

A CDA of Polarization in Donald Trump's Political Discourse (Us vs. them)

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Abstract

This study examines us vs. them polarization in political discourse articulated by the current U.S. president using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's model, with a focus on the ideological square. Through an analysis of two significant speeches—the 2025 Joint Session of Congress address and the 2025 Inaugural Address—the study reveals how linguistic strategies consistently highlight positive traits of the in-group and negative traits of perceived opponents, while downplaying in-group weakness and suppressing positive traits of out-groups. This discourse pattern is consistent with earlier CDA studies that demonstrate how political rhetoric reinforces power structures and group solidarity in polarized contexts by creating social identities and ideological divides. The results show that by influencing public opinion and legitimizing political agendas, the us vs. them framing in presidential rhetoric both reflects and actively contributes to polarization. This study adds to the body of knowledge on political communication and how language perpetuates social division and ideological dominance.

Keywords: (CDA, Van Dijk, Ideological square, Trump. Polarization).

تحليل نقدي للاستقطاب في الخطاب السياسي لدونالد ترامب (نحن ضدهم)

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة استقطاب "نحن ضدهم" في الخطاب السياسي الذي استخدمه الرئيس الأمريكي الحالي، وذلك باستخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي ونموذج فان دايك، مع التركيز على المربع الأيديولوجي. ومن خلال تحليل خطابين هامين - خطاب الدورة المشتركة للكونغرس لعام ٢٠٢٥ وخطاب التصيب لعام ٢٠٢٥ - تكشف الدراسة كيف تُبرز الاستراتيجيات اللغوية باستمرار السمات الإيجابية للجماعة الداخلية والسمات السلبية للمعارضين المتصورين، بينما تُقلل من شأن ضعف الجماعة الداخلية وتُخفي السمات الإيجابية للجماعات الخارجية. يتوافق نمط الخطاب هذا مع دراسات تحليل الخطاب النقدي السابقة التي تُبين كيف يُعزز الخطاب السياسي هياكل السلطة والتضامن الجماعي في سياقات الاستقطاب من خلال خلق هويات اجتماعية وانقسامات أيديولوجية. تُظهر النتائج أن تأطير "نحن ضدهم" في الخطاب الرئاسي، من خلال التأثير على الرأي العام وإضفاء الشرعية على الأجندات السياسية، يعكس الاستقطاب ويُسهّم فيه بشكل فعال. تُضيف هذه الدراسة إلى رصيد المعرفة في مجال التواصل السياسي وكيفية ترسيخ اللغة للانقسام الاجتماعي والهيمنة الأيديولوجية. الكلمات المفتاحية: (تحليل الخطاب النقدي، فان دايك، المربع الأيديولوجي، ترامب، الاستقطاب).

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Democracy has faced significant internal and foreign threats as a form of government and as a set of values, particularly in the last ten years (Mounk, 2018). Among these, political polarization is one of the most important. Conceptually, political polarization is a contentious term that has been linked to a number of different phenomena, such as the inability to form coalitions and reach political compromise; performance failures brought on by abrupt policy changes; antidemocratic attitudes; a rise in the acceptance of political violence; and a decline in public confidence in politicians, political institutions, and other citizens (Dawson,

2025). Many academics believe that political polarization is one of the main factors causing the current "crisis of democracy" or "democratic backsliding," notwithstanding the concept's ambiguity (Somer,2025).

People increasingly define and describe society and politics in terms of "us" and "them," and polarization is a tactic that refers to aligning diverse disparities in society to be at one dimension (McCoy, 2018:16). The term "polarity," which denotes the existence of two opposing directions or points of view, is used to formally describe polarization (McCarty 2019).

An opposition or rivalry between two parties or organizations is known as polarization (Van Dijk, 2011). Under the general ideological strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (our good things and their bad things), such resistance and competition are experienced through a variety of discursive methods (ibid). Hence, Trump is considered a highly polarizing American politician (Joseph et al 2019). Trump frequently expresses empathy, compassion, and support for the majority group of Americans in particular in the bulk of his remarks. The majority of Americans are consistently portrayed as victims of Islamic terrorism and as being impacted by it. Trump uses compassion in the majority of his remarks. Trump used compassion as a tactic to further his political objectives. Trump frequently manipulates the public by bringing up the flawed policies of both his opponent, Hillary Clinton, and the administration of his predecessor.

