

# Politics, Culture and Socialization

2023-2024

Political Identities Challenged: Democracy, Culture, and Socialization

Democracy, Democracy Support and Democracy Socialization

Trump's New Face of Power in America

The State of America IV: A Nation Divided, But Still Strong

Political Identities Challenged: Exploring the Consequences of Communicative Changes

The analysis of political equivocation by British political leaders

Knocking at the House with Closed Doors: Metaphorical representation of European integration in Ukrainian media discourse before 2014

Mere Duplication or Original? ISIS Ability to Adapt Propaganda to Different Target Audiences

*Voicing Politics*: Linguistics and the Debility of Political Science



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# Politics, Culture & Socialization

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# Preface

With the invasion by Russia of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 started a new period in situations of international conflict. For many of us, collaboration with friends and colleagues from Russia abruptly became a problematic issue. Almost similarly, the period of Covid Pandemic slowly came to an end. On March 17, 2022 there took place an IPSA RC21-29 Workshop at Antwerp University, Belgium. At least two volumes of *Politics, Culture and Socialization* would be dedicated to the themes of this workshop, “Political Identities Challenged: Exploring the Consequences of the Confrontation with COVID and Communicative Changes”. Incoming papers, before and after the Workshop, however, discussed, much less than we expected, the theme of Covid Pandemic. In contrast, “Democracy” and “Communication” turned out to be the most chosen topics!

We followed the preferences of our colleagues, which indicate significant trends in the research on Politics, Culture and Socialization, as we present the two special issues covering 2023 and 2024 of the journal *Politics, Culture and Socialization*. The first special issue is entitled *Political Identities Challenged: Democracy, Culture, and Socialization*. Guest editors are Paul Dekker (Tilburg University, The Netherlands), with Henk Dekker (Leiden University, The Netherlands) and Daniel B. German (Appalachian State University, USA). *Political Identities Challenged: Exploring the Consequences of Communicative Changes* is the theme of the second special issue. Guest editors are Hongna Miao (Nanjing University, PRC) and Oleksii Polegkyi (Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland), with Christ’l De Landtsheer (University of Antwerp, Belgium). More detailed information about the focus and contents of the special issues can be found in a separate foreword to every issue composed by the guest editors. The incoming articles on communication being numerous, a second special issue on this topic is being planned for 2025. The journal *Politics, Culture and Socialization* will meanwhile continue with its mission to report on scientific research that discusses recent trends and history-based analyses in the areas of political socialization and political education, and in the field of political psychology. Article submissions are welcome!

The peer-reviewed articles in the two issues are again written and/or edited by scholars of multiple origin: The Netherlands, Canada, USA, PRC, the UK, Poland, Belgium, and Turkey. There is much variation in the subjects dealt with, in the scientific perspectives, and in the methods of these scholars involved in political socialization and political psychology research. The 2023 volume on “Democracy” opens with an analytical article by Henk Dekker (Leiden University, The Netherlands) entitled “Democracy, Democracy Support and Democracy Socialization”. The volume continues with a critical analysis of “Trump’s New Face of Power in America” by Bob Hanke (independent scholar, Canada). Furthermore, there is the section Work in Progress with “The State of America IV: A Nation Divided, But Still Strong”, by *Daniel B. German (Appalachian State University, USA)*.

The 2024 volume on “Communication” brings four empirical articles. Peter Bull (Universities of York and Salford, UK) details “The analysis of political equivocation by British political leaders”. Furthermore, one article is focusing on the topic of the relation of Ukraine and the European Union before the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. The qualitative metaphor analysis by Oleksii Polegkyi (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) and Christ’l De Landtsheer (University of Antwerp, Belgium) reveals a disappointed attitude at the Ukrainian side (“Knocking at the House with Closed Doors: Metaphorical representation of European integration in Ukrainian media discourse before 2014”). A third article consists of a

quantitative content analysis of ISIS propaganda by Onur Sultan (University of Antwerp) and Ismail Aslan (Independent scholar, Ankara, Turkey) (“Mere Duplication or Original? ISIS Ability to Adapt Propaganda to Different Target Audiences”). A fourth article is by Richard D. Anderson, Jr. (University of California at Los Angeles, USA). The author starts from a prominent recent book by political scientists to “deconstruct” the bias in survey questions research (“*Voicing Politics: Linguistics and the Debility of Political Science*”). His article, which can be seen as a political-linguistic case study, is highly critical, so that the book authors are invited to defend themselves in a coming issue of *Politics, Culture and Socialization*.

Perspectives taken in the articles of the 2023-2024 issues stem from public opinion studies within political science and political philosophy, and from speech communication and propaganda studies. The methods for these studies in politics, culture and socialization consist of descriptive survey analysis, psychohistory, speech and metaphor analysis, and statistical content analysis. The 2023-2024 issues also present reviews of three recent fascinating books! The reviews by Daniel B. German discuss scholarly work on violent conflicts in “the Post-Soviet Space” and the impact of technology in communications. It is clear that the book reviews in this issue are thematically related to some of the scholarly articles.

As always, we encourage you to contact the editors with your ideas on new books in the area that you would like to review, or to send them your own new book for review. Even more, we invite you to submit your own manuscripts to the international and interdisciplinary (peer reviewed) journal *Politics, Culture and Socialization!*

Christ’l De Landtsheer, Managing Editor  
Daniel B. German, Henk Dekker, Co-Editors  
*Politics, Culture and Socialization*

Vol. 14, 2023: Special Issue:  
Political Identities Challenged:  
Democracy, Culture, and Socialization

*Guest editors: Paul Dekker (Tilburg University, The Netherlands),  
with Henk Dekker (Leiden University, The Netherlands)  
and Daniel B. German (Appalachian State University, USA)*



# Foreword

The feeling that democracy is under threat or even in crisis is true of all times, but the feeling has been very strong in many countries in recent years (though perhaps that sense of particularity is also of all times). Internationally, waves of democratisation have been extinguished, and authoritarian leaders have put themselves in the spotlight of the world stage. In many countries, there are concerns about the growth of a technocratically and technologically driven anti-political *Post-democracy*, the erosion of democratic culture through destructive *Polarisation* and encroaching anti-institutional *Populism*. In this special issue, we do not focus on deepening these P-diagnoses and their interrelationships but primarily aim to provide a better picture of the democratic nature of national political systems and their actors.

This special issue opens with a review article by Henk Dekker. He discusses international surveys of countries' democratic content and citizens' support for democratic governance. The findings are diverse but worrying across the board. Only a minority of countries are democratic, and a minority of the world's population lives in a democracy. Trends are negative and in established democracies are showing erosion. Popular support for democratic governance and democratic values is limited. Enthusiasm for democracy is mostly there only among a minority and support for democracy is not infrequently combined with sympathy for undemocratic authoritarianism and technocratic leadership. According to the author, there is little reason to optimistically trust in global growth and flourishing of democracy as an outcome of modernisation and economic prosperity. There is a need to better socialise citizens into resilient democrats to resist the temptations and threats of strong leaders and undemocratic movements.

