and their incurious approach to all. And I know many of you cannot believe that bags of votes, almost all for Biden seem to turn up just when Biden needs them the most. And the fact is, serious legal arguments are being made against. And the big win at the Supreme Court as I mentioned, we'll get to that more in a bit. I can't tell how the courts will ultimately rule or if the remedies will even change the outcome. But I will repeat what I said last night. These legal efforts are critical because the truth does need to come out to preserve the integrity and transparency of elections going forward. And if there is no path for Donald Trump's second term, it doesn't mean the end of America First movement or his role in leading it. On the contrary, this is only the beginning. For now, it's time to take our gens, learn from our defeats,

and confidently expand one of the greatest political movements in the past 100 hundred years. So how do we do this? First, we must ensure that state by state we work to overhaul any process that leads to what we've seen play out this week. I don't care how much money it costs. I don't care what we have to study to get there. But we must work to eliminate mass mail-in voting and ballots harvesting. Litigation is going to be necessary, and it costs big money, so it needs to be funded. Hey big donors stop giving money to think tanks in Washington that have accomplished next to nothing and start giving money to grassroot political and legal effort to stop this nonsense. Now back in August Republican Governor Doug Ducey of Arizona assured us that everything would go smoothly on election day.

→ *Video clip of Republican Governor Doug Ducey of Arizona on August 5, 2020:* In Arizona we're gonna do it right. It will be free and fair. It will be difficult, if not impossible to cheat and it will be easy to vote. 78 percent of the citizens already vote by mail in Arizona. In the course of decades, we've established a system that works and can be trusted.

Laura: Oops, it didn't really work out that way. But he's not alone. Republicans also control Georgia. Yet sheer incompetence and foul play have compromised the integrity of the election results there as well. Democrats have strong holds in Detroit and Philadelphia, that'll be more difficult to change. But try we must. For many months *The Angle* warned that the mail-in ballots were going to present serious challenges that the GOP needed to be prepared for.

→ *Video clip of Laura Ingraham interviewing Donald Trump in September 2020:* Laura: So, you gonna have lawyers across this country ready to challenge this stuff, because they have a lot of lawyers? Donald Trump: They do. They have more lawyers than any human being has ever hired. I don't know whose hiring their lawyers, but the Democrats have lawyers and we do too. We're in Pennsylvania right now. We're in Nevada right now. We're in all different states fighting this.

Laura: Apparently there weren't nearly enough lawyers to counter what would happen in Philly and Detroit with lawyers being denied access to vote counting centres repeatedly. Number two, it's time to retire all the failed political consultants and campaign officials who blew through hundreds of millions of dollars yet didn't have this legal apparatus set up to challenge what we all knew was coming. Why didn't they have it in place? Why aren't the best lawyers in America on television night after night explaining the president's legal claims? We saw Jay Sekulow tonight thank goodness. Third, even when it's time to accept an unfavourable outcome in this

election. And we hope it never comes. But if and when that does happen, President Trump needs to deal with it with the same grace and composure he demonstrated at that town hall with Savannah Guthrie. So many people remarked about his tone and presence. Exactly what he needs. Now losing, especially when you believe the process wasn't fair, it's a gut punch. And I'm not conceding anything tonight by the way. But losing, if that's what happens, it's awful. But President Trump's legacy will only become more significant if he focuses on moving the country forward. And then the love and respect his supporters feel for him it's only gonna grow stronger. And his legacy more historically significant. The media knows he will be a GOP kingmaker for 2022 and 2024, no doubt. They know he's a political hero to tens of millions of Americans, and they want to take that from him too.

→ *Video clip of various interviews on CNN on Trump:* "The president keeps sawing seeds of doubt about our democracy saying he's not gonna accept results of the election unless he's the winner". "President Trump threatened to tear the country apart. I think that should disqualify him in the minds of fair-minded people". "Donald Trump in his speech not only seemed like a dictator, not only seemed like he was a blatant racist dictator, but a panicked one".

