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**Donald Trump's "Shouting the Conspiracy Theory from the
Rooftops": How QAnon Strengthens his Vision**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Language and Culture**

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Dedication 1

“I am willing to speak up, I am willing to keep going, I am willing to listen to what others have to say, I am willing to go forward even when I feel alone” Emma Watson.

Here, is the little girl who loved childhood channels and innocence. She is growing day by day after a lot of efforts during eighteen years, here I am now; I have reached my goal and I will achieve my long-awaited dream. In order to prove that there is no life with despair and sadness. I dedicate this work to My Grandmother, may God have mercy on her soul; she always dreamed of seeing me graduated.

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“I think we’ve outgrown full time education, time to test our talents in the real world” Fred Weasley, Harry Potter.

Meriem

Dedication 2

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, family, and my supportive friends. They have always been there for me, believing in me without any doubt.

To my parents. Thank you for your endless love, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in me. Your guidance and support have shaped me into who I am today. This dissertation is a testament to your unwavering encouragement.

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Nour

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of QAnon movement in the USA and highlighted Donald Trump as a case study and how the QAnon conspiracy helped to strengthen his vision in attempting to show his believers' point of view. QAnon has always been the subject of debate in American society because the issue opens up an area of controversy in which opinions differ and conflict. This study equally examines how Donald Trump's government and the rise of QAnon, a conspiracy theory movement, have affected American politics and thus, understand the complicated connections between them and the impact they have had on society. By studying these events, people gain important knowledge about the complexities and results of conspiracy theories in today's world. It also shows the difficulties that democratic systems face when dealing with such movements. By considering Trump himself a fighter against the so-called deep state and its associated conspiracies, Trump created a story that really connected with his supporters, motivating them to stay loyal and join him in challenging the existing system.

ملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير حركة كيو أنون في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، و تسلط الضوء على دونالد ترامب كدراسة حالة و كيفية مساعدة و تعزيز نظرية و مؤامرة كيو أنون رؤيته في محاولة عرض وجهة نظر أنصاره. لطالما كانت كيو أنون موضوع جدل في المجتمع الأمريكي لأن المسألة تفتح مجالاً كبيراً للجدل الذي تختلف فيه الآراء و تتصادم. تتناول هذه الدراسة أيضاً كيفية تأثير حكومة دونالد ترامب و بروز كيو أنون على السياسة الأمريكية. و هكذا ، فهم العلاقات المعقدة بينهما و تأثيرهم على المجتمع. ومن خلال دراسة هذه الأحداث، نكتسب معرفة مهمة حول هذه التعقيدات و ماذا احدثت نظريات المؤامرة في عالمنا الحالي. كما توضح لنا التحديات التي تواجهها الأنظمة الديمقراطية عند التعامل مع مثل هذه الحركات. من جهة اخرى ، بوصف ترامب نفسه مقاتلاً ضد الدولة العميقة المزعومة والمؤامرات المرتبطة بها، خلق ترامب قصة التي ارتبطت حقا مع أنصاره، محفزاً إياهم على البقاء و الاخلاص به والانضمام إليه ليتحدوا النظام القائم.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

4CHAN	Four Different Chan boards
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIAAnon	Central Intelligence Agency and Anonymous
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBIAnon	Federal Bureau of Investigation and Anonymous
SARS- CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
WHInsideeAnon	White House Indicating insider knowledge and Anonymous
WHO	World Health Organization

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Introduction

Responsibility is often the most valuable thing a person can possess whether in any area of life such as business, study, medicine, or any other field. Specifically, among them is the responsibility in the political system. In which those in power or in positions of authority have a duty to serve and represent the interests of the people they govern. This includes making laws, enacting policies, and ensuring the well-being and rights of citizens. It also involves being accountable for their actions, being transparent in their decision-making processes, and listening to the concerns and needs of the public. In simple words, the responsibility in the political system is about working towards the betterment of society and ensuring the welfare and progress of its members.

Among one of the important responsibilities in the world is the presidency, because it is the real meaning of a person being truly responsible for what he manages and what he controls around him. The presidency is a very important role in the world because it involves taking authority for managing and controlling various things. When someone becomes a president, he is entrusted with making important decisions and leading the country or organization he is in charge of. He has the power to influence and shape policies, laws, and the overall direction of his nation or group. Being president means being accountable for the outcomes of his decisions and actions, both good and bad. It is a position of great authority and responsibility, as the president's choices can have a significant impact on the lives of many people.

Among one of the famous presidency systems in the world is the US, throughout its history, the United States has had a number of influential and notable presidents; who have shaped the country's development and played significant roles on the global stage. Among them, former president Donald Trump, he is an evident example of not giving up on the goals that a person's sets in his mind in order to be achieved. It is not easy at all to forget

someone like him throughout history because of the extensive legacy he left behind.

According to A. R. Carsen, in his book, *Donald Trump: 45th U.S. President*, he declared that Donald Trump was a unique president for many reasons among which he was not a typical politician unlike most presidents, because he did not have any experience working in politics before becoming president. He came from a business background, which made him different from previous leaders. Furthermore, he connected with regular people in which he appealed to many everyday Americans who felt left behind by the political system. He spoke to their concerns about jobs, trade, and immigration, and made them feel heard. However Carsen also assumed that Donald Trump made a lot of use of social media, especially Twitter. He would share his thoughts and opinions directly with the public, without going through traditional news outlets. This made him stand out and generated a lot of attention.

The use of social media platforms has played a significant role in strengthening Donald Trump's presidency, by allowing him to communicate directly with the public and shape its opinion. Within the same line, Twitter and Facebook provided Trump with a vast audience. He could share his thoughts, and policy ideas with millions of followers instantly; this helped him to reach people directly without relying on traditional media outlets. In *Trump Revealed: An American Journey of Ambition, Ego, Money, and Power*, Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher explored the same idea in their book by clarifying that Donald Trump's presidency was marked by his direct communication unlike previous presidents who relied on press conferences and official statements. He could share his unfiltered messages on social media without any fear. Indeed, Trump's social media presence helped him mobilize and energize his supporters. He could spread his political message freely among his followers; this played a crucial role in his election campaign and subsequent presidency.

The importance of this research lies in the fact that there is a strong and deep connection between Donald Trump and social media platforms that led to secret illegal political works reached by many conspiracies; one of them named QAnon movement. It is worthwhile to conduct this research because QAnon is a well-known conspiracy theory that emerged in the U.S. in recent decades and led to multiple damage to America, the selection of the topic has initially been triggered by the interesting nature of the phenomenon in question because QAnon as a term by itself creates curiosity that needs to be academically fulfilled.

The work presented is set to examine the emergence of QAnon in the U.S. and construct a comprehensive analysis of the movement by investigating its concepts and evaluating the variety of perspectives Americans share as well as attempting to settle the heated debate that is based on the image of this conspiracy theory, being a hero or a traitor. More importantly, it is noted to provide an understanding of how exactly the act of QAnon takes place in the U.S. during Donald Trump's presidency. The research exposes and explains the crucial criteria of different criminal acts implemented in the U.S. political system secretly.

When putting into perspective the business career of Donald Trump and the existence of these conspiracies, a series of questions are raised. This research provides answers to the following questions: What are the concepts of QAnon? Who is the person named "Q"? At what level can it operate? Is it a legal or illegal act? Is there any difference between QAnon movement and other conspiracies? Does the government provide protection about the damage of QAnon? Why is there a focus and deep connection between this conspiracy theory and social media platforms? What is the role of Donald Trump in this conspiracy? Is there any direct relationship between Donald Trump and QAnon? Did Trump support QAnon? How did QAnon impact Donald Trump's Presidency?

QAnon conspiracy theory is among the most interesting topics to be tackled within the arena of academia. This is due to the nature of the movement and the possibility it offers to approach it from a variety of aspects whether ethical, political, or social. In fact, it is quite crucial to put into perspective what researchers, journalists, politicians, and scholars have said about QAnon in order to build a crystal clear image about the essence it owns.

One of the most controversial areas concerning the act of emergence of QAnon lies in the state of knowledge achieved of the term itself. In *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*, Mark Fenster plays on the image note and demonstrates that QAnon is an arguable topic that sparked a lot of controversy and debates recently in the U.S., and tried to spread to other parts of the world. Moreover, Fenster emphasizes the idea that the actions of QAnon conspiracy theory come from secret actions by former President Donald Trump with his secret support for the movement, so that he did not fully declare that he rejected its existence; he also did not fully assume that he supported QAnon's activities because he has always avoided direct statements about any topic of discussion related to this movement, and it is an absolute must to take into account that these illegal activities caused a lot of harm not only in the United States but indirectly all over the world as well during the presidential period of Trump.

The U.S. stands for the image that it is the sunshine of the world in terms of power, presidency system, and political decisions, and takes the role of being a global empire of all. But within the existence of QAnon conspiracy theory, the power of this empire has begun to decline somehow. On the same line of thoughts, the term "conspiracy theory" covers a political nature of various illegal acts against the government. Thomas Milan Konda in his book, *Conspiracies of Conspiracies: How Delusions have Overrun America*, holds the view that QAnon is a far-right conspiracy that began as a fringe Internet theory

and grew into a massive political movement during Donald Trump's presidency. Moreover, he argued that the movement began in October 2017 when an anonymous user named "Q" claimed to be a U.S. Department of Energy official with high "Q-level" clearance, outlining the conspiracy in a post titled "Calm before the Storm". Q claimed that he was causing a "Great Awakening" in which his followers attempted to decode the meaning of his messages known as "Q drops"; the conspiracy theory which is known as QAnon deeply means "Q + Anon" because these followers post their content anonymously.

In the same framework, it is claimed by the media that Trump had been publicly embracing QAnon conspiracy theory on different social media platforms in many ways. Hence, this hints that there is an actual relationship between the U.S. former president Donald Trump and QAnon movement. Therefore, this research aims at uncovering the truth behind Donald Trump's embracement of QAnon conspiracy theory as well as exploring different events that can explain such accusations, such as the Capitol Riot on January 6, 2021. Moreover, this research also aims to expose and explain how QAnon supporters gained mainstream attention to support their plans.

The cornerstone of this research is captured in the case of Donald Trump's presidency, so that the chance of conspiracies spreading was so fast in which Trump did not oppose them. Going further with this research, QAnon gained its power due to its supporters; those who helped Donald Trump to strengthening his four years of the presidency. To develop this point, it is pivotal to review the work of Joseph E. Uscinski and Joseph M. Parent entitled *American Conspiracy Theories*. In their book, they assumed that social media platforms faced criticism for their role in facilitating the spread of QAnon content. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube took steps to address the issue by implementing policies to stop the transmission of QAnon-related content and blocking

accounts associated with the movement. However, the spread of QAnon conspiracies continues to be a challenge due to the decentralized nature of the movement and the migration of its followers to alternative platforms. They stated that the visibility of a conspiracy theory and the behavior of its followers shaped public perception, such as engaging in harassment campaigns or promoting baseless claims, and influencing public perception of the movement. While many people were critical of QAnon, its presence in political discourse created an environment where conspiracy theories gained more attention and legitimacy.

Authors, scholars, politicians, and journalists will remain at the level of diversity whenever dealing with the topic of QAnon due to the purpose of building a comprehensive consensus that can encompass all the aspects of the movement. The works mentioned above are further examined throughout the process of developing the presented research. The intricate essence of QAnon conspiracy theory requires a deep analysis. In this regard, the qualitative method is an essential element for the construction of this research because it grants the opportunity to examine a variety of descriptions, illustrations, and critical thoughts provided by experts in the field. Be that as it may, the analytical approach is followed in the process of developing the current work. As a consequence to the use of qualitative materials, the results are descriptive in nature for the purpose of presenting a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study.

This dissertation includes three chapters. The first chapter “Donald Trump’s Government” demonstrates a step-by-step understanding of the earlier life of Donald Trump before the presidency by presenting his business career, family experiences, and his political interests. This chapter explains how Donald Trump gained his popularity in entering the presidential election to become a president for the U.S.; it goes with more details about the illegal activities that he participated in both directly and indirectly in

order to maintain his political position; such as the Capitol building attack with its aftermath.

The second chapter entitled “The Emergence and the Rise of QAnon: Understanding the Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory Movement” goes further to cover the origins of QAnon and its existence as well as analyze the person named “Q” and his anonymity with all the activities in which they are involved in. The second chapter deals with an important case study which is the influence of this conspiracy theory during the presidency of Donald Trump for the purpose of confirming that there is a strong connection between them.

The third and final chapter captured in “From the Far-right Movement to Trumpism” covers the case of Trump’s career in relation to this movement after the end of his presidency. Furthermore, it examines QAnon’s damages on American politics. The chapter is developed gradually introducing the history of conspiracy theories in the U.S., as well as it confirms the strong relationship between Donald Trump and QAnon; then the light is shed on the COVID-19 global crisis due to conspiracies with a persuasive analysis of the pandemic. Most crucially, the chapter settles the long lasting debate about whether QAnon movement will remain as strong act, or things will change after the end of Donald Trump’s presidency. The presented dissertation stands as a humble addition to the broad scope QAnon conspiracy theory; despite the complexity of its nature, QAnon is an intriguing area of study because it bears limitless divergent approaches by which scholars can tackle its features deeply and critically. This research is conducted through dealing with both business and presidency career of Donald Trump related to QAnon. Yet, a suitable start for this study is to draw the early beginnings of the emergence of QAnon movement.

Chapter One

Donald Trump's Government

The United States political system is characterized by having presidential elections every four years, one of the most famous figures in the U.S. presidency is Donald Trump whom the country has never witnessed a president of his kind. Over the past years, Trump was and still is a wealthy businessman he became interested in politics and mainly in being elected as a U.S. president. This Chapter deals with Trump's personal life in terms of his occupation, family, and considers the different and important achievements during his career. It eventually includes the major stages he went through during his presidency and among which there are the elections of 2016, the conspiracies, and the U.S. capitol riot and its aftermath.

1.1. Historical Background about Donald Trump

The world is a vast adventure that can be extremely successful, as it can also be the worst experience a person may live. However, in the United States of America, there was an adventure embodied in the presidency of Donald J. Trump that the whole world will always remember. This controversial celebrity whose fame was shaped by his career sparked debate all over the world during and after his presidency.

Referring to Jackie Calmes, on June, 1946 Mary Anne Macleod gave birth to her fourth child who was Donald John Trump. Although Trump's mother was born in Scotland and moved to America in 1930, he took the name of his father who was of German origin. When Trump was young, the family lived in New York City's upscale Jamaica Estates neighborhood (1). He lived through difficult circumstances in his childhood that led him to be somewhat impolite towards those who surrounded him, He had many moral problems in his childhood that most of them continued with him even when he matured and grew up (1).

Everyone witnessed that Trump was not a close to or friendly with his friends; he was somehow a bossy boy and rude in dealing with them. The way of life he lived made his parents feel confused about how to deal with him and how to make him change his behaviors. This is according to Benjamin C. Waterhouse who again affirms that “His parents tried to make him a nice person by punishing him so that maybe he could change. While they were thinking, they came to the idea that awareness might be implanted in him by making him a member in the New York Military Academy in the age of 13 to make him feel the responsibility of his actions, as well as teaching him a sense of good discipline” (Calmes 2).

