



## A Critical Discourse Analysis of Populist Political Speeches in Contemporary Western Democracies

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### ABSTRACT

The research applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze modern western democratic political speeches, which show how leaders use language to present citizens as virtuous and a single entity while making opponents and foreign elements appear dangerous to national authority and cultural heritage and economic stability. The research examines speeches from Viktor Orbán, Nigel Farage, Alexis Tsipras, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon through van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's discourse-historical approach during 2015-2025. The research shows right-wing populists use civilizational nationalism and anti-elitist sovereigntism to create threats, but left-wing populists focus on economic inequality and oligarchic power and international solidarity. The implemented strategies follow specific national requirements because they address Hungarian post-communist identity and British welfare chauvinism and Greek post-austerity political dynamics and French republican anti-imperialist movements. The research shows that populist speech contains an essential oppositional pattern, yet its actual words depend on specific situations, and its meaning can shift based on ideological perspectives

**Keywords:** populism, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), "the people," political rhetoric, van Dijk, Wodak, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Viktor Orbán, Nigel Farage, Alexis Tsipras, left-wing populism, right-wing populism, discursive strategies, national context

### تحليل الخطاب النقدي للخطابات السياسية الشعبوية في الديمقراطيات الغربية المعاصرة

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### الملخص

يطبق هذا البحث منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) لتحليل الخطابات السياسية الديمقراطية الغربية المعاصرة، مُبيناً كيف يوظف القادة اللغة لتصوير المواطنين بوصفهم أفراداً فاضلين ومتحدين، بينما يُظهر المعارضين والعناصر الأجنبية بوصفهم خطراً على السلطة الوطنية والتراث الثقافي والاستقرار الاقتصادي. ويدرس البحث خطابات فيكتور أوربان، ونايجل فاراج، وأليكسيس تسبيراس، وجان لوك ميلانشون، من طريق منهج فان ديك الاجتماعي المعرفي ومنهج ووداك التاريخي الخطابية، في المدة 2015-2025. يُظهر البحث أن الشعبويين اليمينيين يعتمدون القومية الحضارية والسيادة المناهضة للنخبوية لخلق تهديدات، بينما يركز الشعبويون اليساريون على عدم المساواة الاقتصادية وسلطة الأوليغارشية والتضامن الدولي. وتتبع الاستراتيجيات المُطبقة متطلبات وطنية محددة، إذ تتناول الهوية المجرية ما بعد الشيوعية، والشوفينية البريطانية في مجال الرعاية الاجتماعية، والديناميات السياسية اليونانية ما بعد التقشف، والحركات الجمهورية الفرنسية المناهضة للإمبريالية. يُظهر البحث أن الخطاب الشعبوي يحتوي على نمط معارض أساسي، ومع ذلك فإن كلماته الفعلية تعتمد على مواقف محددة، ويمكن أن يتغير معناه بناءً على وجهات النظر الأيديولوجية..

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الشعبوية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA)، "الشعب"، الخطاب السياسي، فان ديك، ووداك، جان لوك ميلانشون، فيكتور أوربان، نايجل فاراج، أليكسيس تسبيراس، الشعبوية اليسارية، الشعبوية اليمينية، الاستراتيجيات الخطابية، السياق الوطني.



## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Context**

During the last twenty years, western democratic nations have experienced a major comeback of populist political groups that support populist leaders. The global financial crisis in 2008, together with increasing socioeconomic disparities and worldwide perception of globalization breakdowns and massive population movements, has destroyed public confidence in established political organizations and established political parties (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2023). The current state of public dissatisfaction has led populist figures from both the right-wing and left-wing political spectrums to succeed through their claims of representing ordinary citizens against the perceived dishonesty of powerful elite groups. Umaraj and Hasan (2020) state that using Critical Discourse Analysis, any candidate for the presidency or Democratic speech uses a different strategy to win and a distinct ideology to persuade the American people to elect him. They use various methods, such as number games, hyperbole and promises, to convince the audience.

