

VOICING THE NATION: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S HYBRID RHETORIC AND THE PERFORMANCE OF POWER

Adnan Gul^{*1}, Mubeen Khan², Zubair Khan³, Lubaba Noor⁴, Tariq Hussain⁵

^{*1}Mphil Scholar, Department of English, Northern University Nowshera, Pakistan

²Mphil Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan

³Lecturer, Department of English, Govt. Postgraduate College Dargai, Malakand, Pakistan

⁴Scholar, Department of English, Government Girls Degree College Dargai, Malakand (Affiliated with University of Malakand)

⁵Lecturer at Riphah International College Dargai Phattak, A Project of Riphah International University Islamabad.

¹adnanmah76@gmail.com, ²mk8088077@gmail.com, ³zubair8592@gmail.com, ⁴lubabafarooq0@gmail.com, ⁵taruq345hu@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Adnan Gul

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ABSTRACT

The paper at hand provides a holistic and nuanced analysis of a speech by U.S. President Donald Trump. Through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which includes textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, the research reveals the complex means through which language is used as an instrument of political persuasion and ideological support. It also points out the way in which Trump's rhetorical approach skillfully weaves together an assortment of discursive forms such as the official conventions of political discourse, affectively charged populist invocations, security-oriented and militaristic language, technical economic rhetoric, religious terminology, and polarizing culture war accounts. This hybridity of discourse enables Trump to connect to an extensive range of audience segments, from working-class constituencies and religious conservatives to nationalists and political cynics. The analysis also shows how Trump's language creates binary oppositions, e.g., "us" vs. "them," thus reinforcing group identity and mobilizing the base by framing political rivals, migrants, and elites as existentially threatening. The research also explores how multi-platform delivery through conventional broadcast media, partisan analysis, and social media amplifies the reach and power of the speech, which makes its impact in society even greater. This study makes an important contribution to political discourse analysis and calls on future comparative studies across political settings worldwide to examine differences in rhetorical techniques and their socio-political consequences.

Keywords: CDA, rhetoric, nationalism, polarizing culture, identity, populist, power.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Language is not just a means of communication but also a social instrument with power to build reality, form identities, and exercise power. Discourse in politics takes a central position in

the construction of ideologies, justification of power, and formation of public image. Political speeches, in particular, are extremely constructed texts intended to convince audiences, mobilize loyalty, and establish social and national

boundaries. Such speeches habitually utilize rhetorical tactics of appealing to emotion, constructing collective identities, and differentiating in-groups from out-groups.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a helpful theory of analysis for examining how language creates and reinforces social relations of power. To Fairclough (1995), CDA is interested in how discourse works in the process of reproduction of social domination and even more dominance of some over other groups. Van Dijk (1998) also focuses on ideological functions of discourse in that he thinks language can be employed to subtly reproduce inequalities and exclusionist ideologies. For CDA, scholars can reverse-engineer the concealed messages of political rhetoric and study how discourse constructs social and political realities. One of the fundamental concerns of CDA is "Othering," i.e., the construction of the "Other" groups or individuals portrayed as essentially different, menacing, or substandard. This othering is most often employed in political discourse to construct a collective identity based on a majority group while, at the same time, excluding those who are seen as outsiders. Such discursive practice is particularly noteworthy in cases when political agendas are framed in terms of national identity, immigration, security, or cultural purity (Wodak, 2015).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a strong methodology for examining the relationship among language, power, and ideology. Drawn on both linguistic theory and social theory, CDA understands discourse as social practice that represents and constitutes social realities (Fairclough, 1995). CDA believes that discourse is not created in isolation but is influenced by and influences the broader socio-political and historical context within which it takes place. CDA is specifically interested in the way discourse helps to (re)produce inequality, dominance, and hegemony through apparently mundane language use.

One of the core ideas in CDA is that of ideology, defined as a meaning system that operates to create and sustain relations of power and domination (van Dijk, 1998). Political discourse tends to be full of ideological content either explicitly or implicitly embedded in language options, metaphors, and narrative schemata. These ideological stances can shape public

opinion about intricate issues like immigration, national identity, religion, gender roles, and security.

The primary discursive technique used in political speeches is the creation of the "Other," a construction of people or groups framed as being essentially different, threatening, or in some way inferior. This othering function is not just used to establish who "we" are, but also to legitimate discriminatory practices, measures, and attitudes towards those framed as outsiders. Wodak (2015) calls this method a common feature in right-wing populist rhetoric, wherein anxiety and fear of loss of culture or economic insecurity are used to create scapegoats and enemies. Through this kind of rhetoric, political figures are able to create unity among their supporters by strengthening the in-group solidarity and out-group antagonism.

The other significant aspect of political rhetoric is the invocation of nationalist rhetoric, which invokes common histories, values, and symbols to reinforce a collective identity. Nationalist political language tend to dwell on protectionism, sovereignty, and safeguarding cultural integrity. Nationalism in political language may tend to invoke emotional appeals and historical narratives to frame a sense of urgency or threat that, in turn, legitimates some policies and actions. When added to the language of fear, nationalism has the potential to be a powerful ideological lever for setting up political agendas in terms of "us" versus "them."

In this context, political discourse study under critical scrutiny is imperative to comprehend how the political uses language strategically to shape public opinion and secure ideological domination. On analyzing the linguistic and rhetorical features of political speech, CDA unearths the underlying assumptions and mechanisms of power that structure modern socio-political environments.