Laura: They are still on the racist thing even though he expanded in support of the minority voters. These people are absolute buffoons. Trump should make them eat their own words. But more importantly he should do it for the voters and those who expect their leaders to accept the will of the people. And to all you patriots who supported President Trump, stand tall and be proud of your efforts and his. It was all worth it. We all helped reshape the national conversation on China, on immigration, on trade, and political correctness, etcetera, etcetera. We don't have time to bury our heads in crying towels. There are two senate races to win in order to hold the senate. There's money to be raised, speeches to be written and delivered, ads to be made, and ballot canvassing events to be organized. The 2020 presidential election will be studied for decades, and even centuries to come. Historians will know that in this election, Biden and the left were pumped up by a fortune from big businesses who are angry with the president who stood up for the average American. But history will also show that a time when so many intellectuals had given up on this country, Donald Trump and his supporters show that the American dream still inspires tens of millions, and that billions of dollars, the propaganda could not persuade us to abandon the faith. And from myself, I'm confident that our vision of this country will eventually prevail. And that's *The Angle*.

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1. Trump campaign files lawsuit in Arizona alleging Maricopa County rejected ballots by in-person voters

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-campaign-files-lawsuit-in-arizona-alleging-maricopa-county-rejected-votes-by-in-person-voters

Programme: FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream

Anchor – Shannon Bream: Press Office in Arizona. Correspondent Alicia Acuna is on the phone now with some new developments. She has been escorted away from the area. I believe she's in her car now. Alicia we're getting a lot of conflicting reports on what's going on. What can you tell us?

Alicia Acuna: Hi Shannon. I can tell you that our crew and other members of the media inside the Maricopa county's elections office, as the crowd was gathering outside over the course of hours. At first, in the beginning there were conflicting protests. We had Biden supporters then and we Trump supporters as well. That turned into a much larger group. We had hundreds of people there. But by the time we were escorted out there were hundreds. And what happened was we were sitting there waiting to do a hit for your show to give an update on account about the county. However, we were approached by an election official who said there were shutting the building down for safety purposes. They needed everybody out now. So, all of the crews had to break down. We were all escorted out by sheriff deputies to our cars. I can tell you the frustration in the crowd was incredibly evident. You could hear them yelling "Can Fake Fox News". They are very frustrated that the Fox News channel decision desk, which stands by its decision, called Arizona yesterday evening. The Trump campaign and the Republican felt the call was too soon. So, there is frustration from the crowd. They said they are coming back tomorrow in the Maricopa County continues. So, we will bring you the latest as we get it. But our crew is safe and so are the other members of the media.

Shannon: Ok Aliicia really quick. Before we get cut off. Just to be clear. We were expecting another tranche of votes around 1am eastern sort of like in another 10 minutes or so. So, does that work continue? Do you think we will get anything more tonight?

Alicia: According to the election officials as we were leaving, they said the count will continue. They will shut down for the evening once that is complete. At 1am eastern another dump of data is supposed to be released. So, we'll look for that.

Shannon: Ok we'll check that with you Alicia. Thank you. More news on those numbers next.

2. Fox News projects Joe Biden will win 2020 presidential election

https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-wins-presidency-trump-fox-news-projects

Programme: FOX News Democracy 2020

Anchors - Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum

Bret: The Fox New decision desk can now project that former vice president Joe Biden will win Pennsylvania and Nevada putting him over the 270 electoral votes he needs to become the 46th president of the United States.

Martha: Donald Trump the 45th president of the United States who stated in this process, 'I will never give up fighting for you and our nation', will be denied a second term. That has not happened since 1992 and President George W Bush. Keep in mind the Trump campaign is in the midst of waging legal challenges in several states, but the path is clear for the new president elect.

Bret: The states will all need to officially solidify the votes in the middle of a pandemic. Almost 150 million Americans voted, and Joe Biden and Kamila Harris will receive the most votes of any presidential ticket ever.

Martha: Senator Kamala Harris will be the first woman and the first woman of colour to become vice president of the United States. President Trump got 5 and a half million more votes in 2020 than he did in 2016 and closed the gap in the final days after bomb storming the nation. Whether he chooses to concede or decides to wait until these legal challenges play out is yet to be seen.