Initially, this was a good idea because he had undergone a new experience that would benefit him and make him a conscious person who calculates his actions with people around him. Because this military school was known to re-educate children from the beginning and turn them from little boys into old men capable of shouldering the most difficult responsibilities and gaining many experiences in life following a harsh military system in order to teach them awareness (The White House 3). This Military Academy aimed to strengthen the toughness of its students, training them on how to turn work and business into elaborate art. Donald Trump’s entry into it was a bit different, as he was able to express and show himself in the place in a short period of time (3).

As a result of his intelligence, he was given the honor of excelling in that school. He walked the way his parents imposed on him, but he did not take it as a punishment. He studied and worked hard a lot and showed great inclination for success. This is what made his older brother, a person addicted to alcohol to be subjected to a struggle against sadness and pressure for success. His brother died at the age of 42 due to heavy alcohol addiction, revealed the BBC News which additionally mentioned that Donald Trump decided not to drink alcohol again since the death of his brother. Although the wine products in America

at that time bore his name and even some of his pictures, he completely shied away from drinking (The White House 2).

Moving to the depth of Donald Trump's earlier life, even after the end of the study stage of the New York Military Academy from which he graduated with a very good grade, he moved on in work and business. His interest was pouring into how to run the successful conduct of business. He took his inspiration in life from his father and considered him as a source of infinite self-confidence, because he was a hard worker who created own large real estate company. Benjamin C. Waterhouse in his article "Donald Trump: Life before the Presidency" confirmed that "When Donald Trump was in the military school he worked for his father as a part timer, coming on officially as soon as he graduated" (4).

Those years were an educational experience for the young Trump. The success of his father raised his awareness in regard to the psychology of the real estate business. It means that Donald Trump took his father's career into consideration to enter the business field, it opened his mind to differentiate between good and bad and right and wrong. However, he possessed a somewhat different intelligence when compared to those of his age; there was that desire to work. He wanted to attend the company to know more about how is the work. Donald Trump's will did not stop at this part only; he insisted on taking more helpful ideas for the needs of future jobs. However, he was busy working with his father. He met a tragic and sad matter; his father passed away in 1999 (Brian 4).

After the passing away of his father, Fred Trump, Donald Trump tried to expand in the various fields and businesses. He inherited from his father. After this painful injury, he tried to protect himself and his position in the company in all ways. Although he owned an above-average percentage of the company's shares, it helped him a lot in strengthening his business position. As a result, he succeeded in establishing his own hotels and casinos that

were given his full name. It was considered as the accessibility to Donald Trump's entry into the wide world of commerce and business to become a very wealthy businessman (Brian 5).

Donald Trump's business career has had both positive and negative impacts. Its positive side included job creation which consequently helped Trump to be involved in a number of business progresses over the years. For example, the Trump companies were founded in 1980 and employed thousands of people. Trump's real estate development projects have contributed to the growth and development of cities and urban areas. Donald Trump has built a successful brand around his name, which has been used to market a wide range of products and services. He has also been involved in humanitarian activities which donating some of his money to a variety of charitable organizations (Gould et al. 8).

Keeping with the same scope, the article titled "The Companies Owned by Former President Donald Trump" propounded that the negative side included the Bankruptcies and Trump has declared bankruptcy multiple times leading to the loss of jobs and financial ruin for some of his business partners and investors. As a consequence, he has been involved in many legal disputes over the years among them are his illegal actions related to his business dealings. He had controversial policies that have been criticized for harming the American societies (Gould et al. 3).

1.2. The Presidency of Donald Trump

The business life of Donald Trump did not start easily like what some people had expected. He went through many difficulties and challenges in order to prove his presence and position, even after working in the real estate company that his father owned. He faced those difficulties in managing all the real estate projects during the nineties that would lead him to bankruptcy at that time, but soon he was able to adjust the situation, overcome these issues and get rid of them again. He was characterized by a great will for such matters,

especially in the various fields of work. So, he has made himself an example of a man who can overcome various hardships (Calmes 5).

After Donald Trump worked in that company and established his own casinos, he tried his best to keep them alive and would not go bankrupt. Over the past years, he had a famous quote that everyone knows, “It never hurts to buy a good piece of land with a low price.” This saying was a good example to follow in his life and business. But in any business there is a risk that a person must live with or a sacrifice that is done in order to preserve something. So, Trump had to give up on half of his hotels and casinos, yet he soon regained his strength again (Rockefeller 34).

Trump compensated himself for all the money he had lost in that sale with the aim of maintaining his prestige in order not to face the bankruptcy. Most of them went bankrupt and collapsed. However, J. D. Rockefeller confirmed in his book *Donald Trump: Life and Business Lessons* that Donald Trump has been forced to sell a full part of his empire in order to restructure his debts after losing control of some parts in that real estate to creditors and banks (8).

This career was the door to his entry into the political arena as he started to show his interest to take control of the U.S. government. It is because of all that work he had done before the presidential period made him aspire to enter the world of presidency; he believed in himself that he had a sufficient ability to control a great international country like America. Even when Donald Trump started having the idea of running for the presidency, many did not consider it a viable idea and did not believe that it could be real. He did not acquire these ambitions from nothingness as it was mentioned earlier. His father was his source of inspiration and self-confidence for whom developed the idea that if his son wanted something, he certainly could. In consonance with Flegenheimer Matt and Michael Barbaro, Trump quickly applied this way of life by establishing close friendships

with politicians in order to secure his position indirectly, those who had influence over the laws, permits and tax that affected his real estate interests (Rockefeller 4).

Within this line, Donald Trump succeeded in entering the elections through his intelligence with the ability to deliver sweet words, many promises in his speeches to the American citizens. So, he became the first person elected president for the USA without any successful experiences before because most of the candidates had great experience in the political field and were aware of what was happening and kept up with all the news (Johnson). In contrast to Donald Trump whose political experience before the presidency was formed of political influence only and not in practicing any form of leadership, the rest of the candidates did not see him as really deserving of winning those elections. In their point of view, he was an ordinary man who did not have enough strength and power to obtain the position of becoming a president. That led his self-confidence to rise when he won the elections; he achieved what no candidate could have expected (Johnson).

Donald Trump's presidency may have influenced global politics and world affairs. During that period Donald Trump pursued a policy of "America First", which turned to be the main focus on protecting American interests and not involving the country in foreign affairs that do not concern it. Not only that, but his presidency was also marked by many things such as a number of domestic debates, the most important of which was the issue of removing him from the elections and his interference with them (Smith). So, it was clear that Trump's presidency had a significant impact on global politics and world affairs, though opinions on the nature and consequences of this impact vary widely. As he also instituted new changes in the political immigration of the country and he applied new rules in this field by resettling all refugees (Rockefeller 45).

Nevertheless, his behavior in the COVID-19 pandemic affected him negatively because he really did not deal with the problem seriously and was unable to provide

appropriate solutions to help those infected with the disease (Parker and Stern). Thus, Donald Trump's presidency was characterized by controversy and polarization, which his supporters credited him with refreshing the economy and policies that they believe in the idea of "America first", but from the other side the critics argued that his policies were harmful and that he undermined democratic norms and institutions (Saltykov).

It is well known that Trump has actively promoted several false claims and unfounded accusations throughout his political career and has been a direct supporter of conspiracy theories (Kessel). While it is unclear how much Trump's views and choices all over his presidency were influenced by conspiracies, within the same line Abrams and Zara figured that conspiracy theories can be psychologically comforting, especially during difficult times, because they give people the impression that they have some form of control over the world (1). That is the reason for conspiracy theories to control and dominate the psychological situation of people easily because their opinions were just waiting for a small reaction to go in the opposite direction (Kessel).

1.3. The Global Impact of Trump's Presidency

Donald Trump's victory in winning the presidency was a somewhat dubious historical event due to a number of factors, among of which many were shocked by his victory because they believed he was mentally, morally, and cognitively unsuited to serve as president (Denning). The 2016 U.S. presidential election outcome was perceived as a surprise by many people who believed that social media had a significant impact on that gain; one of the most important social networking sites that played a big role in Donald Trump's winning the elections is Twitter. Müller et al. shed light on this idea "Facebook and Twitter were the reasons to win this, according to Trump's digital media director in 2016. Trump has argued that these factors played a significant role in 2016 election outcome" (1). He has recently said, in an interview with CBS News, 60Minutes "I think I

wouldn't be here if I did not have social media" (1). So, it is clear that Twitter contributed greatly to taking Donald Trump to the US presidency.

Over and above that, America was somewhat dissatisfied with the rules of Donald Trump's presidency; even most of the questions that spread rapidly at that time were about how a man who had only ruled a real estate company in his life career could take control of a large-scale country like America? By contrast, he will be remembered by the whole world even after his four-years of presidency end. Not because he did not carry out any attacks outside the United States of America during that period, and not because of his activities on the Twitter pages, but for making fateful decisions that affected the lives of millions of people on earth (Kamarck). No matter what of whether those decisions were for the benefit of the people or not they were an achievement that confirmed America's power and in the world today. Moving with the same line with Donovan Todd and Shaun Bowler whom simplified that Trump's decisions and accomplishments have made him a unique president who was different from all those who have held this position before (10).

Donald Trump tried to prove to the world that he is a competent and worthy president. He carried out many campaigns on social media platforms to make America a country of greatness. One of the most important issues he focused on during that time was creating jobs opportunities, economic growth and paying taxes (Vazquez). Naturally, Donovan Todd and Shaun Bowler once again mentioned that Donald Trump's supporters encouraged him and raised their voices that his policy is unique and aims to strengthen the solidity of the American state. Trump frequently was proud by mentioning his successful business career as evidence that he would be a good president for the USA (6). Trump suggested that the White House would benefit from his background in deal-making and managing the tricky business plans. On this level, these arguments that received wide success and huge support from politicians and voters so that it covered with promises that

sparked controversy were the main reason for his chance in winning the elections in 2016 (9).

1.3.1. Using the Conspiracy Theory as a Support

The term “conspiracy” often carries a negative connotation, as it suggests that individuals involved in a conspiracy are working against the common good or engaging in unethical or illegal behavior. However, it is important to note that not all conspiracies are necessarily harmful or illegal, and the term can also refer to legitimate efforts by groups to work together towards a common goal or outcome. It is usually a secret work that takes place between two powerful authorities politically, in which all kinds of violation are used; criminal activities, including thefts and illegal crimes, continue to be a major concern for a society (National Institute of Justice). According to Daniel C. Hellinger, conspiracy theories as political conspiracies, are groups of people that plot and work together to advance a political objective in a way that is characterized by three interconnected traits: secrecy, sensitive to defeat by disclosure; and unlawful, dishonest, or unethical behavior; a narrative involving deceitful behavior (18).

It has been known that Donald Trump used conspiracy theories in his presidential campaign, and apart from what happened via Twitter and social networking sites, there was one of the conspiracy theories that was made famous by Trump himself; it raised doubts about the place of birth of former U.S. President Barack Obama (Rothman). This happened before Trump was an official candidate for the presidency. This was not the most famous conspiracy during the age of Donald Trump’s administration, but rather one that emerged as a very deep and secret political event known as the QAnon Conspiracy movement which he personally promoted through his social media accounts, either directly or indirectly as if he were amplifying and cultivating it (Rahn and Patterson).

Moving through the conspiracy theory history in the last decades, QAnon is one

of these conspiracies that was marked by the control of the various spheres of life in the American political power and was so secretly spread (Dehaven-Smith 18). QAnon is based on the practice of various illegal acts of extreme violence. Over the past years, this movement built ties with numerous political figures of high ranks (18). Such figures helped this theory in influencing life in the USA on different levels including both social and political.

Papasavva et al. shed light on many individuals who were indirectly supporting this theory due to its sensitive nature, which made it difficult to openly endorse. In the same vein, the former president of the United States Donald Trump; has been associated with this movement by some. It is claimed that Trump has been linked with the QAnon conspiracy theory on social media platforms. Based on these indications, it is believable that there is a relation between Donald Trump and the QAnon conspiracy theory. It has a large spread on social media which leads to a strong deep connection between them (2).

Conspiracy theories have served to reinforce Donald Trump's messages that he is an honest politician fighting against the corrupt in the country (Nicholas 5). This helped its believers to gain great influence on the distinction between American politics and the creation of conflict. Trump used the conspiracy theories to divert criticism from his actions and policies. But, they also played a major role in dividing the U.S. and declining the confidence in democratic institutions.

Conspiracy theories became popular during that period because they were a phenomenon that explained difficult events in a simplified and very impressive way to attract opinions. While their actions have caused a sense of despair among many of Donald Trump's supporters regarding the protection of their rights (Nicholas 9). As a consequence, its huge popularity was due to social media and the internet in general as it brought people with intellectual similarities together and make their opinions pass quickly without being

subject to any doubt (10).

1.3.2. QAnon Followers and American Politics

Donald Trump said that he was grateful to have loyal supporters and voters by his side believing in QAnon which considered that he was fighting against killing children, plundering money and standing against various theft crimes within the government (Green). This movement was resourceful as it elevated Donald Trump and defended him as a person who was fighting in a secret way in order to uncover the hidden crimes in the country (Green).

The QAnon movement gave a great emphasis on Donald Trump as a political leader. Generally speaking, it was famous by its rapid spread on all social media and websites even before the development of social media around the world (Zihiri et al.). During that period when people were getting news from newspapers and television, its spread was large and huge, thus no circumstances could stop it. No one was brave enough to say that QAnon was destroying the world instead of helping to build it. For its supporters during the presidency of Donald Trump; they have been warned by the US intelligence officials that they are really dangerous and may cause more violence (Klepper and Swenson).

Most of those who believed in Qanon conspiracy theory had many negative views about the Democratic Party and obviously supported the Republican Party. There were seven among ten of them who encouraged the idea that the 2020 elections results were rigged and stolen. Besides, the supporters of the QAnon movement were involved in various political events which brought social media attention. The most important one is gatherings in the streets and paying attention to people's organizations.

There was one thing that was occupying their minds strongly which is promoting their conspiracy theory due to its rapid spread on social media and trying to impose

themselves by running for various political positions. Rather, it was difficult to determine their influence on Donald Trump's politics, or even on how the American people viewed him, or whether they thought about him in a negative way or not. Besides, the QAnon movement had a significant impact on the administration of Donald Trump, among if them was the public trust, which led Donald Trump to such disappointment in controlling the situation. But the most dangerous consequence of this conspiracy theory was the wrong promotion of politics and promoting unproven treatments to stop the spread of the COVID-19 (Buntain et al. 7).

The QAnon followers felt that many of Trump's activities during his presidency were part of a broader scheme to defeat the Deep States (Buntain et al. 4). They took part in a variety of other actions, such as sharing and spreading the conspiracies over the country and even using violence (5). For instance, QAnon supporters themselves participated in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol in order to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. While they did not have a direct control over the events during Donald Trump's presidency, the movement had a significant impact on some of his supporter's political views and behavior (6).