Against this background, we zoom in on the United States of America (USA) and its current leader. The second article elaborates on the political breakthrough of Donald Trump. Using, among others, the theoretical notions of face-work (Goffman) and faciality (Deleuze and Guattari), Bob Hanke meticulously analyses Trump's first presidential campaign and reign from 2016 with great richness of concepts and inspiring comparisons. Through extreme media use, Trump developed into the macro face of national power. In 2020, that power lost its presidential guise, but not its importance. Or as Bob Hanke concludes his article, "The micro-fascist conjunction of power around the 45<sup>th</sup> president was a historical moment of danger that will have far-ranging, long-term political ramifications for US democracy."

In the third article, Dan German describes the state of democracy in America. Basing himself, like Henk Dekker, on research by Freedom House, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), he agrees with EIU's characterisation of the USA as 'flawed democracy'. A deteriorating political culture manifests itself in the anti-democratic misconduct of the former and present president and his supporters (Trump's refusal to concede the 2020 election; the January 6, 2021, Capital riots).

This special issue is completed with a review of a book about violent ethnic conflicts in the not so (fully) democratic southern post-soviet nations.

# Democracy, Democracy Support and Democracy Socialization

*Henk Dekker*

Institute of Political Science, Leiden University<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** What is the current democratic situation in the world? How can we explain the presence or absence of democracy in countries? How much popular support is there for democracy? How can we explain variance in this support for democracy? These are the key questions to answer in this article. Only a small fraction of the world's countries are democracies, and only a small fraction of the world's population lives in a democracy. Moreover, many existing democracies suffer from a gradual erosion. Favourable conditions for democracy include a positive economic development, a good functioning of the actual democracy, democratic leaders without autocratic temptations, and a strong and robust support for democracy among the population. Support for democracy among citizens in the world is however weak: only a minority said that a representative democracy is a very good way of governing the country and even less support a representative democracy without also supporting a non-democratic rule by experts, a strong leader or the military. Support for democracy on the individual level is the effect of various other orientations such as knowledge of democracy and autocracy, satisfaction with democracy, political trust, subjective well-being, and emancipatory values. People acquire these orientations through experience and socialization. Committed democrats are concerned with the decline of democracy and the intensifying wave of autocratization in the world over the past decade and ask for new initiatives to establish and defend democracy.

**Keywords:** democracy socialization, democracy support, democracy

## Introduction

The U.S.A. is the example of a democracy in the eyes of many. So, it was a big surprise when the Republican former president and 2024 presidential candidate Donald Trump told a crowd of Christian supporters that they won't 'have to vote again' if they return him to the presidency in the coming election. 'Christians, get out and vote! Just this time – you won't have to do it anymore'.<sup>2</sup> Even greater was the surprise when he turned out to have been elected by an overwhelming majority, while Americans generally say in surveys that they are in favour of a democracy. Not only in the U.S.A. but also in other countries, e.g. Hungary, democracy is in danger under attack from an undemocratic leader. The current situation of democracy in the world is indicated

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1 Prof. Dr. Henk Dekker: professor emeritus, Institute of Political Science, Leiden University, [dekkerh@fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:dekkerh@fsw.leidenuniv.nl) <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/henk-dekker#tab-1>

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/jul/27/trump-speech-no-need-to-vote-future>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/jul/30/donald-trump-wont-have-to-vote-any-more-fox-interview>.

by words such as decline, recession, degradation, erosion, and backsliding. This brings me to a number of questions. Who keeps track of the democracy versus autocracy developments in the world and how? What is the current democratic situation in the world? If there is indeed a decline, what are the causes of this decline and what explains the presence or absence of democracy in a country most? That leaders want more power is not unusual, but what do citizens think about it? Who keeps track of the support for democracy in the world? How is support for democracy measured? How much popular support is there for democracy? Is support for democracy declining, and if so, also among mature democracies? And how can we explain variances in this support? Driven by amazement and curiosity, I looked for answers to those questions as much as possible based on empirical evidence. The ones I found so far are below.

## Democracy in the world

Democracy is defined and measured differently in the relevant literature. 'Thin' or 'minimalist' definitions include a few institutional features. 'Thick' or 'maximalist' definitions include more institutional attributes and involve also economic, social, and cultural aspects. An extremely 'thin' definition includes only presence of elections. This makes sense because democracy cannot exist without elections but is on the other hand not completely satisfying because elections in themselves do not make democracy and can even serve as a facade for the opposite (electoral autocracies). A few additional institutional features, which have been mentioned in several publications and on which there seems to be consensus, are: incumbent government can be turned out of office through elections; these elections are fixed-term, free and fair; universal adult suffrage; right to run for office; trias politica with an independent judiciary; a competitive multi-party system; freedom of expression; independent media with alternative sources of information; and an associational autonomy (among others, Dahl, 1971). These attributes are also reflected in the description of democracy in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures'.<sup>3</sup> The different conceptualizations and operationalizations of democracy have led to several questions about the validity and reliability of the existing measurements of democracy (Knutsen, 2010). In any case, it seems good not to rely on one but several data sources for knowledge of the situation of democracy in the world. Here I use the international comparative measurements of democracy by Freedom House, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the Varieties of Democracy Institute, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

**Freedom House**<sup>4</sup> publishes every year a global report on political rights and civil liberties since 1973 and a regional report on democratic governance since 1998. The 2024 *Freedom in*

3 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. Articles 21.1, 21.2, and 21.3 present de democracy features. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> .