One of the most well-known figures in the domains of text linguistics, discourse analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the Dutch social scientist Teun A. Van Dijk. He is currently employed at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Spain as a professor of critical discourse analysis. This section aims to provide a broad overview of Van Dijk's definition of critical discourse studies.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analysis research that focuses on how text and speech in social and political contexts are used to enact, perpetuate, legitimize, and fight social power abuse and injustice (Van Dijk, 2015). Critical discourse analysts take an explicit stance in such dissident research, seeking to comprehend, reveal, and eventually confront societal inequity. Additionally, for this reason, CDA might be defined as a social movement of discourse analysts who are politically engaged.

US President Donald Trump's polarizing discursive techniques that create inflexible in-group (us) against out-group (them) divisions have been extensively examined in his political language, both in speeches and on social media. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research demonstrates how Trump's rhetoric defines political identities and perpetuates social divisions by using emotional appeals, nationalistic imagery, and binary oppositions to portray opponents, minorities, and outside actors as threats to American values and unity. The current study intends to advance scholarly understanding of how language functions as a tool of power and identity in contemporary political communication by illuminating how rhetorical and linguistic devices in Trump's political discourse contribute to the construction of polarized identities and social divisions.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

President Donald Trump portrayed himself as a uniter in his inaugural speech, promising a "golden age" for the United States. However, it frequently mimicked the past for a speech that promised a bright future. When Trump was first inaugurated in as president eight years ago, he spoke about a nation with a failing economy and cities ripped apart by crime, and much of his rhetoric echoed those remarks. Moreover, polarization has increased in recent U.S. political communication, demonstrating deep societal divisions that are often reproduced and reinforced through presidential

rhetoric. However, the specific discursive mechanisms by which such division is constructed remain under-examined; this is especially evident in the political speeches of the current U.S. president, where binary us vs. them narratives are frequently mobilized to delineate in-groups (such as "true Americans," political supporters) and out-groups (such as political opponents, critics, and immigrants) in ways that can influence public opinion and social identity.

These strategies were evident in the president's 2025 Inaugural Address, where rhetoric about national restoration and threats emphasized a stark distinction between those aligned with the president's vision and those portrayed as opposing it (e.g., framing policy positions and national renewal in contrast to unnamed "others") and his 2025 Joint Session of Congress address, which framed national challenges and partisan conflicts in terms that implicitly contrasted devoted citizens with political adversaries. These examples highlight the larger issue: despite a wealth of media and political science commentary on political polarization, there is a lack of systematic Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that focuses on how ideological polarization is linguistically constructed in presidential discourse, especially through discursive strategies like ideological square, ingroup/outgroup positioning, and semantic polarization—mechanisms that influence public perception, shape mental models, and reinforce social identities.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the current president of the United States use discursive techniques found in van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis ideological square to create and maintain the us vs. them polarization in political discourse?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to ascertain Trump's political views and strategies in public speeches, as well as the role of identified discourse in language appropriation for political purposes.

This study is important because it uses van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analytical framework to provide a methodical and comprehensive examination of how political polarization, specifically the creation of us vs. them narratives, is linguistically and cognitively engineered in the public speeches of the current U.S. president. As seen in other political discourse research on polarization and us vs. them framing in U.S. politics, CDA enables researchers to show how language, power, and ideology interact in political discourse and how social cognition and shared mental models are mobilized to influence audience perceptions and reinforce ideological divides, in contrast to descriptive accounts of political division.

Additionally, the study strengthens the theoretical application of socio-cognitive CDA in political communication studies by showing how useful it is for analyzing the subtle but potent ways that language can reproduce ideological positions and power structures. This is crucial for academics, media analysts, and policymakers who want to understand or lessen the negative effects of rhetorical polarization in modern democracies.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

A- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary approach to studying discourse that focuses on how language enacts, reproduces, and challenges power and inequality in society. It examines the relationship between discourse and social structures, emphasizing the role of context and ideology. (van Dijk, 2011)

B- Polarization (Us vs. Them)

The dispersion of political views toward ideological extremes and away from the center is known as political polarization.

C- Ideology (in Discourse)

In discourse, an ideology is a set of values, ideas, and mental models that influence how people or groups use language to understand and portray the world. Ideologies have an impact on how events, persons, and issues are presented in political discourse. For instance, they can prioritize particular values or present particular players in a positive or negative light.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In the 1970s of the previous centuries, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was created. The foundational works of European social scientists like Habermas, Foucault, and Althusser, as well as the writings of Marx, the French post-structuralists, and postmodernists, are the sources of CDA. These authors warned social science researchers from a variety of backgrounds and interests to pay attention to issues of representation as well as their construction, their social, ideological, and sociopolitical functions, and the strategic effects of these discursive representations (Catalano & Waugh, 2020). According to Van Dijk (2011), the ideologies of their social actors give texts their meanings. Language is a potent weapon that reflects the ideas of social actors through lexical, syntactic, and discursive choices rather than being a neutral tool for communication. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a paradigm that looks at these processes.