3. Trump releases statement after Biden's projected win

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_x7bkJvKERE

Programme: FOX News Democracy 2020

Anchors - Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum

Bret Baier: We have a statement from the president and reaction from the Trump's campaign. But right now, the president is playing golf at his gold course in Virginia. That's a shot from the Associate Press. As this announcement has been made that Joe Biden will the 46th president of the United States, we know that the Trump campaign is saying hold on we are fighting a legal battle. Our projection is our projection. Let's bring in Chief White House correspondent John Roberts. John what are you hearing?

John Roberts: Obviously the Trump campaign knew that this was happening. And I also know that if I was the president, I wouldn't be making a lot of putts right now. The Trump campaign obviously knew that this was coming because they had a statement that was ready to go when this news came down. The presidency claiming that Joe Biden is rushing to claim victory and that he's doing that and there is complicity with the media to hide the truth. The president basically indicating that this is not ended, at least not for him. Statement from the president through the campaign saying, I quote "Beginning Monday our campaign will start prosecuting our case in court to ensure election laws are fully upheld and the rightful winner is seated. The American people are entitled to an honest election: that means counting all legal ballots, and not counting any illegal ballots. This is the only way to ensure the public has full confidence in our election". The president also started out the day defiant and Twitter sort of checking him along the way. Couple of tweets to share with you. The president tweeting quote "I won this election, by a lot". Disclaimer was slapped on that tweet by Twitter. The president in another tweet saying, "people were screaming stop the count & we demand transparency (as legal observers were refused admittance to count rooms)". That tweet was censored by Twitter. And another one, "tens of thousands of votes were illegally received after 8pm on Tuesday, election day, totally and easily changing the results in Pennsylvania and certain other razor thin states. As a separate matter, hundreds of thousands of votes were illegally not allowed to be observed". That tweet censored by Twitter as well. But this is the argument that the president is going to make going forward. It's going to be about voter counting. It's going to be about access to vote. It's gonna be about what votes were allowed to be counted. Samuel Alito, justice of the Supreme Court yesterday issued an order to Pennsylvania to sequester all ballots that came in after 8pm. That was subject of the case that was in the Supreme Court. We don't know though how many ballots came in after 8 o'clock on election day. We don't know who they were cast for. So, we do not know that would change the results of the election. President Trump seems to think that it

will. But the short statement from the president is that this has not ended for him. There doesn't' appear to be any intention on the president's behalf to concede, only to fight on. One of the problems he's got right now is that he doesn't have a legal team that he thinks is high powered enough to really make a credible case before the American people on this. And that is the other 74 million people who did not vote for him. So, I'm hearing that they're trying to beef up the legal team with some big names. Former attorney general of the United States Michael Mukasey maybe on that list of people that they are trying to get. But we see going forward because somebody like Mukasey before he ever signed on to something like this, I'm told by people who are in this team that the president has put together a team to try to fight this. We would want to see some real hard evidence that there was in fact voting irregularities. We had that list of 300 people that are said to have voted illegally because they didn't satisfy the residency requirements in Nevada. That case was thrown out by federal district judge yesterday. So that's one loss for them. There've been other smaller loses that they've had so mounting this case that there were mass irregularities or huge tranches of votes that should've not been allowed to be counted. That's gonna require a lot of hard evidence. And in order to get some real high powered legal help, sort of the calibre of James Baker and the Bush campaign in 2000 is going to require the Trump campaign to get a pretty high bar when it comes to all of that. Arizona is still getting closer as the vote count comes in. We don't know if the Trump campaign will be able to make the projections that they say will put the president in the lead there. The most likely places that we're gonna see votes recounts, that the president will fight tooth and nail will be in Georgia. In fact, Brad Raffensperger secretary state in Georgia has already suggested that there's going to be a recount there. The president also likely to try to go for a recount in Pennsylvania. We don't know what the margins are gonna be. I'm also hearing that there might be something in Wisconsin that they may challenge on. So, all of this will unfold in the days going forward. One thing I should point out though, Joe Biden wants to be the president of all of the people. He's got 70 million people who voted for President Trump. So that's gonna be a big lifter for Biden as well. But I'm sure that he will, if he becomes president as hard as he can to do that. Bret, Martha.