Statement of the Research Problem

Even as there is increasing academic focus on political rhetoric, more is needed in nuanced investigation of the ways that today's political leaders such as Donald Trump make strategic employment of hybrid discursive forms to build political identity, rally support, and shape popular perception. Trump's speeches, especially those given at high-profile political occasions,

frequently combine several rhetorical styles—such as populist, nationalist, religious, and security-related rhetoric—while scant scholarship has jointly critically explored how these rhetorical forms interact to influence audience reception and ideological alignment. Secondly, framing in-groups and out-groups and emotional appeal are also important in reinforcing social polarization and influencing national narratives. In addition, the broadcast of the speech through the wide range of available media draws into focus the significant issues surrounding reception, interpretation, and amplification of such discourses in the public sphere. Thus, this research seeks to provide answers to the challenge of how Trump's speech is not only political communication but a potent discursive event that makes meaning, claims power, and shapes socio-political discourse in the digital era.

Objectives of the study

The study focuses on the following research objectives:

To explore the hybrid discursive genres used in Trump's speech and their contribution to forming political

identity and audience engagement.

To know how the speech defines in-groups, out-groups, and emotional appeal.

To examine how media dissemination shapes public reception and ideological impact.

Research Questions

The study tries to answer the following research questions:

How does Donald Trump's speech employ several discursive genres to build his political identity and appeal

to diverse audience groups?

How does Trump utilize multiple discursive genres to shape his political image?

How does

media contribute to disseminating and perpetuating the speech's ideology?

Significance of the study

This research is important in a number of academic as well as applied fields, including linguistics, political communication, media studies, and critical discourse analysis. Based on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model—textual analysis, discursive practice, and social

practice—this research provides an in-depth analysis of how Donald Trump's political discourse is created, spread, and ideologically loaded. The analysis reveals how language is not merely a neutral vehicle for communication but a powerful tool for shaping public opinion, constructing social identities, and legitimizing political authority.

The research reveals how Trump uses strategically combining several discursive genres, such as political, populist, economic, military, religious, and cultural-war rhetoric, to appeal at the same time to different sectors of the population, including working-class Americans, conservative Christians, and nationalist constituencies. This genre hybridity not only consolidates his political coalition but also perpetuates cultural polarization and the reproduction of hegemonic ideologies like American exceptionalism, patriotism, and anti-elitism.

In addition, the study of discursive practices points to the work of media—both mainstream and new in the digital age—to amplify, reframe, and polarize interpretations of political messages. Social media use and partisan news coverage stretch political messages across wider audiences and enhance echo chambers, with deep ramifications for democratic citizenship and civic conversation.

By placing the speech in wider socio-political contexts, the study adds to knowledge on how political language mirrors and reinforces dominant power relations, cultural fears, and ideological antagonisms. It provides scholars, teachers, journalists, and political commentators with a better appreciation of how language can be employed to affect, manipulate, and mobilize the public, particularly in a polarized and media-drenched society. Therefore, the research not only contributes to academic literature but also offers applied insights into the work of political rhetoric in influencing current socio-political realities.

Literature Review

The convergence of language, ideology, and power has been a central interest of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) since its inception, especially in the study of political discourse. Researchers like Norman Fairclough (1995), Teun A. van Dijk (1998), and Ruth Wodak (2015) provided the theoretical underpinning for

exploring how discourse serves as an agency of social control, identity formation, and the (re)construction of inequality. These foundational works offer the analytical tools required to study political rhetoric as an ideological practice.

Fairclough (1995) contends that language is both socially constructed and socially constructing, pointing out that discourse reflects not only current power relations but also how these are reinforced and legitimated. His three-dimensional model of discourse—text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice—is a detailed framework for studying political speech at various levels. Van Dijk (1998) contributes to this knowledge by concentrating on the cognitive aspects of ideology and discourse, and stating that discourse structures (e.g., lexical options, patterns of argumentation, and rhetorical devices) are employed by elites in order to construct public knowledge and manage societal norms.

One of the major concerns of CDA is the phenomenon of othering—a discursive practice whereby some groups are represented as essentially different, menacing, or inferior. Said's (1978) Orientalism theory forms an early basis for explaining how the West discursively constructs the East as the "Other." Politically, this takes shape in the form of presenting immigrants, minorities, or foreign countries as threats to national security, identity, or values (Wodak, 2015). Such othering is not only used to create a sense of togetherness among the in-group but also to legitimate exclusionary policies and practices. Populist political discourse is especially susceptible to such rhetorical practices. Moffitt and Tormey (2014) observe that populism tends to entail a simplification of society along lines of "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite" or menacing outsiders. Such a dualistic schema is sustained by appeal to emotions, reduction of complicated issues, and invocation of nationalist and protectionist rhetoric. Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2017) focus in their critical examination of right-wing populist discourse on the importance of fear and crisis talk to the building of enemies and the legitimation of authoritarianism.

A number of recent analyses have focused specifically on the rhetoric of Donald Trump. For example, Lakoff (2016) discusses how Trump has used metaphor, framing, and repetition to build

moral authority and enhance nationalist feeling. His speeches are often premised on themes of national decline, external threats (e.g., immigration and terrorism), and the necessary strong leadership to resurrect American greatness. These stories tend to be built through the demonization of the "Other," whether Mexicans, Muslims, or political oppositions (Mercieca, 2020). These rhetorical tactics conform to van Dijk's (2006) findings about the way political rhetoric can insidiously inscribe ideological leanings with lexical preferences, passive voice constructions, and emphasis-deemphasis tactics.

In addition, Trump's style of communication—characterized by simplicity, directness, and emotional intensity—has been identified as a forceful medium for mobilizing support and promoting populist messages (Ott, 2017). His effective utilization of Twitter, campaign rallies, and press conferences has established a unique rhetorical persona that erodes the distinctions between conventional political oratory and performative populism (Enli, 2017).

Though there is increasingly available scholarship analyzing Trump's rhetoric, there remains room for more in-depth CDA-based research that targets specifically the construction of the "Other" in his speeches. Current research has tended to address his populist discursive approach or his media exchanges, leaving a lacuna in the discourse-ideology-power nexus as it applies specifically to the linguistic representation of the marginal.