In an effort to reveal the hidden ideological biases and power dynamics in texts, it investigates the linguistic strategies employed by influential social actors to influence societal ideas, values, and beliefs (Van Dijk, 2015).

According to Van Dijk (1998), CDA is predicated on the idea that discourse contributes significantly to the consolidation of bias, oppression, and prejudice in society. As a result, it aims to expose the instruments used by social actors to uncover concealed discourse ideas. It emphasizes how discursive and rhetorical elements shape and reconfigure authority and power in social practice. This approach is convenient when the analysis involves examining bias in political discourse, as presented in the present study

Van Dijk demonstrates that CDA focuses more on concerns and problems than on bottom-up relations of resistance, compliance, and acceptance. It is especially concerned with top-down relations of dominance. According to Van Dijk (2001, 2009), CDA represents discourse analysis with an attitude, a critical perspective, a position, or an attitude and is concerned with social problems. According to this perspective, CDA vehemently opposes people who misuse text and speech to prove, validate, or justify their abuse of authority: "CDA does not deny, but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position." In other words, CDA is biased and takes pride in it (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96).

2.2 Political Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis

Political discourse analysis claims that political discourse is "conceived as a form of social practice" that is structured around the various ways that language is used to address topics and occurrences that are "collectively meaningful." In connection with their viewers, this official discourse continuously circulates and co-constructs socio-political topics (Sovacool et al., 2021).

According to Van Dijk, "the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance" is the focus of critical political discourse analysis (1997, 11). It looks at the strategies, rhetorical techniques,

discursive tools, and structures that work in a political setting. Phonology, visuals, syntax, meaning, speech acts, style, and rhetoric can all make use of these instruments, devices, and structures.

Additionally, it investigates if particular discourse patterns are more or less common and particularly more or less effective for the political purposes they may serve, or even more precisely, in the particular political situations in which they may be employed. Evaluations are one characteristic of political discourse that is pertinent to the present investigation. Political agendas and ideologies permeate the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of political figures and organizations. These assessments are polarized in political discourse by highlighting both our positive and negative traits while downplaying our negative actions.

They are clearly terrorists, while our soldiers and others who support our cause are freedom warriors. We are democratic, while THEY are not. The same is true for our political choices and programs, which will always be advantageous to the nation and all of its residents while those of the others will not. It is well knowledge that there is semantic and ideological division. Van Dijk (1997, 28)

2.3 Polarization

People increasingly define and describe society and politics in terms of "us" and "them," and polarization is a tactic that refers to aligning diverse disparities in society to be at one dimension (McCoy, 2018:16). The term "polarity," which denotes the existence of two opposing directions or points of view, is used to formally describe polarization (McCarty 2019: 8). He lists three states that are connected to polarization:

1. A process known as "policy polarization" occurs when extreme viewpoints on matters of public policy, such as those about government abortion regulations, have become more common over time (ibid:9).

2. Another type of polarization is ideological polarization, which functions with ideologies like liberal and conservative ideas and is similar to policy polarization (ibid: 10).

3. Lastly, partisan polarization, which is the division regarding political parties (ibid: 11).

When two parties or organizations are at odds or compete with one another, polarization results (Van Dijk, 2000: 49). Under the general ideological strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (our good things and their bad things), such resistance and competition are experienced through a variety of discursive methods (ibid).

According to Van Dijk (1998:69), ideologies are social representations, and polarization may function as an ideological strategy. Societal groups create an ideological image for both themselves and other people (ibid). The primary feature of this kind of polarization is that they display polarized representations of positive self-representation and negative other-representation (ibid).

The increasingly severe positioning of various political viewpoints on the ideological or political axis is known as ideological polarization (Dalton , 2021). However, research shows that the ideological gap between political extremes has not grown much over time in many nations, including the United States (e.g. Hannon and de Ridder , 2021). Rather, polarization takes the form of an increasing emphasis on and adherence to one's political beliefs and party choice. Additionally, intra-group diversity has less space (Hannon and de Ridder , 2021).

2.3.1 Polarization as a Strategy of Political Discourse

According to Galderisi (2015:95), the degree of polarization in the United States can be measured by how divided Congress is in favor of the president. Congressmen are categorized based on the proportion of times they back the

president's proposed legislation for which their opinions are known (ibid). A significant divergence signifies greater polarization and a significant gap between the parties. In conclusion, polarization reveals the disparate views of various party members (ibid).

