

The terms Trump and Bannon use: a glossary

By **Marc Fisher** March 9 at 10:41 PM

President Trump and his chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, have introduced a new political language to Washington — a populist and nationalist rhetoric that cuts across traditional Republican vs. Democratic divisions.

Some of the words and phrases the administration has injected into Washington's political vocabulary previously thrived on the far reaches of both left and right. Here is a glossary of terms that Trump and Bannon have been using, with some background on where the language came from and how it's been deployed.

economic nationalism — Bannon and senior policy adviser Stephen Miller have described the overall philosophy driving the Trump administration's policy initiatives as “economic nationalism,” which Bannon defined as a singular focus on American jobs. The idea, according to two senior administration officials, is to pull back from multilateral trade agreements, multinational organizations, and the free flow of goods (and, to some degree, workers) that the previous four presidents emphasized. This was the “new world order” that President George H.W. Bush envisioned after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 — a system of interlocking, international agreements and alliances that he hoped would replace the Cold War faceoff between communism and capitalism.

That system, Bannon and Miller believe, has failed. Bannon wants to replace it wholesale — a blizzard of change “as exciting as the 1930s, greater than the Reagan revolution,” he said — with a system that used to be known as “protectionism,” using tariffs and other government action to press U.S. companies to bring offshored jobs back home and make their goods here. Most economists dismiss the idea of economic nationalism, saying that automation, far more than globalization, has reduced the supply of manufacturing jobs. They cite Adam Smith, the 18th-century Scottish economist, who called the concept of a balance of trade “absurd” and wrote that tariffs are a tool of “national prejudice and animosity.”

enemy of the people — From the internecine political battles of ancient Rome through the Leninist purges within the Soviet Union’s sprawling bureaucracy, the term “enemy of the people” has been used by revolutionaries and reactionary states alike to tar the opposition as disloyal. During the French Revolution, a tribunal was created to punish “enemies of the people” who, among other crimes, spread “false news.” Vladimir Lenin used the term as the basis for collaring political opponents, especially “landowners and capitalists,” and bringing them before his revolutionary court. In 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev eliminated the term from the Soviet lexicon because it had been “specifically introduced for the purpose of physically annihilating” those who opposed the government. The slur has been wielded through the past century against czars and rebellious subjects, and against Jews and imperialists.

globalist — Trump said during the campaign that in deciding between him and Hillary Clinton, voters faced “a choice between Americanism and her corrupt globalism.” To Trump and Bannon, what Trump called “the false song of globalism” connotes jobs shipped abroad, out-of-control immigration and an international elite of political and financial leaders who profit from a globalized economy, at the cost of good jobs and wages for middle-class Americans. To many — including large majorities in Congress over the past two decades — who have supported the world’s movement toward closer economic ties across national borders, globalism is not an insult but an aspiration. But Trump said during the campaign that Clinton was part of a global conspiracy with bankers to “plot the destruction of U.S. sovereignty.” “Globalism” for many decades has been used by nationalists in

many countries as shorthand for a drive by elites to demean national cultures and traditions, seeking instead a one-world, single-market system. Starting in the 1990s, some on the far right focused their critique of the U.S. political system on the “new world order,” the system of economic alliances that conspiracy theorists of various stripes saw as a nefarious conspiracy against working people.

corporatist — Although Bannon and many other Trump supporters billed his candidacy as a rejection of corporatism — the system of regulations and subsidies by which government helps boost corporate profits — Trump himself has defended subsidies and other public support of corporations throughout his career.

Leftists and rightists alike have used the term “corporatist” to denounce politicians who put profits and stock values ahead of the interests of working people. The word was used to criticize both President George W. Bush and his successor, Barack Obama, despite their stark political differences. In Trump’s case, the word is being used to reject policies in support of companies that ship American jobs abroad. “Corporatism used to be part of Americanism,” said a senior administration official. “People used to say ‘what’s good for GE is good for America.’” But then came globalization, and “the corporation was disaggregated from the country,” the official said, because some American companies made more money by investing outside the country than they did within its borders.

Corporatism started out as an ideal advanced by 19th-century European thinkers, including leaders of the Catholic church, who envisioned a system based on private enterprise and religion in which workers, entrepreneurs and the state could come together for the common good. But in the 1960s, leftist academics and libertarian theorists retooled the term to reject aspects of American capitalism, either because it was too oriented toward corporate profits, as some on the left saw it, or because it was too limited by government regulation and welfare benefits, as libertarians argued.

fake news — Phony news stories ginned up to support or undermine politicians or governments have been around as long as real news has. Trump’s use of the term to diminish the credibility of news organizations whose reports he objects to is also not new. Politicians around the world, and especially populists and nationalists, have long found it useful to attack independent or oppositional news sources as propagandists and liars.

As far back as the 16th century, Roman political operatives composed nasty sonnets about the candidates they opposed and posted them for voters to read, according to the historian Robert Darnton. In the United States before the Civil War, fake news about rapes and assaults by slaves sometimes sparked attacks against slaves by white mobs. And in the 1930s and ‘40s, Adolf Hitler’s Nazi party used fake news accounts of purported crimes by Jews to spur Germans to attack their Jewish neighbors. Accusations of fake news by political extremists have been used through the centuries to deepen divisions in societies to help minority parties gain a foothold on power.

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In the late 1960s and early 1970s, President Richard Nixon carried on a sustained attack on newspapers and TV networks that he believed were fomenting opposition to his policies. “We saw the media as the part of opposition, just as Bannon does,” said Patrick Buchanan, an architect of Nixon’s anti-media strategy. “The media had power, so you have to go ahead and do the things you need to do to defeat them. The media provided the intellectual support for the Democrats on the Hill.”

Trump's criticism of news reporters works, Buchanan said, because it appeals to exactly the group of voters who support him — people who often believe that news companies are elitist institutions with a condescending attitude toward their customers.

America first — “From this day forward, it's going to be only America first,” President Trump said in his inaugural address. ‘America first’ is not merely a statement of nationalist pride; it's a slogan that candidates and movements have used periodically in three centuries of American politics to connote various degrees of isolationism and opposition to immigration and foreign influences.

From George Washington's warning against foreign entanglements in 1796 through congressional opposition to America joining Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations in 1919 and on to the grass-roots resistance to engaging in World War II, some Americans — usually through fringe movements such as Charles Lindbergh's America First Committee in the 1940s or the American First Party that supporters of Patrick Buchanan created in 2002 — have argued that the nation's economic health and cultural identity require taking advantage of our oceanic distance from other world powers to stick primarily to ourselves.

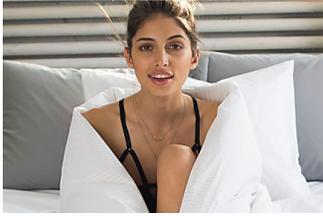
To Lindbergh, ‘America first’ meant staying neutral in World War II to maintain “an independent American destiny.” It also meant blaming American Jews for pushing the United States toward war and for twisting public opinion through their purported control of the media. “America first” supporters have almost uniformly contended that most Americans supported their cause but that the news media refused to reflect that reality. Lindbergh, Buchanan and Trump have all made that argument, despite opinion surveys to the contrary. Until Trump, candidates from ‘America first’ movements have failed to win elections. Now one has.

Marc Fisher, a senior editor, writes about most anything. He's been The Post's enterprise editor, local columnist and Berlin bureau chief, and he's covered politics, education, pop culture, and much else in three decades on the Metro, Style, National and Foreign desks.

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