Chilton (2004) contends that political language is by its very nature strategic, frequently presented in a way to serve persuasive aims by means of spatial, temporal, and modal metaphor. When examining political speech, Chilton points to the use of proximity—namely, who is "us" and who is "them"—as a key element in discursive productions of national identity and threat. This model is especially applicable to Trump's rhetoric, which consistently marks off borders and boundaries between Americans and foreigners.

Charteris-Black (2011) examines the ways metaphors are used as ideological resources in political discourse. His analysis of "metaphors of the nation" illustrates how leaders piece together stories of purity, threat, and regeneration, and abstract ideas such as security or freedom to

emotionally charged metaphors like family, war, or disease. In Trump's instance, metaphors such as "building a wall" or "draining the swamp" are not just policy mantras but symbolic purging and safeguarding acts.

Reisigl and Wodak (2001) provide a discourse-historical methodology that focuses on how discourse is situated within particular socio-political and historical contexts. Their scholarship regarding political discourse and racial and ethnic discrimination can be applied to follow the ways in which Trump's speeches utilize long-standing histories of American exceptionalism and fear of foreign invasion to frame discriminatory rhetoric.

Laclau (2005), while more abstract, gives us a post-structuralist explanation of populism. Populist leaders, according to him, mobilize political identities by employing chains of equivalence—situating various grievances on the basis of a shared enemy (the "elite" or "Other"). Trump's political rhetoric can be understood in terms of this, where his language combines various social unease and targets marginalized or outside groups. Bhatia (2009) discusses the idea of "discursive illusions" in political discourse—how politicians deploy illusory coherence to mask contradictions and ideological prejudice. Trump's speech, while frequently derided as incoherent, is also strategically ambiguous, permitting various listeners to impose their own meanings upon what he says. Hall (1997), one of the central theorists of cultural studies, insists that representation is central to producing meaning. His argument is that political speech does not reflect reality but actually produces it through language. Trump's insistence on mentioning crime, danger, and invasion—when talking about immigrants, for instance—contributes to producing a discursive reality to justify exclusionary policies and to transforming public consciousness.

Moreover, Bonilla-Silva (2017) refers to "color-blind racism," in which seemingly race-neutral language is employed to reproduce racial domination. Trump's speech tends to utilize such a rhetorical technique by not using overtly racist language while still advancing racialized discourses—e.g., linking certain ethnic groups with crime or terrorism without actually invoking race. More recent multidisciplinary work has broadened the analytical model to examine how

political leaders constitute national identity and construct the "Other." One of the seminal contributions is that of Michael Billig (1995), who developed the theory of banal nationalism to examine how nationalistic sentiment is reproduced daily through seemingly mundane discourse—such as flags, words, and images in the media. This is the secret to understanding how nationalism gets normalized and habitually uncommented on in political language, like Trump's constant invocations of "America First" and the daily ceremonies of patriotism.

Benedict Anderson (2006) also outlines an underlying theoretical framework in his theory of imagined communities, maintaining that nations are constructed through shared symbols, myths, and stories. Anderson's theory underpins political discourse constructing collective identity and delineating insiders and outsiders—key to Trump's discursive approach. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) also explained how political identities are not made by fixed categories but by contingency and antagonism. Their hegemonic discourse theory is key in an understanding of how Trump's rhetoric makes "us vs. them" oppositions and reformulates the public grievances into nationalist discourses. Jason Stanley (2018), in his *How Fascism Works*, describes how fascist politicians toy with language to uproot truth, promote conspiracy, and inculcate fear of a fabricated enemy. He characterizes such rhetorical techniques as anti-intellectualism, victimhood, and preoccupation with a fantasized past—common in Trump's rhetoric.

In media discourse, Susan Herring and others (2005) discuss how political language is changed by online platforms, especially social media, in ways that promote concision, hostility, and performativity. The Twitter rhetoric of Trump is a prime example, combining everyday language with pugnacious ideological messaging that produces the Other in speedy, consumable forms. Niels Bohrmann and Ruth Breeze (2020) highlight the place of multimodal discourse in affirming ideological stances. Political messaging nowadays entails not just speech and text but also images, memes, hashtags, and performance. Trump rallies, media engagements, and social media presences present rich arenas for examining how discourse in different modalities reasserts nationalism and exclusion.

Sara Ahmed (2014) in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* examines how emotions—particularly fear, disgust, and hate—are mobilized in political discourse to unite people against perceived threats. This model is very much relevant to the emotional aspect of Trump's populism, wherein "others" are depicted as threatening, criminal, or culturally incompatible.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) theory of cultural hegemony also still holds. According to Gramsci, ruling groups sustain dominance not just by coercion but by ideological consent, reproduced through discourse. Trump's discourses can therefore be analyzed as being within a hegemonic project that legitimizes some nationalist ideologies while silencing opposition. Lastly, Michael Kranert (2020) examines the interdiscursivity of populist rhetoric, showing how populist politicians draw on several discursive traditions (nationalist, moralist, anti-elitist) to construct effective narratives. Trump speeches frequently intermix patriotic feeling, religious imagery, and economic populism to form a unified but elastic ideological narrative. And researchers like Marwick and boyd (2011) analyze the function of social media in contemporary political communication. Trump's tweeting during the campaign demonstrates how online platforms enable the fast spread of ideological messages, simplifying complicated issues into succinct, slogan-like sentences, and echo chambers affirming in-group identity and demonizing out-groups.