Language differences are the development of discourse of ideological dispute, according to Demata (2016: 97); what is said on social media pages may reflect the larger context of American politics. Ideological polarization has long dominated American politics and is an enduring feature of institutional politics (ibid). Additionally, ideological polarization is a phenomenon that affects activists and party members as well as a large portion of voters and the general public (ibid). According to Woods & Arthur (2017:130), the 2016 American presidential election marked a period of extreme division on immigration-related topics at both the partisan news and elite press levels. According to Jackson (2018), the party's extreme polarization on immigration was demonstrated by the fact that only Republicans supported the plan, while Democrats consistently rejected it. The most contentious issue is immigration, and Trump's rhetoric on the subject was crucial to his successful presidential campaign.

2.4 Previous Studies

- Polarization in Trump's Tweets: A Critical Discourse Analysis Study (Obied & Abbas, 2023) The current study aims to clarify the polarization strategy and explore the macro- and micro-strategies used by former US President Donald Trump in his tweets. In this study, two models—Van Dijk (2000:51–84) and Masroor et al. (2019: 6–10)—are integrated to create an amalgam data analysis model. The study's scope is restricted to examining tweets criticizing Trump's opponents' immigration plans. Two of Trump's four macro-strategies—"the self is personification of Goodness" and "the self is the only nation's hope"—are related to positive self-representation.

- Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump Across Time (Bonilla, 2020). This study examines how Trump has discussed immigration both as a businessman and as president. Four speeches and four interviews given by Trump during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as four speeches and four interviews following his election as president, provided the data for this study. The research focuses on how Trump employs pronouns and implicatures to depict the US (ingroup) versus THEM (outgroup) at the local semantic level and syntax, or the formal relationship between clauses and sentences, at the local form.

- A critical discourse analysis of Trump's election campaign speeches (Kadim,2022)- A critical discourse analysis of Trump's election campaign speeches is presented in this article. Trump's anti-immigrant remarks have sparked uproar both globally and domestically. Such anti-immigrant rhetoric could incite Native Americans to start a racial confrontation with Muslims and other non-Native Americans. Van Dijk's (1991, 1995; 2006) discourse methods are used in this study. Thus, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate how Trump ideologically invested these discursive methods in both the negative language of THEM (Obama, Obama administration, Clinton, immigrants, particularly Muslims) and the positive discourse of the US (Trump, the majority of Americans). The study's data analysis revealed that Trump used the (12) discourse methods in nearly all of the chosen speeches to further his political agenda. It is hoped that the study will persuade politicians to refrain from employing racist and sectarian language, as it has detrimental effects on innocent bystanders.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Selection

Two significant speeches made by the current US president (the 2025 Joint Session of Congress address and the 2025 Inaugural Address) make up the data for study. These speeches were chosen because they are prominent instances of political discourse used

to establish national agendas and speak to large audiences, which makes them perfect for analyzing the formation of divisive group identities and ideological stances. Donald J. Trump gave his inaugural address at the United States Capitol on Monday, January 20th, 2025, after being elected 47th President of the United States the prior November. President Trump began serving his second term as the commander-in-chief precisely at noon on Inauguration Day.

The second speech is Trump's 2025 Joint Session of Congress speech, which was given in Washington, D.C. on March 4, 2025. The president outlines an ambitious legislative agenda and highlights early-term accomplishments, including executive actions on immigration, border security, deregulation, and economic policy, in this long and well-publicized speech.

The speeches can be found by following these 2 links

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-4>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/>

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative approach based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been developed. In order to analyze large amounts of linguistic data while also addressing the need to simplify and manage the inherent complexity of the data, a number of crucial decisions were made, including the selection of the data collection tool, the methods for data collection, and the processing techniques used. CDA was chosen because it focuses on the interaction between language, power, and ideology in sociopolitical contexts, allowing for an examination of how discourse generates societal divisions and reinforces power dynamics. Unlike classical discourse analysis, CDA examines power asymmetry, manipulation, and ideology in language use, particularly in political communication.

3.3 Analytical Framework: Van Dijk's Ideological Square

Van Dijk (1998) developed a CDA theoretical framework for analyzing hidden ideologies in conversation. The current study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to identify hidden ideologies in political debate. One type of political discourse involves political players providing evaluations. These assessments are ideologically motivated opinions. Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square model focuses on evaluations in conversation. It exemplifies how social groups are portrayed in discourse as us versus them in order to assert group supremacy. In this concept, the speaker and his supporters are viewed as the us or in-group, whilst the opponents are presented as the them or out-group.