The negative impact on Donald Trump's presidency began by the QAnon conspiracy theory; it was not easy for the movement to maintain the same dominance and power that it enjoyed during his era but this was not something impossible for its followers. While it is true that the decline of Donald Trump's presidency has decreased the prominence of QAnon, the movement and its supporters have not completely lost their power.

One of the main reasons for its continuation was the decentralized nature it used to own because QAnon has never had a centralized leadership or organizational structure, instead relying on a spread group of people and online communities to carry out its

operations (Kuźelewska and Tomaszuk). This has made it possible for its activities to continue and evolve despite the lack of a clear political figurehead. QAnon's story is built on a wide formation of conspiracy theories that may be used to explain a wide range of circumstances and events; even when the movement's attention turned away from Trump, its defenders could still find new ways to view current events from a QAnon perspective (Kuźelewska and Tomaszuk).

QAnon has capitalized on the spread of misinformation on social media platforms. The movement's followers have continued to share and amplify their conspiracy theories on these platforms, despite efforts to curb their spread. This has allowed it to maintain a significant presence online and influence public discourse, even if their influence is not as overt as it was during Trump's presidency. Even though the decline of Trump's presidency may have reduced QAnon's influence to some extent the movement's decentralized structure, adaptable narrative, and presence on social media have allowed it to continue to be more powerful (Haimowitz).

1.4. The Decline of Trump's Presidency

Behind all political events and facts it was important to highlight that Donald Trump's presidency did not fall primarily due to conspiracies especially QAnon. The events that led to his presidency to terminate were combining political, social, and economic elements. From another perspective, the victory of 2016 elections has hidden sides that no one could notice at first; rather it became a major catastrophe for the state itself during the period of Donald Trump's presidency (Wright).

This conspiracy theory has crept into mainstream politics in the United States of America, while the previous U.S. president thought that this movement was supporting his presidency. In fact it was the greatest harm he had done to himself by himself. Back in 2020, Donald Trump never denied the QAnon conspiracy theory; he did not know much

about it and also did not confirm whether it was true or false. Moving to the recent period of the same year and beyond, he began to believe in it strongly (Nast).

The media and journalists were confused whether Donald Trump publicly supported QAnon movement or not; therefore, this debate affected negatively the presidency and distracted Donald Trump's thinking and was unable to prevent his people from asking such questions. Because the majority of the Americans who have heard about it though it is a bad thing for the whole country (Nast).

Within this scope, democrats are more listed than Republicans to believe that QAnon is negative for the nation if they have heard of it. The majority of Democrats who have heard of it there were about 77% believed that it was "extremely harmful"; for the nation, while 13% believed that it could be "somewhat negative"; Nonetheless, and only 26% of Republicans who have heard of QAnon believed that it could be extremely harmful for the nation, while 24% of them believed it could be somewhat negative. In fact, approximately four out of ten Republicans who have heard of it there were about 41% whom believed it is beneficial for the nation, 32% somewhat beneficial, and 9% very beneficial (NW, 1615L. St et al. 3). That led to the slow fall down of the Donald Trump's era whose result was shown in the 2020 U.S. presidential elections.

Trump himself did not support QAnon overtly and directly, but he did retweet and highlight accounts connected to the movement, increasing its visibility and validity. The supporters of QAnon were also key participants in the January 6th Capitol Building Attack. Hence, while QAnon did not directly cause Trump's presidency to fall, it did contribute to a broader climate of conspiracy thinking and distrust that ultimately undermined the democratic process and contributed to Trump's defeat (Fandos and Cameron).

There were significant incidents and issues that shaped American politics and society during the four years of Trump's presidency. Once Donald Trump's

presidency came to its end, America passed a huge political and social change. In November 2020, Joseph Biden won the election to become the 46th President of the U.S., he took the office on January 20, 2021. He has governed the USA in a very different way from Donald Trump; one of the most noticeable differences between Biden and Trump is their tone and style of leadership. While Trump was known for his combative approach, in other hand Biden has emphasized the need for unity and the two party systems. He has called for an end to the "uncivil war" between Democrats and Republicans and has highlighted the importance of working across the aisle to get things done (Uhrmacher et al.). He focused on highlighting that togetherness is better than separation. He has also attempted to restore America's good relationship with its old allies, which was in dispersion during the Donald Trump administration. America was still facing some of the problems and challenges that it was suffering from during the presidency of Donald Trump but it was clear that it might regain its activity under the new rules of the new President, Joe Biden (Uhrmacher et al.).

1.4.1. The Election Loss

Donald Trump's presidency was extremely unique, but the proverb always says "When things get to their extreme, they turn into their opposite." Within that time and after everything he went through during his presidency period from 2016 to 2020 he ended up not being proposed by the people for being a president again (Owens). For Donald Trump and the QAnon supporters, they declared that the election's results were questionable. They even claimed that the voting machines all sided with Joe Biden and defrauded the votes. However, this story later became circulated by Donald Trump and all his lawyers. On the other hand, some suspected that Donald Trump and QAnon's members manipulated the outcome of the elections when they felt that it was the beginning to pose a threat to them (Tran 4).

After this deformation that the Conspiracy Theory QAnon did with Donald Trump, they were preparing to return Donald Trump to the presidency again by re-electing him. Unfortunately, this time it did not go as what was planned. Some supporters of QAnon were depressed by Joe Biden's strength in the election, while others are still fighting hard (Tran 6). This indicates that this conspiracy theory is able to continue, whether with or without the existence of Donald Trump as a president. In order not to have to declare its true intentions, it has started freshening the air again for Donald Trump, for example, taking into consideration the voices of some people who were asking to save their children and other such issues and to declare that only Donald Trump is capable of doing such aid. Therefore, the people must elect him and nominate him for the presidency again (8).

It is important to note that conspiracy theories and misinformation spread on social media platforms and by some political figures that have been disproved by the election officials and the fact-checking organizations. The election results have been widely accepted by many political leaders even Donald Trump's Vice President himself (Tran 10). The reactions of the American people differed after the election results were announced; many of Donald Trump's supporters were worried, upset, and even disappointed which prompted them to come out and declare that the elections were rigged and non-true on one hand (11).

Many Americans were satisfied and celebrated Joe Biden's victory. He received more popular votes than any other presidential candidate in U.S. history (Demczuk 37). His supporters believed that he was the best choice to lead the country forward (37). So, it can be said that the reaction to Trump's loss was a reflection of the deep political divisions in the United States of America. While some were happy with the outcome, others were sad and angry; this prompted the tension between them to remain high and increasing even after the elections (38). The 2020 election in the United States was one of the most

controversial in recent history with high risks and strong emotions on both sides.

The impact of the election results on American society has been notable and far-reaching; it affected everything from politics and policy to social attitudes and cultural norms. Among one of them was the Political Polarization which the elections helped to consolidate and grow years ago; it also played a major role in the voter's feeling of passion and eagerness towards their candidates and towards their issues. The U.S. elections confirmed the idea of division among Americans and that it was difficult to rejoin that division again (Demczuk 40).

With continuation to address racism and work towards social justice, while promoting healing and unity between black and white communities. Additionally, last but not least, those elections focused on rebuilding trust among people especially in the institutions such as the media and the government. The impact of the 2020 election on the American society has been significant from one side and complex from the other, with both positive and negative consequences. As the country continues to struggle with the aftermath of the election, it was important to work towards greater understanding, empathy, and unity to move forward as a society.

The dreams of restoring Donald Trump to his presidential position faded after Joe Biden joined the scene; what was surprising is that even after Joe Biden succeeded in taking the presidency, this did not affect the movement of QAnon. On the contrary, it continued to grow secretive and dangerous. However, in the end Trump's presidency ended as it began. What also affected his exposure to defeat was his lack of belief in the phenomenon of the existence of the Corona virus (Ladkin 2). While people were losing their lives and businesses were under threat of bankruptcy in addition to the interruption of job opportunities and the complete domination of the virus over the country, Trump used to declare and say that it was not that great danger as it seemed, saying that the Corona

virus was not the reason behind the ending of people's lives (3).

The Corona virus has not completely destroyed America, while the pandemic has had a significant impact on the country; including causing illness and death, disrupting daily life and damaging the economy. This led to the need for a competent president who is able to face the crisis and develop beneficial solutions for all those affected by this storm (Van Kessel et al). Shortly before the Election Day, According to the AP News, Donald Trump made a speech saying that "losing something yours is somewhat harsh." Until that moment, he did not accept the idea that his ego could be broken and said that the loss he talked about was meant to those men with weak personality (Van Kessel et al.)

1.4.2. The US Capitol Attack

The U.S. Capitol Building before the attack was a representation of the American democracy and a functional government which was completed in 1800; it served as the meeting place for the United States Congress and the legislative branch of the federal government (Glancey). It was considered a historical landmark due to the wonderful architecture in which it was built. Before the attack, the Capitol building was a place for political discussions in which the various legislative debates were taking place; it was a place where citizens could gather in peaceful ways in order to be able to express their opinions on the important national and political issues. The security around the Capitol Building was generally solid, with organized police patrols, and metal detectors at the entry (Glancey).

Within this scope, it was characterized also by the accessibility due to the role of being an important symbol of American democracy; it was also opened to the public and visitors can take guided tours of the building and even sit in on congressional sessions. They could also access to any restricted areas of the building, but they must follow strict rules and procedures inside it. This was not enough to prevent the attack from occurring

when a group of supporters of former President Donald Trump violated the Capitol Building, causing violence that shocked the world. Since then, the security measures around the Capitol building have been significantly strengthened to prevent any future attacks (University et al.).

The U.S. Capitol Riot was a shocking event in American history. It took place after weeks of false claims and conspiracy theories that the 2020 U.S. presidential election was stolen from former President Donald Trump because those electoral results affected America in a somewhat negative way (Sund). Donald Trump's supporters wanted to re-filter the voting results more than one time that created an increasing disturbance between the American people; they attacked the Capitol building in the United States of America without thinking about the damages that the country might cost later on (Sund). This attack began on January 6, 2021 in violent ways, including ruining doors, breaking windows, and throwing stones (Cowan). This attack was an affirmation of the people's lack of confidence in the American government or policy, even their lack of confidence in the democratic institutions branching out across the country which led them to spread the wide desire to completely change their system of government through the use of such powerful attacks and resorting to violent ways. The main responsible feature was the conspiracy theorists (Cowan).

QAnon is one of the most important offensive groups that was highlighted and attracted the attention on January 6th and that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has described as a very dangerous movement on social media (Lee et al 4). The proportion of QAnon supporters facing charges rises; according to estimates, QAnon supporters make up more than 8% of those detained in connection with the uprising. This is due to the lies of former U.S. President Donald Trump and his insistence that the electoral results have been manipulated (4).

QAnon played a huge role in motivating people to participate in the 6th January attack. But until this moment, it was not actually proven that the QAnon conspiracy theory was really supporting those attacks, as some of the attackers confirmed that they saw Donald Trump personally there, as a leader of the movement they were participating in (Barry et al.).

1.4.3. The Aftermath of the US Capitol Riot

After the attack on the U.S. Capitol, the QAnon movement theorists got distracted between themselves. They have begun to confront their fears, a fact that confirms the end of Donald Trump's presidency and the beginning of Joe Biden's era and what this new presidency may bring from danger and threat to them (Harwell et al.). QAnon followers questioned several times about what would happen then? How could they be able to continue to spread the violence and abuse that they used to spread in secret ways during the Donald Trump era? From this perspective it was clear that this attack left great political repercussions among all parties to American society (Harwell et al.).

Donald Trump realized the danger that occurred after the attack on the Capitol building. He felt that this could revolve around the uprising that his fighters had launched in order to restore him to the presidency again. Even his speeches before that attack were full of aggressive sentences, but after the Capitol Building Riot and in order to justify his position in a conspiratorial manner, he delivered a new speech to his supporters and advised them to make their voices heard in a peaceful and patriotic manner (Naylor).

Conspiracy Theories continued the destruction of many media and political messages during the U.S. Capitol Building attack. Even after two years, it did not disappear and continued to encourage violent and aggressive actions in the country with the uprising of American democracy. All the conspiratorial accusations pointed to Donald Trump's connection to the attack and this was remarked in the article, "Trump can be Sued

for January 6 Riot Harm, US Justice Department Says.” With the idea that affirmed, “...The department’s lawyers informed the court that a president would not enjoy total protection; it was determined that his statements had incited imminent private violence.” The aftermath of the riot has been large in both political and social sides that led social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to block former President Trump’s accounts, according to his role in motivating violence. The FBI launched a massive investigation into the riot that resulted in hundreds of arrests and criminal charges against those who were involved.

The riot has also sparked a broader conversation about the role of conspiracy theories in American politics and society; it asserted that Conspiracy theories have always been a part of American culture, and the rise of social media has amplified their impact. So, the conspiracy theories played a huge role in the aftermath which resulted in the U.S. Capitol Riot, including political polarization, social unrest, and calls for increased accountability and regulation of internet content (Bond and Neville-Shepard).

The nation was deeply divided, and there were concerns about the country’s ability to heal and move forward after the attack; there were marked efforts to hold those responsible accountable and to ensure that such of those events will never happen again. The federal government of the United States of America has taken strict measures in order to restore security and avoid such an occurrence one more time (Bond and Neville-Shepard). While the attack on the U.S. Capitol was an obvious storm to the country, the flexibility of the American people and the strength of the country’s institutions allowed it to recover and move forward. Therefore, the peaceful transfer of power on January 20, 2021, with the inauguration of President Joe Biden, demonstrated the strength of American democracy.

The healing and rebuilding process in the aftermath of the attack is going on, and

there are still challenges that need to be addressed, including healing the divisions within the country and addressing issues of systemic racism, inequality, and political polarization (Banti). Following the attack, The Capitol building has undergone many repairs to cover the damage and losses it suffered; in order to confirm that, it is still safe for future use. These repairs included starting with broken windows and doors, and replace all damaged artwork and also furniture that was ruined; those restoration works were carried out by the most proficient workers including architects. Indeed, the team worked non-stop in order for the building to restore its power as quickly as possible (Rubin et al.).

Regarding America's position, the nation is still a superpower in the world and has a strong economy. Even so, the nation's political processes ultimately prevailed, and President Joe Biden took the office. But this does not prevent that in the aftermath of the events at the Capitol, there has been increased attention on issues of political polarization, misinformation, and the role of social media in shaping public discourse. The country remains deeply divided, with ongoing debates over issues such as immigration, healthcare, and gun control, the United States continues to be a dynamic country with a rich cultural heritage and a commitment to democracy and freedom (Reibstein and Bedi 8).

The presidency of Donald Trump was unique and controversial in American history as it had great influence in various fields, including the influence of delivery because Donald Trump's ability to appeal to voters directly and simply was a key factor in his victory in the 2016 presidential election. His use of social media allowed him to address his followers directly, within this line, the importance of leadership played a major role in his presidency and his leadership style was frequently criticized for being polarizing and impulsive. His willingness to attack opponents, make false claims, and ignore norms and institutions destroyed trust in the presidency and the government as a whole (Colarusso). He highlights the importance of the character and leadership in public office, and the need

for leaders who prioritize the well-being of the country over their own interests.