The political landscape of Hungary, the United Kingdom, Greece, and France have experienced major changes through populist leaders who now influence how their nations conduct politics (Rooduijn, 2022). Digital media platforms now enable populist leaders to directly connect with their supporters while they bypass the conventional news media gatekeepers, which Engesser et al. (2016) studied (2023).

The term “populism” exists as a widely recognized term, but scholars continue to disagree about its exact definition. The academic community supports a basic definition of populism, which describes it as a political belief system that establishes a moral divide between an innocent unified people and a wicked elite who serve their own interests (Mudde, 2022). Researchers disagree about whether populism exists as an ideological framework, functions as a rhetorical approach, or serves as a political campaign instrument. Laclau (2023, posthumous reissues) explained that populism functions through discursive and performative elements because it unites different social demands into a single "people" through oppositional relations. Political scientists, including Pappas (2023), study this phenomenon as a system-wide issue which endangers liberal democracies through its institutional development. The various ways in which people interpret these ideas require researchers to develop complex methods which study both the meaning of ideas and their presentation style.

### **1.2. Research Problem and Questions**

Research has established the growth of populism but scientists need to identify the specific language patterns which populist leaders use to build their political world and gain public backing. Language functions as a communication tool which enables idea transmission yet it also creates social identities and determines how power operates and what makes political systems legitimate

(Wodak, 2021). The research investigates how modern populist leaders use discourse to establish the core populist concept which pits "the people" against "the elite/other." The research investigates the following particular questions.

- (1) How do populist leaders linguistically frame “the people” as morally superior and unified, while depicting elites or out-groups as threats to national sovereignty, culture, or economic well-being?
- (2) What discursive strategies were deployed to legitimize their policy agendas and delegitimize opponents?
- (3) How do these rhetorical strategies vary across national contexts?

These questions are vital because populist discourse can reconfigure democratic norms by undermining pluralism, eroding institutional trust, and normalizing exclusionary rhetoric (Krämer, 2023). Understanding the discursive architecture of populism enables scholars, journalists, and policymakers to better recognize, deconstruct, and respond to its appeals without reinforcing its binaries.

### **1.3. Objectives and Scope**

The research investigates how populist political speeches from 2015 to 2025 of Viktor Orbán (Hungary, right-wing), Nigel Farage (United Kingdom, right-wing), Alexis Tsipras (Greece, left-wing), and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (France, left-wing) differ through critical discourse analysis. The research includes both right- and left-wing populists to prevent the mistaken belief that populism exists only through nationalist or xenophobic ideologies while demonstrating how the fundamental "people vs. elite" framework gets used to achieve various political goals. Orbán uses his speeches to establish Christian civilizational identity against liberal globalists, while Tsipras presents the EU and IMF as anti-democratic institutions that oppress the Greek nation. The research examines important public speeches, which include political campaign events and official parliamentary speeches, and important television broadcasts because they generate strong rhetorical effects and attract large media audiences. The temporal scope enables researchers to study post-crisis populism by analyzing migration events and Brexit and pandemic management and democratic deterioration which create an extensive database for studying different political systems.

### **1.4 Methodology Overview**

The research uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its methodological framework to study how language interacts with social power structures and ideological systems in different social environments (van Dijk, 2023 and Wodak, 2021). Critical Discourse Analysis as a social practice which shows both the existing power systems and their ongoing maintenance. The research draws its framework from two distinct CDA traditions, which operate as complementary approaches. The socio-cognitive approach of van Dijk shows how discourse creates and spreads ideological content

through mental models, which people use for social cognition to understand in-group and out-group definitions. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Wodak enables researchers to analyze texts through historical context analysis, which includes studying how texts relate to each other and how they use argumentative techniques at different levels of analysis.