Van Dijk's ideological square (2000) identified four characteristics in ideologies that allow powerful groups to articulate complex ideological viewpoints. They have the following qualities: "a) Emphasize positive things about Us; b) Emphasize negative things about Them; c) De-emphasize negative things about Us; D) Deemphasize positive things about Them" (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 44). These four concepts are fundamental techniques for self-representation, including "positive" and "negative" others.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

A- Inaugural Address at the US Capitol

On January 20, 2025, the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, delivered his "Inaugural Address" at the US Capitol. The president's speech contains both promises and ambiguities, highlighting opportunities and challenges for his second term. Trump's speech emphasizes the country's crises and regeneration. Donald Trump, a New York billionaire and former reality TV show star, has been elected president of the United States for the second time. He is America's first president with no previous political or military experience. During Jeo Biden's presidency from 2016

to 2020, he attempted to destabilize the country, making it challenging for him to run for president again. Despite the odds, he took the oath as America's 45th president in the 2024 election. Unlike past presidents in American history, Donald Trump does not attempt to unite the country; instead, he continues to celebrate and fight even after winning the election and taking office. He used his presidential megaphone to criticize members of his own administration, the media, and other elected leaders.

From the start, Trump's speech tracked his campaign rally approach: big promises of national success due to his leadership, with plenty of sweeping indictments of the status quo.

"The golden age of America begins right now," Trump said after ticking through the requisite nods to former presidents and other dignitaries. He added several more promises: The "start of a thrilling new era." A nation "greater, stronger and far more exceptional than ever before."

The speech aims to appeal to Trump loyalists, disillusioned voters, and detractors alike. His speech highlights American exceptionalism, sovereignty, and power. Trump prioritizes law enforcement, border security, and economic growth, which coincide with conservative voters' priorities. By recognizing the support of the African American and Hispanic populations, the president positions himself as a figure of inclusivity and harmony.

Furthermore, Trump criticizes progressive beliefs such as gender diversity and immigration policy by questioning specific aspects of their speech. For example, Trump asserts that "there are only two genders: male and female," which contradicts current debates and programs on gender diversity. Furthermore, he regards immigration as an "invasion," and immigrants as "aliens" and "criminals," and his vow to "send troops to the southern border" reflects conservative philosophy on national security and cultural identity. These discursive strategies are controversial and enticing

to his supporters. This polarization promotes Trump's reputation as a challenger to the current quo and supporter of right-wing ideas.

Trump's speech reflects Inter-textual tendencies which are another aspect of discursive practice within the political discourse (Van Dijk 1997). Trump from his previous campaigns emphasizes the idea to "Make America Great Again" and "America First"

The speech at the level of social practice depicts and reinforces the dynamics of sociopolitical forces in America. During his second term, Trump has expressed dissatisfaction with political institutions and advocated for cultural change. His rhetoric aligns with conservative views on immigration, globalization, and progressive social ideals, portraying his leadership as opposing progressive programs. He uses phrases like "dangerous criminal" and "foreign gangs" to portray immigration policy as a security concern.

The speech also addresses cultural debates about identity. Trump opposes gender diversity and stresses traditional and cultural norms, which accord with conservative cultural views. The author's viewpoints may alienate younger, more liberal audiences who value inclusive and controversial gender identities. It emphasizes the cultural gulf between the newly elected president and his audience, which promotes opposing viewpoints. Trump exhibits nationalism and uniqueness in his address while also placing the material in a socio-political framework.

Trump has the initiative and the focus on the day of his inauguration. Hundreds of executive actions on a variety of topics, including immigration, energy, trade, education, and contentious cultural matters, have been pledged by his aides.

He described a few of them in his inaugural speech. In order to place the US military on the border, severely restrict the rights of asylum seekers, and unlock vast tracts of federal land to energy extraction, he promised to proclaim national

emergencies related to immigration and energy. He reiterated his promise to reclaim the Panama Canal and rename the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America."

He said things like: "America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth" or "America will be a manufacturing nation once again..." Refer to his future vision for American domination, superiority, and self-reliance. Trump's patriotic discourse reflects his beliefs with worldwide populist tendencies, framing his image as the single partner of the movement against globalization.