4. MSNBC's Maddow: Trump's vow to fight election results feels 'laughable', 'pitiful' and 'irrelevant'

https://www.foxnews.com/media/rachel-maddow-trump-laughable-pitiful-irrevelant

Programme: FOX News Democracy 2020

Anchors - Bret Baier and Martha MacCallum

Martha MacCallum: So, let's bring in our panel, Fox News Sunday anchor Chris Wallace, Dana Perino host of The Daily Briefing and co-host of The Five and Juan Williams Fox News political analyst and co-host of The Five. Chris it's interesting, we are so used to hearing from President Trump many many times during the day and usually making appearances as he comes and goes. He has been quiet really over the past three days. We understand that he's playing golf right now. But more so we've just heard from his representatives who are out there trying to lay the groundwork for this case. Your thoughts.

Chris Wallace: Yeah, his silence has been very unusual and kind of deafening really. Since election night we just had that one controversial speech in the White House briefing room when he said the election had been stolen, talked about fraud, talked about conspiracy of big media, big money and big tech. I just want to go back to John Roberts and his report. It seems at this point that the Trump camp is filing and pushing the idea of lawsuits in search of evidence. Usually, you have evidence of something and then you follow with lawsuits. And you also had that clip you ran of Rudy Giuliano where he said the burden isn't on us. The burden is on vote counters that the votes are legitimate. They will not gonna be able to overturn this unless they have hard evidence of fraud and as you guys have mentioned, fraud of the level that it would overturn the election. We're talking about tens of thousands of votes. You gotta have evidence that they are people in the backroom signing ballots, tens of thousands of ballots fraudulently. And counting them. We have not seen any sign of that. And although there have been a couple of cases about whether people can stand 20 feet away, or 6 feet away, any cases on the merits of vote fraud of illegally counted ballots or illegally cast ballots. Whether it's in Georgia, Pennsylvania or Nevada, judges have just quickly thrown them out. There is no evidence of fraud. Maybe there will be. And as you've all pointed out, the president has every legal right to pursue is legal options, but with this one again these are lawsuits in pursuit of any evidence. And we even had a case where they were setting up hotlines in the White House. Call if you have evidence of fraud. When you are talking tens of thousands of votes in at least three states, Arizona, Nevada and Georgia that put the president over the top, you can bet they're gonna get a lot of phone calls, but I can't imagine they will get them up very much.

Bret Baier: And we've been looking into things that pop up on the internet that people send us. It has not panned out. Ok we are gonna continue on that. I also wanna talk about this race, just

historically Juan. More than 8.4 billion dollars spent on political ads. 8.4 billion dollars this election cycle by far surpassing any other election ever. Now we are getting ready Juan to go on to a runoff with two senate races down in Georgia potentially with the balance of power in the Senate hanging on those two results. I mean you could be talking about another 500 million dollars just before January 5th in that race.

Juan Williams: Let's keep in mind that the Democrats feel a little chase in at this moment Bret. I think they spent a hundred million dollars in the South Carolina County.

5. Pro-Trump demonstrators, some armed, rally around US following Biden victory projection.

https://www.foxnews.com/us/pro-trump-demonstrators-biden

Programme: America's Newsroom

Anchor - Trace Gallagher: Let's bring in Democrat Strategist Kevin Walling. He has close ties to the Biden campaign leadership. Kevin, always good to see you. You've just heard the other side, the president' campaign clearly they wanna prosecute this case in court despite the fact that Joe Biden is now the president elect. I know you've talked to the members of the Biden campaign. You get insight there. Do they plan to continue Kevin the ground game on the ground of the states making sure that the votes are counted? Making sure the process goes forward despite the fact that the election has been called in his favour?

Kevin Walling: Absolutely Trace. We want every vote counted across each of these states because we want to make it abundantly clear that Joe Biden is president elect of this country, duly elected in all of these battleground states that have been called. As well as Kamala Harris as the vice president elect. So, we will adjudicate this starting tomorrow responding to whatever lawsuits the Trump campaign files. But then again, as the network have called it, as more departments have called, we are seeing the same kind of votes coming out of these counties, making sure that the vice president is now the president elect.

