

Methodology. The study employs general scientific methods such as the historical method (to examine the prerequisites, establishment, and functioning of the Points of Light organization), structural-functional analysis (to identify the features of President George H. W. Bush's approaches to addressing the social crisis), and the axiological method (to reveal the value basis of the institutionalization of volunteering and its role as a form of social activity within the broader framework of civic culture formation).

The scientific novelty lies in providing a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the institutions and mechanisms shaping the volunteer movement in the United States, as well as in assessing their role and effectiveness in addressing social issues and strengthening civic engagement in the context of evolving state-society relations.

The author concludes that the establishment of the Points of Light organization was an important part of the legacy of former U.S. President George H. W. Bush, particularly in the context of promoting a global culture of volunteering aimed at addressing the social crisis and restoring America's vitality, as well as encouraging broader public participation in socially oriented initiatives and reinforcing the importance of collective action in overcoming social challenges.

Key words: volunteer movement in the USA, George H. W. Bush, Points of Light, domestic policy, U.S. President, social problems.

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DID PRESIDENT TRUMP INCREASE THE REVOLVING DOOR LOBBYING PHENOMENON IN THE U.S.?

Abstract. Despite a considerable number of studies on lobbying in the United States, the question of how presidential administrations shape the revolving-door dynamics between public service and the private sector remains debatable. Existing research has mostly focused on lobbying regulation and transparency, while the influence of executive turnover and ethics enforcement on post-service lobbying has not been systematically examined. The purpose of this article is to test whether appointments and dismissals during the first Trump administration (2017 – 2021) contributed to the expansion of the revolving-door lobbying phenomenon.

The study is based on a confirmatory research design, applying hypothesis testing and an explanatory single-case approach following the framework of Widner, Woolcock, and Ortega Nieto (2022). The main method is process tracing, which helps to identify causal links between executive reshuffles, ethics regulations, and lobbying activities. Data were collected from ProPublica, OpenSecrets, and leading U.S. media sources including The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Boston Globe.

The scientific novelty lies in the first empirical attempt to trace this process through a single-case explanatory study, revealing how the structure of presidential appointments and ethics regulation shaped lobbying patterns during 2017 – 2021.

The results show that frequent personnel changes and the presence of former lobbyists in key posts blurred the boundaries between public office and the private sector, particularly in

lobbying. These findings demonstrate that the first Trump administration functioned as a stress test for existing lobbying ethics regulations and contributed to the intensification of the revolving-door phenomenon. The overlap between cabinet appointments and industry ties blurred the lines between public service and private advocacy, undermining public trust in federal governance. These findings align with elite theory's expectation of cyclical elite reproduction within formal institutions.

Key words: *United States, American foreign policy, American domestic policy, lobbying, interest groups, revolving door, Trump administration.*

Problem statement. The revolving door in America between government service and private sector, in particular, lobbying, has long been recognized as a structural feature and an issue in U.S. politics. Yet its scale and therefore influence and regulation remain highly debatable both in public and in academic circles. While scholars have extensively examined lobbying transparency and campaign finance causation, they have paid less attention to how presidential administrations, through their internal turnover patterns and appointments, affect revolving-door dynamics. The first Trump administration provides a critical case because of the number of appointees with prior lobbying backgrounds and frequent dismissals that opened new post-service lobbying pathways. Therefore, the research question is: did the Trump administration intensify the revolving-door phenomenon?

Analysis of Research and Publications. Previous scholarship on lobbying in the United States has been dominated by several major traditions: the ‘pluralist’ school by Truman, emphasizing the competition of interests; the ‘elite’ theory [10], focusing on concentrated influence networks; and addressing policy feedback and bureaucratic capture. More recent research by Straus highlights the enduring challenges of enforcing the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) and the intensification of ‘shadow lobbying’.