Donald Trump called his predecessor "worst President in the history of American history", claiming that thousands of illegal crossings happened in America under Biden's presidency. In the statement "In comparison, under Joe Biden, the worst President in American history, there were hundreds of thousands of illegal crossings a month, and virtually all of them, including murderers, drug dealers, gang members, and people from mental institutions and insane asylums, were released into our country. Who would want to do that?" Van Dijk's ideological square is used in the discourse to create a sharp divide between the Biden administration and the current administration. First, by using highly demeaning labels like "the worst President in American history" and classifying a wide range of criminal and socially stigmatized categories (murderers, drug dealers, gang members, people from mental institutions and insane asylums) as having been "released into our country," this extract highlights negative characteristics of the out-group (Them), here represented by Joe Biden and his policies. In contrast, the formulation subtly highlights positive portrayals of the in-group (Us), in this case the speaker's own administration and its border security strategy. This line does not specifically mention the in-group, but it is part of a larger argument (in the same address) that unlawful border crossings have drastically

dropped, improving the competence and accountability of the present administration over the previous one.

In his statement “We have removed the poison of critical race theory from our public schools. And I signed an order making it the official policy of the United States Government that there are only two genders: male and female.” VanDijk's ideological square states that polarized political discourse tends to: (1) emphasize positive representations of the in-group (Us); (2) emphasize negative representations of the out-group (Them); (3) de-emphasize negative aspects of the in-group; and (4) de-emphasize positive aspects of the out-group. The emphasis on good Us representation and negative Them representation is clearly reflected in the language used in this passage. The president subtly portrays proponents of such curriculum as detrimental or ignorant by characterizing critical race theory as "poison." The word "poison" has strong negative connotations, which is consistent with van Dijk's tactic of depicting out-group views as poisonous or harmful. In addition, the phrase “I signed an order making it the official policy... that there are only two genders” presents the speaker and his supporters (Us) as the authoritative and official standard while positively portraying them as defenders of an alleged “truth” regarding gender. This action strengthens group unity and validates the speaker's stance as defending biological certainty and social order, which are fundamental components of in-group valorization. The framing also fulfills the third and fourth dimensions of the ideological square by failing to acknowledge any positive aspects of alternative perspectives on gender, thereby de-emphasizing any negative or controversial implications of such policy.

Trump also focused on the Panama Canal, calling the US transfer of the vital economic route a "foolish gift." In reaction to what he called unfair treatment of US ships passing through the canal and China's encroaching influence in the region,

Trump declared, "We're taking it back." In a prompt response, Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino reaffirmed Panama's authority over the canal in an official statement.

Van Dijk's ideological square, which methodically contrasts positive self-representation (Us) with negative other-representation (Them), is consistent with Trump's language in the segment where he criticizes the Panama Canal transfer as a "foolish gift" and declares "we're taking it back." By calling the canal transfer "foolish" and implying that Panama and its allies have broken promises and treated the United States unfairly in terms of economic costs and influence (Panama's promise... has been totally violated, American ships... severely overcharged), Trump highlights negative characteristics of the out-group (Them).

At the same time, Trump's rhetoric subtly highlights positive aspects of the in-group (Us) by citing past U.S. contributions ("we gave it to Panama") and claiming a future reclaiming of control ("we're taking it back") as a proactive restoration of proper order and national primacy. This reinforces collective identification and the perceived legitimacy of in-group objectives by creating a mental model in which the United States is viewed as a powerful, legitimate guardian of global interests. The language promotes the in-group as proactive protectors of national interests by portraying the United States as unfairly treated and ready to make amends.

Jason points out that Trump sparred with Panama during his first administration and that his worries about the canal date back decades. However, Jason believes that "increasing US investment in the canal and in the numerous direct and indirect businesses that support canal operations" is one alternative that the Panamanians would embrace. To win the game, the United States must actively participate.

The goal of Donald Trump's 2025 inauguration speech is to enhance his reputation as a capable national leader. In political science, a strong leader is typically referred to

as a "strongman leader" due to characteristics like intense nationalism, vows to restore the nation's past greatness, placing blame elsewhere, and reacting to dangers to the nation that are frequently nonexistent (Davis, 2020, p. 280).

In this sense, Trump makes use of his inaugural speech as a publicity stunt, showcasing his fulfillment of his pledges and drawing notice from the general public. Additionally, viewers and inauguration attendees are engaged as witnesses to a momentous occasion by the president's public act of signing orders, which deepens the emotional bond between the people and the president. By portraying Trump as a powerful and decisive leader, these measures help to carry out the PR plan.

b- Trump's 2025 Joint Session of Congress speech

The length and political tone of President Trump's speech to the Joint Session of Congress were unprecedented. It established the MAGA agenda as the prevailing force in modern American politics and proved politically potent. The variety of subjects covered, such as the cost of eggs, border security, the economy, and foreign affairs, may have been the most fascinating. Even by today's political standards, it was an exceptionally controversial address, and the sharp division between Republicans and Democrats in the audience could indicate a widening political gap in the US.