Generally speaking, Donald Trump's presidency was marked by controversy, populism. His administration implemented significant changes to trade policy, immigration, and environmental regulations, while his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic was widely criticized. His presidency was also characterized by high-profile scandals, including the ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and his impeachment for abuse of power and incitement of insurrection. Trump's presidency was highly polarizing and divisive, with strong opinions on both sides of the political spectrum.

Chapter Two

The Emergence and the Rise of QAnon: Understanding the Antisemitic Conspiracy Theory Movement

Being aware of conspiracy in the USA is essential to understand how QAnon emerged. QAnon is considered a conspiracy that appeared in October 2017, a fact that became a focus with an enormous influence on the internet and social media platforms. It is also a movement with a strong belief that there is a “Deep State” that consists of a secret cabal that runs sex child and pedophile trafficking, which includes politicians, Hollywood actors and celebrities, and rich people who have power (Richardson 131).

2.1. Overview of QAnon and its Origins

In the book *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, by Michael Barkun, a conspiracy theory refers to an explanation or belief that suggests a secretive group or organization working together to achieve a particular goal, usually involving harmful or illegal actions. It often attributes events or situations to a hidden agenda rather than accept the commonly given explanation or evidence. Not all conspiracies are theories; some are proven to be true, while others remain unconfirmed and are widely regarded as false (43).

The term conspiracy has had an impact on America because it has led to the spread of various conspiracy theories. However, conspiracy theories can confuse and mislead people, as they often provide alternative explanations for events or situations that go against commonly accepted explanations or evidence (Barkun 44). This can create divisions and mistrust in society, as people may become skeptical of official information and institutions. Specifically, one example of a popular conspiracy theory in the United States is QAnon; which gained significant attention and followers and confused America during the presidency of Donald Trump because of its widespread and its great influence.

Its spread has contributed to political polarization and the erosion of trust in public institutions. But, some of the unfounded conspiracies can have negative consequences for society. It means that it is essential to rely on credible sources and information to make informed judgments and decisions (47).

The rise of QAnon can be traced back to an enigmatic figure referred to as “Q.” This individual started posting cryptic messages online, purporting to be a prominent government insider with access to classified and secure information. The messages were written in code, which followers of QAnon believed contained hidden truths about a secret war between former President Trump and a shadowy group of powerful elites. The popularity of these messages led to the formation of a large and dedicated community that continues to promote and spread QAnon’s ideas and beliefs (Thompson and Thomander 6). QAnon conspiracy theories claim that there is a secret war being waged by President Donald Trump against a global cabal of satanic pedophiles and sex trafficking (Contrera). QAnon gained traction on social media platforms, particularly on Twitter and YouTube, where it was promoted by right-wing personalities and amplified by algorithms. The movement has its roots in ancient anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (Garry et al. 157).

2.1.1. Brief History of QAnon and its Origins

The origins of QAnon can be traced to a mysterious figure known only as “Q.” in which the identity of the ‘Q’ person is still a mystery at this time of writing. Nevertheless, QAnon is not made up of one person but describes a community of adherents believing in various conspiracy theories which target many different areas and people (Larsen and Tindskard). Although QAnon became more popular, nobody knew who Q was. Some people thought that Q could be a very important government worker or a group of insiders who wanted to reveal the secrets of the deep state. Others thought that Q was just a trick or a plan to trick people.

QAnon followers, or “anons,” quickly became obsessed with decoding Q’s messages, looking for hidden meanings and clues about what was happening behind the scenes. The messages appealed to their sense of disillusionment and desire for a greater purpose. QAnon followers saw themselves as “digital soldiers” in a battle against the deep state and the establishment (McIntosh 12). In addition, they believed that Q was working with Trump to expose and bring down this elite criminal network, which they named the “deep state” or the “cabal”.

During Donald Trump’s presidency, QAnon gained a notable following and influence among certain segments of his supporters. Michael D. Gambone in *Modern Conspiracies in America: Separating Fact from Fiction*, asserted that this influence was effective on the online community because this conspiracy started on internet meetings and conferences and quickly spread to social media platforms (Gambone 30). It attracted a dedicated community of followers who believed in the conspiracy theory and actively discussed and shared QAnon-related content. Additionally, its followers believed that Donald Trump was secretly fighting against the global cabal described in the conspiracy theory (33). Gambone assumed that Trump was seen as a heroic figure working to expose and dismantle this hidden network of power. However, the influence of QAnon continued and it gained traction among some Trump’s supporters, who saw it as a way to support and defend the president. They promoted QAnon theories and used hashtags associated with the movement (38).

More specifically, as QAnon gained prominence it started receiving attention from media outlets and politicians. Donald Trump made statements that were seen as implicit endorsements to QAnon. Garrett M. Graff explained that Donald Trump retweeted QAnon-affiliated accounts, and shared content related to QAnon conspiracy theories, or responded positively when asked about QAnon followers (20). So, this has led to the extent of

QAnon's influence beyond its dedicated followers. Its conspiracy theories moved into broader political discourse, with some QAnon ideas being referenced by conservative media personalities and commentators (22). In this vein, social media platforms began taking action against QAnon-related content, implementing policies to limit its spread. However, the movement had already gained a significant following and efforts to curb its influence faced challenges (Gambone 40).

2.1.2. The QAnon Conspiracy

The source of the QAnon conspiracy can be linked to an ancient conspiracy in the middle ages "The Blood Libel". The Blood Libel is an anti-Semitic myth that falsely accuses Jews of using the blood of Christian children for religious rituals. The author argues that this myth has its roots in medieval Europe. It was fueled by a combination of religious, economic, and political factors, including the Christian belief in the crucifixion of Jesus and the role of Jews in the money lending industry. It was one of the devastating impacts of blood libel accusations on Jewish communities, which often led to violent attacks and pogroms (Schwartz).

The Blood Libel has been considered a source of inspiration for other movements and the QAnon conspiracy theory represents a new iteration of these earlier panics, drawing on similar fears and tropes to promote a dangerous and divisive worldview. QAnon has its roots in much older anti-Semitic conspiracy theories "There are more blood-drinkers. There are new demons, still out for the same purpose: to defile Christ and steal hope and do all that demons do, which are the vilest things you can imagine" (Lavin). Therefore, QAnon is a recycled version of these false claims, replacing Jews with Democrats, celebrities, and anyone else the movement chooses to go after (Greenspan).

The idea of the all-powerful, world-ruling cabal comes straight out of the Protocols

of the Elders of Zion, a fake document purporting to expose a Jewish plot to control the world that was used throughout the 20th century to justify anti-Semitism. Another QAnon canard – the idea that members of the cabal extract the chemical adrenochrome from the blood of their child victims and ingest it to extend their lives – is a modern remix of the age-old anti-Semitic blood libel (Wong). Followers of QAnon have been known to spread the Blood Libel and other anti-Semitic ideas, saying that a group of international elites, including Jews, are engaged in a secret plan to take over the globe (Anti-Defamation League).

A conspiracy theory called Pizzagate gained widespread attention during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. This theory claimed, without evidence, that a popular pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. was secretly operating a child trafficking ring, based on references to food in stolen emails from the campaign manager of Hillary Clinton. This theory resulted in serious harassment of the restaurant and its employees and even led to a shooting by a man who believed he was rescuing children there in December 2016 (Siddiqui and Svrluga). QAnon emerged from Pizzagate and shares many of the same key elements and storylines, but with less specific claims that are easily proven false (Wong).

QAnon emerged in late of 2017 when an anonymous user claiming to be a high-level government insider began posting cryptic messages on online message boards. The user, known as “Q,” claimed to have access to classified information and promised that President Donald Trump was working to expose a global cabal of elites involved in child sex trafficking and other criminal activity (Wendling).

2.1.3. The Spread of QAnon

The movement gained traction on social media platforms, particularly on Twitter and YouTube, where it was promoted by right-wing personalities and amplified by systems. QAnon believers began organizing in online seminars and creating their own

media channels to spread their message. As QAnon grew in popularity, it attracted a broader audience beyond its original base of far-right conspiracy theorists. The movement's adherents included people from various political and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as those who were disillusioned with mainstream politics and institutions (Greenspan).

Despite widespread debunking of the conspiracy theories promoted by QAnon, the movement continues to thrive online and in some segments of American society. The origins of QAnon may shroud in mystery, but its impact on American politics and society is all too real. The movement played a role in spreading disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 U.S. presidential election, and it played a significant role in the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, with many of the rioters espousing QAnon beliefs (Mapping Militant Organizations).

QAnon became popular day by day because of those websites, social media platforms, and online communities where people can share and discuss ideas. People started talking about a secret group that they believe is doing bad things behind the scenes (Uscinski 35). This secret group is said to be involved in activities like child trafficking and controlling governments. However, people who are attracted to QAnon feel a sense of approval because they think they have special information that most others do not know about. They believe they have access to hidden secrets and are part of an exclusive group that understands what is really happening in the world (36).

Some QAnon followers even see themselves as soldiers fighting a digital war against this secret group. They believe it is their duty to spread the word and uncover the truth. They may share messages, videos, and posts online to convince others and try to wake them up to the so-called reality they believe in (Graff 17). People should always remember that QAnon is a conspiracy theory which means that there is no solid evidence

to support these claims. Many experts and reliable sources have debunked these ideas as false. Despite this, the movement continues to have an impact and some of its followers have been involved in harmful actions and violence (Smith).

2.1.4. The Core Beliefs of QAnon

Among QAnon's core concepts are the "deep state" or "cabal" of strong people controlling governments, the media, and other institutions, and that they are working together to further a global agenda. Its beliefs are continually evolving and vary among its adherents. 'Q' claims that *everyone* is in the game. The government, the media, Hollywood, the education industry, the healthcare industry, and even individuals, are all working together to take advantage of the average citizen (Weaver).

QAnon still believes that something named "The Storm" is about to happen. Donald Trump is secretly working in league with Robert Mueller to arrest Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and other members of the Deep State who are working to destroy the nation. Sealed indictments have already been filed, and arrests followed by military trials, and possibly executions are coming any day now. "The Storm," is a significant event that will reveal the deep state and bring it to justice (Zuckerman 4). They believed that many important and famous people will be arrested and punished for their supposed crimes (4). In simple words, QAnon followers think that there will be a time when all the bad people in the world will be caught and punished believing that Donald Trump is the one who will make it happen. But, these ideas are not based on facts or evidence, and many experts say they are not true. So, the anonymous "Q" sends messages called "Q drops." These messages made people believe that something big is going to happen soon which people call the "storm" (10).

2.1.5. Major Attacks by QAnon

As with everything else related to QAnon, which attacks can be directly attributed

to QAnon is unclear. A report by the Anti-Defamation League found that about half of the killings by domestic extremists in 2021 did not have a clear ideological motive (LaFrance). The QAnon conspiracy-theory movement has been linked also to several alleged and convicted violent crimes, including killings and attempted kidnappings. The first known QAnon-linked crime took place in 2018 (Beckett), and the movement helped fuel the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol people have been inspired to commit violent acts as a result of the false beliefs and misinformation shared by QAnon, which is a serious threat to public safety.

One notable event that brought greater attention to QAnon at both the local and national levels was the Capitol attack. On January 6, 2021, a group of pro-Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol after announcing the results of the 2020 presidential election (Kulper et al.). The attack on the Capitol caused the tragic deaths of five individuals, including a Capitol police officer. Shockingly, many of the individuals who participated in the insurrection were supporters of QAnon. They were motivated by the false belief that former President Trump had won the election, but it was stolen from him through a deep-state plan. This misguided belief led them to commit acts of violence and undermine the democratic process, causing harm to innocent people and damaging the integrity of the political system (Healy).

The ideology claiming that elites are controlling the United States government has circulated among QAnon since the 2016 Presidential Election (Garry et al.). QAnon finds its origins a year prior in the Pizzagate conspiracy theory (Kang and Frenkel) which alleges coded words and satanic symbolism purportedly apparent in John Podesta's emails, hacked during his tenure as chair of Hillary Clinton's 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, point to a secret child sex trafficking ring at a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C., called Comet Ping Pong. Pizzagate came to a head in December 2016 when Edgar M. Welch traveled

from North Carolina to the popular D.C. pizzeria Comet Ping Pong with a handgun and an assault rifle to ‘self-investigate’ the validity of the 4chan conspiracy (Eordogh).

In October 2020, thirteen people have been arrested in alleged plots to kidnap the Michigan governor and attack the state capitol building, prosecutors said on Thursday. The group plotted to kidnap Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat and frequent target of Republican President Donald Trump’s ire, ahead of U.S. presidential election, according to an FBI affidavit released on Thursday (Aljazeera). The men had planned again to storm the Michigan State Capitol and take hostages, including Governor Whitmer (Layne and Borter).

These are only a few instances of the violence that the QAnon conspiracy theory has been said to be responsible for. People have been inspired to commit violent acts as a result of the false beliefs spread by QAnon, which is a serious danger to society. The QAnon movement is still active online and in various American society sectors despite the considerable rejection of its conspiracy theories.

2.2. Understanding the Tactics Used by QAnon

QAnon is a conspiracy theory alleging a secret plot against Donald Trump and his supporters. QAnon uses coded messages and symbolism, known as “Q drops,” to communicate with followers (Roose). QAnon spreads its message through social media, often by hijacking trending topics and hashtags. By doing this, they aim to gain new followers and to amplify their message. At the same time, many of their claims are based on unfounded beliefs and conspiracy theories, which can be dangerous and harmful to individuals and society as a whole (Buntain et al. 2). The movement creates an online echo chamber and filter bubbles that reinforces its beliefs and engages in harassment campaigns against those who challenge them. QAnon attends rallies and protests, usually in support of far-right causes (Wilson).

Many of the claims made by QAnon are based on unfounded beliefs and conspiracy theories. These beliefs can be dangerous and harmful to individuals and society as a whole. QAnon operates within online echo chambers and filter bubbles, which reinforce their beliefs and isolate them from different perspectives. QAnon followers also engage in harassment campaigns against those who challenge their beliefs. Keeping with the same line, in *Summary of Mike Rothschild's The Storm is Upon Us*, Everest Media declared:

QAnon employed a strategy of cognitive dissonance, where its believers are encouraged to question mainstream media and reject established facts in favor of different perspectives. This tactic creates a sense of clearance among followers, who believe they have access to hidden truths. Moreover, QAnon relies on community building through online conferences and offline events. (18)

This promotes a sense of belonging among followers and reinforcing their commitment to the movement. Finally, QAnon conspiracy theory employs a decentralized structure, allowing for flexibility and adaptation as the movement evolves (18). They attend rallies and protests, typically in support of far-right causes. More specifically, it is crucial to approach QAnon and similar movements critically and seek reliable information from credible sources to avoid being misled by false narratives and harmful ideologies (12). Nevertheless, there were major tactics used by this popular conspiracy theory among them social media platforms, in which the movement used to spread its message to gain new followers. This includes sharing memes, videos, and articles that are often sensational and play on people's fears and emotions (Anwar et al.).