Research by Akiashvili et al. and Kravitz empirically demonstrate that the so-called cooling-off periods and ethics pledges not to participate in ‘shadow lobbying’ remain largely ineffective. However, the first Trump administration (2017 – 2021) has not yet been systematically analyzed through the lens of revolving-door lobbying as a case of executive–private sector interpenetration. This article fills that gap by combining empirical mapping with a theoretical lens linking agency behavior to institutional design.

The novelty of research lies in analyzing the revolving-door lobbying phenomenon during the first Trump administration, 2017 – 2021, as a single explanatory case. Unlike previous studies that focused mainly on lobbying regulation and transparency, this article examines how executive turnover, frequent dismissals, and post-service employment contributed to expanding revolving-door lobbying. The study combines process tracing with data from ProPublica, OpenSecrets, and major American media to reveal how institutional design and ethics enforcement shaped lobbyist–government circulation.

The purpose of this article is to test whether the filling of vacancies in the first Trump administration contributed to expanding the revolving-door lobbying phenomenon, thereby affecting policy outcomes.

Research design and methods. This article operates within a confirmatory research design, where the major method is hypothesis testing. Following the framework outlined by Widner, Woolcock, and Ortega Nieto this study employs an explanatory single-case design. The goal is not only to test a hypothesis but also to trace the causal mechanisms linking executive turnover and ethics regulation to the growth of revolving-door lobbying during the Trump administration 2017 – 2021. In this sense, the case is *instrumental*, it

illuminates broader institutional patterns of revolving door in American political life rather than seeking representativeness or statistical generalization. Therefore, the major method is process tracing in a single-case design study.

The main text of the article. The term lobbying is becoming more and more closely embedded with current American politics and policy, both foreign and domestic. Due to its multi-faceted nature, it can be summarized as lobbying is an activity which refers to many features like influencing the decision-making process, both in the legislative and executive branches.

Generally, examination of lobbying practices in America and their legal regulation constitutes a subject of substantial scholarly as well as practical political and juridical significance. In numerous states, especially in Eastern Europe, in the twenty-first century, such efforts have merely laid the groundwork for the establishment of lobbyist registers or the development of corresponding legal frameworks. Overall, lobbyists' activities have traditionally been linked to interest groups and mostly focused on lobbying for domestic legislation. Therefore, the exciting literature seeks to find casualty between campaign donations and lobbying for certain bills and grassroots initiatives. This study seeks to enrich the academic debate by combining elite theory, which views the government as the main target of interest group activity, and pluralist theory, which treats it as a neutral arbiter [5].

This research operates at the intersection of the agency and structure paradigms. As lobbying itself becomes more and more structured in the U.S. policy-making and this article attempts to analyze only a small part of how it operates. Within both the most recent Republican in 2017 – 2021 and Democratic in 2021 – 2025 administration, hiring insiders, close family members, lobbying plays one of the key roles in the policy outcomes. Another term, connected to lobbying, which is often used and misused in media and research is interest groups, which will not be in the focus of this article. One should note that the beginning of a substantive academic discussion about interest groups in the United States is associated with Arthur Bentley (1870 – 1957), who at the beginning of the 20th century, in his famous book 'The Process of Government' referred to interest groups broadly as 'pressures of interest' on the government and parliament. However, he did not explore this topic in much detail, devoting his work instead to a general characterization of political systems in various countries of the world – from ancient Rome and Greece to contemporary China and the Russian Empire. Therefore, he can be regarded as one of the first scholars to refer to interest groups as pressure groups, to which he dedicated the chapters titled 'Pressure of Interest in the Executive' and 'Pressure of Interest in the Parliament' [2].