This speech was intended to create a political narrative that would showcase the President's political achievements during the first 100 days of the Trump administration. Because it determines the administration's main priorities and sets a standard for political efficacy, the first 100 days of a presidency are regarded as historically significant.

The speech emphasized the modern president's desire for a long-term campaign for both political and policy influence and visibility. President Trump declared at the start of the speech that "America is back," and he later commended his followers for taking part in "the righteous cause of American liberty." President Reagan's description of the

United States as a "City on a Hill" was echoed in the final portion. The speech was designed with the audience's attention in mind, as are many other live-streamed or televised speeches.

“The American dream is unstoppable, and our country is on the verge of a comeback, the likes of which the world has never witnessed and perhaps will never witness again. There's never been anything like it.”

According to van Dijk's ideological square framework, which is a crucial part of discourse-based ideological analysis, the president's language in this statement creates a strongly positive in-group representation (Us) while subtly establishing an evaluative contrast with unidentified others (Them). Van Dijk claims that political discourse frequently highlights positive information about "Us" and bad information about "Them," while downplaying negative features of the in-group and positive characteristics of the out-group, all of which contribute to the discourse's polarized ideology.

Referring to his election opponent and a senior senator by their first names, the President at times seemed to taunt his opponents and rally his followers in the chamber. He also showed a startling disregard and contempt for his predecessor, Joe Biden. In the meantime, President Trump's tone was arrogant and combative, much like in prior appearances.

“Over the past six weeks, 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.”

The president's assertion that he has signed "nearly 100 Executive orders and taken more than 400 executive actions – a record" in this passage clearly emphasizes the positive aspects of the US by presenting his government as incredibly successful,

dynamic, and sensitive to the interests of the people. The speech associates the in-group (his administration and its supporters) with positive outcomes and national renewal by framing this large number of actions as a "record" intended to restore "common sense, safety, optimism, and wealth." This reinforces a positive collective identity for his audience.

The phrase "The people elected me ... and I'm doing it" implies that critics or political opponents (e.g., Democrats, previous administration) are less legitimate or effective, emphasizing a negative Them in the speech's context. Critics are implicitly presented as ineffective or obstructive by contrasting them with the speaker's track record of action, implying that they (the opponents) failed to act forcefully.

To unshackle our economy, I have directed that for every 1 new regulation, 10 old regulations must be eliminated, just like I did in my very successful first term. And in that first term, we set records on ending unnecessary rules and regulations like no other President had done before.

According to van Dijk's ideological square, political discourse frequently creates a us vs. them polarization by emphasizing positive attributes of the in-group (Us) and negative attributes of the out-group (Them), while downplaying negative aspects of Us and ignoring positive aspects of Them. The president presents his deregulation plan as a daring victory aimed to "unshackle our economy" in this statement, emphasizing positive information about Us and portraying his administration as proactive, effective, and exceptionally successful.

At the same time, the speech implicitly contrasts the speaker's administration with previous ones by implying that the regulatory environment was overly burdensome and needed to be drastically reduced — a framing that can portray Them (previous administrations or regulatory proponents) as less effective or having hampered economic progress.

In keeping with van Dijk's idea of downplaying negative aspects of the United States, the statement likewise minimizes any potential disadvantages of rapid deregulation, such as worries about consumer protections, environmental preservation, or public safety. The rhetoric avoids addressing complicated trade-offs that critics or politicians could bring up by concentrating only on economic freedom and historical accomplishment. The fourth feature of the ideological square—downplaying good Them attributes—is also fulfilled by excluding any beneficial contributions from different policy viewpoints (such as bipartisan regulatory improvements or safeguards), which worsens the divide between the US and them.

We've ended the tyranny of so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies all across the entire Federal Government and, indeed, the private sector and our military. And our country will be woken no longer.

Van Dijk's ideological square states that polarized political discourse frequently creates a us vs. them binary by: (1) highlighting positive information about Us; (2) highlighting negative information about Them; (3) de-emphasizing negative information about Us; and (4) de-emphasizing positive information about Them. All of these strategies are used to support a specific ideological stance. The president employs strong evaluative language in this statement to portray the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as a liberation from "tyranny," a term with strong negative connotations that highlights negative characteristics of the out-group (Them) by framing DEI policies as harmful or oppressive.