4 Freedom House is 'a non-profit, nonpartisan organization that works to create a world where all are free'. The mission is to inform the world about threats to freedom, to mobilize global action, and to support democracy's defenders. 'Freedom House is founded on the core conviction that freedom flourishes

*the World* edition (Freedom House: Gorokhovskaia and Grothe, 2024a and b) covers developments in 195 countries and 15 territories in 2023. Both laws and actual practices are considered and are factored into scoring decisions. More than 130 analysts and around 40 advisers are engaged in the study. They use a broad range of sources, including academic articles, news articles, reports from nongovernmental organizations, on-the-ground research, and individual professional contacts. First, the analysts score countries and territories. Next, these scores are discussed at a series of review meetings, organized by region, and attended by Freedom House staff and a panel of advisers. The Freedom House staff is responsible for any final decision for the end product. The measurement is based on 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators (25 indicators) which take the form of questions. For each indicator are 0 to 4 points given, respectively the smallest and the greatest degree of freedom. The political rights concern: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government (in total: ten questions and scores between 0 and 40). The civil liberties concern: freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights (in total: fifteen questions and scores between 0 and 60). The combination of the overall score awarded for political rights and the overall score awarded for civil liberties, after being equally weighted, determines the country's status of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. According to the report, 20% of the world's population lived in a free country by 2023 (83 of the 195 countries), 42% lived in a partly free country (56 countries), while 38% lived in a not free country (56 countries). There has been a decline in global freedom in 18 consecutive years. In 2023, the decline was steep; political rights and civil liberties were diminished in 52 countries, while only 21 countries made improvements. The manipulation of elections was among the leading causes of global erosion in freedom. The regional *2024 Nations in Transit* (Freedom House: Smeltzer and Karppi, 2024a and b) edition measures the level of democratic governance in 29 countries in the region that stretches from Central Europe to Central Asia in 2023. A country's ratings are determined by considering the practical effect of the state and nongovernmental actors on an individual's rights and freedoms. The democracy score incorporates separate ratings on seven indicators: national and local governance, electoral process, independent media, civil society, judicial framework and independence, and corruption. Based on the scale of 1-7, the researchers distinguished five regime types: consolidated authoritarian regime, semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, transitional/hybrid regime, semi-consolidated democracy, and consolidated democracy. Out of the 29 countries 11 are transitional or hybrid regimes, 6 are consolidated democracies, 4 are semi-consolidated democracies, and 8 are consolidated authoritarian regimes. The year 2023 is the twentieth consecutive year of overall decline in democratic governance for the region; just 5 out of the 29 countries registered improvements and 10 out of 29 countries suffered downgrades.

**The Economist Intelligence Unit**<sup>5</sup> has the view that a measure of democracy which reflects only the state of political freedoms and civil liberties is not thick enough. Democracy is more than the sum of its institutions. A democratic culture including popular support for democracy and political participation are also necessary components of a 'thick' measure of democracy. As a result, the EIU Democracy Index measures the quality of democracies based on five categories of indicators: civil liberties; electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political culture; and political participation with a total of 60 indicators. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall index is the simple average of the five category indexes. The main sources are experts' assessments and public-opinion surveys mainly the World Values

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ishes in democratic nations where governments are accountable to their people'. 1850 M St. NW Floor 11, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 296-5101. <https://freedomhouse.org/>

5 The Economist Intelligence Unit is the research and analysis division of the Economist Group which is a global media and information-services company. <https://www.eiu.com/n/>.

Surveys. The Index provides a snapshot of the state of democracy in 165 independent states and two territories, covering almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the world's states. Each country is classified as one of four types of regimes: "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime". In 2023 there was full democracy in 24 of the 167 countries surveyed (14%), in which 8% of the world population lived. There is a 'flawed democracy' in 50 countries (30%) in which 38% of the world population lived. These two forms of democracy cover a minority of countries (44%) in which less than half of the world's population lives (45%). More than a third of the countries have an 'authoritarian regime' (59 countries, 35% of the countries) with 39% of the world population, while a fifth of the countries have a 'hybrid regime' (34 countries, 20% of all countries) with 15% of the world population. About half of the countries (68) registered a decline in their democracy score and the other half showed scores that stayed the same (67), 'painting a global picture of stagnation and regression' (EIU, 2023, 4). The global average score on the Democracy Index fell again also in 2023 (from 5.29 in 2022 to 5.23 in 2023) and is the worst global score since the index was first produced in 2006 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2024).

**The Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem)**<sup>6</sup> published in 2024 for the eighth time its Democracy Report (Nord et al., 2024). This report includes a Liberal Democracy Index and a Regimes of the World measure. The Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both electoral and liberal aspects of democracy. The electoral component is measured by the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) that captures Dahl's polyarchy elements, including the quality of elections, individual rights, as well as freedoms of expression, the media, and association. The Liberal Component Index (LCI) captures the liberal aspects including checks and balances on the executive, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the independence of the legislature and the judiciary. The Regimes of the World measure (RoW) is a categorical measure classifying countries into four distinct regimes: two forms of democracy (electoral and liberal) and two types of autocracies (electoral and closed) (Lührmann, Tannenberg and Lindberg, 2018). An electoral democracy meets sufficiently elevated levels of free and fair elections as well as universal suffrage, freedom of expression and association, while a liberal democracy has in addition executive constraint by the legislature and high courts, rule of law and individual rights. In electoral autocracies, there are institutions emulating democracy but falling below the threshold for democracy, while in closed autocracies, an individual or group of people exercise power largely unconstrained by the people. V-Dem typically gathers data from five experts per country-year observation, working independently, and using a pool of over 4.300 country experts. Experts report their judgments using rough ordinal categories. The V-Dem model then converts these expert ratings to a single continuous latent scale and thereby estimates values of the concept. The observations in 2023 include the following: The world is almost evenly divided between 91 democracies and 88 autocracies. But, much more people live in an autocracy than in a democracy: 71% respectively 29% of the world's population: 27% live in one of the 33 closed autocracies, 44% live in one of the 55 electoral autocracies, 16% live in one of the 59 electoral democracies and 13% in one of the 32 liberal democracies. Autocratization is ongoing in 42 countries, home to 35% of the world's population, while democratization is taking place in 18 countries.

**The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**<sup>7</sup> provides in its Global State of Democracy Reports an annual analysis of democracy in 173 countries

6 The Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem) is part of the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden. [www.v-dem.net](http://www.v-dem.net)

7 The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an inter-governmental organisation with 35 Member States from all over the world. Its mission is to support democracy worldwide (<https://www.idea.int/>). It works with local communities, democracy practiti-

across the globe covering the years 1975-2023. Most of the data on which these reports are based comes from the own Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices. These Indices provide annual global rankings of country performance for each of four categories of democratic performance rather than classifying regimes on an overall basis. The focus on category-level performance (rather than on something like regime types) allows according to IDEA for a more nuanced understanding of where democracy is thriving and where it is suffering. It also shifts the focus from the broad idea of democracy generally to specific and narrower aspects of democracy, which are more appropriate to target for reform and intervention. The 4 top-level categories of democratic performance are representation, rights, rule of law and participation. They in turn are based on 17 second-level indices such as credible elections and judicial independence and a couple of specific lowest-level indices such as freedom of expression and social group equality. The data sources include observational data from United Nations agencies, expert-coded data from academic programmes and some data collected directly by IDEA self. The Indices are based on a total of 165 indicators. Each index ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 being the most democratic. The boundaries are set by the best and worst observed values across all countries and years. The Global State of Democracy 2024 Report concludes that the core categories reveal that ‘the plight of democracy continues’ (IDEA, 2024: 13). Declines at the factor level have been most concentrated in the categories of representation (especially at credible elections and effective parliament) and rights (especially at economic equality, freedom of expression and freedom of the press). Almost half of the countries (47%) suffered a decline in at least one second-level factor of democratic performance, compared with their own performance five years prior, while in contrast, 30% advanced in at least one factor over that period. IDEA concludes that democracy continued its decline in 2023, with notable challenges emerging regarding representation and rights. Four in nine countries were worse off in 2023 than they had been in 2018, while only one in four had improved. A negative trend that developed roughly a decade ago continues. Challenges to democracy are found in every part of the world and at every level of democratic performance.