These tactics used by QAnon while appealing to some; have also been widely criticized for promoting misinformation, division, and a distorted worldview for several reasons. Firstly, the anonymous nature of the "Q-drops" raises concerns about the

credibility of the information being shared (Venås 28). Without any verifiable source or evidence, it becomes difficult to separate fact from fiction. Secondly, the sensational content shared on social media often exaggerates real events, leading to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories (29). This can have harmful consequences, as people may make decisions and take actions based on false and unfounded beliefs. Thirdly, the strategy of cognitive dissonance encourages followers to distrust established institutions and reject objective facts, undermining the foundation of shared reality and fostering a climate of distrust and polarization (Singer and Brooking 11). Moreover, QAnon's community-building tactics can lead to the formation of echo chambers, where dissenting opinions are dismissed, and critical thinking is discouraged. This can reinforce extreme beliefs and isolate individuals from mainstream society (11). Lastly, the decentralized structure of QAnon makes it difficult to hold anyone accountable for the movement's actions, allowing harmful ideas and behavior to persist without clear leadership or responsibility (15).

2.2.1. The Spread of QAnon via Social Media

The rise of social media has enabled conspiracy theories like QAnon to spread rapidly and globally. Social media platforms allow all comers instant access to communication with people around the world and facilitate the linkage of those susceptible to conspiracy thinking with a community of like-minded individuals. It has enabled the immediate, global sharing of disinformation (Holoyda). QAnon supporters use social media extensively to spread their messages and plans. Posting on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and others is one of their primary tactics. They use various tools, such as hashtags, memes, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram reels and posts to promote their ideology and beliefs. This helps them reach a larger audience and build support for their cause (Papasavva et al.).

QAnon supporters have dominated social media extensively to promote their messages and plans. They make use of various tools and features offered by these platforms and others to advance their ideology and gain support during the presidency of Donald Trump (Olmsted 50). These tools make the process of spreading QAnon ideas easier, in which hashtags are used to categorize content and make it discoverable by a wider audience interested in related topics. QAnon supporters often create and use specific hashtags that are associated with their conspiracy narratives, in order to allow them to reach a larger online audience and expand their influence (53). The combination of these tactics allows QAnon supporters to rapidly disseminate their ideas, connect with individuals who may be open to conspiracy theories, and create an echo chamber where their beliefs are reinforced and normalized. The viral nature of social media and its global reach have significantly contributed to the growth and influence of QAnon and other conspiracy movements (56).

During Donald Trump's time as president QAnon became popular on social media. Its followers believed in a made-up idea that says there is a secret group of bad people who are doing terrible things, like hurting children (Rosenblum and Muirhead 22). In *A Lot of People Are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy*, Muirhead Russell and Rosenblum Nancy L. Confirmed that QAnon's followers also believed that Donald Trump is trying to stop them. Within that time, social media websites played a significant role in helping QAnon's spread because people could easily share and talk about these ideas with others (25). People would join online groups and follow hashtags to learn more about this movement and share their own thoughts. Yet, the things that QAnon supporters believed were often very strange and not based on facts. They would look for hidden messages in what Trump said or did, thinking it proved their ideas were true. They would also accuse famous people of being part of this secret group (27).

The spread of QAnon on social media was helped by different reasons, among which some people did not trust the government or the media and thought QAnon had the real answers. Others liked having a simple explanation for complex problems. But it is important to know that QAnon was not true; it was based on fictional sides, because many reliable sources like the police and the news, have shown that the QAnon ideas are false. It is always a good idea to look for accurate information from trusted sources before believing something you see on social media.

2.2.1.1. The Birth and Early Development of QAnon on 4chan

The QAnon conspiracy's first step was on October 28, 2017, when a user named "Q Clearance Patriot" posted in a 4Chan thread titled "Calm before the Storm." With "Q drops" – the name given to posts from the "Q" user – the "storm" subsequently became an idiom for an imminent event in which elites were to be arrested and imprisoned by President Trump for being cannibalistic pedophiles (Thompson and Thomander 4).

The messages posted by "Q" on 4chan are usually difficult to understand and make references to current events, with claims of having privileged information about government or military activities. These messages may include questions, leading to their name "Q drops". From these posts, the QAnon conspiracy theory emerged, suggesting that a group of powerful individuals secretly control the world and that Donald Trump is working secretly to reveal and defeat this group. Even so, it is worth noting that there is no evidence to back up these claims, and they have been discredited by experts and the mainstream media.

Moderators of the 4Chan board and a far-right YouTube conspiracy theorist were primarily responsible for taking these "Q drops" out of relative obscurity and spreading them throughout the internet. These beginnings laid the groundwork for the role that online influencers would play in the QAnon community, with a litany of blog posts, YouTube

videos, and podcasts released that provided explainers of “Q drops” (Thompson and Thomander 4).

The reason behind using “4chan” is that is highly used by politicians, and wealthy people to reach personal advantage through publishing videos, posts, pictures, and articles that are considered illegal because the platform provides high protection with confidentiality, and privacy that offers to its user more anonymity that it is not allowed the owners to collect data about users (Knuttila) i.e. no one can track who is the publishers and he is unknown and invisible for others. Q’s claim on 4chan to have special government access and that he/she is part of a wider “anon genre” of government officials with top-secret information is not entirely novel(Chandler 15). Before Q, several 4chan posters asserted they had special government access, including FBIAnon and HLIAnon in 2016, and CIAAnon and WHInsiderAnon in 2017(Amarasingam and Argentino). QAnon devotees, many of whom may be familiar with this “anon genre,” thus are familiar with Q’s apparent need for anonymity and presumably take it as a sign of credibility (Zuckerman).

2.2.1.2. The support and amplification through Twitter

QAnon adherents have been active on social media platforms including fringe sites like 4chan, where the first “Q drops” appeared, as well as mainstream sites like Telegram, Reddit, and Twitter, where users post thousands of QAnon-related messages each day (Jackson et al.). The QAnon presence on Twitter began as obscure actors on the platform and was the start of a development that spread from the social media platform and realized further amplification from far-right media outlets (Gambini).

After the insurrection in the capitol, and on 21 January 2021, Twitter removed the accounts of Michael Flynn, Sidney Powell, and other high-profile supporters of President Donald Trump who promoted the QAnon conspiracy theory, as part of its efforts to crack

down on misinformation and calls for violence. Trump promotes QAnon-related posts on his social media platform promoted several posts on his social media platform early about QAnon conspiracy theory. One post highlighted on his Truth Social account, which has more than 4 million followers, is a video clip that begins with an image showing a giant “Q” over his face and text that reads: “Information Warfare. It’s time to wake up.” The video features a compilation of meme-like images of Trump with graphics (Shabad). During his presidency, Trump frequently re-tweeted followers linked to the notorious conspiracy theory QAnon, a narrative that originated in 2017 and claimed that a powerful cabal of Democrats and elites are trafficking and abusing children and that Trump is fighting them. Although Trump never endorsed QAnon, he repeatedly refused to condemn the conspiracy theory in interviews, and once praised its followers for their support (Tollefson 193).

Twitter has taken some actions against the former U.S. president Donald Trump’s account. Twitter has locked down Trump’s account and has issued a warning that he could be permanently banned from the platform if he does not follow their rules (Gruzd and Mai 3). Twitter has become stricter when it comes to conspiracy theories that are linked to violence, such as the QAnon movement. The company has removed around 7,000 accounts connected to this movement (Jackson et al.11), and it has limited the reach of many others. This is because Twitter wants to create a safe and healthy environment for its users, and it believes that these conspiracy theories and the spread of misinformation can be harmful. By taking these steps, Twitter is trying to make sure that its users can trust the information they see on the platform and that everyone can feel safe while using it (Collins and Zadrozny).

Researchers such as Donovan knew QAnon was primed to embrace the theory that the 2020 U.S. presidential election was rigged. Trump began pushing the idea when he

suggested that postal ballots can be falsified. Things came to a head at a 6 January rally, when Trump told attendees, “If you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.” He then called for them to march to the U.S. Capitol, just as Congress was preparing to certify Democrat Joe Biden as the next U.S. president (Tollefson). Yet, Twitter continues to take efforts to delete accounts that often share dangerous content related to QAnon and update their policies and the platform safety:

We’ve been clear that we will take strong enforcement action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm. Given the violent events in Washington, D.C., and increased risk of harm, we began permanently suspending thousands of accounts that were primarily dedicated to sharing QAnon content on Friday afternoon”. (Twitter Safety)

Following the violent events in Washington, D.C., Twitter made the decision to permanently suspend thousands of accounts that were primarily dedicated to sharing QAnon content. This action by Twitter can be seen as an example of how social media companies can take responsibility for the content that is shared on their platforms and the potential consequences it may have in the real world. By suspending these accounts, Twitter is sending a clear message that it will not tolerate behavior that could lead to violence and other forms of offline harm (Robison).

2.2.2. The Use of Coded Messages

To connect with its members, QAnon employed a specific language that include coded messages published by “Q,” who identified himself as a high-level official in the Trump administration, QAnon followers analyzed these posts, which were frequently written in phony spy jargon, to decode hints and hidden messages and create new connections easily. Regardless, some scholars assert that QAnon’s coded messages are just

written at random and do not contain any codes. Posing alongside military generals, Trump said, “You guys know what this represents? Maybe it’s the calm before the storm.” QAnon believers pointed to this moment as proof that Mr. Trump was sending coded messages about his plans to break up the global cabal, with the help of the military (Thompson and Thomander 6). Yet, people found that the coded messages on boards including 4Chan and 8Chan might just be typed randomly.

Mark Burnett, a security consultant who has analyzed millions of passwords (via *Motherboard*) said that the supposedly “coded” messages QAnon’s followers eat up are likely just gibberish. Mark Burnett wrote on Twitter, noting that “almost all the characters” in the codes alternate between the left and right hands, or the characters are close to each other on the keyboard (qtd. in Grothaus). The order of the characters suggests whoever typed them might also play a musical instrument and type on a U.S. QWERTY keyboard (Zhou). Overall, some scholars such as Peter Knight, Mark Fester, Dehaven-Smith, and Konda Thomas Milan argue that QAnon’s coded messages are just random and do not actually contain any codes. Despite this, QAnon followers have pointed to various incidents, including a statement made by President Trump, as proof that the messages contained hidden meanings.

2.2.3. Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles as Strategy

To disseminate its principles and win the support of its adherents, QAnon used echo chambers and filter bubbles. Echo chambers are an environment in which somebody encounters only opinions and beliefs similar to their own, and does not have to consider alternatives (*Oxford Dictionary*). The term Online Echo chambers refers to online places that gather a particular group that shares common beliefs and are exposed to the same opinions that confirm their pre-knowledge that strengthens their ideas including being protected from substitute views (Robison).

Echo chambers describe as “an environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own” (qtd. in Larsen and Tindskard). These environments are “fueled by confirmation bias, which is the tendency to favor info that reinforces existing beliefs.” This enhancement of beliefs or bias a person has towards a certain topic can thereby construct a misconstrued perception or a very subjective opinion of the information, news, or objective facts (GCFGlobal).

In the book *Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*, Cass R. Sunstein explains that the term “echo chambers” refers to online environments where information, ideas, or views are amplified and reinforced, polarizing opinions and resulting in filter bubbles (116). Social media platforms have aided in the development of echo chambers, which have weakened democratic standards and fragmented public discourse. Yet, the dangers of echo chambers are emphasized including the dissemination of false information and the potential for radicalization (93).

Echo chambers and filter bubbles are potent metaphors that encapsulate widespread public fear that the use of social media may limit the information that users encounter or consume online, thus failing to promote a shared experience of free-flowing information (Kitchens et al.). So, people are concerned that social media can limit the types of information we see and stop us from sharing our thoughts and ideas freely. This might make people with different opinions not understand each other and make it hard to solve important problems together. It is like everyone is in their own little groups, and they cannot agree on anything.

For QAnon, echo chambers are used to amplify the beliefs of its members and exclude dissident viewpoints. According to the extensive, wholly baseless QAnon theory, President Trump is engaged in a covert campaign against powerful, Satan-worshipping pedophiles in the media, industry, and government. QAnon adherents believe they are a

rare, knowledgeable group, and that anyone outside the community is either illiterate or involved in a conspiracy. Despite the lack of proof for its assertions, QAnon was able to develop a sizable following because of the usage of echo chambers. Particularly striking is how quickly and widely QAnon has spread via social media, and how it has established itself abroad (Wilson). Fake news and the impact of the social media filter bubble have gained increasing attention in both academic and general discussions. There is a widespread assumption that algorithmic curation and personalization systems create a filter bubble for users, limiting their exposure to ideologically diverse news content. This issue lies at the intersection of new media, politics, and behavioral science (Spohr). Some people think that computer programs that choose what news to show you might only show you the news that you already agree with. This can make it hard to see news from different points of view which are an issue that is related to new technology, politics, and the way people behave.

Filter bubbles are a problem for deliberative democrats, mainly because of the low quality of information and the diminishing of information diversity. If bubbles exist, the pool of available information and ideas will be less diverse, and discovering new perspectives, ideas or facts will be more difficult. If we only get to see the things we already agree with on the Internet, discovering disagreement and the unknown will be quite difficult considering the increasing popularity of the Internet and social media as a source of political information and news (Mitchell et al.).

In the case of political information, in Eli Parisier's book *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from you*, he mentioned that "It might lead to the situation that the user never sees contrasting viewpoints on a political or moral issue. Users will be placed in a "filter bubble" and they will not even know what they are missing" (qtd. in Bozdag and van den Hoven 249). Therefore, filter bubbles happen when the computer programs only

show you things you like and have seen before. This means you might only see things that agree with what you already think, and not learn about different ideas. QAnon used this to their advantage by showing their followers only things they wanted to see on social media. The computer programs made these ideas even stronger in their followers' minds.

Fundamentally, QAnon is mostly an online movement that functions differently and on a larger scale than anything we have ever seen. By establishing a closed information system where its members were only exposed to information that supported their own beliefs, QAnon used echo chambers and filter bubbles to promote and normalize their invalid and unsupported assertions.

2.3. The Impact of QAnon on Politics

For *The Guardian News*, the QAnon conspiracy myth movement continues to thrive in the U.S. and has even strengthened more than a year after Donald Trump left the White House, according to the largest-ever study of its followers and according to the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), Some 22% of Americans believe that a “storm” is coming, 18% think violence might be necessary to save the country and 16% hold that the government, media, and financial worlds are controlled by Satan-worshipping pedophiles. As a result, this study highlights that QAnon is a conspiracy theory that can be dangerous because it can lead to violence and spread false information. It can make people lose trust in important institutions and democratic ways of doing things. Recent studies show that QAnon has many followers in the United States who believe in this conspiracy theory (Fenster 20).

The political landscape in the United States has been impacted by QAnon. Tens of millions of Americans have been attracted by the movement, which periodically involves its followers participating in violent acts that culminate in the assault on the Capitol. Republicans who have been elected to office at the state and local levels have shown

support for QAnon, making them a significant minority (Rosenberg). QAnon has stoked the widespread anti-government feeling among the Republican Party's conservative base. Concerns regarding the dissemination of misinformation, the possibility of radicalization, and the degrading of democratic norms have grown as a result of QAnon's influence on the political landscape (Dehaven-Smith)

Although Donald Trump lost the election to Joe Biden, and social media platforms have banned QAnon content, the movement has continued to thrive and even gain more followers. This is because the movement is not controlled by one person, but rather spread among many followers who share the conspiracy theory on other websites and social media platforms (Smith). These beliefs are reasons for concern and a threat to political and social stability comes from the encouragement of conspiracy theories as well as the potential for violence or harassment directed at people who believe to be part of the alleged pedophile network.