The research uses these analytical approaches to perform qualitative thematic and rhetorical content analysis of speech recordings, which identifies essential discursive elements through pronoun analysis between "we" and "they" and metaphor identification and evaluation assessment and narrative pattern detection. The analysis examines both performative aspects (tone and repetition and direct address) and platform-based features, which include social media's short-form content and viral potential and parliamentary rules for deliberation. The research design uses methodological triangulation to achieve both detailed analysis and specific environmental understanding about how populist leaders use words to build political facts and gain control.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach**

Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA shows how discourse interacts with human thinking processes and social environments. Van Dijk (2023) explains that people learn ideology by adopting common mental models, which serve as cognitive structures for understanding social occurrences and group membership. Populist leaders employ these models to establish emotional political differences, which they transform from complex issues into simple moral battles. The speaker creates oppositions through pronouns such as "we" and "they" and evaluative terms, which include "corrupt" and "authentic," to demonstrate his representative status of "the people." The research method enables scientists to analyze how people express their beliefs through casual dialogue while they analyze how people understand popular stories that spread through media.

### **2.2 Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach**

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which Ruth Wodak created, enables researchers to analyze political discourse through its method, which examines texts within their historical context. The DHA operates through three analytical levels, which consist of (a) text linguistic elements that include metaphor and argumentation and narrative structure and (b) intertextual and interdiscursive elements that reference other discourses and historical events and genres and (c) the broad social and political and historical context (Wodak, 2021). The research design includes various stages that enable the study of populism between nations because it understands how countries preserve their distinct identity and how populist leaders employ cultural elements that resonate with their citizens' past grievances. Wodak demonstrates how populist speakers implement particular

argumentative structures called *topoi* to validate their discriminatory policies while they portray their opponents as having no right to exist.

### **2.3 Populism as a Discursive Phenomenon**

The study of populism by CDA scholars now focuses on its function as a performative and discursive practice instead of treating it as a simple ideology (Stavrakakis et al., 2023). The definition of populism by political scientists includes a basic ideological framework which opposes common people against powerful elites (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2023). The antagonistic relationship between people and elites emerges through discursive processes according to CDA instead of existing as an actual fact. Right-wing populist leader Viktor Orbán uses metaphors to describe migrants and liberal institutions as threats that endanger the existence of national identity. Left-wing populists, including Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Alexis Tsipras, present "the elite" as financial and technocratic forces that they claim work to destroy popular rule through their actions at the IMF and EU technocratic institutions. The two versions use identical rhetorical methods, which include moralizing and simplifying and emotional manipulation to create social bonds that support political activism (Krämer, 2022).

### **2.4 Digital Media and the Evolution of Populist Discourse**

Research studies from recent times have developed CDA to study how populist communication patterns change when people use digital platforms. The platforms X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook use their design to support short messages, which create strong emotional responses, while their algorithms select content that spreads quickly through the platform, thus promoting populist content, which includes polarizing messages and personal attacks and rejection of diverse perspectives (Engesser et al., 2023). The combination of rally speeches with news media and social media posts has produced new hybrid discourse genres, which need researchers to develop adaptable analytical methods. Hasan stated that "the use of structures should be considered as one way of manipulating the opinions of the public" (Hasan, 2025, p.1260). The flexible nature of CDA enables researchers to monitor how populist strategies transform between different platforms, which include both official parliamentary speeches containing historical references and social media content that uses casual language and visual elements and personal interactions with viewers.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design and Data Selection**

The research uses qualitative methods based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze how western democratic populist leaders use public speeches to create discursive representations of "the people," "the elite," and "the other." The research uses CDA because it enables researchers to identify how language carries political ideologies and power dynamics, which create social practices

that both show current political situations and maintain them (Wodak, 2021; van Dijk, 2023). The research uses comparative case study analysis to evaluate speeches from four leaders who belong to different ideological and national backgrounds: Viktor Orbán from Hungary with right-wing views, Nigel Farage from the United Kingdom with right-wing views, Alexis Tsipras from Greece with left-wing views, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon from France with left-wing views. The selected material allows researchers to study how populist speech evolves between different political groups and democratic systems. The corpus contains 4 speeches that leaders delivered between 2015 and 2025, with one speech from each leader. The research draws its information from official government archives together with party websites and national broadcasters and the European Parliament and international news outlets that have verified their transcripts.