**The Bertelsmann Stiftung**<sup>8</sup> analyses and evaluates the quality of democracy in combination with economic performance and governance in 137 developing and transformation countries on a biennial basis since 2006 (long-consolidated democracies with a well-advanced economy are not included in the sample). The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) is based on a qualitative expert survey in which written assessments are translated into numerical ratings and examined in a multistage review process to make them comparable both within and across regions. The review period for the 2024 edition was from February 1, 2021, through January 31, 2023. The assessment is based on country reports from 269 experts from universities and think tanks across more than 120 countries. Guided by a standardized codebook, country experts assess the extent to which a total of 17 criteria have been met for each of the countries and ground the scores in their country reports. A second country expert then reviews these assessments and scores. In a last step, each of the individual scores on the 49 indicators given per country are subjected to regional and interregional calibration processes. The ‘thick’ concept of

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oners and partner organizations all over the world. IDEA develops, shares and enables the use of comparative knowledge, assist in democratic reform, and influence policies and politics, focusing on six workstreams, including Democracy Assessment. Its main knowledge products are the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Reports, the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices, and The Democracy Tracker (<https://www.idea.int/gsood/>). IDEA has offices in 20 countries; its headquarters is located in Stockholm, Sweden.

8 The Bertelsmann Stiftung is a nonprofit foundation, established in 1977, that ‘share knowledge, promote expertise and develop solutions’. The foundation ‘is committed to ensuring that everyone in society can participate in political, economic and cultural life’ and its focus is on ‘people, because people are the drivers of change and can make the world a better place’. [www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en)

democracy includes not only free elections and basic civil rights but also among other things the rule of law, the separation of powers, the prosecution of office abuse, the quality of representation regarding the party system and interest groups, and the approval of democratic norms and procedures. The BTI aggregates the results of the study into two indices: The Status Index and the Governance Index. The Status Index is aggregated by calculating the average of the total scores given for the dimensions of political (democracy status) and economic (economy status) transformation and identifies where each country stands on its path toward democracy under the rule of law and a social market economy. The Governance Index is aggregated by calculating the average of scores given for the governance performance criteria. The indicators on the state of political transformation are also used in determining whether a country can be classified as a democracy or autocracy. Seven threshold values marking minimum requirements are considered. Not the aggregate political transformation score determines whether or not a country is a democracy or autocracy, but rather the thresholds. The democracy indicators are free and fair elections, effective power to govern, association/assembly rights, freedom of expression, separation of powers, civil rights, monopoly on the use of force, and basic administration.<sup>9</sup> The latest findings of the Transformation Index, now in its tenth edition, show that out of the 137 countries surveyed, a majority are autocracies and only 63 remained democracies. The quality of democracy in the studied developing and transformation countries has been in steady decline over the past 20 years. In the last two years alone, elections in 25 countries were less free and fair, while assembly and association rights in 32 states have been increasingly curtailed and the freedom of expression in 39 countries has faced tightened controls (Donner and Hartmann, 2024).

**Conclusion.** We may conclude that the definitions and operationalizations in these five reports do differ, but not in a completely incomparable way. The conclusions in all five also differ in the details here and there, but there are also two broad common outcomes: first, only a small part of the countries in the world are democracies and only a small part of the world's population lives in a democracy, and second, democracy suffers from a gradual erosion.

There is democracy in only a small number of countries for only a small part of the world's population. Freedom House 2023 reports: 43% van de countries are free with 20% of the world's population. The Economist Intelligence Unit 2023 data are: 14% of the countries have a full democracy with 8% of the world population. The Varieties of Democracy Institute states that 18% of the countries have a 'liberal democracy' with 13% of the world population and 33% of the countries have an 'electoral democracy' with 16% of the world population. The Bertelsmann Stiftung 2023 data show that a majority of the developing and transformation countries surveyed are autocracies (54%).

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9 The autocracy indicators are: 'free elections are not held or are marked by serious irregularities and restrictions; democratically elected leaders de facto lack the power to govern; freedom of association or assembly does not exist, or civil society organizations are suppressed; freedom of expression or media freedom does not exist, or severe restrictions are in place; constitutional oversight and checks and balances of the executive, legislature or judiciary do not exist, or exist only on paper; civil rights are systematically violated; stateness is eroded (failing state): the state has no control over large parts of the country and fails to fulfil basic administrative functions'.

Table 1: Percentages democracies and autocracies of all countries surveyed and percentages of the world population living in a democracy or autocracy according to Freedom House, the Economist Intelligence Unit, and the Varieties of Democracy Institute in 2023 and 2024.

<b>Freedom House 2024</b>				
'Free country'	43 %	of 195 countries	20 %	of the world population
'Partly free country'	29 %	of 195 countries	42 %	of the world population
'Not free country'	29 %	of 195 countries	38 %	of the world population
<b>Economist Intelligence Unit 2023</b>				
'Full democracy'	14 %	of 167 countries	8 %	of the world population
'Flawed democracy'	30 %	of 167 countries	38 %	of the world population
'Hybrid regime'	20 %	of 167 countries	15 %	of the world population
'Authoritarian regime'	35 %	of 167 countries	39 %	of the world population
<b>Varieties of Democracy Institute 2024</b>				
'Liberal democracy'	18%	of 179 countries	13 %	of the world population
'Electoral democracy'	33%	of 179 countries	16 %	of the world population
'Electoral autocracy'	31%	of 179 countries	44 %	of the world population
'Closed autocracy'	18%	of 179 countries	27 %	of the world population

Moreover, there is currently a worldwide wave not of strengthening but of weakening democracy. Freedom House observes a decline in global freedom in 18 consecutive years and a steep decline in 2023. The Economist Intelligence Unit reports that the global average score on its democracy index fell again in 2023 and that this was the worst global score since the index was first produced in 2006. The data paint 'a global picture of stagnation and regression' (EIU, 2023, 4). The Varieties of Democracy Institute observes that autocratization is ongoing in 42 countries, home to 35% of the world's population, while democratization is taking place in only 18 countries, home to 5% of the world's population. IDEA observes that democracy continued its decline, that the negative trend that developed a decade ago continues, and that challenges to democracy are found in every part of the world and at every level of democratic performance. The Bertelsmann Stiftung sees a steady decline in the quality of democracy in the studied developing and transformation countries over the past 20 years and calls this a gradual erosion of democracy.