2.3.1. The Danger of QAnon

QAnon believers have speculated that this fight will lead to a day of reckoning where prominent people will be arrested and executed (BBC). QAnon has also been a source of threatening messages online, with several QAnon believers being arrested after making threats or taking offline action (Wendling). Republicans, who are elected at the state and local levels, have shown support for QAnon, making them a significant minority within the party. With the pandemic denialism has been influenced by QAnon, and its growth in politics became a subject of friction in several states. Natalie Jackson, research lead, said:

People who are susceptible to believing in these conspiracy theories are found in every demographic. It's not just restricted to Republicans or the uneducated or those in a specific age group. It's distributed throughout. Of

course, there are some groups that are more prevalent than others, like there are many more Republicans than Democrats, but we do find that people in every demographic find these wild conspiracies believable.

Online threats have also come from QAnon, and several of their members have been arrested after making threats or acting aggressively. Experts claim that QAnon has already showcased a propensity for harm, its growth in the online space having manifested into tangible offline harm. A series of criminal activities have been linked to its believers leading to acts of armed violence, attacking the United States (U.S.) Capitol on January 6, 2021, for example (Zihiri et al.). Yet, QAnon is a group that threatens national security, and the social landscape. As a result, raising concerns about the spreading of misinformation, disseminating false information, and encouraging hatred and violence against opponents. The problems associated with disinformation on social media platforms are becoming increasingly apparent and include the loss of a shared sense of reality, political polarization, and a risk to public health (Holoyda).

The conspiracy theories' claims have put ordinary people at risk, QAnon supporters believe that there will soon be a mass of arrests, and members of the cabal will be brought to justice. Travis View, one of the hosts of the QAnon Anonymous podcast said that: "If supporters of the conspiracy theory begin to lose faith in Trump's ability to stop the cabal of child abusers that might inspire them to begin taking more direct violent action themselves" (qtd. in Beckett). Since 2018, the QAnon conspiracy theory has been connected to some violent crimes. QAnon members have been arrested for threatening politicians, engaging in a shootout, founding bomb-making materials organization, kidnappings, and even murder crimes (Garry et al. 198). Subsequently, the spreading of misinformation on social media led to incitement for violence.

QAnon has since erupted and raised security concerns across the globe. Likewise,

recent literature has elucidated that a strong conspiracy mentality increases the likelihood of violent extremist behavior, especially in those individuals who exhibit low self-control, low regard for the law, and high self-efficacy (Garry et al.). This indicates that individuals who hold extreme beliefs, such as those promoted by QAnon, may be more likely to engage in violent or illegal activities, especially if they have personality traits that make them less likely to follow social norms or respect authority. This underscores the potential dangers of conspiracy theories and the importance of understanding their impact on individuals and society especially when child sex trafficking is involved. It is important to keep in mind that many of these beliefs have been rejected by people because they lack support and are unfounded (Kranish and Fisher).

Ultimately, the threat and danger of QAnon, a far-right conspiracy theory group, cannot be determined by a single factor. The movement's potential harm to society will depend on a variety of elements, including the extent to which it gains support and spreads its message, the effectiveness of government and social media countermeasures, and whether or not its followers continue to be attracted to its theories and beliefs. One crucial factor in assessing QAnon's threat is its ability to disseminate its message effectively (Hannah 3). If QAnon supporters continue to successfully spread their beliefs and gain more followers, it could lead to an increase in extremist activity, such as hate crimes and domestic terrorism, and potentially even incite violence against individuals or groups who are believed to be part of the alleged conspiracy. This could have severe consequences not only for those targeted by QAnon followers but for society as a whole, as it could further erode trust in institutions and exacerbate existing social and political divisions (Amarasingam and Argentino). Another important factor is the ability of governments and social media companies to counter the movement's message. While free speech is an essential value, it is necessary to regulate harmful content that can incite violence,

discrimination, and harassment (Cunningham and Everton 4). It is very important to stop the spread of false and dangerous information related to conspiracy theories like QAnon, because it can lead to violent actions and harm to individuals or groups who are targeted by the followers of such theories. To prevent this, it is essential to take steps like educating people to think critically about information they encounter, regulating social media to prevent disinformation, and providing support to those who have been affected by these conspiracy theories (Moskalenko 112).

Finally, the level of adherence to QAnon's conspiracy theories and beliefs by its followers is a critical factor that can determine the movement's longevity and level of threat. If followers remain loyal and committed to the group's message, QAnon could continue to pose a danger to society. If followers begin to disengage, it may lead to the movement's decline (Knight 18). In conclusion, the threat and danger of QAnon are complex and multifaceted. It is essential to consider various factors when evaluating its potential impact on society, including the success of the movement in spreading its message, the effectiveness of countermeasures, and the level of adherence of its followers to its conspiracy theories and beliefs (19).

Chapter Three

QAnon: From the Far-right Movement to Trumpism

Conspiracy theories and beliefs are not unique for the United States, but they have become a notable feature of American culture and politics in recent years. However, conspiracy theories such as QAnon refer to explanations of events or situations that are based on the idea of secrecy, harsh groups working behind the scenes to manipulate events for their own gain or to achieve some criminal purpose. This chapter deals with the relationship between Donald Trump and QAnon conspiracy theory with its influence on American politics, the COVID-19 pandemic effects on the U.S. government due to conspiracies, and the analysis of Trump's connection to QAnon. In the end, it deals with the rise of Joe Biden's arena.

3.1. Donald Trump and QAnon Relationship

Everything that was hidden became obvious and revealed; all events in America were reversed after the direct appearance of QAnon and its rapid spread in the country via social media platforms. While linking all these events, it was found that former U.S. President Donald Trump has a close relationship with QAnon conspiracy theory which is a complex and controversial topic. Within the U.S. government, and that former President Trump was fighting against them (Smith). Donald Trump never explicitly endorsed QAnon. He and his administration generally avoided commenting on it directly; but frequently retweeted and amplified QAnon-related accounts or hashtags on Twitter, and he reportedly enjoyed the support of some QAnon followers during his presidency. In addition, several of Trump's associates, such as former national security advisor Michael Flynn, have promoted QAnon theories (Smith).

Although that movement was widely aimed at spreading destruction, this did not make Donald Trump to stop supporting it and stop praising it in front of public opinion

over and over again. Despite all the crimes committed by the supporters of QAnon movement, they were able to escape without leaving any evidence indicating that they were actually involved in (Warren 3). Even with these apparent expressions of support, Trump and his administration also distanced themselves from the more extreme elements of QAnon movement, such as its explicit claims about child trafficking. In August 2019, the FBI even identified QAnon as a potential domestic terrorism threat, although it did not name any specific individuals or groups associated with the movement (3).

Child trafficking has been linked to QAnon conspiracy theory, the far-right movement that gained significant attention in the United States and worldwide during the Trump presidency (Warren 6). One of the core beliefs of QAnon is that this cabal operates a vast network of abuse, and that high-ranking politicians and celebrities are complicit in or even actively participating in these activities (7). QAnon followers believe that president Donald Trump is leading a secret mission to take down this cabal, and that the ongoing investigations and arrests of high-profile individuals for crimes related to sex trafficking are proof that QAnon's claims are true (Benton and Peterka-Benton). Donald Trump's opinion was not clear at first, so he always concealed the truth of the matter by avoiding confronting statements about that movement (Benton and Peterka-Benton).

From another perspective, during the 2020 U.S. presidential election, Trump was asked to denounce QAnon, which he did, saying, "I don't know much about the movement, other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate" (January 7, 2021). However, he defended QAnon followers, saying, "They are people that love our country" (January 7, 2021). After the 2020 election, some QAnon followers believed that Donald Trump would remain in power and that he was secretly working to overturn the election results. He did little to dispel these beliefs, in fact he encouraged his supporters to challenge the election results; this culminated in the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S.

Capitol by Trump supporters, some of whom were QAnon followers (January 7, 2021).

Moving to the depth of the relationship between Donald Trump and QAnon; it is important to clarify that QAnon is a baseless conspiracy theory that has been widely debunked by experts and the mainstream media. His accounts were introduced on social networking sites; he used all ideas and methods to support this movement in many indirect ways in order to avoid any kind of problems (Enders et al. 5). While there is no evidence to support these claims, it is true that some of Donald Trump's rhetoric and actions as president aligned with some of the beliefs of QAnon supporters. For example, Trump often portrayed himself as a fighter against the so-called "deep state" and the "fake news media", which are central to QAnon's worldview. He also frequently attacked his political opponents and claimed they were engaged in corrupt or illegal activities (5).

Even so, it is still somehow ambiguous to show how much QAnon specifically influenced Trump's vision in the presidency, as many of his political beliefs and strategies predated the emergence of the conspiracy theory. Nonetheless, QAnon became a significant part of the broader cultural and political landscapes during Trump's presidency and his supporters were undoubtedly influenced by its ideas. Among which political candidates refer to several individuals identified as QAnon supporters; ran for political office. Some of them managed to secure party nominations and even won seats in local or state-level elections (Enders et al. 6). Donald Trump's political beliefs and strategies precede the emergence of QAnon conspiracy theory. Trump's political views have been shaped by his experiences as a businessman, television personality, and political figure. However, QAnon's claims have been repeatedly debunked and its influence has faced criticism due to the potential for real-world harm, including instances of violence and harassment linked to the conspiracy theory (7).

The fact that Trump saw QAnon as a way to rally his base and strengthen his

presidency is speculation and not based on concrete evidence. Regardless, the promotion of conspiracy theories by political leaders can have dangerous consequences and undermine the trust in institutions and democratic norms (Bond and Neville-Shepard 4). There is speculation about Trump's motives for promoting QAnon, and it is not based on concrete evidence. In the same line, the promotion of conspiracy theories by political leaders can indeed have dangerous consequences and undermine trust in institutions and democratic norms (5). Indeed, conspiracy theories often rely on baseless or distorted information and can lead to harmful behaviors, such as discrimination and violence. When political leaders promote such theories, they legitimize them and provide a platform for them to spread more widely. This can create a culture of distrust and divisiveness that can erode the foundations of democracy (6).

This promotion can distract from real issues and problems that need to be addressed. It can also undermine the credibility of the media and other sources of information, making it harder for citizens to make informed decisions and hold their leaders accountable (Zihiri et al.). In short, political leaders have a responsibility to promote facts and evidence-based arguments, not baseless conspiracy theories, in order to maintain trust in institutions and democratic norms (Zihiri et al.).

3.1.1. The History of Conspiracy Theories in the U.S.

Conspiracy theories have a long history in the U.S., on the one hand, one of the most enduring conspiracy theories in American history is the idea that the government is involved in a massive cover-up of extraterrestrial life and technology (van Prooijen and Douglas 325). Hence, in the 1960s and 1970s, conspiracy theories became increasingly associated with political activism and dissent. Many activists believed that the government was involved in secret programs to suppress dissent and maintain control over the population (326). On the other hand, one of the most infamous conspiracy theories in

American history is the idea that the government was involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This theory gained widespread acceptance in the years following the assassination and has remained popular to this day (774).

In the last decades, conspiracy theories have become more prevalent and more extreme, fueled in part by the rise of the internet and social media. Some of the most popular conspiracy theories today include the idea that the 9/11 attacks were an inside job, that the moon landing was faked, and that vaccines are harmful (Reed). While conspiracy theories have always been a part of American culture, they have become increasingly divisive in recent years. Many people believed that conspiracy theories are a threat to democracy and that they can fuel extremism and undermine trust in institutions (Reed).

Firstly, the spread of conspiracy theories in America is a complex phenomenon with many contributing factors. Among which there is erosion of trust in institutions (Cassam 191). Over the past several decades, Americans' trust in government, media, and other institutions has steadily declined. This erosion of trust has created fertile ground for conspiracy theories to take hold, as people are more likely to believe in alternative explanations for events and behaviors (191). Driven by a range of factors including political polarization, economic inequality, and a perception of corruption and self-interest among elites, this decline in trust has been particularly pronounced in recent years, with many Americans expressing skepticism about the information they receive from traditional sources of news and information (Cassam 193). Secondly, the rise of social media has played a significant role in the spread of conspiracy theories, as these platforms allow like-minded individuals to connect and share information more easily (van Prooijen and Douglas 328). Social media algorithms also tend to promote content that generates engagement, which can amplify conspiracy theories and other controversial ideas (328).

Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have transformed the way people consume and

share information. These platforms have made it easier for like-minded individuals to connect and share information, often leading to the formation of online communities that reinforce certain beliefs and values. Social media data and programs also tend to promote content that generates engagement, which can amplify controversial or exciting content, including conspiracy theories (Douglas et al. 6). Thirdly, the online echo chambers is another side in the history of conspiracies, in which social media platforms and other online communities can create echo chambers, where individuals are only exposed to information and viewpoints that reinforce their existing beliefs. This can make it harder for people to distinguish between fact and fiction (7).

It can lead to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories. However, the formation of online echo chambers can be particularly dangerous when it comes to the spread of conspiracy theories. This can make it harder for people to distinguish between fact and fiction, and can lead to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories (Duetz 5). Fourthly, prevalence of misinformation and disinformation that the internet has made it easier than ever to spread false information and propaganda, including conspiracy theories (6). In some cases, foreign governments and other malicious actors have intentionally spread disinformation to sow division and confusion in American society. This has been particularly evident in recent years with the proliferation of fake news and propaganda during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and subsequent elections in other countries (7).

The psychological factors also are an important part in conspiracy theories history because there are a range of psychological factors that can make people more susceptible to conspiracy theories. For example, some people may be drawn to these theories because they provide a sense of order and explanation in a chaotic world (Cassam 194). Others may be motivated by a desire for social status or a need to feel like they have inside knowledge

that others don't. Additionally, in some cases; individuals who feel disenfranchised or marginalized may be more likely to believe in conspiracy theories as a way of explaining their situation (Zihiri et al.). It is likely that conspiracy theories will continue to be a prominent feature of American culture and politics for the foreseeable future (Zihiri et al.).

Linked to all these conspiracies, QAnon conspiracy theory emerged in 2017 originating on anonymous message boards and social media platforms. In which its followers believed that there is a secret cabal of elite politicians and celebrities who are engaged in a global child trafficking and abuse ring, and that former President Donald Trump is working to expose and defeat this group. QAnon theory has been linked to acts of violence and domestic terrorism, and has been widely debunked by fact checkers and experts (Holoyda). Donald Trump has been linked to QAnon because many of his supporters are also QAnon followers. Trump has not explicitly endorsed QAnon, but he has retweeted QAnon accounts and shared QAnon related content on his social media accounts (Holoyda). During his presidency; Trump also frequently made false or misleading statements that were similar to QAnon conspiracy theories, such as claims of widespread voter fraud (Holoyda).