### **3.2 Analytical Framework and Procedures**

The research combines two CDA frameworks, which include van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The 2023 model by Van Dijk demonstrates how discourse enables people to create mental models, which help them establish group boundaries between their own group and other groups. The DHA model developed by Wodak (2021) examines how historical elements and textual connections and argumentative patterns (including threat and victimhood and urgency) function together. The research follows ethical guidelines through its use of public domain materials while it analyzes exclusionary speech in a critical manner instead of presenting it without evaluation.

### **3.3 Limitations**

The research focuses on traditional formal speeches which might not show the complete extent of populist communication that occurs through digital platforms. The main platform for ideological expression exists through speeches because these messages spread throughout various media outlets. The research methodology provides strong evidence about modern populist discourse structures, which show how political leaders use words to activate public support and build democratic community identity.

## **4. The Analysis**

### **4.1 Discourse Analysis of Viktor Orbán's Speech**

Viktor Orbán delivered a speech to the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments during 2023 when he took the role of protecting democratic self-rule against what he saw as an excessive EU administrative body that lacked democratic accountability. The speech delivered in an official building demonstrates right-wing populist speech patterns from today, which use democratic values and national heritage and cultural heritage to present their message. The

analysis uses two CDA frameworks, that work together to reveal the ideological elements present in this text.

#### **4.1.1. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach: Constructing "The People" vs. "The Elite"**

The socio-cognitive model developed by van Dijk (2023) shows how Orbán uses common mental frameworks to establish a moral-based opposition between democratic authorities and unauthorized technical experts. The speaker maintains a consistent use of first-person plural pronouns that include "we Hungarians" and "we Europeans" to create a shared identity between himself and his audience members, who serve as national parliamentarians and the people who he presents as the genuine representatives of democracy. EU officials receive construction as a unified group, which EU officials present as "bureaucrats who have never been elected by anyone" who "give lectures on democracy and values." The rhetorical approach used here works to undermine supranational power because it defines electoral validity as something that only national institutions can provide.

Orbán supports this dual system through his process of moral assessment. National parliaments function as authentic representative institutions that develop naturally through time, but Brussels faces criticism for showing arrogance while being corrupt and working against democratic principles. The EU faces accusations of attempting to overthrow national parliaments through its funding conditions, which Brussels labels as an "attempted coup against national parliaments." The language used in this text triggers mental frameworks that connect state authority with democratic systems and technological control with oppressive regimes, thus making Orbán's sovereignty-based approach seem naturally democratic (van Dijkstra, 2023).

#### **4.1.2. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach: Historical Anchoring and Argumentative Topoi**

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Wodak (2021) shows how Orbán uses historical and political contexts to support his criticism. The Peace of Westphalia serves as his basis to establish that the modern European order emerged through nation-states, which made Europe into a dominant world power. The historical analogy functions to discredit modern EU integration because it presents the current state as a departure from Europe's past "glorious era" while showing centralization as a process of deterioration instead of advancement.

The speech contains essential populist rhetorical elements, which Wodak (2021) identifies as core arguments in populist communication.

- The topos of threat: EU energy sanctions "will kill the Hungarian economy"; Ukrainian accession means "you will take in the war."

- The topos of victimization: Hungary faces victimization because it defends its nation-state framework while Brussels supposedly works to destroy Hungary's economy for establishing a puppet government.

The topos of historical necessity asserts that Europe needs to restore nation-state sovereignty to achieve national power.

The author connects these topoi with present-day national security threats and economic problems to demonstrate that Orbán maintains a logical approach that defends Hungarian national interests.

#### **4.1.3. ideological Implications and Populist Strategy**

The populistic approach of Orbán during this speech focused on civilizational and institutional aspects rather than ethnic or xenophobic elements. He establishes Europeanness through Christian heritage and national self-determination while suggesting treaty modifications to establish Christian heritage as European identity and to eliminate the concept of ever-closer union. Right-wing populist movements across Europe now present illiberalism as their method to defend authentic democracy, according to Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2023). Orbán uses democratic language to support his illiberal goals by making national parliaments his exclusive authority to define European values (Krämer, 2022).