Much later, subsequent researchers, particularly David Truman and William Grant, preferred the term 'interest groups', which significantly contributed to its political and thereafter academic normalization, as in the following decades those two scholars sought to demonstrate that interest groups did not pose a threat to representative democracy in the United States. Truman, in fact, conceptualized interest groups as communities that, based on at least one or several shared positions, make demands on other groups in society or government in order to establish, maintain, or strengthen certain patterns of behavior arising from these attitudes – that is, to change or preserve policy. In addition, other scholars point out that one of the earliest conceptualizations of what we now call 'interest groups' appeared in the writings of one of the American Founding Fathers – James Madison, the fourth President of the United States. In 'Federalist No. 10', Madison

described such groups, or ‘factions’, as being ‘united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest’, recognizing their natural tendency to form and advocate for their shared objectives. Importantly, Madison outlined two possible approaches to addressing the challenges posed by these factions: either to prohibit their formation altogether or to encourage their proliferation so that no single group could dominate the political sphere. The United States ultimately chose the latter path, thereby laying the groundwork for the institutionalization of lobbying and the enduring practice of interest representation both in America and beyond.

Many scholars also point out that one of the first definitions was outlined by one of the American Founding Fathers, the fourth President of the United States, James Madison. He described the role of the so-called interest groups at the time by defining them as ‘united and actuated by some common impulse... or interest’, referring to them as factions, and recognized their right to form and advocate for their interests. In particular, he viewed two potential solutions to deal with interest groups, if one may call them so in Madison’s view. The first was to encourage their existence and thus multiply them, and the second was to ban their formation [17]. One may say that choosing the first postulate and vision paved the way for lobbying and the representation of interest groups in America and beyond to this day. Furthermore, one should mention the corporate lobby, which draws attention of various scholars, which I will not make in this article. At the time of writing this paper, the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) of 1995 has been in effect for nearly three decades. It would be inaccurate to claim that no serious issues have emerged in this area that require further attention. Nevertheless, from a European perspective, it appears that the United States has made a substantial effort to regulate the lobbying sphere by establishing rules that are difficult to circumvent, thereby making compliance more advantageous for most actors.

Considering the aforementioned facts and the brief literature review, it is worth paying particular attention to the revolving door phenomenon, which has received relatively limited attention in previous scholarship. Since this term is primarily used in American political discourse, it merits explanation for non-native English readers. The metaphor refers to a type of door, quite common in the United States, that rotates around a central axis, allowing continuous passage. In political terms, a ‘revolving door’ describes the movement of individuals from government positions, particularly those in the executive branch, into the private firms, particularly, lobbying industry. In other words, individuals who have gained insights into how decision-making processes operate within the administration, regardless of the length of their public service, often pursue subsequent careers in the private sector. Some scholars also argue that shadow lobbying is another label that may be used. The reason I use the revolving door designation is that shadow lobbying implies that a person does lobby but is not a registered lobbyist [1]. For the purposes of this article, I exclude from close consideration those who transitioned into government after having previously worked as lobbyists, but I include them in the tables I present later. This limitation may serve as a basis for future research.

This article adopts an explanatory single-case design, following the framework of Widner, Woolcock, and Ortega Nieto [20]. Its purpose is to trace causal mechanisms linking executive turnover and post-service lobbying to the growth of the revolving-door phenomenon during the first Trump administration (2017 – 2021). Case studies, as Widner et al. note, strengthen the «quality of explanation and the realism of application» when they combine theoretical rigor with contextual realism [20].

The First Trump administration serves as an instrumental case illustrating how ethics regulation and elite mobility interact within U.S. policymaking [20, p. 246]. This period represents a critical case for assessing the effectiveness of post-employment lobbying restrictions after the U.S. Congress passed the 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act.). Methodologically, the analysis is dwelled upon process tracing and within-case analysis to identify patterns connecting executive appointments to later lobbying activities. This approach helps understand whether observed evidence strengthens the hypothesis that frequent reshuffles facilitated revolving-door lobbying. Data was triangulated across official disclosures, ProPublica, OpenSecrets, and major media outlets, The Washington Post, The New York Times, Boston Globe to ensure descriptive accuracy. Internally, the case relies on process-tracing logic to infer causality; externally, it enables contingent generalization. While limited by secondary data, this article provides a replicable foundation for future research on lobbying and elite circulation. The major hypothesis is that the first Trump administration didn't necessarily increase the number of revolving door lobbyists on purpose. However, those who find this perspective relevant, should largely base their case studies on first-hand knowledge or interviews of those who could be named 'revolving doors'.