## Democracy explanations

How can it be explained that one country has a full democracy, and another country has a flawed democracy, hybrid regime or an autocracy, that only a small part of the countries in the world are democracies and only a small part of the world's population lives in a democracy, and that democracy suffers from a gradual erosion? The existing literature presents various explanatory variables: positive conditions for a democracy include economic prosperity and equality, a good functioning of the actual democracy, democratic leaders without autocratic temptations, and democratic citizens (Diskin and Hazan, 2005).

**Economic prosperity** is expected to have a positive effect on democracy. A reasonable income has a positive effect on subjective well-being, tolerance, trust, and probably also on satisfaction with and support for democracy. Economic progress also leads to a greater need for

self-expression which in turn leads to a greater need for agency and democracy (Inglehart, 2003, 57). It should be noted that this economic prosperity must benefit everyone and not just a small group. If inequality increases and the small number of rich people get richer and the large group of less rich and poor people remains at the same level or gets poorer, there is a great chance of dissatisfaction among a large part of the population and thus of reduced satisfaction with and support for democracy.

**A well-functioning democracy** is also expected to have a positive effect on democracy because citizens can be satisfied with their democracy and as a result will support this democracy. In case of a malfunctioning democracy in which, for example, problems that directly affect citizens are not solved, in which there is a strong polarization, where influence and power are bought with money, and corruption is rampant, citizens may become dissatisfied with the democracy in their country and with democracy in general, and may give less support to democracy. Carothers and Hartnett (2024) have tested the democracy-not-delivering thesis. They examined twelve countries that experienced democratic backsliding during the past twenty years from a starting point of either electoral democracy or liberal democracy. These countries were drawn from the 25 to 40 countries (depending on the specific measures used) that are usually identified as having experienced backsliding in the time period. For each country, a range of socioeconomic and political developments were analysed to answer among others the following question: was the election of the leader who ended up engaging in backsliding clearly linked to a failure of democracy to deliver? The study shows that the democracy-not-delivering thesis has some explanatory power in certain cases, but little in others. Also, the proposition that when citizens are disappointed with the socio-economic results of democratic governance, they knowingly embrace antidemocratic alternatives does not hold up to empirical scrutiny. ‘The onus for backsliding belongs on those leaders who gain power for a wide range of reasons, including in many cases by promising to renovate democracy, but then once in power relentlessly amass unconstrained power by overriding countervailing institutions and undercutting basic democratic norms and procedures’ (Carothers and Hartnett 2024: 34). A strong and robust confirmation of a negatively curvilinear relationship between affective polarization and democratic support was found by Janssen and Turkenburg (2024) employing generalized additive modelling on data from Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

**Democratic leaders** are expected to also have a positive effect on democracy while power-hungry leaders with autocratic tendencies are expected to pose a threat to democracy. For stability, leaders must provide as much democracy as the people want (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 187). Democracy erodes from the top, states Bartels (2023). Europe’s most sobering example of democratic backsliding - in Hungary - occurred according to him because conventional conservative parties, once elected, seized opportunities to entrench themselves in power. Freedom House data confirms that overreach by elected leaders is one of the primary drivers of democratic decline. That is the case when these leaders seek to eliminate the people and institutions that stand in their way, for example by trying to evade term limits, excluding opponents from elections, by firing judges and installing loyalists in courts, by limiting freedom of expression through harassment of journalists and government-directed mobile internet shutdowns, and diminishing the political rights of certain groups (Slipowitz and Gorokhovskaia, 2023). If given the chance and not inhibited by the institutions and the population, ‘personalist’ leaders (Frantz, et al., 2021) increasingly seize power, systematically eliminate all checks on them in the political system, appoint only loyal pumpjacks to important posts, establish their own guard army, monopolize the media, and set up professional image making and propaganda divisions.

**Democratic citizens** are the fourth explanatory variable for democracy vs. autocracy. In the end, this is perhaps the most important explanation because it can amplify, weaken, or nullify the effects of the previous three predictors mentioned. One of the key features of democratic

citizenship is the attitude of support for democracy (Dekker, 1996). If that support for democracy is superficial, low or absent, democracy may become insecure in times of crises and there will probably be little resistance to undemocratic leaders who want to take more power and undermine democracy. Many thinkers in the past have hypothesized the causal relationship between structure and culture. Empirical evidence for the causal relationship between democracy and democratic citizens is however not easily to obtain because of the need of valid and reliable measurements of support for democracy across many countries with different political systems from multiple years. Moreover, a distinction must be made between the survival and the strengthening and deepening of an existing democracy, a transformation of an autocracy into a democracy, and a transformation of a democracy into an autocracy. It is also important to know the meaning of the democracy the respondents claim to support. It should therefore come as no surprise that the few studies that have been conducted do not meet all requirements and have led to contradictory conclusions.

A recent study by Claassen (2020a) takes many of the complexities into account. Democracy was measured using the Liberal Democracy Index of the Varieties of Democracy Institute. Democratic support was measured by using a latent variable approach from available data from previously conducted cross-national surveys with representative national samples (14 survey projects, 1,390 nationally representative survey samples, 150 countries, 52 different questions, 3,765 nationally aggregated responses). The analyses show that support for democracy within democracies is indeed positively and significantly associated with subsequent development in democracy; in short, 'public support does indeed help democracy survive' (Claassen 2020a, 119). Jacob (2024) tested a similar hypothesis by combining data from public opinion surveys, party systems and democratic downturns in 100 democracies and implementing dynamic time-series cross-section models covering the period from 1990 to 2019. The conclusion is that periods in which anti-pluralist parties are in government during times of weak citizen support for democracy predict episodes of democratic decline.

Other attitudes that are seen essential for democracies besides support for democracy are more general attitudes such as interpersonal trust, tolerance of outgroups, postmaterialist values and self-expression values (Inglehart 2003). According to the 'cultural theory of autocracy versus democracy', 'the driving force of global regime evolution is the generative emergence of emancipatory values' (Welzel 2021a, 994). These values 'idealize universal human freedoms and combine a libertarian emphasis on individual choice with an egalitarian emphasis on equality of opportunity' (Welzel 2021a, 994). Values have been changed by the rise of education and the rise of education is an effect of modernization. Because emancipatory values embody a principled commitment to the vision of human nature that originally inspired democracy, the spread of emancipatory values among a population has more predictive power about the actual level of democracy in a country than is true for the percentage of people who say they support democracy. 'The achievement, maintenance, and deepening of democracy all become more likely as emancipatory values gain traction on a mass scale' (Welzel 2021a, 998). These proposals have not gone unchallenged. Foa et al. (2022) point out that there has been a decline not stability in levels of democratic support, emphasize that there is no clear pattern in survey data on emancipatory values in countries that have recently moved towards democracy, and reject the suggestion to examine emancipative values rather than what citizens think of democracy.