### **4.2 Discourse Analysis of Nigel Farage's Speech**

#### **4.2.1 Introduction to the Speech and Context**

Nigel Farage delivered a policy speech to Reform UK members on 27 May 2025, when he presented his plans to eliminate the two-child benefit restriction, boost tax limits, and bring back winter fuel assistance. The speech presents itself as a practical economic approach, but it actually serves as a tool for populist communication, which targets ordinary workers while attacking policies made by wealthy elites. The research uses van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to analyze the ideological methods that Farage uses in his speeches.

#### **4.2.2. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach: Constructing "Deserving" Citizens**

The category of "the people," which Farage creates, according to van Dijk (2023) includes working-class families, married couples, and pensioners, whom he presents as virtuous. The author defines his purpose as helping people achieve pregnancy success without creating a welfare system that would support people who receive benefits. The distinction between these two groups triggers a mental framework that distinguishes between citizens who deserve help because they work yet face difficulties under existing rules and those who supposedly misuse welfare benefits. Through his role

as the genuine representative of these workers, Farage establishes his right to speak while he dismisses both Labour and Conservative leaders because they lack understanding of common people.

The elite receives its discursive construction through indirect references that use "diversity and equality initiatives" and "quangos" and "net-zero climate measures" to represent ideological waste from institutions without public oversight. Farage supports using these funds to support tax relief because he shares the belief that regular citizens face excessive tax burdens from progressive elite groups, which represents a fundamental populist mental structure (Krämer, 2022).

#### **4.2.3. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach: Moral Topoi and Cultural Tradition**

Wodak's DHA (2021) demonstrates how Farage implements culturally important argumentative methods to support his proposed policies. He backs conventional values through his suggestion to boost tax advantages for married people because he thinks family unions create the best conditions for children to succeed. The author chooses to avoid judging his previous actions, but he supports the traditional family structure which he believes produces the most beneficial social results. The strategy implements right-wing populist methods which show socially conservative measures as functional answers (Moffitt, 2023). He uses economic realism as a rhetorical tool to present benefit reforms as financial support for workers instead of welfare growth. The topos of threat emerges through comparisons to "Liz Truss" and economic collapse warnings which indicate that elite-controlled policies threaten national security. Through his declaration of Reform UK as the party which serves working people Farage attempts to establish his movement as the authentic successor of Labour's historical voter base which European populist movements now frequently achieve through discursive shifts (Rydgren, 2024).

#### **4.2.4. Ideological Implications**

The right-wing populist movement has developed into welfare chauvinism, according to Farage, because he supports state welfare programs only for citizens who demonstrate cultural and economic worth (Engesser et al., 2023). The system excludes people through moral and financial standards instead of showing direct prejudice against foreign nationals. The organization now works to gain public approval through its actions while it maintains its definition of who belongs to the people.

### **4.3. Discourse Analysis of Alexis Tsipras's Speech**

#### **4.3.1. Introduction and Contextual Framing**

The 2nd International Conference on Democracy & Social Justice hosted former Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who gave a keynote speech on 10 June 2025 to present left-wing populism as a democratic and moral response against the growing "oligarchy and kleptocracy." The speech presents a progressive populist agenda that promotes economic fairness and maintains institutional

honesty and international cooperation between nations. The research uses two CDA frameworks, which work together to study how Tsipras uses language to create moral distinctions between "the people" and "the elite" through his structural and moral definitions.

#### **4.3.2. Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach: Moral Categorization and Collective Identity**

Van Dijk (2023) shows how Tsipras uses "the people" to describe a diverse group of workers and youth and farmers and "healthy entrepreneurs" who share a common moral bond because they face an unfair economic system. The speaker uses shared mental models about exploitation and dignity to support his argument through his presentation of poverty statistics, which show a rise from 17.9% to 19.6% during the current government term, and his demonstration of corporate profit growth at "11.5 billion euros" for ten companies. The situation creates a mental framework that shows economic inequality exists as a purposeful system, which benefits the political-economic elite.