As a matter of fact, one has to acknowledge that frequent reshuffles and firings in the first Trump Administration contributed to the increase of revolving door lobbying phenomenon. In order to test this hypothesis, I refer to the Trump first Cabinet through the lenses of appointed persons to the roles corresponding to either secretary or deputy secretary, which is eloquent to the minister or deputy minister in other countries. Using the open data materials mostly from American media outlets, like Boston Globe, news organization ProPublica and the largest database of lobbyists, OpenSecrets, I build the following two tables.

Table 1. Senior-Level Trump Administration Officials (Deputy-Ministerial Rank and Above) with Documented Lobbying Connections

Name	Position (2017 – 2020)	Lobbying Involvement	Phase Before/Af ter Service	Notes
David Bernhardt	Deputy Secretary, later Secretary of the Interior	Partner and registered lobbyist at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, representing oil, gas, and water-rights clients [6].	Before & after	Exemplifies the revolving-door dynamic between extractive-industry lobbying and resource regulation; rejoined the same firm post-service.
Katharine MacGregor	Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior	Former energy-industry lobbyist; later congressional staffer managing energy portfolio [6].	Before	Illustrates permeability of legislative–executive boundaries and persistence of sectoral networks in

				energy governance.
Mark W. Menezes	Under Secretary of Energy	Vice President for Federal Relations at Berkshire Hathaway Energy registered utility lobbyist [13].	Before	Example of energy-sector lobbyists assuming senior policy positions overseeing the same industry.
Patrick Pizzella	Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary of Labor	Former lobbyist at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart for business clients in labor policy before appointment [15].	Before	Illustrates continuity of employer-association influence within labor government structures.
Douglas Benevento	Regional Administrator (Region 8), later Deputy Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency	Partner at Greenberg Traurig LLP, registered lobbyist for energy and utilities clients [11].	Before & after	Shows energy lobbyists entering environmental regulation roles; a classic case of regulatory capture.
Dan Coats	Director of National Intelligence	Registered lobbyist for defense and telecommunications firms before Senate service [9].	Before	Example of pre-service lobbying shaping national-security oversight perspectives.
Eugene Scalia	Secretary of Labor	Partner and labor-law lobbyist at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, representing corporate clients before federal agencies [14].	Before	Exemplifies corporate law-to-policy pipeline and labor-market deregulatory agenda continuity.

Note. We selected positions corresponding to U.S. Cabinet Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, Under Secretaries, or agency heads with ministerial-equivalent authority specifically because of their significant influence on decision-making and public visibility. This approach makes it easier to assess whether individuals who held top-level positions were exposed to potential conflicts of interest.

Table 2. Senior White House Advisers and Political Appointees Engaged in Lobbying or Advocacy

Name	Position (2017 – 2021)	Lobbying/Advocacy Involvement	Phase Before /After Service	Notes
Pam Bondi	Special Advisor to the President (White House); former Florida Attorney General	Joined Ballard Partners as a registered lobbyist for Qatar and other clients [19].	After	Clear case of traditional revolving door lobbying; former advisor became foreign-client advocate.
Boris Epshteyn	Special Assistant to the President; Director, Communications for Surrogates	Became political commentator and senior advisor to Sinclair Broadcast Group – a politically aligned media conglomerate engaged in issue lobbying [12].	After	Illustrates hybrid or media-based lobbying, where communication platforms serve as policy-advocacy tools.
Katie Walsh	Deputy Chief of Staff	Executive at America First Policies (501(c)(4) advocacy organization engaged in issue lobbying) [12].	After	Demonstrates shadow lobbying through politically affiliated nonprofit structures circumventing registration.
Walter Shaub	Director, Office of Government Ethics (deputy-level independent agency head)	Joined Campaign Legal Center as Senior Ethics Counsel advocating lobbying-reform legislation [17].	After	Represents a ‘reverse revolving door’ case – transition from state oversight to external policy advocacy.
Gary Cohn	Director, National Economic Council (cabinet-level advisor to the President)	Former president and registered lobbyist of Goldman Sachs [18].	Before	Exemplifies the financial-sector continuity within executive economic policy making.