## Democracy support

Who keeps track of the support for democracy in the world? How is support for democracy measured? How much popular support is there for democracy? Is support of democracy declining and if so, also among mature democracies? And how can we explain variances in this support? To answer these questions, I analysed recently published reports from research institutions and journal articles from (groups of) individual researchers.

**Pew Research Centre.**<sup>10</sup> The most recent report from February 2024 on public opinion of democracy in the world has a title that reveals already much of the content: ‘Representative democracy remains a popular ideal, but people around the world are critical of how it’s working’ (Pew Research Center: Wike, R, et al., 2024a). The data were collected by nationally representative surveys conducted spring 2023 in 24 countries. The key survey question was: ‘For each political system, would it be a very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or very bad way of governing this country? a. A democratic system where citizens, not elected officials, vote directly on major national issues to decide what becomes law, b. A democratic system where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law, c. A system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts, d. Experts, not elected officials, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country, and e. The military rules the country’ (Pew Research Center, 2024b).

Solid majorities – a median of 77% - express support for representative democracy in all 24 countries. But enthusiasm for this form of government has slipped in many countries since 2017, according to the report. The numbers of people that view representative democracy as a ‘very good way’ to govern decreased significantly in 11 of the 22 countries (where data from the previous measurement in 2017 is available) and increased in only 3 countries. Views about representative democracy correlate with opinions about the state of the economy, and with the respondent’s income and education. There is more support for a representative democracy among those who say their country’s economic situation is good in about half of the countries surveyed, among people with higher incomes in nine countries, and among people with more education in eleven countries. In most of the countries surveyed there is also a correlation with satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. In 19 countries, there is also a correlation between opinions about representative democracy and the perception that one’s views are represented by at least one party. And in half the countries, representation democracy opinions correlate with the belief that elected representatives care about respondents’ opinions.

Not only representative democracy receives a lot of approval, but also direct democracy. In nearly all countries polled, majorities - with a median of 70% - view such a system favourably. This view correlates with saying that elected officials do not care what people like them think.

There is also support in most countries, albeit less large, for a system in which ‘experts, not elected officials, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country’ (58%). In two-thirds of the countries surveyed majorities say this would be a good way to govern. Support for this is significantly greater in 2023 than in 2017.

The support for a strong leader system has increased in 8 of the 22 countries and declined in 4 of these countries with data from 2017 and 2023. A median of around a quarter of all respondents are open to such an autocracy (26%). Support for a strong leader model correlates with a country’s gross domestic product; countries with a higher GDP per capita tend to have

10 Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research and is non-profit, nonpartisan and nonadvocacy. The Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, the primary funder and partners strategically with philanthropists and institutional funders who share the commitment to impartial research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/about/>

fewer people who support autocratic rule. Yet even in higher-income democracies there are substantial minorities that support rule by a strong leader. The U.S. stands out with the highest per-capita GDP of the countries surveyed and with more support for autocracy than in about half of the other countries. Views about autocracy correlate also with education, income, and political ideology; support is stronger among people with less education, those with lower incomes and people on the ideological right.

Military rule receives positive answers from a median of 15% across 24 countries. Views about military rule correlate with the respondent's income, education, and ideology; there is more support for military rule among people with lower incomes in 14 of the 22 countries, and among people with less education in 16 of the 22 countries, while people on the political right are less likely to say military rule is a very bad way to govern in 13 of the 18 countries where ideology is measured.

Although democracy scores well, there are quite a few people with significant criticisms of the way democracy functions. A 24-country median of 59% is not satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country. In only 7 of the 24 countries a majority is satisfied with the way democracy is working. In most countries, satisfaction with democracy has decreased. People with a positive perception of the current economic situation in their country are much more likely to also be satisfied with how democracy is working. A median of 74% across all 24 countries surveyed, say that elected officials in their country don't care what people like them think. This perception correlates with satisfaction with democracy in every country surveyed; people who feel politicians do not care about people like them are less satisfied with democracy. There is a positive correlation with a positive perception of the economic situation in one's country. A median of 42% across all 24 countries say that none of the parties in their country represent their views well. Especially people who place themselves in the centre are likely to feel unrepresented in 18 countries.

Pew Research Center also constructed an interesting distinction of people based on their attitudes towards democracy: 'committed democrats', 'less committed democrats', and 'non-democrats'. 'Committed democrats' support a representative democracy without also supporting a rule by experts, a strong leader, or a military rule (roughly a quarter of all respondents). 'Less committed democrats' support a representative democracy but also at least one non-democratic form of government (almost half of all respondents). 'Non-democrats' do not support representative democracy, but they do support at least one non-democratic form of government (about one-tenth). Public commitment to representative democracy is highest in countries that have a well-functioning democracy (as measured by the Economist Intelligence Unit). There is also a positive correlation with education (Pew Research Center: Wike et al., 2017).

Pew Research Center also asked questions about a number of democratic principles. Many people in the world support these democratic principles, but – again - that support is not overwhelming. In all 34 countries polled by Pew Research Center in 2019 most people said they find the democratic rights and institutions presented to them important, but it is not a very large majority that consider those rights and institutions 'very important' for their country: fair judiciary: 82%, gender equality: 74%, free religion: 68%, keeping regular competitive elections: 65%, free speech: 64%, press freedom: 64%, freedom on the internet: 59%, free operation for human rights groups: 55%, and free operation of opposition parties: 54% (Pew Research Center: Wike, R. and Schumacher, S., 2020, and Pew Research Center: Connaughton, A., et al., 2020).