Methodology

Research Design

Applying a qualitative research design framed within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides an insightful approach to consider the ideological underpinnings, power relations, and identity constructions in the political discourses of former President Donald Trump. With its focus on context, Qualitative research best fits examining the persuasive rhetoric and ideological currents of Trump's discourse. This approach is grounded in Norman Fairclough's CDA model, known as the three-dimensional model, which consists of three interlinked components: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The study examines the representation of nationalist and populist ideologies through the analysis of lexical choices, metaphors, and stylistic

rhetoric framing these ideologies in the texts. In the discourse practice dimension, we focus on how the speech is created, circulated, and received in multiple media and political settings to demonstrate how institutional and communicative contexts operate. Finally, in the social practice dimension, we study the speech in relation to broader socio-political contexts to describe the ways in which language reinforces predominant ideologies, legitimizes power, and constructs the personality of "Other"—the immigrant.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis which describes the relation between language and power in the social world. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which includes: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, takes a global viewpoint on how discourse shapes and is shaped by social systems. This model views discourse not as an empty container of meaning but rather a resource that can maintain or challenge power dynamics within society. Applying Fairclough's model concerning the speech under analysis sheds light on the rhetorical moves employed, the language used, and the predominant socio-political realities, particularly how power and identity is performed, power is legitimized, and ideological boundaries are reasserted within the discourse.

Data Collection

The data for this analysis was collected from the official transcript of President Trump's Joint Address to Congress on his 2025 Presidential Address, which was delivered on March 4, 2025 in the Capitol Building, Washington DC. Wording his speech in such a manner highlights the importance of the address in terms of domestic and foreign policies, the gaer-speech-sociology of 'adult' discourse as well as the target audience of the speech. As for speech acts, it was legislative in nature, and as a consequence, low on the hierarchy of speech acts. Its context and setting underscore its relevance as an example of presidential discourse capture the American zeitgeist and therefore it is rich and illuminating for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). From the point of view of discourse analysis, the document captures the relations of power as well as national

identity, the alignment of social discourse of ideology and politics, and the strategies of political communication. The sources of the transcripts include the official ones which are available and accessible to the public such as the website of the White House and the official publications of independent television and radio stations like C-SPAN, CNN, The New York Times, etc. In addition to scrutinizing the text of the speech, the video also was analyzed to observe delivery style elements including intonation, movements, and reactions from the audience. The integration of various sources enhances the richness and accuracy of the analysis by utilizing verbal and non-verbal cues essential for understanding the influence of rhetoric and speech.

Data Analysis

The analysis of Donald Trump's political discourse will be carried out through the three dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis developed by Fairclough. Within the text most focus will be paid to practical meaning involving his socially marked choices of vocabulary, figurative expressions, and dominating clauses that stress the split social order of "us" and "them" rifts. The discursive practice aspect examines how Trump speeches are created, circulated, and understood, especially by way of media framing and social media interactions, including his own Twitter use to reaffirm and reframe his messages. At the socio-practical level, the research locates his rhetoric in the context of larger socio-political phenomena, including the emergence of right-wing populism, post-9/11 security imperatives, and traditional discourses of American exceptionalism, to show how his rhetoric helps normalize exclusionary discourses and cement the image of the "Other" in U.S. political culture today.

Textual Analysis

This phase is a close analysis of Trump's speeches for how language builds social reality. It takes note of his employment of affectively loaded words such as "illegal aliens," metaphors such as "build the wall," and binary pronouns such as "us" vs. "them." Such a selection serves ideological stances and cultivates an in-group versus out-group dynamic. Through syntax, metaphors, repetition, and presuppositions, the research

examines how Trump's discourse supports exclusionary and nationalist ideologies at the micro-text level.

Discursive Practice

At this level, the research investigates the production, dissemination, and interpretation of Trump's discourse. It looks at media framing of his speeches and how audiences, especially on social media, respond to and interpret them. Trump's calculated use of Twitter is important in shaping and consolidating his messages so that he can circumvent traditional media and address the public directly. This aspect emphasizes the interactive, interpretive processes that facilitate circulating and normalizing his political rhetoric.

Social Practice

The last dimension places Trump's rhetoric in the context of larger socio-political currents, including global right-wing populism and post-9/11 security discourses. His language is deeply rooted in traditional themes of American exceptionalism and racialized identity, appealing to nostalgia and fear in support of exclusionary policies. This aspect accounts for how Trump's language reflects and operates within influential ideologies and power structures in American society today, exposing the deeply ingrained effect of his political discourse.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW

Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this section critically analyzes President Donald Trump's Joint Address to Congress on March 4, 2025, to reveal the mechanisms through which language creates political realities, sanctions authority, and mirrors wider socio-political ideologies.

Textual Analysis (Description)

This report applies Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (textual dimension) to President Trump's March 4, 2025 Joint Address. It points to his vocabulary selection, metaphors, repetition, grammar and binary oppositions. The analysis is structured into five theme categories with examples taken from the official White House transcript.

Nationalist Rhetoric and Identity Construction

Trump's discourse is replete with patriotic imagery and metaphor that constructs an epic discourse of American renewal. He begins by proclaiming "the dawn of the golden age of America", a metaphor that tacitly projects the U.S. to be entering a remarkable age of national greatness. Throughout the speech, he consistently describes America in hyperbolic, mythic language: the "greatest and most successful period in the history of our nation", an "American dream [that] is unstoppable", and a comeback "like the likes of which the world has never seen". This kind of rhetoric employs superlatives ("greatest," "most successful," "unstoppable") and the "never before" formula in order to elevate the nation to greater heights. Trump makes active use of first-person plural pronouns ("our country," "we have accomplished," "our wonderful land") to form an inclusive national "we" and to assert shared achievement. For instance: "America's momentum is back, our spirit is back, our pride is back, our confidence is back...". The anaphora of "is back" reinforces rebirth and shared identity. Trump also appeals to national history and symbols in building American identity. He appeals to heroic origins and pioneers: "From the patriots of Lexington and Concord... to the astronauts who touched the Moon, Americans have always been the people who defied all odds, ... and did whatever it took to defend our children, our country, and our freedom". This extensive historical roster (a form of catalog or "collective memory" tool) connects present-day America to iconic leaders, reaffirming a message of exceptionalism. He emphasizes that Americans continue "a proud, free, sovereign, and independent nation.". By pitting Americans' persistent "spirit" and "strength" against amorphous "enemies" or "radical forces" (i.e. "despite the best efforts of those who would try to censor us"), he rhetorically creates a binary opposition - free Americans and forces of oppression. He also invokes religious symbolism ("With God's help... we are going to lead this nation even higher") to hallow the national project. In total, Trump's nationalist discourse constructs a shared American identity through superlatives to describe, victorious metaphors ("golden age," "comeback"), repetition of patriotic

leitmotifs, and the representation of Americans as the heirs of a heroic heritage.