Note. The table 2 poses a significant portion of interest to later colleagues as there are people who occupy much stronger positions in terms of their rank in the second Trump administration which came into office in January 2025.

In fact, these two tables reveal which non-cabinet political appointees perpetuated influence on decision-making while being connected to lobbying. While ministers in rank or not, their proximity to the President amplified lobbying's communicative dimension, turning public advocacy and information control into alternative channels of influence. Together with Table 1, this evidence shows that lobbying under the Trump administration operated on two interlocking levels — formal regulatory capture at the ministerial tier and informal persuasion through advisory and media networks at the political-staff tier.

Conclusions. The evidence points out that the first Trump administration functioned as a stress test for existing lobbying ethics regulations. The overlap between cabinet appointments and industry ties blurred the lines between public service and private advocacy, undermining public trust in federal governance. These findings align with elite theory's expectation of cyclical elite reproduction within formal institutions. Yet, from an institutionalist perspective, they highlight the resilience of structural lobbying channels even amid presidential pledges to «drain the swamp».

Future research should explore comparative data from the Biden administration (2021 – 2025) to evaluate whether enhanced transparency mechanisms, ethics waivers, or enforcement reforms have mitigated the revolving-door trend identified here.

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ЧИ ПОСИЛИВ ПРЕЗИДЕНТ ТРАМП ЛОБІСТСЬКИЙ ФЕНОМЕН «ОБЕРТОВИХ ДВЕРЕЙ» У США?

Анотація. Попри значну кількість наукових досліджень, присвячених лобізму у Сполучених Штатах Америки, питання впливу президентських адміністрацій на динаміку феномену обігових кадрів («revolving door» / «обертові двері») між державною службою та приватним сектором залишається дискусійним. Наявні праці здебільшого зосереджуються на аспектах регулювання та прозорості лобістської діяльності, тоді як зв'язок між кадровими ротаціями в урядових структурах, дотриманням етичних норм і подальшою участю колишніх посадовців у лобізмі системно не досліджувався.

Метою статті є перевірити, чи сприяли кадрові призначення та звільнення в першій адміністрації Дональда Трампа 2017–2021 рр. розширенню явища лобізму обігових кадрів та чи вплинули вони на процес ухвалення політичних рішень.

Дослідження базується на підтверджувальному дизайні із використанням перевірки гіпотези та пояснювального підходу аналізу одного кейсу відповідно до методології, запропонованої Дж. Віднер, М. Вулкоком та Д. Ортегою Ньєтом. Основним методом є процес-трейсинг (process tracing), який дозволяє встановити причинно-наслідкові зв'язки між кадровими змінами, етичним регулюванням і лобістською активністю. Емпірична база сформована на основі відкритих даних ProPublica, OpenSecrets та матеріалів провідних американських медіа – The Washington Post, The New York Times і The Boston Globe.

Наукова новизна полягає у першій спробі емпірично простежити цей процес у форматі пояснювального одно кейсового дослідження, що розкриває вплив структури президентських призначень і системи етичного регулювання на трансформацію лобістських практик у 2017–2021 роках.

Результати дослідження свідчать, що часті кадрові ротації, висока частка колишніх лобістів на ключових посадах і слабкий контроль за дотриманням етичних норм розмили межу між державною службою та приватним впливом. Це дозволяє стверджувати, що перша адміністрація Дональда Трампа стала випробуванням для чинних механізмів регулювання лобізму та сприяла посиленню феномену «обертових дверей».

Ключові слова: Сполучені Штати Америки, зовнішня політика США, лобізм, групи інтересів, феномен «обертових дверей», адміністрація Трампа.

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