**World Values Surveys.**<sup>11</sup> The main research instrument of the World Values Surveys is a representative comparative survey which is conducted globally every 5 years (Haerpfner, et al.,

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11 The World Values Survey (WVS) is an international research program devoted to the scientific and academic study of social, political, economic, religious, and cultural values of people in the world. The project's goal is to assess which impact values stability or change over time has on the social,

2022). The most recent Wave 7 comprises data for 66 countries/territories collected in 2018-2020. The last included survey was completed in July 2023. All countries employed random probability representative samples of the adult population. Vast majority of surveys were conducted using face-to-face interview. The key question in the survey is: 'I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country? Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections. Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country. Having the army rule. Having a democratic political system. Having a system governed by religious law in which there are no political parties or elections'. This is almost the same question as the key question from the Pew Research Center; added is the option of a system governed by religious law. On average 82% says that having a democratic political system is 'very good' or 'fairly good', respectively, 45% and 36%. The other options receive less but still significant numbers of positive reactions on average: a rule by a strong leader: 48%, an experts' rule: 57%, an army rule: 29%, and a religious law system: 30%. The WVS questionnaire also included a question that asked to indicate how important it is to live in a country that is governed democratically on a scale from 1 meaning it is 'not at all important' to 10 meaning 'absolutely important'. On average 47% answered 'absolutely important'. Another relevant question invites respondents to say how important fair elections are to them. On average, 61% answered 'very important' and 26% 'rather important'.

Inglehart's 2003 analysis of World Values Surveys data from 1981-2000 showed that the correlation between the one item that says that democracy is better than any other form of government and the level of democracy (as measured by Freedom House) is not significant in one year but is significant with the country's level of democracy during a longer period (1981-2000). A multi-item index including the same item saying democracy is a good way of governing but now combined with the experts' rule item, the strong leader item and the item saying 'democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government' is even a stronger predictor of a country's long-term level of democracy (.51 correlation). Remarkably the correlation with a set of self-expressive values such as tolerance of out-groups, trust, subjective well-being, postmaterialist values and political activism is an even more powerful explanatory variable. Islamic publics show on the one hand strong overt support for democracy but on the other hand a low score on the self-expression values. 'Despite a tradition of Asian values or an Islamic cultural heritage, the emergence of post-industrial society is conducive to rising emphasis on self-expression, which in turn brings rising mass demands for democracy' (Inglehart, 2003: 57).

Welzel and Klingemann (2008) constructed an index for 'intrinsic preference for democracy' by weighting a person's democratic preference by this person's emphasis on emancipative values. 'To have a strongly intrinsic preference for democracy a person must both have a strong preference for democracy and hold strong emancipative values'. The difference between the unsubstantiated democratic preferences score and de intrinsic democratic preferences in 85 societies, using WVS data is (respectively 78-34=) 43 percentage points. The effect of intrinsic democratic preferences on institutions was strongly positive and highly significant. Intrinsic mass preferences for democracy explain much better than the unsubstantiated democratic preference the level of democracy which elites effectively institutionalized (respectively 72% and

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political, and economic development of countries and societies. The project grew out of the European Values Study and was started in 1981 and since then has been operating in more than 120 countries. The World Values Survey Association Headquarters are in the Institute for Comparative Survey Research in Vienna, Austria. The President, Christian Haerpfer, is connected to the Institute of Political Science of the University of Vienna in Vienna, Austria. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>. (Haerpfer et al., 2022).

27%). Preferences that are anchored in deeply held values ‘increases readiness for action and this effect can trump the discouraging effect of repression at time’ (Welzel and Klingemann 2008, 77).

Researchers using the WVS Wave 7 data see no decline in support for democracy in the countries studied. The data from Waves 3 till 7 show that – across the world – popular support for democracy is static (Welzel 2021a Online Appendix). The long-term future for democracy in the world is much brighter than most imagine, writes Welzel’ (2021b). This optimism is based on the ‘modernization theory’. This theory states that economic development in recent decades has led to more education, travel, and other learning experiences, which in turn have led to more awareness, knowledge and intelligence. This ‘cognitive mobilization’ has in turn led to people developing their own ideas instead of simply adopting those of the authorities. Authoritarian values are slowly but steadily being replaced in secure material environments by emancipatory values, such as universal human freedoms, individual choice, and opportunity equality. If an increasing tension arises between these self-expressive, emancipatory values and existing undemocratic systems these systems are forced to adapt and become more democratic. ‘In other words, [economic] development brings value change that is highly conducive to the emergence and persistence of liberal democracy’ and ‘the momentary challenges to democracy are unlikely to stifle democracy’s long-term rise (Welzel, 2021b: respectively 132 and 142).

**Eurobarometer.** Surprisingly, the most recent Flash Eurobarometer 522 on Democracy (2023) does not ask what respondents think about democracy, let alone whether they support democracy.<sup>12</sup> Years ago, e.g. 1979, the Eurobarometer did ask a question about democracy and dictatorship, including three statements ‘Democracy is the best political system in all circumstances’, ‘In certain circumstances a dictatorship can be preferable to democracy’. ‘Living in a democracy or under a dictatorship makes no difference to people like me’. Respondents were also sometimes asked about the importance of democracy as a value compared to human rights, peace, respect for human life, equality, rule of law, individual freedom, solidarity, and tolerance. In 1988 and 1992 Eurobarometer surveys asked the following question (previously developed and used by Morlino and Montero 1995, named by König et al. 2022): ‘Here are three opinions about political systems. Which one comes closest to your own way of thinking? 1. Democracy is the best political system in all circumstances, 2. In certain circumstances a dictatorship could be a good thing, and 3. Whether we live in a democracy or under a dictatorship makes no difference to people like me’.

**Robert Bosch Stiftung.**<sup>13</sup> The Robert Bosch Stiftung commissioned More in Common to conduct a study in Germany, France, Poland, Britain, and the USA on views of and attitudes towards democracy (Robert Bosch Stiftung 2021). The researchers consciously decided to assess each of the surveyed countries as an in-depth case study and conducted ‘a comprehensive online-panel survey’ in each of the five focus countries. Respondents were chosen according to socio-demographic criteria to reflect the adult population of each country as accurately as possible, write the researchers. More than 2.000 adult people per country were interviewed in the first quarter of 2021. Unfortunately, the original questionnaires are not available, and I had to derive the survey items from what is stated in the report alone.

12 De Flash Eurobarometer 522 on Democracy offers data van a representative sample of EU citizens, aged 15 and over, in each of the 27 Member States of the European Union. The 25.600 interviews were conducted via computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) in March 2023 by Ipsos European Public Affairs on behalf of the Secretariat-General of the European Commission. [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-12/Democracy\\_fl\\_522\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-12/Democracy_fl_522_report_en.pdf).