Key characteristics and illustrations: patriotic superlatives (e.g. "greatest era in our history"), metaphoric epochs ("golden age of America"), collective "we" language (e.g. "We have accomplished more in 43 days..."), and historical allusions (Lexington, Gettysburg, Kitty Hawk, Moon) that connect past heroes with contemporary America. These create a positive, victorious American identity and implicitly counterpose it to any image of decline or defeat.

Representation of Political Opponents and the 'Other'

Trump continually casts his political rivals and other out-groups in negative terms, employing strong oppositions (in-group and out-group) and loaded language. For instance, he brands Democrats and the Biden administration as incompetent or worse. He refers to President Biden as "the worst president in American history" and says that during Biden "hundreds of thousands of illegal crossings" took place, enabling "murderers, drug dealers, gang members, and residents of mental institutions" to come into the country. Not only does this demonize the previous administration ("insane open border policies") but also characterizes Democrats as culprits of chaos. Trump also goads Democrats in so many words: "for just this one night, why not join us in celebrating so many amazing victories for America? ... let's really make America great again". The message is that Democrats, who are defined as the out-group, are obstructionist or selfish ("nothing I say will make them applaud"), thus strengthening the unity of the in-group (Trump supporters).

Immigrants and foreigners are another "Other" in Trump's rhetoric. He constantly describes "illegal aliens" as criminals or invaders: he speaks of an "invasion of our country" and gives credit to deploying troops for historically low border crossings. In chilling anecdotes, he brands child murderers "savages" and "monsters" specifically named as "illegal aliens" in U.S. sanctuaries. He describes whole towns as "destroyed" by migrant "occupation.". Such terminology establishes a dichotomous opposition: innocent Americans (especially children) versus violent foreign "others". He also groups foreign nationals and cartels together: Mexican cartels are "murder[ing],

rape[ing], tortur[ing]... waging war in America". Through militarized metaphors ("wage war on the cartels") and dehumanizing slogans ("savages," "monsters"), Trump emphasizes the threat from "others" over versus patriotic Americans.

Foreign nations and organizations are likewise presented as cheating or hurting America. For example, he laments that America "pay[s] subsidies to Canada and Mexico of hundreds of billions of dollars," and promises "we will not be doing that any longer," suggesting these neighbors unfairly burden Americans. He derides international efforts (the "Green New Scam," Paris Accord, WHO) as "ridiculous" or "corrupt", casting them as anti-American forces. The constant binary is America against the rest of the world: "We have been taken advantage of for decades by virtually every country on Earth". Such an us-versus-them approach serves to strengthen national unity by establishing definite enemies (foreign governments, international organizations, illegal immigrants) and having the in-group (Americans under his "America First" rubric) rally against them.

Ideologically loaded terms: Trump's vocabulary for rivals is overwhelmingly negative - adjectives such as "insane," "heartless," "savage," "radical-left lunatics," and nouns such as "monsters," "terrorists," "scam" are plentiful. He employs binary frames (for example, "woke no longer" suggests "woke vs. patriotic"), and polarizing constructs ("the lie that any child is trapped in the wrong body"). These language decisions harden in-group unity by pitting "our nation" or "common sense" against a variety of "others" (Democrats, immigrants, progressives, foreign powers). In this way, Trump's rhetoric invariably pounces on opposition by pitting "America" (and real Americans) against its adversaries and characterizing the latter as menaces or enemies in order to justify an us-versus-them attitude.

Economic Populism and Governance

Trump's economic rhetoric focuses on himself as the protector of working-class and small-business Americans, attacking elites, bureaucrats, and foreigners. He calls on "working families," "farmers," "auto workers," and other mainstream Americans with regular frequency. For instance, he asserts that among his "very highest priorities is to rescue our economy and get dramatic and immediate relief to working families.". His

rhetoric emphasizes a redemption from crisis: he took over "an economic catastrophe and an inflation nightmare" created by others, and is "fighting every day to reverse this damage and make America affordable again". This positions him as a fixer for the average man. He applies concrete examples (e.g. bringing down egg prices "out of control" under Biden) to bridge policy speeches to real issues. The repetition of the popular catch-all words like "common sense" ("common sense revolution") and "we are just getting started" resonates with regular Americans tired of the expert-led policy.

Trump's economic rhetoric also features lists and bracketed constructions that set up government waste against benefit. He invokes a catalog of foreign "spending scams" (e.g. "\$22 billion... to provide free housing and cars for illegal aliens," "\$8 million to promote LGBTQI+... in Lesotho," "\$8 million for making mice transgender," etc.). This list of follies is offered in opposition to "American families" that will gain from reforms. He positions slashing fraud and waste as anti-inflation and pro-working-class: "By cutting all of the fraud, waste, and theft we can locate, we will vanquish inflation, reduce mortgage rates, make car payments and grocery bills cheaper... and put more money in American families' pockets". Such phrases as "put more money in the pockets" are direct appeals to populist themes.