Trace: You also say you have friends in the Trump campaign and they're scrambling because they don't have one unifying figure to take this fight forward, pointing to someone like James Baker who did that for President Bush back in 2000. Baker by the way says this, I'm quoting here, "there are huge differences between then and now. For one thing our whole argument was that the voters have been counted and they had been counted and they had been counted and it's time to end the process. That's not exactly the message that I heard on election night. And so, I

think it's pretty hard to be against counting the votes there. What are your thoughts on that Kevin?

Kevin: Yeah, I think you are absolutely right Trace. And to former secretary Baker's point, George Bush was leading in Florida. That's not the condition here we are seeing in 2020 where the vice president, now president elect Joe Biden is leading in all of these key battleground states. That is operating not from a deficit but from a point of power in terms of going to these courts. And again, you asked Harmeet for multiple instances of fraud and she couldn't produce any examples of that just yet. You have Bob Casey Republican senator of Pennsylvania no fan of Joe Biden who was saying there was no evidence of fraud. You have Republican officials in Georgia saying there is no evidence of fraud. Again, this is a desperate last-minute attempt by Donald Trump and his campaign to reverse the will of the American people. And I don't think it will be successful.

Trace: Well, the Trump campaign just said look here's the deal, we believe there is fraud. We believe there is widespread fraud, and we plan to bring that to court and when we file these in court you can read it there. That's on their side. We talk about a unifying figure like former secretary general James Baker. There's word now, our White House correspondent John Roberts saying maybe the Trump campaign is looking at someone like Michael Mukasey the former attorney general under Bush. What are your thoughts on someone like that coming in, heavy header, giving this thing a lot more credibility? Your thoughts.

Kevin: Yeah, sure I do think that someone with more credibility than a Rudy Giuliani might be more successful in terms of advocating for the Trump campaign. But then again, I think that the car has left the station here with regards to trying to reverse any of these numbers. It's much more difficult as you know Trace from a legal perspective to actually throw out votes once they have been tallied or once they have been counted. So regardless of who they get from a level of experience I just think its not an upward battle that they are gonna be successful with.

Trace: I wonder if pressure starts to mount, I mean you have people like Lindsey Graham coming out acknowledging that Joe Biden is the president elect. And we've had reports there are some internal battles in the White House maybe with some saying the president should consider conceding here. Do you think the pressure over the next couple of days rises Kevin?

Kevin: Sure, I think it will certainly be mounting now. Of course, we know Trace, in your reporting in the last 4 years there's not a lot of outside pressure that actually motivates Donald

Trump to do the one or the other. So that's gonna be him and his conscious to come forward whether he wants to be the uniting figure in the ending months and days of his presidency or not. But then again, the American people have spoken pretty clearly. This is a clarion call. This is a very clear call for Joe Biden to be the president elect and regardless of what the president does, Joe Biden will be inaugurated on January 20th.

Trace: Kevin Walling always good to see you sir. Appreciated.

6. Trump defies media projections Biden elected 46th president

Trump defies media projections Biden elected 46th president | Fox News Video

Programme: America Reports

Anchor - Sandra Smith: President Trump and the Trump campaign pushing back as the media, including Fox News, called the election for Joe Biden. Fox News media analysts and MediaBuzz host Howard Kurtz joining us now to break it all down. So, Howie as we continue to look at these live pictures of celebrations happening in streets and in many cities across the country. Your thoughts on this big day.

Howard Kurtz – MediaBuzz Host: My thoughts Sandra is that once again it comes down to President Trump versus the media. These calls by the networks and projecting that Joe Biden will win they are not official status. Obviously, the states have to certify the votes. But they have broadcast to the world that Biden is the president elect and they are the reason these decisions why Biden is addressing the nation tonight and claiming victory. But listen to this Trump statement. The president saying, we all know why Joe Biden is forcing to pose as the winner and why his media allies are trying so hard to help him. They don't want the truth to be exposed. Simple fact is that this election is far from over. Trump casting this as another fake media narrative.