The link between QAnon and Trump's presidency is significant because it highlights the dangerous influence of conspiracy theories in politics (Bensinger and Haberman). QAnon's followers have been involved in numerous violent incidents, including the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. In which the spread of QAnon and other conspiracy theories also undermines public trust in institutions and can lead to a breakdown in democratic norms and values (Bensinger and Haberman). Moving to the depth of explaining the link between QAnon and Trump's presidency; it is indeed significant because it underscores the dangerous impact of conspiracy theories in politics and that former President Trump was secretly working to expose and defeat this cabal

(Bensinger and Haberman). The dangerous influence of conspiracy theories in politics is not limited to QAnon, as other conspiracy theories have also had a significant impact on political discourse and behavior (Bensinger and Haberman).

Conspiracy theories can be appealing because they offer simple explanations for complex events and can create a sense of community among believers. With referring to the article titled “Trust the Plan review: How QAnon and Trump unhinged America”. It is clear that they can also be harmful because they can promote distrust of institutions, demonize certain groups, and lead to violence and other forms of dangerous behavior (Green). For political leaders it is crucial to reject and condemn conspiracy theories and to promote evidence- based decision-making and civil discourse (Green). The media and other information sources also have a responsibility to report accurate information and to fact-check false claims and conspiracy theories. By promoting critical thinking and rational discourse, we can help prevent the dangerous influence of conspiracy theories in politics (Green).

3.1.2. Examining QAnon’s Influence on American Politics

The negative effects of QAnon movement were not directly apparent to America and its citizens; even the majority of public opinions did not notice the great danger that surrounded them and of what these conspiracies were capable to do. Within this scope, QAnon’s influence on American politics has led to increase polarization and a decrease in trust in institutions and traditional media sources as it was mentioned in the article titled “Analysis QAnon, the Conspiracy Theory Creeping into U.S. Politics” (3).

QAnon followers often dismissed mainstream media outlets as “fake news” and believed that they were part of a larger conspiracy to cover up the truth “Analysis QAnon, the Conspiracy Theory Creeping into U.S. Politics” (3). So in summary, QAnon’s influence on American politics has been largely negative, leading to increased polarization,

a decrease in trust in institutions and traditional media sources, and incidents of real-world violence and criminal activity (4). One of the core beliefs of QAnon followers is that mainstream media outlets are part of the conspiracy and cannot be trusted. When they often dismissed mainstream news sources as “fake news” and believed that they are actively working to cover up the truth about the supposed cabal. Instead, QAnon followers turned to alternative sources of information, such as social media, blogs, and conspiracy websites, to find information that supports their beliefs (Hannah 4).

QAnon continues to have a significant following online and has been linked to real-world acts of violence and extremism; the influence of QAnon on American politics has been largely negative, and its spread of conspiracy theories and disinformation has had real-world consequences (Hannah 4). The main belief of QAnon followers regarding mainstream media being untrustworthy is based on the idea that there is a secret, powerful group of elites (the supposed “cabal”) that controls the world’s political and economic systems. According to QAnon, this cabal operates in secrecy, and mainstream media outlets are complicit in covering up their activities (Papasavva et al. 5).

QAnon followers believed that mainstream media outlets are part of the cabal’s propaganda machine, controlled by the same powerful forces that they claim are working to destroy humanity. They believed that mainstream media released deliberately withhold information that would expose the cabal’s activities, and instead promote a false narrative that supports their agenda (Papasavva et al. 6). Over and above that the term “fake news” is often used by QAnon followers to describe any information that contradicts their beliefs. They viewed the mainstream media as an enemy of truth, and believed that the only reliable sources of information are those that support their worldview (7). Rather, these beliefs are not supported by any credible evidence, and have been widely discredited by mainstream media outlets; as well as by many independent fact-checking organizations (8).

Yet, QAnon followers remained committed to their beliefs and continued to promote their conspiracy theories through social media and other online platforms (Smith). QAnon has had a significant impact on American society, in part because of the way it has spread through social media platforms; there were different ways in which it has had a destructive influence such as disseminating false information. It describes that the movement has spread a vast amount of misinformation and conspiracy theories, many of which have been shown to be untrue. This false information can lead people to make decisions based on faulty assumptions, or to distrust legitimate sources of information (Zuckerman 3). The second way is radicalizing individuals, which means that QAnon has been associated with a number of violent incidents, including the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 (3).

The conspiracy theory has been known to radicalize individuals and encourage them to take extreme actions in the name of their beliefs (Zuckerman 4). Consistently, undermining democracy is the third way and it defines how QAnon has propagated the idea that the U.S. government is controlled by a cabal of corrupt individuals who are working against the interests of the American people. This undermines the legitimacy of democratic institutions and can lead to a loss of faith in the government (5). At last but not least, QAnon played a huge role in dividing communities that has been associated with a number of online harassment campaigns and has led to the fracturing of relationships and communities. It can lead people to view those who do not believe in it as enemies, which can further polarize society (6). As a result QAnon's spread through social media platforms has had a destructive impact on American society, by spreading false information, radicalizing individuals, undermining democracy, and dividing communities.

The emergence and growth of QAnon during Donald Trump's presidency continued playing a big role on leading American politics, as it promoted its dangerous

conspiracy theories that posed a threat to democratic institutions (Roose). Following the repression on QAnon-related content and accounts by social media companies and law enforcement agencies, there has been a reduction in the promotion of false and harmful information related to QAnon, as well as a decrease in the promotion of extremist and conspiratorial thinking in American politics (Roose). Consequently, the impact of QAnon and other extremist movements may continue to be felt in American politics, and it will likely take continued efforts to counter these movements and promote accurate and fact-based information.

This conspiracy theory is different from other conspiracies as it is unique in several ways, one of which is its level of complexity and scope (Zuckerman 8). This theory is propagated by a person or group of people who call themselves “Q,” who claim to be a high-level government insider with access to classified information (8). Unlike other conspiracy theories that often center-around a specific event or group, such as the 9/11 truther movement or the assassination of John F. Kennedy, QAnon theory is a constantly evolving narrative that incorporates various elements of other conspiracies, including anti-vaccination, anti-Semitic, and anti-government sentiments (Huiskes).

Another distinguishing feature of QAnon is its online presence. Its followers primarily communicated and spread their beliefs through social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit (Huiskes). This has allowed the movement to rapidly grow and attract followers from all over the world especially in the arena of Donald Trump; that became something normal in recent years. Furthermore, it did not stop here but continued to destroy American life from particular side and the life of the whole world from general side (Huiskes).

3.1.3. COVID-19 Global Crisis in the U.S.

In a parallel aspect to the conspiracies, there was a global issue that violated all

countries of the world; since there was no escape from it, which is the Corona virus that was able to fully control all areas of life. The COVID-19 crisis refers to the global pandemic caused by the spread of the novel corona virus SARS-CoV-2, which first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (The World Bank). The virus quickly spread to other parts of China and then to other countries around the world; leading to a global health emergency that has had far-reaching impacts on public health, economies, and daily life (The World Bank).

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). Symptoms can range from mild to severe and may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, and loss of taste or smell. In severe cases, COVID-19 can lead to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and even death, particularly in older adults and those with underlying health conditions (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development).

The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly spread across the globe becoming a major public health crisis. In the United States; the pandemic took hold in early 2020, and quickly became a significant issue during Donald Trump's presidency (*New York Times*). Initially, the Trump administration downplayed the severity of the virus, with Trump repeatedly claiming that the virus would soon disappear and that the country had it under control. However, as the number of death cases continued to rise, the administration's response became increasingly criticized (*New York Times*). One of the main issues with the response was the shortage of testing kits, which limited the ability of health officials to track and contain the virus. Trump also faced criticism for not taking stronger action to promote social distancing and mask-wearing, which some experts argued could have helped slow the spread of the virus; many politicians and businessmen have accused him of not taking

sufficient measures during the virus period (The White House).

In addition to these issues, there were also concerns about the administration's communication of information related to the pandemic (Parker and Stern 5). Trump and some of his advisors made controversial statements about potential treatments for the virus, including advocating for the use of hydroxychloroquine, despite limited evidence of its effectiveness. All this was in order to facilitate the image of Donald Trump that he really contributed to the fight against the virus (7).

Despite the seriousness of the situation during the increase of the virus there is no evidence to suggest that the spread of COVID-19 is due to QAnon. Because QAnon is a far-right conspiracy theory that originated on the internet in 2017, and it has gained a following among some individuals who believe in various unfounded claims and baseless conspiracy theories (Moffitt et al. 4). However, COVID-19 on the other hand is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus causing a global pandemic (5).

While it is true that some QAnon followers have been spreading misinformation about COVID-19, such as promoting false cures and denying the severity of the pandemic, there is no evidence to suggest that QAnon has played a significant role in the spread of the virus itself (Pummerer et al. 2). But in fact, the spread of COVID-19 is primarily due to factors such as person-to-person contact, international travel, and inadequate public health measures such as social distancing and mask-wearing (3). When things got bad, America did not stand without reacting; the World Health Organization and other health experts repeatedly emphasized the importance of following these measures to slow the spread of the virus (Moffitt et al. 6), especially during Donald Trump's presidency in which the U.S. response to the COVID-19 crisis was met with a mix of praise and criticism (Pummerer et al. 4).

In the early stages of the pandemic, Trump did not take it seriously but tried to downplay the danger of the virus and suggested that it would disappear by time. But he did not make many agreements with health officials and countries on dealing with the crisis (van Prooijen and van Vugt). In the next phase, as the virus spread and the death count increased; Trump eventually declared a national emergency and implemented travel restrictions to limit the virus spread. The federal government also distributed resources and financial aid to states and businesses affected by the pandemic. However, there were also concerns over the shortage of medical supplies, such as masks and ventilators, and the slow amount of testing (van Prooijen and van Vugt). This has led to Trump's administration face criticism for its handling of the pandemic, particularly in comparison to other countries that were able to quickly contain the virus. As a result, the response to the COVID-19 crisis during Donald Trump's presidency was a subject of ongoing debate and analysis (van Prooijen and van Vugt).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world and the United States has been hit particularly hard. As it has progressed, there have been various conspiracy theories and misinformation that have emerged, which have added to the challenges of dealing with the virus (Hart). Some of the most prominent conspiracy theories related to COVID-19 in the US include claims that the virus was deliberately created in a laboratory, that it is a hoax or a political ploy, that it can be cured by various unproven treatments or remedies, or that the vaccines are dangerous or ineffective (Hart). These conspiracies have been amplified by social media, where false information can spread quickly and easily, and by political leaders who have downplayed the severity of the virus or encouraged resistance to public health measures (Saltykov). However, the impact of these conspiracies has been significant. They have contributed to confusion and mistrust, making it more difficult for public health officials to effectively communicate with the public about the

severity of the pandemic and the need for measures like mask-wearing and social distancing.

They have also led to dangerous behavior, such as people refusing to wear masks or getting vaccinated; which has contributed to the spread of the virus (Saltykov). Indeed, they are not based on scientific facts or reliable sources (Wright). The best way to combat the spread of COVID-19 is to follow public health guidelines, get vaccinated, and rely on trusted sources of information, such as the CDC and WHO (Wright). One of the most prominent QAnon-related COVID conspiracy theories is the idea that the pandemic is a deliberate exaggeration by the government and the media. QAnon adherents have also spread false information about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, claiming that they are part of a larger conspiracy to control or harm the population (Egorova et al.).

The spread of QAnon-related COVID conspiracy theories has been linked to broader concerns about misinformation and the role of social media in amplifying extremist views (Egorova et al.). Some experts have suggested that the movement's emphasis on secrecy and insider knowledge may make it particularly appealing to individuals who feel alienated from mainstream institutions or who are susceptible to manipulation by conspiracy theories (Egorova et al.).

3.2. Examining the Connection between Trump and QAnon

The former President Donald Trump has been linked to the QAnon conspiracy theory in various ways although he has not explicitly endorsed it. Furthermore, Trump's connection to QAnon can be traced back to a series of hidden messages posted on the anonymous image board 4chan in late 2017, purportedly from a high-level government insider with top-secret security clearance (Klepper and Swenson). Whit the same line, the messages which came to be known as "Q drops," claimed to reveal the inner workings of this supposed cabal and its nefarious activities. QAnon followers believed that Trump

was collaborating with this insider to bring down the cabal (Klepper and Swenson).

Within this category, the analysis of Trump's connection to QAnon shows that it came under scrutiny after the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol; which was carried out in part by supporters of QAnon (Anwar et al. 5). In the aftermath of the attack Trump issued a statement condemning the violence but did not specifically mention QAnon or its followers. Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms subsequently banned or suspended thousands of QAnon-related accounts and groups, citing concerns about the spread of misinformation and incitement to violence (7).

Donald Trump has been accused of supporting QAnon by both his followers and detractors, and the relationship between the former U.S. president and the conspiracy theory is complex and contentious (Bleakley 6). Trump has re-tweeted a number of QAnon-affiliated accounts on Twitter, including accounts that have supported the conspiracy theory. This is one method that "Retweets" demonstrate the connection between them. At the next stage, there is other important way to prove this relation which is "Acknowledgment"; Trump has acknowledged QAnon followers and their beliefs in interviews and press conferences (Benton and Peterka-Benton). In the same year in August 2020, Trump was asked about QAnon during a press briefing and said, "I don't know much about the movement other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate." He went on to say that he had heard that they are people who "love our country" (Benton and Peterka-Benton).

On the next floor, "Coded Messages" also played a significant role QAnon followers believes that Trumps ends coded messages to them through his speeches and social media posts. For example; they believe that his frequent use of the phrase "the storm is coming" refers to a day when the cabal will be defeated and exposed (Green). It did not tope here. However, "Shared Goals" is another aspect in which QAnon Believers supports

the idea that Trump is secretly working to defeat the cabal and bring about a “Great Awakening” of consciousness (Green). Trump’s own rhetoric and policies have sometimes ranged with QAnon beliefs. For instance, he has promoted the idea of “draining the swamp” in Washington, D.C., which is a central theme of the QAnon conspiracy theory (Green).

In the last scope, “condemnation” is defined as the last aspect because despite these connections, Trump has also condemned QAnon and other extremist groups (Morelock and Narita 6). In August 2020 he said, “I heard that these are people that love our country, and they just don’t like seeing it. So I don’t know really anything about it other than they do supposedly like me. They also would like to see problems in these areas, like especially the areas that we are talking about, go away. But that I don’t know because I haven’t spoken to them” (6), which actively demonstrates that he tried to convince Americans by these fake sayings in order to pour out confidence by falsely promoting the movement. To sum up everything that has been stated above, while there is no direct evidence of Trump coordinating with QAnon activities, his rhetoric and actions have been perceived as supportive of the conspiracy theory. His repeated failure to condemn the movement has contributed to its growing popularity among his supporters (7).

This led to many results in the U.S. because the relationship between Donald Trump and QAnon has contributed to the erosion of trust in mainstream media and institutions (Morelock and Narita 8). By promoting conspiracy theories and casting doubt on established facts, QAnon has helped to create a climate of mistrust and suspicion that has been difficult to overcome. This relation has had significant consequences; both positive and negative. While it has helped to mobilize his base of supporters; it has also been linked to violence and the spread of dangerous conspiracy theories. The impact of this relationship is likely to be felt for some time to come (9).