Tariffs and tax reductions are promised as protection for American workers: "if you don't make your product in America... you will pay a tariff". He boasts new investments (SoftBank \$200 billion, Apple \$500 billion, TSMC \$165 billion) as proof that his "America First" strategy is bringing industry back. The tale of an American steelworker, Jeff of Alabama, is invoked to symbolize tariffs "protecting the soul of our country" and "making America rich again". A straightforward us-vs-them economic narrative: industrious Americans (factory workers, farmers) vs. lazy or crooked elites and foreigners (regulatory bureaucrats, "other nations that levy us atrocious tariffs on their stuff").

Stylistic devices: Trump employs repetition and hyperbole to reinforce his populist rhetoric. He also repeats that the economy will "boom" or will "be bigger and better than ever". Parallel construction ("no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, and no tax on Social Security") conjoins favorite proposals. The emotive expression "drain the

swamp" figuratively frames his anti-bureaucracy crusade in populist language. He also employs triadic lists ("our momentum is back, our spirit is back, our pride is back") to generate rhythmic confirmation of recovery. Overall, the economy part of the speech depicts Trump as protector of "Middle America" by virtue of promises of tax relief, job creation, and stringent trade policy, holding elites ("bureaucrats," "scholars," "foreign scammers") accountable for economic troubles.

Language of Authority and Legitimacy

Trump's discourse uses a great many devices to authorize his presidency and actions. He uses his electoral mandate and executive record repeatedly to support authority. He quickly reminds audiences that "the presidential election of November 5th was a mandate like has not been seen in many decades," by invoking his Electoral College victory. He takes credit for an unprecedented flurry of actions: "I have signed nearly 100 executive orders and taken more than 400 executive actions – a record – to restore common sense, safety, optimism, and wealth all across our wonderful land. The people elected me to do the job, and I'm doing it". This self-referential deployment of first-person "I" and plural "we" claims mastery and achievement (e.g. "we ended Biden's environmental restrictions," "we have signed...we have been working"). Such deployments highlight his legitimacy by establishing that he is keeping promises and exercising legal authority.

He also employs titles and honors to impart gravitas: "As Commander in Chief, my attention is on constructing the most formidable military...". When referring to new projects (e.g. a "Golden Dome missile defense shield"), he emphasizes "we want it...to safeguard our citizens like never before", implying that such moves are unavoidable patriotic responsibilities. Trump regularly issues calls for legislative action, supporting institutionalized governance: "I am calling for no tax on tips...And in the near future, I want to do what has not been done in 24 years: balance the federal budget. We're going to balance it". By constructing such policy proposals as moral absolutes ("we have thought this through at great length...the gold card") and as measures of consensus ("we desire it; it is time to put a stop to this folly"), he presumes authority as a visionary leader.

Trump employs repetition and exclamations rhetorically to express conviction. Both "we will" and "we are going to" are repeated to pledge firm action. Such as: "we are going to lead this nation even higher," "we are going to forge the freest... civilization ever.". The climactic recitation towards the end ("We are going to conquer... American flag on Mars," "we will stand up and fight, fight, fight... for the country our citizens believe in") employs parallel syntax and anaphora ("we are going to... we are going to... we are going to") in order to generate confidence and authority. He also appeals to divine mandate ("With God's help...") and historical destiny ("I was saved by God to make America great again"). These work together to sanctify his leadership as fulfilling a manifest American destiny.

Examples of legitimizing speech: overt mentions of electoral victory and popular approval ("mandate," "the people chose me"), repeated "I did this/We did that" affirmations (executive orders, emergency proclamations), lofty vows ("we will...," "we want to be safeguarded"), and appeals to history or religion (founding imagery, God). All operate to portray Trump as an empowered, legitimately mandated president.

Culture War Issues

Trump himself directly addresses culture-war issues in his speeches, habitually employing very charged language in defending conservative positions on gender, schooling, and "woke" thinking. He's particularly outspoken in stating that the official policy of the government is to "only have two genders: male and female," and proudly announcing that he's eliminated "the poison of critical race theory from our public schools.". The term "poison" used here is a case of emotionally charged vocabulary, suggesting that CRT is poisonous for society. He also says he "signed an executive order prohibiting public schools from indoctrinating our children with transgender ideology" and refers to sex-change surgery on children as "child abuse" and "a lie". This characterizes transgender rights and gender theory as evil or harmful, creating a dichotomy of "innocent children/god-given bodies" and "harmful progressive ideology". In January Littlejohn's anecdote of his daughter, he underlines secrecy and deception ("Teachers and administrators conspired. all without telling [the parents]"). Such storytelling emotionally loads the

issue and presents progressives as conspirators against family values.

Trump consistently employs the trendy slang word "woke" in a derogatory manner. He states "our country will be woke no longer" and states "wokeness is trouble... it's out of our society. We don't want it". The term "common sense" is set in opposition to "woke" ideology: he mentions a "commonsense revolution" re-entering schools and the military. His vocabulary polarizes America as either free and common-sensical (good) or indoctrinated and "woke" (bad). On matters of race and diversity, he mocks "so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies" and declares hiring will be on the basis of "skill and competence, not race or gender". The use of "so-called" delegitimizes DEI initiatives as illegitimate. He asserts the Supreme Court now "let us" do hiring on the basis of merit, suggesting constitutional support for his action.

Sex and sports are another battleground. Trump tells the story of a female athlete injured by a male competitor to justify banning men from women's sports. He uses dramatic phrasing: "It's demeaning for women, and it's very bad for our country. We're not going to put up with it any longer". The meta-message is that gender identity issues are a threat to female athletes and national well-being, requiring strong action.