The elite receives its discursive definition through domestic oligarchic framing, which shows its collaboration with Mitsotakis' government: The Recovery Fund distributed 87% of its total funds to only 2% of all companies in the country. Tsipras undermines the elite status of these individuals through his connections between their group and three elements of corruption, which include the "Predator phone-tapping scandal," the decline of judicial autonomy, and the existence of exploitative economic systems. He presents himself as a member of democratic change rather than a rescuer because he uses his experience as governor to prove his ability to represent people (Krämer, 2022).

#### **4.3.3. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach: Historical Memory and Transnational Topoi**

The DHA (2021) by Wodak shows how Tsipras uses historical and worldwide stories to build his argument against the government. The author uses Greece's 2010 debt crisis to demonstrate how neoliberal policies have failed, while his government achieved poverty reduction through different methods than the current "Balkanization" that he uses to describe democratic regression. He uses transnational topoi in his argument by mentioning Bernie Sanders' terms "oligarchy" and "kleptocracy" and the Prespa Agreement as evidence of progressive foreign policy and global democratic movements, including Occupy and indignados, to establish a new international framework for democratic opposition.

The main argumentative points in this text consist of three elements, which include the moral responsibility of companies to fulfill their national tax obligations, the analysis of how neoliberalism creates structural problems that lead people to blame others for their situation, and the comparison between left-wing patriotism, which brings hope, and right-wing demagoguery, which creates fear (Moffitt, 2023). Tsipras transforms patriotism into a concept that combines solidarity with justice and humanism, according to Sandel and Piketty (2024).

#### **4.3.4. Ideological Strategy: Democratic Reclaiming**

Tsipras presents a different approach than right-wing populism because he focuses on promoting pluralism and upholding international law while working to transform institutional structures. His “new patriotism” promotes an inclusive system that operates at a transnational level and depends on institutional frameworks to achieve its goals through an “entrepreneurial state” and EU fiscal reform. The strategic left-populist approach unites emotional connection with policy reliability to fight against anti-pluralism while it supports collective action (Stavrakakis et al., 2023).

#### **4.4. Discourse Analysis of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Speech**

##### **4.4.1 Introduction and Context**

The April 2025 interview which took place in New York became part of his book *Now, The People* when Jean-Luc Mélenchon who leads the left-wing French party *La France Insoumise* described his concept of "citizens' revolution" which combines anti-neoliberalism with ecological needs and international cooperation. His statements function as political discourse which establishes a defined moral and ideological separation between ordinary citizens and the international group of oligarchs and their allies who support war and promote neoliberalism. The research uses van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach together with Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to study the populist speech patterns of Mélenchon.

##### **4.4.2. Van Dijk’s Socio-Cognitive Approach: Constructing a Transnational “People”**

The socio-cognitive framework which Van Dijk (2023) developed shows how Mélenchon uses common mental images of institutional unfairness to build a single moral community known as the "people." He establishes this collective group as French workers and youth but also as a worldwide population which suffers from climate denialism and imperial militarism and corporate control. He explains that Trump's Paris Agreement withdrawal represents a denial of our current human understanding because environmental disasters now represent a common danger which brings people together to protect their existence and achieve social equality. Right-wing populism bases its ideology on exclusionary nationalism which stands in direct opposition to the universalistic approach.

The elite exists as a transnational alliance which includes U.S. Big Tech companies and NATO-supporting European leaders and French centrists Macron and Bayrou who violate republican values. Mélenchon accuses the Socialist Party of making "rotten deals" which support austerity measures while he uses cognitive schemas to show how their actions represent both betrayal and moral decay. His commitment to authenticity became his defining characteristic because he declared his mission to represent honest values in a political space where deception prevails (Krämer, 2022).

##### **4.4.2 Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach: Historical Memory and Solidarity Topoi**

Wodak's DHA (2021) shows how Mélenchon uses historical and geopolitical stories to support his criticism. He uses France's republican heritage to criticize Macron for ignoring the 2024 parliamentary election outcomes which he labels as an unprecedented attack against fundamental republican values. The argument uses the topos of democratic legitimacy to show how people rule through their sovereignty against the deceptive actions of elite groups. The author uses anti-imperialist arguments to demonstrate that European countries must pay an imperial tax because they need to allocate 5 percent of their GDP for military expansion under U.S. command which makes them become American vassals through their dependence on F-35 jets. The topos of solidarity-based protectionism presents economic policy as an ethical form of resistance which supports two main actions: the United States should establish trade negotiations with China while imposing taxes on domestic tech companies instead of pursuing trade war escalation. The arguments establish a connection between national policies and international fairness which supports left-populist approaches that oppose both global neoliberal systems and independent nationalistic policies (Stavrakakis et al., 2023).