3.2.1. QAnon after Trump's Presidency

The wide spread of QAnon movement had greatly increased during the previous presidency of Donald Trump however it also left an impression that it is a movement that is never subject to disappearance or extinction. After all the destruction it left behind in America and its people, this movement never stopped spreading, rather it became something coexisting with its existence (L. Cohen). QAnon movement has gained a significant following in the U.S. It has been linked to several violent incidents. But, it is difficult to predict the future of QAnon in the U.S. Some experts believe that the movement will lose momentum as its predictions fail to come true, and its followers become disillusioned (Bellaiche). However, others warned that QAnon could continue to pose a threat to U.S. democracy, particularly if its followers became more radicalized and turn to violence.

After the end of Donald Trump's presidency QAnon faced a number of challenges and changes. Firstly, QAnon supporters had to adapt with the fact that Trump had lost the 2020 presidential election and had left office (J. Cohen). Many QAnon believers had believed that Trump would remain in power and would take down the supposed cabal, so his departure from the White House was a major blow to their beliefs (J. Cohen). Secondly, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube cracked down on QAnon-related content and accounts, citing concerns about misinformation and extremist content. This made it more difficult for QAnon supporters to connect and spread their message online (Roose). Despite these challenges, QAnon continues to exist and has evolved in various ways. Some QAnon supporters have shifted their focus to other conspiracy theories, while others have become more involved in local politics and activism (Roose).

QAnon activities did not completely disappear after Donald Trump's presidency ended, but they have somewhat declined in intensity and visibility because this is a

conspiracy theory that originated on online forums and social media platforms, and it centers around the idea that there is a “deep state” network of powerful individuals involved in child trafficking, Satanism, and other nefarious activities (Marshall et al.). The theory also posits that Donald Trump is waging a secret war against this network, and that Q, an anonymous figure purporting to be a high-level government insider, is providing guidance to Trump supporters (Marshall et al.). During Trump’s Presidency; QAnon gained significant visibility and support, with some Republican politicians openly endorsing the theory. According to the article titled “Will Conspiracy Theories Influence the U.S. Vote?” It was clear that after Trump left office; QAnon supporters’ focus shifted to the belief that he would be reinstated as President, which has not happened. This led to sense of disillusionment among some supporters, while others doubled down on their beliefs and continued to spread QAnon messaging online (BBC News).

In recent months, QAnon has faced increased scrutiny and backlash from social media platforms, which have taken steps to limit the spread of QAnon-related content (Smith). Some QAnon adherents have also faced legal consequences for their involvement in the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, which was fueled in part by QAnon beliefs. However, it is worth noting that QAnon beliefs and messaging are still being shared and discussed online, and it remains a controversial and divisive force in American politics (Smith).

It is difficult to say for sure if QAnon conspiracy theory will continue after Donald Trump’s presidency, but it’s possible it will because QAnon has its own community and language that could keep it going, even if it’s not directly connected to Trump (Smith). QAnon is based on a belief in a secret, powerful group controlling events; which is not unique to QAnon and could continue to attract followers (Dover). People often believe in conspiracy theories even when there is evidence against them; because it gives them a

sense of control or certainty. So, even if QAnon doesn't specifically talk about Donald Trump anymore, the conspiracy theory could still stick around and change in different ways (Dover).

3.2.2. QAnon's Implications on Trump's Political Career

Donald Trump's political career has been greatly influenced by QAnon movement; on the one hand some supporters of Trump have embraced QAnon conspiracy theory, and Trump has at times seemed to encourage this support (Dellinger). For example, he has retweeted QAnon-related content on Twitter, and he has been known to make vague references to the conspiracy theory during his speeches and rallies. This has helped to fuel the growth of the QAnon movement and has given some of his supporters a sense of purpose and belonging (Dellinger).

Ultimately, the impact of QAnon on Trump's political career is complex and multifaceted. While it has energized some of his supporters and helped to solidify his base, it has also alienated many others and contributed to a broader sense of polarization and division within the Republican Party (Harwell et al.). Within the same passage, QAnon movement may have strengthened Donald Trump's vision, as his political views and goals are complex and multifaceted, and the beliefs of the QAnon movement are often contradictory and unverifiable (Harwell et al.).

That being said, some supporters of QAnon movement believe that president Trump is working behind the scenes to expose and dismantle a global conspiracy involving powerful elites engaged in criminal activities, including human trafficking and other abuses. These beliefs may align with Trump's own views on issues such as law and order, immigration, and national security (Nast). Many of the claims made by QAnon movement have been debunked or shown to be based on unfounded speculation and hearsay. The extreme and sometimes violent rhetoric associated with the movement has been widely

criticized as divisive and dangerous (Nast).

While the beliefs of QAnon movement may resonate with some of Trump's supporters, it is unlikely that the movement has had a significant impact on his political vision (Binder). Trump's policies and statements are shaped by a variety of factors, including his own personal views, the views of his advisors and supporters, and the political climate and issues of the day (Binder). Despite the movement's extreme beliefs and behavior, some of Trump's supporters have embraced QAnon conspiracy theories (Bensinger and Haberman). During the 2020 election campaign; several Republican candidates who expressed support for QAnon were elected to Congress, including Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert. In addition, a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in September 2020 found that 36% of registered voters who identified as Republican or Republican-leaning had heard of QAnon, and 9% had a favorable view of the movement (Bensinger and Haberman).

However, QAnon is not a mainstream movement and its beliefs are not widely accepted. In fact, many of conspiracy theories propagated by QAnon have been debunked by fact-checkers and dismissed by mainstream media outlets (Bond and Neville-Shepard). As a conclusion, while some of Trump's supporters may have been drawn to QAnon movement, the movement's extreme beliefs and behavior are not reflective of Trump's political vision. Trump did not explicitly endorse QAnon or its conspiracy theories, and his policies and actions during his time in office did not align with the QAnon world view (Cassam).

After Donald Trump lost the elections, the destiny of QAnon was not clear; whether it would actually continue secretly and quickly or whether it would disappear. Thus, this president was not like other presidents, which means that even if QAnon did not exist, he would have found a new way to nominate himself for the presidential elections again (L.

Cohen). This has raised a lot of confusion and controversy in the presidential field; the idea of questioning whether Donald Trump might actually be able to win the presidency again in 2024 was circulated, and whether this matter would actually be achieved despite the current president; Joe Biden (L. Cohen).

No one knows the truth about Donald Trump's intentions, but at the expense of many studies and previous research conducted by different researchers; this person will not retreat for one moment from his goal, and will strive to win the elections once again (Dellinger). Because for him, it is not easy to lose a career that he spent all his life in to make it an example to follow, whether in America or even in the whole world. Not for the purpose of narcissism, but only for the sake of not wasting the efforts of the previous years in a short period of time (Dellinger).

3.3. The Emergence of Joe Biden's Administration

During Donald Trump's presidency the whole world talked about how different his arena was from the rest of the presidency in America before. It was an experience full of successes and profitable deals, as well as increasing developments in all areas of life. Far from the bad side like conspiracy theories and others, indeed the presidency of Donald Trump is more than unique and special. Nothing lasts forever, whether it is related to the presidency or not everything is subject to demise and end; this is an inevitable fact in life. There is an evident example for this which is the case of Donald Trump after his presidency ended and events pulled together for him (Dimock and Gramlich).

According to the article titled "The End of Trump?" Donald Trump, the former President of the United States, initially disputed the results of the 2020 Presidential Election; claiming that there was widespread voter fraud and that the election had been stolen from him (Nast). However, after several failed legal challenges and certification of the election results by Congress, Trump did eventually concede the election to Joe Biden in

a statement released on January 7, 2021, the day after the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol (Nast). In his statement, Trump said that he disagreed with the outcome of the election; but that there would be an orderly transition of power on January 20, when Joe Biden would be assert in as President (Burden 6). While Trump never explicitly conceded that he had lost the election, his statement was widely interpreted as an acceptance of the fact that his Presidency had come to an end (7).

Donald Trump's acceptance of the election outcome was somewhat ambiguous because his language and behavior in the aftermath of the election were widely criticized as inflammatory and divisive (Panagopoulos and Weinschenk 4). He and his supporters made baseless claims of widespread voter fraud and irregularities, which were debunked by numerous courts, election officials, and independent experts. Trump also encouraged his supporters to protest the election results and to march on the Capitol, which led to the violent insurrection on January 6 (4).

In the run-up to the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, Donald Trump repeatedly was still claiming that the election was rigged against him, despite the fact that there was no evidence to support these claims, Trump and his supporters continued to cultivate them (Burden 8). After the election, when it became clear that Joe Biden had won, Trump refused to concede; instead launching a legal and public relations campaign to challenge the results (Przeworski 9). His legal team filed numerous causes in several key battleground states; claiming voter fraud, irregularities, and other issues that they alleged had compromised the integrity of the election (10).

Many of these claims were baseless or lacked evidence and were ultimately dismissed by courts. In fact, some of the judges who heard these cases were appointed by Trump himself. Recounts and audits in several states confirmed that the election results were accurate and valid (Przeworski 11). Even with the lack of evidence to support his

claims, Trump continued to push his false narrative claiming that the election had been really stolen from him. He used social media and other platforms to spread misinformation and stoke anger among his supporters, many of whom believed that the election had been rigged against Trump (Brewer 10).

This culminated in the events of January 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to overturn the election results (Fujiwara et al. 7). The violence and chaos that ensued resulted in several deaths and many injuries, and sparked widespread condemnation from both Democrats and Republicans (8). In the aftermath of these events, Trump eventually conceded the election and committed to an orderly transition of power to Joe Biden (9). Yet, the damage had already been done; and the events of the past few months had eroded public trust in the electoral process and the peaceful transfer of power that is a cornerstone of American democracy (9).

3.3.1 Creating a New authority: The Policies of Joe Biden

Donald Trump's presidency witnessed many achievements during the four years he ruled, but that success did not last long when he lost the presidential elections in 2020 and Joe Biden won it. And the presidency differed between them in all ways among which their policies, leadership styles (Pita). Donald Trump's leadership style has been unchallengeable because of using Twitter to direct communication with public. Unlike Joe Biden, whom his leadership style is famous by established and planned approach because he focused on highlighting unity; also he tried to create a sense of stability in the U.S. due to his strong political personality (Pita). With reference to the article "*Joe Biden's Political Personality Illustrated in his Political Decisions*," it is mentioned that: "Some of the many political choices made by Joe Biden during his more than 50-year public service career demand greater attention than others in terms of the leader being examined and his personality because they directly correspond to his characteristics, motivations, cognition,

and cognitive contractions” (Demczuk 36).

From another perspective, there was a clear difference between them in their foreign policy in which Donald Trump sheds light on the project named “America First” foreign policy, by emphasizing U.S. interests (Shalal and Hunnicutt). However, James Toby S. in his article entitled “*The Effects of Donald Trump*” assumed that: “...there was little trust in the government before Trump took office, and it has always been lower among members of the party that holds the presidency. Yet, once he left office, only 9% of voters with a Republican lean had faith in the administration” (James 7). Which means that his supporters, who were by his side from the first day before the election until after the end of his presidency, all of them removed their support little by little, leaving only a small minority that still supports him in small ways.

3.3.2. Strengthening the U.S. Democracy after the end of Trumpism

QAnon conspiracy theory has been a significant and divisive presence in the United States. It is not a formal organization or a political movement with specific policy goals. But its followers were always looking for new ways to spread it wider. Nonetheless, when Joe Biden won the presidential election; he was not silent about the conspiracies this movement was doing in the country. He has taken steps to address the broader issues related to misinformation, conspiracy theories that can cause harm to his presidency system (Kamarck). He has expressed concerns about the spread of misinformation and disinformation, particularly on social media platforms. His administration has worked very well to address the sources of false and misleading information including conspiracies like QAnon (Kamarck).

Finally, addressing the influence of conspiracy theories and extremist ideologies is a complex challenge that involves multiple collaborators. The rise of Joe Biden’s government began with his victory in the 2020 United States presidential election; he was

inaugurated as the 46th president of the U.S. on January 20, 2021, succeeding former president Donald Trump. Biden's government is notable for being the oldest in US history, with a significant number of his cabinet members having served in previous administrations.

Conclusion

Donald Trump's connection to QAnon conspiracy theory was an important move to gain support from specific groups of voters and advance his political plan for a successful future. QAnon claims that a secret group called the "deep state" is conspiring against Trump, involving government officials and celebrities in activities like child trafficking and satanic rituals. Although, Trump never directly said he supported QAnon, he said things and did things that some QAnon followers saw as support. This made those QAnon believers and other conspiracy theory supporters feel connected to him which also helped him to tap into the loyalty of them too. It made Trump look like someone who fought against corruption and as a champion who stood up for the common people.

By analyzing Trump's speeches, it shows that by embracing conspiracy theories like QAnon, Trump brought his supporters together and made them feel united. It made them feel like they were part of a noble fight against corruption. Trump presented himself as someone who was standing up against the deep state and its conspiracies. This deeply connected with his supporters and motivated them to stay loyal to him and try to change the system. Due to these events, it is important to note that mainstream media, fact-checkers, and many politicians have rejected and debunked QAnon and its conspiracy theories. These claims lack evidence and are based on unfounded ideas. While some people may have been attracted to Trump because of his association with conspiracy theories. To better understand the implications of these results, further research is needed to approach these claims and question their truthfulness.

The connection between Trump and QAnon has led to concerns about the impact of conspiracy theories on democracy and people's trust in important institutions. More importantly, the study suggests that Trump's involvement with QAnon has made the movement stronger and more influential. The rise of QAnon and its impact on American

politics cannot be ignored. QAnon gained a significant following, with supporters participating in rallies and spreading their beliefs on social media. This raised concerns about the spread of misinformation and the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. QAnon being connected to Trump made it harder to tell the difference between conspiracy theories and regular politics. When he was asked about QAnon, Donald Trump did not fully support it, but he did not clearly say it was wrong either. Sometimes he even shared QAnon-Related things on social media. This made QAnon's followers feel like they were being supported and encouraged by him, which made them even more devoted to the movement.

This confirms that exploring the connection between Trump and QAnon is significant for future researchers because it helps them understand how conspiracy theories impact modern politics and the problems caused by spreading false information. However, by examining this relationship, they can learn about the influence of conspiracy theories on people's beliefs and actions, as well as the challenges they create when it comes to sharing accurate information. This research can help develop strategies to address these challenges and protect the integrity of the political system.

The current research answered the question about Donald Trump's association with QAnon and his promotion of conspiracy theories, which served as a means to strengthen his political vision and aimed to gain support from certain groups within his. By embracing these theories, Trump was able to connect with and engage the passionate and dedicated followers of conspiracy theories, reinforcing his image as an anti-establishment leader. Indeed, it is important for researchers to study the relationship between Trump and QAnon to understand the influence of conspiracy theories in modern politics and the challenges posed by the spread of misinformation especially after the covid-19 era. Studying this situation can help to fight against fake information and encourage people to be

well-informed and engaged in society.

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