Divisive language: On these culture-war issues, Trump uses language such as "indoctrinating," "lie," "lie of being trapped," "woke," "radical-left lunatics," "poison," and "child abuse." These are highly emotionally charged and represent unambiguously clear moral divides (e.g. innocence or evil, truth or lie, victims or offenders). He sets up "our service members" and children as worthy of protection from ideology: "Our service members won't be activists and ideologues.". They will be warriors and fighters". In characterizing progressive social concepts as "toxic ideologies" that taint schools and families, Trump's rhetoric presents culture-war topics not as value-neutral discussions but as zero-sum struggles between good (traditional values) and evil (radical progressivism).

More broadly, Trump's discourse on issues of culture is adversarial and absolute. He deploys narratives (actual or hypothetical) and emotive vocabulary to call out resistance to words like "transgender," "CRT," and "woke." This has the effect of mobilizing his base around what he

presents as classic American values (two sexes, parental authority, meritocratic hiring) and demonizing the opposing ideology.

Discursive Practice

Production Context: Political Setting and Intent

The speech is delivered in a high-stakes, formal context: the Joint Address to Congress at the beginning of Trump's second term. This is a ritualized event when the president lays out his vision, achievements, and legislative agenda to Congress and the American people. It performs several strategic purposes:

Legitimation of presidency and policies: Speaking before the term begins, the address seeks to reaffirm Trump's political mandate following his decisive 2024 election victory, reinforcing his authority and agenda.

Mobilization of political base: The speech addresses Trump's political base by reasserting common values and "America First" nationalism. Pressure on opposition: It publicly needles Democrats and political opponents, trying to set the terms of political debate for the upcoming legislative session.

Influence on public opinion: Presented live and widely reported, the speech is meant to set national tone and sway media storytelling.

Trump's decision to focus on accomplishments and employ confrontational language against critics fits with the political atmosphere of intense polarization, seeking to mobilize his base and position his presidency as necessary.

Intertextuality: References to Past Speeches, Political Events, and Media

Trump's speech relies heavily on previous political rhetoric, both his own and others', and establishes a web of textual allusions:

Self-referential intertextuality: The address reflects themes and catchphrases of Trump's 2016 and 2020 campaigns, such as slogans "Make America Great Again" and "America First." Recurring use of these familiar phrases is used to bring to mind past victories and continuity.

Historical intertextuality: Recurrent allusions to foundational American historical events (Lexington and Concord, Gettysburg, Kitty Hawk, Apollo Moon landing) ground his rhetoric in well-established narratives of patriotism, connecting his presidency to genesis moments.

These references call up shared cultural memory and civic pride.

Political discourse and media: The address invokes current controversies (e.g., "woke" ideology, immigration "invasion," "Green New Scam") that are whipping up hornet's nests in right-wing media and political discourse. These position the discourse within current partisan media wars and culture wars.

Legal and institutional references: Executive order, emergency declarations, and legislative measures bring to mind the formal political-legal mechanisms, aligning the speech with official government discourse.

Interdiscursivity: Mixing of Genres and Discourses

Trump's speech reflects a hybridization of several discursive genres with aplomb, presenting various rhetorical styles in masterful combination to address diverse audience spectra. It exemplifies the traditional form of political rhetoric characteristic of presidential speeches, with appeals for coherence and legislative initiatives that forecast leadership and governance. At the same time, the speech makes use of populist rhetoric by direct address to "the people," strong condemnations of elites and bureaucracy, and the vow to "drain the swamp," which taps into anti-establishment feelings. Security and military discourse dominates, with constant references to defense programs like the "Golden Dome missile defense shield" and border control, and National Security as central issue. The economic aspect is expressed in terms of elaborate policy suggestions regarding tariffs, tax reductions, and inflation relief, blending technical economic jargon with populist simplifications to appeal to experts as well as ordinary people. Religious language is woven through by appeals to "God's help" and a divine mission sense, sanctifying the political platform and calling upon spiritual virtues. Finally, cultural war and conspiratorial rhetoric emerges in allusions to "radical-left lunatics," the demise of "woke" culture, and cultural foes, which instills the combative tone characteristic of current culture war storytelling. This fusion of discursive styles allows Trump to speak to various groups within his base—working-class voters and religious conservatives, for example, as well as nationalist patriots—while reenforcing a general and unified ideological position.

Production and Distribution Channels

The delivery of the speech was strategically enhanced by a live streaming on various platforms, such as conventional television networks, social media platforms, and online streaming services, thus optimizing its direct reach to wider and varied audiences. Trump's pre-existing popularity on social media also guaranteed that the speech would be extensively disseminated beyond the initial transmission, with customized commentary, memes, and hashtags being shared to maintain supporter interest and shape public opinion. This cross-platform strategy facilitated ongoing interaction and discussion between followers, bolstering principal messages. Moreover, political and partisan media sources figured prominently in framing the reception of the speech; right-wing media generally promoted and amplified its nationalist and populist messages, framing it in a positive light, whereas liberal media provided frequent critical reframing, focusing on controversy and danger. The formal White House posting of the transcript on the website further institutionalized the speech, making it directly available to researchers, journalists, and foreign observers, and allowing for more analysis. Together, this multi-media dissemination strategy guaranteed wide distribution and allowed for multiple interpretations, extensively shaping the public discussion of the speech.

Audience Positioning and Reception Strategies

In the speech, Trump uses in-group targeting strategically by using collective pronouns like "we" and "our" again and again, and also shared cultural references, to create a very strong feeling of community and belonging among his fans. This language of inclusivity resounds with values such as patriotism, economic nationalism, law and order, and religious faith, making his base the very figure of the "real America." At the same time, the speech casts political rivals and immigrants as outside threats, perpetuating an 'us versus them' mentality that shores up group cohesion and creates a defensive, besieged identity among the base. But Trump also makes periodic overtures to skeptics and uncommitted voters through words of inclusion like "I want to work with everyone who loves America," paired with specific policy offerings like reduced taxes and economic growth programs. This mix of

communication tries to soften his image and expand his appeal outside of the base, presenting pragmatism and a desire to unite. The emotional impact of the speech is reinforced by evocative metaphors, historical reference, and direct appeals—like "let's really make America great again"—calculated to generate pride, hope, and a feeling of urgency. Lastly, although the polarizing and combative tone of the speech can threaten to alienate political opponents, this is an intentional tactic intended to cut political polarities fine and mobilize electoral bases, reinforcing the cycle of political polarization as a mobilization tool.