The statement "our country will be waking no longer" simultaneously serves to highlight the positive aspects of the in-group (Us) by offering a vision of national rebirth and freedom from what the speaker describes as polarizing cultural tendencies. In contrast to Them, who is implicitly described as being ruled by ideology rather than

skill or merit, this positive self-representation creates a mental model in which Us is logical, merit-based, and united around common ideals.

Additionally, by failing to acknowledge the advantages that proponents of DEI ascribe to such programs (e.g., improved representation, equitable opportunity), the excerpt de-emphasizes good features of Them. This deliberate omission deepens the us vs. them dichotomy at the heart of van Dijk's paradigm and perpetuates a one-sided ideological framing that marginalizes opposing viewpoints.

We suffered the worst inflation in 48 years, but perhaps even in the history of our country—they're not sure. As President, I'm fighting every day to reverse this damage and make America affordable again.

According to Van Dijk's ideological square, political speech creates divided narratives by deliberately emphasizing the good traits of the in-group (Us) and the negative traits of the out-group (Them), while downplaying the negative traits of the in-group and disregarding the positive traits of the out-group. In this passage, the president describes inflation as "the worst inflation in 48 years, perhaps even in the history of our country" and subtly blames the previous administration's policies for it. he highlights negative information about Them (here, his political opponents) by linking them to economic harm and depicting their reign as worse than any in recent memory,

So, while we take out the criminals, killers, traffickers, and child predators who were allowed to enter our country under the open-border policy of these people—the Democrats, the Biden administration—the open border, insane policies that you've allowed to destroy our country—we will now bring in brilliant, hard-working, job-creating people.

According to van Dijk's ideological square, political discourse frequently uses language techniques that minimize bad features of Us and positive aspects of Them

while emphasizing positive information about Us and negative information about Them in order to systematically establish group identities. In this passage, Trump characterizes them (the Democrats and the Biden administration) in a very bad light by calling their policies "open border, insane policies" and asserting that they have "destroyed our country." This framing, which blames political opponents for permitting dangerous people (such as criminals, traffickers, and child predators) to enter the country under previous immigration laws, is an obvious example of highlighting negative facts about Them. The speech perpetuates a schema in which Them are perceived as careless, destructive, and responsible for social issues by combining several dangerous characteristics and assigning them to the governance of the out-group.

On the other hand, by suggesting that the United States will "bring in brilliant, hard-working, job-creating people," the statement explicitly highlights positive information about the country. In stark contrast to the purported shortcomings of the out-group, this presents the in-group as positive and advantageous to the country's economy and society. Additionally, by concentrating only on the positive contrast (job creation, economic advantage), the excerpt minimizes the bad elements of the United States, ignoring potential hazards, the complexity of immigration enforcement, or the difficulties of integrating immigrants. Additionally, it minimizes the beneficial features of them, leaving out any acknowledgment of legitimate policy goals, humanitarian obligations, or opposing opinions related to earlier immigration policies.

V. CONCLUSION

Through us vs. them representations in presidential discourse, this study has shown how political language can be an effective tool for creating and sustaining ideological polarization. Through the use of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly the ideological square, this study has demonstrated that the current

president of the United States consistently highlights the positive characteristics of the in-group (Us) while simultaneously depicting opposing groups or policies as negative or dangerous (Them). The speeches actively create mental models that impact audience cognition and group identity in addition to reflecting pre-existing ideological positions through linguistic techniques like evaluative labeling, metaphor, pronoun use, and the removal of opposing viewpoints. The examination of significant speeches reveals that polarization is encoded at several discourse levels and is not just a characteristic of political disagreement. The study demonstrates how political rhetoric can create binary oppositions that have both communicative and ideological purposes by identifying recurrent patterns of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. This validates research findings that political discourse frequently uses rhetorical constructions to promote group cohesion and division, a phenomenon seen in both domestic and international political contexts.

This study offers perspectives for academics, media analysts, and policymakers regarding the mechanisms through which polarization is linguistically enacted and sustained, in addition to its theoretical contributions. In order to interpret political communication in increasingly divided public spaces and to promote more critical and knowledgeable engagement with political rhetoric, it is essential to comprehend these processes. Future studies could apply this framework to comparative analyses of political leadership or investigate the relationship between rhetorical polarization and media amplification found here. In the end, the results confirm that language is never neutral in political contexts; rather, it is a site of intersection and contestation of meaning, identity, power, and ideology.

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