Sandra: Howie you just wonder as you see the celebrations. We'll hear from Joe Biden, Kamala Harris. They are set to speak at 8 o'clock tonight and address the nation. You wonder what the days and weeks look like knowing that the Trump campaign is making very clear, we just had one of their legal strategists just a short time ago. They still plan to fight this. The outcome of the election in many of these key states.

Howard: Look the president has every right to pursue legal challenges as any candidate in a close content would do. And it was a lot close a contest than most in the press expected. But his

messaging is being undermined to some extent Sandra by leaks from the White House in his campaign. Unnamed officials telling the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and other news outlets that they are trying to calm the president down and trying to prepare him for what they see is the likelihood defeat. And they don't believe that these legal challenges have enough evidence of any massive fraud to overturn the results in these key states. So, I think they'll have the legal battle, and we'll all cover it of course. But at the same time Biden has decided, and we'll see tonight, to act as the president elect.

Sandra: You know Howie so many are already looking back at how the media covered the campaigns. How the pollsters may have gotten it right or not so right in some cases Howie. And now we wonder what it looks like to have the media cover a Joe Biden presidency. And it may be covered by various networks and newspapers and how different that may look.

Howard: Well, I think because the former vice-president Biden gave relatively few interviews and I think the press was pretty soft on him and gave him a pass on a whole lot of things, I think the press will have the responsibility to show that as president they will be tough on him as with any other president. But clearly it won't be as frenetic. You won't have the Twitter wars because Biden has a more deliberate, calmer style. I don't think he'll be in the news as much. I don't think he wants to talk to reporters five times a day or make news 10 times a day. You know I've covered Joe Biden for decades. And in his first campaign in 1987 my lead was Joe Biden is trying to talk his way into the White House. He was very verbose. In 2007, his second campaign I bumped into him and asked how you think it's going, and he said if I am the right man for this time, it will become known. It wasn't and it didn't. Very different this time where Biden is the elder stateman, a calming presence. I've seen him hug John McCain and when he talks about working with Republicans. That's not a talking point, that who Biden is. Now it may be that he can't get his way with congress, especially with Republican Senate and maybe that he doesn't have the leadership skills to deal with the economy and coronavirus and other things we've been talking about. But at the same time, I think anybody whose covered Biden knows that he's kind of a tactical politician who really likes people.

Sandra: Well, we shall see Howie Kurtz thank you. As we look at those live pictures in Washington. The news continues here in the Fox News Channel. Howie by the way will have a full break down of the media's coverage of the election results tomorrow on MediaBuzz at 11am eastern time.

Table 1

06 November 2020

	Hard News	Magazine/Lifestyle Show	Current Affairs	Talk Show	
					Themes
1.	FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream				1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law 12. The position of Fox journalists and contributors 14. The kind of argumentation used
2.		Fox & Friends			1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law
3.					1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law
4.			America's Newsroom		4. Media credibility 11. Normative media values
5.				The Five	5. Objectivity 9. The concept of the people

					12. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
6.				The Five	10. Misinformation and disinformation 12. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
7.				The Five	1. Election credibility 5. Objectivity 14. The kind of argumentation used
8.	FOX News Democracy 2020				2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law 12. The position of Fox journalists and contributors
9.				The Angle	1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law 5. Objectivity 6. Propaganda 12. The position of Fox journalists and contributors 13. Journalism practice

					14. The kind of argumentation used
10.				The Angle	1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law 4. Media credibility 5. Objectivity 6. Propaganda 9. The concept of the people 13. Journalism practice

07 November 2020

	Hard News	**Magazine/Lifestyle Show**	**Current Affairs**	**Talk Show**	
					Themes
1.	FOX News @ Night with Shannon Bream				4. Media credibility 11. Normative media values
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3.	FOX News Democracy 2020				1. Election credibility 3. Politics and the law 4. Media credibility 7. Addressing the audience public sphericule or echo chamber 11. Normative media values 14. The kind of argumentation used
4.	FOX News Democracy 2020				1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law 4. Media credibility
5.			America's Newsroom		1. Election credibility 2. Election fraud 3. Politics and the law
6.			America's Newsroom		1. Election credibility 3. Politics and the law 4. Media credibility 8. Fake news

					13. Journalism practice (watchdog journalism or spin)