Social Practice and Ideological Implications

Trump's March 4, 2025 Joint Address to Congress serves as an effective tool for reproducing nationalist ideology, reinforcing themes of sovereignty, patriotism, and American exceptionalism that are core to his political identity. The speech appeals to populist sentiment by strongly pitting "hardworking Americans" against corrupt elites, bureaucrats, and foreign enemies, thereby validating anti-establishment sentiments and perpetuating populist rule. It deepens cultural polarization by constructing progressive policies and identities like "woke" culture, trans rights, and globalism as existential threats that stimulate polarizing identity politics and enrenching social fault lines. Second, the rhetoric legitimates executive power by emphasizing Trump's electoral mandate and presidential actions, thus legitimizing a robust, frequently unilateral leadership style and vindicating controversial policies such as border militarization and aggressive tariffs. Lastly, the speech is a political spectacle, a ritual performance meant to reinforce Trump's self-image as a take-charge and tenacious leader, designed to energize his political base and frame public opinion for political gain.

This analysis of discursive practice reveals how the speech is constructed as a politically strategic text, disseminated across various channels, engages a wide range of discursive resources, and locates audiences to support Trump's political project based on nationalist, populist, and combative ideologies.

Social Practice

The social practice aspect of Trump's March 4, 2025 Joint Address to Congress represents a

highly polarized and divided socio-political situation in the United States. Presented in the midst of persistent culture wars, economic recovery efforts, and intensified global tensions, the speech further solidifies a nationalist and populist worldview that frames America under siege by both domestic and foreign adversaries. By binary frames like "hardworking Americans" against "radical-left lunatics," the language legitimates polarized social hierarchies and excludes categories like illegal immigrants and liberal activists. It establishes a model of robust executive power, privileging unilateral rule and projecting traditional family values in conformity with conservative norms. The speech allows for political activation of Trump's base, galvanizes conservative cultural opposition, and legitimates legislative and executive policy initiatives concentrated on border control, military buildup, and economic protectionism. It limits opportunities for bipartisan conversation and incorporation of minority rights, leading to media fragmentation and echo chambers. Historically, though the rhetoric borrows from entrenched motifs of patriotism and exceptionalism, it represents a departure toward a more aggressive, culture-war-oriented political style characteristic of the Trump era. The speech influences public opinion by establishing the national agenda and shaping public opinion but also deepens social cleavage and distrust towards institutions. By and large, it mainly acts to bolster prevailing polarized social orders and right-wing ideologies, facilitating activism within such constituencies but undermining wider social cohesion and inclusive change.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

The three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump's speech illustrates a well-crafted political discourse that enforces and mobilizes nationalist ideology and addresses a highly polarized public. On the textual plane, the speech uses intentional rhetorical tropes such as collective pronouns, rich metaphors, and binary oppositions, which collectively build a firm in-group identity based on patriotism, economic nationalism, and law and order. These text features are intended to evoke pride and urgency among supporters and present political rivals and immigrants as threats to the country, thereby

perpetuating an 'us versus them' paradigm that motivates political polarization.

At the discursive practice level, the deployment of populist themes, opposition framing, and selective appeals in the speech accounts for a double strategy: consolidating the allegiance of a hard core through cultural and ideological signifiers, while at the same time seeking to expand appeal among undecided or unconvinced audiences by proposing pragmatic policy initiatives and inclusive rhetoric. The affective connection induced by historical references and overt appeals to action further enhances supporters' engagement, reinforcing cohesion and mobilizing political participation. Yet, the confrontational tone further accentuates polarization, implying a deliberate strategy to hone political cleavages in the interest of electoral mobilization.

Lastly, the social practice aspect highlights the speech's place in an ecosystem of media and politics. The real-time streaming on multiple platforms, reinforced by amplification through social media and framing in partisan media, guarantees that the speech receives widespread dissemination and differing interpretations. Such multi-channel distribution not only amplifies Trump's political showmanship as a tough, decisive leader but also places the discourse within circulating culture wars, shaping public opinion and political identity formation at multiple levels.

As such, the speech demonstrates how political speech works as a multifaceted interplay of language, social interaction, and power of institutions. It reproduces dominant nationalist ideologies strategically, mobilizes shared identities, and constructs political realities through both direct communication and mediated public discourse. The layered analysis of the speech emphasizes how political speeches should not only be understood as discrete texts but as socially dynamic practices that reflect and constitute the wider socio-political reality.

SUGGESTIONS

Further research might build on this analysis by carrying out comparative analyses of populist and nationalist discourse among other political leaders and in other cultures to identify both common and distinctive patterns. Examining how other types of media report such speeches

and resulting effects on public opinion and political polarization would further be illuminating on the role of media in determining discourse. Also worth exploring is the role of social media as a platform for political mobilization in understanding how online platforms maintain interest and narrative control post-event. Research on the psychological impact of emotional appeals and metaphors in political discourse would illuminate their contribution to voter identity and voter sentiment. Additionally, an analysis of the relationship between political rhetoric and policy outcome might tell us something about how discourse shapes governance, particularly around controversial topics. Lastly, reception studies of the audience, based on ethnographic or survey research, might tell us something about how disparate demographic and ideological constituencies read and react to these speeches, deepening the understanding of discourse in use over time.

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