Mélenchon works to activate the "fourth bloc" which includes nonvoters and young people and residents of working-class areas through direct community-based activities such as food distribution and voter enrollment efforts. The author believes these organizations protected the Republic from right-wing extremism which transformed American patriotism into a practice of mutual support instead of traditional cultural boundaries (Moffitt, 2023).

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

### **5.1 Discussion**

The research shows that populist leaders who hold different political beliefs use similar rhetorical methods to present their citizens as virtuous entities who face a common danger while they depict opposing groups as threats to national power and cultural heritage and economic security. Viktor Orbán presents the people as protectors of European Christian civilization through history, while he describes EU bureaucrats as threats who work to establish a federalist coup. Nigel Farage presents a "deserving" working class, which he claims liberal elites have betrayed through their support of "diversity initiatives" instead of protecting family welfare. The definition of "the people" according to Alexis Tsipras and Jean-Luc Mélenchon consists of workers and youth and marginalized citizens who face exploitation from oligarchs and warmongers across international borders. Tsipras views the elite as domestic and EU-aligned actors who support "kleptocracy," according to his perspective. Mélenchon identifies the elite as American-controlled servants who, together with Macron and other neoliberal centrists, violate democratic rules.

The four leaders use fundamental discursive methods, which van Dijk (2023) and Wodak (2021) identify through their models to validate their political goals. The leaders use four main discursive methods, which include polarization between good and corrupt elements and moralization to present their policies as ethical responsibilities and victimization to show how the people face continuous harm and historical anchoring to connect their actions to past national or worldwide injustices. Orbán supports his argument through the Peace of Westphalia, while Farage uses British postwar fairness as his basis, Tsipras connects his argument to Greek suffering from austerity measures, and Mélenchon uses his argument to defend republican legitimacy and fight against imperialism. The different countries implement their strategies through distinct methods. Hungarian populism unites civilizational nationalism with institutional critique as its core elements. The UK maintains its focus on welfare chauvinism as its primary concern. Left-wing populist movements in Greece and France focus on building international solidarity while working to transform democracy and fighting against austerity measures. Mélenchon implements his "fourth bloc" approach by using grassroots activities to bring non-voting citizens into the political process, which aligns with France's urban left-wing pluralistic society. Orbán uses his "Christian Europe" speech to connect with people who identify with post-communist heritage. Thus, while the structure of populist discourse is consistent, its content is contextually adapted.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The research shows that populist leaders from all political backgrounds employ words to create new political facts instead of using them for traditional persuasion purposes. The discursive methods that these groups use for their national historical contexts and media systems follow a fundamental pattern, which involves creating moral values for group identity, removing diverse perspectives, and establishing themselves as the only rightful representatives. The study of these mechanisms becomes essential for democratic stability because rhetorical messages determine how people view things and how they perceive the validity of institutions.

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### **Video Clips Analyzed in This Study**

1. *The speech of Jean-Luc Mélenchon* in an April 2025 interview conducted in New York: [French Far-Left Leader Mélenchon Advocates for “Creole” Future in Controversial Speech – \[your\]NEWS](#)
2. The speech of Alexis Tsipras on 10 June 2025, at the 2nd International Conference on Democracy & Social Justice: [Alexis Tsipras: We need a new patriotism against oligarchy and kleptocracy. On the one side stands our country, on the other, their wealth. - Alexis Tsipras Institute](#)
3. The speech of Nigel Farage on 27 May 2025, in central London: [Nigel Farage: Reform UK want to make it easier for people to have children](#)
4. The speech of Viktor Orbán on 12 May 2025, addressed to the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments: ["Make Europe Great Again!" ~ The Imaginative Conservative](#)