

## Donald Trump Is the Real National Emergency

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America's national emergency is not on its southern border, but rather in the White House in the form of its inept president.

On February 15, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in order to appropriate the funds needed to build a wall on America's southern border with Mexico. Trump's autocratic action will definitely face legal challenges as lawmakers and political pundits debate the extent of the president's executive powers. In deciding to arrogate some \$8 billion earmarked for military construction, Trump has effectively sidestepped the nation's legislative procedures to solve a non-existent crisis that he had manufactured for political gains.

Trump was at his incoherent best when he made the announcement from the Rose Garden:

“And by signing the national emergency, something signed many times by other presidents, many, many times, President Obama, in fact, we may be using one of the national emergencies that he signed having to do with cartels, criminal cartels. It's a very good emergency that he signed ... And what we really want to do is simple. It's not like it is complicated. It's very simple. We want to stop drugs from coming into our country. We want to stop criminals and gangs from coming into our country. Nobody has done the job that we have ever done.”

Trump had touted his astute business sense and deal-making in the course of his election campaign, publicly asserting several times that Mexico will pay for the wall. Following a Super Tuesday win in March 2016, Trump stated during a press conference that “We have a trade deficit with Mexico of \$58 billion a year — \$58 billion. The wall is going to cost \$10 billion. It's so easy. I've had these guys that I'm on the stage with go you don't really mean Mexico is going to pay for the wall. One — as sure as you're standing there, 100 percent, Mexico's going to pay, 100 percent.”

Trump failed miserably to deliver on his signature campaign promise, demonstrating utter incompetence when he could not secure the funds needed for the wall's construction from a Republican-controlled Congress for two full years. When the power dynamics shifted in 2019, with Democrats taking control of the House, Trump gambled with the lives and livelihoods of 800,000 federal workers, petulantly instituting a government shutdown that lasted a record 35 days. The Democrats' steadfast refusal to fund the wall forced Trump to end the unnecessary impasse on January 25, just so he could secure House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's invitation to give the State of the Union address.

## Criminal Immigrants

Crime, murder and social turmoil in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, known as Central America's Northern Triangle, have contributed to a sense of disdain in the United States toward socialism and paranoia against communism that have led to meddling in the internal politics of the three countries. The humanitarian crisis at the Mexican border is largely the result of an irresponsible US Central American policy over the last half century.

Refusing to acknowledge this in any fashion, America's xenophobic president has referred to Mexicans as rapists, and to immigrants and asylum seekers at the southern border as drug addicts and criminals. A study by the Cato Institute, an independent, non-partisan public policy research organization, has determined that Trump's White House has repeatedly misled everyone with an error-filled and false narrative on crimes committed by immigrants. Trump has claimed that more than 25,000 criminal aliens have been arrested on homicide charges.

The Cato Institute study points out that the number is over a 55-year period, and that immigrants could have accounted for no more than 2.7% of the 934,000 homicides committed in the country during that timeframe. Trump continues to whip up frenzy about border crossings despite the fact that arrests at the southern border are at a historic low: The numbers have come down from 1.6 million in 2000 to about 303,000 in 2017.

If the number of people trying to enter the country illegally has drastically fallen, and the amount of crime committed by immigrant pales in comparison with those committed by native-born Americans, Trump's assertion that there is an invasion happening on the southern border is merely an attempt to create hysteria and a warlike atmosphere in order to justify his national emergency proclamation.

The United States has declared a state of national emergency 58 times since the National Emergency Act was passed in 1976; 31 of these are still active. Emergencies that have been declared by previous presidents have typically been in response to humanitarian and political threats abroad caused by government-sponsored human rights abuses, terrorism and regional destabilizations. Most national emergency declarations work in tandem with sanctions the United States imposes on a country or a specific group, as in the case with sanctions against Russia introduced by President Barack Obama in 2014 in connection with its annexation of Crimea and incursions into Ukraine.

Markedly different from most of the 31 active emergencies, President George W. Bush promulgated a domestic national emergency in response to the 9/11 attacks. Trump's latest proclamation is essentially positioning the humanitarian crisis at the Mexican border as an invasion against the country and a threat to its national security.

## The Real Crisis

There is indeed a humanitarian crisis at the southern border: It is one faced by the thousands of migrant families and asylum seekers who have been displaced due to the violence and turmoil in their home countries as a direct result of US actions in the past. While migrant crossings and arrests are at a historic low, Trump's executive order bemoans America's inability to provide

detention facilities for immigrants, and especially the growing number of families seeking entry into United States. Instead of building a wall, perhaps the Trump administration should have considered using the money to provide temporary amenities to those looking for refuge in the US and at the same time address the root causes of the problem that are driving this exodus.

Not surprisingly, Trump's national emergency proclamation has met with a swift disapproval from Democratic leaders. "The President is not above the law. The Congress cannot let the President shred the Constitution," said Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer in a joint statement. Trump's action also drew criticism from several Republicans, albeit his diehard supporters, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senator Lindsay Graham, continue to stand by him.

While the inevitable challenges to Trump's national emergency plays out in the courts, Congress has in its power to rein in a president who abuses his executive powers. A simple majority vote of disapproval in both chambers of Congress is the first step. With a Democratic House majority and several outspoken GOP senators united against Trump's action, the vote of disapproval may actually come to pass, although it will most certainly be vetoed by the president himself. In order to formally end a national emergency declared by the president without the possibility of him vetoing it, there has to be a two-third majority in both chambers of Congress. That is a tall order as long as there are those like McConnell and Graham continuing to support Trump.

America does have a real national emergency on its hands right now. It is not on its southern border with Mexico. Rather, it is in the White House in the form of its singularly incompetent president. The sooner the Republican senators and House representatives acknowledge that fact honestly and rein in the blundering leader who is running amok, the faster the real crisis can be contained.