13 The Robert Bosch Stiftung works for a just and sustainable future. The Foundation is rooted in the legacy of the entrepreneur and founder Robert Bosch. Today, around 170 people are employed at its Stuttgart and Berlin offices <https://www.bosch-stiftung.de/en/who-we-are>

In Germany, four key survey questions were asked. The first one is: ‘What would you say: Are you personally more in favour of the idea of democracy, or are you more against the idea of democracy?’ Almost all respondents say they are in favour of the idea of democracy (93%). The second question was: ‘How important is it for you personally to live in a country that is governed democratically?’. Also almost all say they consider it important to personally live in a democratic country (94%). The third question was: ‘Which of the following statements regarding democracy and politics do you agree with? Democracy is only a good thing if it produces good results for the people in the country’. Much less respondents but still a majority agree with this statement (53%). The fourth item was: ‘Democracy is always a good thing, even if it sometimes does not produce good results for the people in the country’. Again, less respondents, now a minority, agree with this statement (47%). The latter statement is very relevant because, according to the researchers, for the people who agree with this statement democracy itself has intrinsic value. Also, less people say that they ‘very explicitly’ embrace democracy: in Germany’s western states half of the respondents while only about one third in the states formerly belonging to East Germany say this (respectively 50% and 38%). Also, age makes a difference: over 70: 69% and 18-29-year-olds: 40%. The researchers conclude that younger people in Germany do support democracy, but not with the same vigour as their older counterparts (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2021: 17). Respondents were also asked to judge for themselves what qualities must be given in a country to call it a democracy. Highest scores were given to freedom of expression (average score: 5.5), free elections (5.4), and equality before the law (5.4). Also, the material component of basic services and supplies for citizens received a high score (5.1); democracy has also a “material” component in the minds of many. Remarkable is the low score for ‘absolutely’ demand ‘the active participation of as many citizens as possible in the political process (average value: 4.4; 25%) and the high score for “strong leadership” to be an essential element of democracy (4.2; 21%). Other interesting statements in the questionnaire are: ‘In the national interest ... a dictatorship may be the better form of government’ (20% agreement), ‘Important issues are best voted on by the citizens themselves’ (52%); ‘Important issues are best decided by the elected representatives of the people’ (48%); ‘Even parties with strong support from the electorate can be undemocratic if they violate important principles (78%)’. Finally, six out of ten respondents agree with ‘These days I worry a lot about the future of our democracy’ (65%).

In addition to Germany, the report also includes chapters on France, Poland, Britain, and the USA. Only a small portion of the questions in Germany were also asked in those other countries. The specific questions for those countries provide insight into the political culture of those countries but offer little opportunity for comparison. The most relevant questions and results are as follows. In France, three-quarters of respondents support a representative democracy or at least believe that the best decisions are made by representatives of the people, while half also support a direct democracy, almost half also support an experts’ and scientists’ rule, and a quarter believe that the president himself makes the best decisions (respectively, 78%, 50%, 48%, and 24%). Relatively many French people believe that “in some cases, a non-democratic government would be preferable to a democratic government” (39%) and think that “for people like me, living under a democratic or a non-democratic regime would not make any difference” (37%). Also, in Poland a large majority believe that democracy is the best form of government (87%) and say that it is important for them to live in a democratic country (91%). Less respondents agree with the statement that democracy is a good thing, even if its results are sometimes not satisfactory for citizens (56%) and one third think that there are situations in which another form of government is better than a democracy (33%). Finally, a majority thinks that democracy in Poland is under threat (67%). Also, in Great Britain say a large majority that democracy as the best way to govern their country (90%). Half of the respondents says that it is

very important to them to live in a country that is governed democratically (54 % rank its importance as 10 out of 10). Also, in the U.S.A. says a majority that democracy is the best form of government for the United States (92%) and that it is very important for them personally to live in a country governed democratically (79%). Large majorities think that democracies are better at ensuring that societies are fair and are the best way to ensure an orderly and peaceful society (respectively 87% and 77%). A majority says also that America is a democracy in name only (53%).

**International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.**<sup>14</sup> The 2022 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement had 23 participating countries almost all from continental Europe. Overall, about 83.000 lower-secondary school pupils in Grade 8 approximately 14 years of age from about 3500 schools in those countries participated (along with about 42.000 teachers in those schools). The key question asked how much the respondent agree or disagree with the statement 'Democracy may have some problems, but it is still the best form of government for country of test. On average, almost three-quarters of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed for country of test with this statement that 'Democracy may have some problems, but it is still the best form of government' (74%). Agreement varied from 47% in Latvia to 91% in Norway. The pupils were also asked which threats to democracy they see. Large majorities of the respondents indicated that they viewed it as bad or very bad for democracy when 'The government blocks social media to prevent users from criticizing its policies', 'The government closes newspapers, radio, and television stations that have been critical of its policies', and 'The government controls all newspapers, radio, and television stations in a country'. Majorities indicated that they viewed it as bad or very bad for democracy when 'The government breaks a law to fulfil a promise they made before they were elected', 'Only government supporters are elected as judges', 'Opposition leaders are arrested because they openly criticized a new law', and 'Political leaders give government jobs to family members' (Schulz, et al. 2023).

**Alternative research.** A few individual researchers question the above studies and offer alternative or additional methods. Graham and Svulik (2020) state that conventional, direct-questioning measures of support for democracy may be flawed because they fail to account for voters' willingness to trade off democratic principles for partisan interests. That is why they infer 'commitment to democratic principles' from choices of candidates in hypothetical election scenarios, so a completely different method of measurement. In their framework (American) 'voters support democracy not when they say so, but rather when their choices reveal a preference for democratic principles over other valid but potentially conflicting considerations such as political ideology, partisan loyalty, or policy preferences' (Graham and Svulik, 2020: 392). Polarization reinforces this process: the more polarization the more even pro-democratically minded voters may act as partisans first and democrats only second. Experiments showed indeed that a candidate with an undemocratic position hardly lose votes (-3,5%). Most voters are partisans first and democrats only second and the larger the difference between the candidates' policy platforms the weaker the punishment for their undemocratic behaviour. Violations of democratic principles by leaders were penalized by fewer than 1 in 10 respondents in these experiments. 'Our findings suggest a sobering upper bound on what can reasonably be expected from

14 The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has been conducting cross-national surveys of civic and citizenship education for over 50 years (Torney-Purta & Schulle, 2011) and established the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) with a first cycle in 2009 (Schulz et al., 2010), followed by a second cycle in 2016 (Schulz et al., 2018) and this third cycle in 2022 (Schulz et al., 2023). The 2022 report was jointly prepared by IEA and the Australian Council for Educational Research (Melbourne) and the Libera Università Maria Santissima Assunta (Rome).

ordinary people in defence of democracy' and conventional methods of support for democracy 'have a fundamental blind spot: they fail to capture voters' willingness to act on their commitment to democracy precisely when democracy is at stake' ... we may have been unduly confident about support for democracy worldwide' write Graham and Svulik (2020: 408; also see Song and Kim 2024). In another study Svulik, et al. (2023) developed a measure of a country's willingness to punish a favoured party or candidate for undermining democracy. They presented representative samples of citizens from seven European countries with a series of choices between two hypothetical candidates for their country's legislature. For each candidate, party affiliation was stated, and a set of policy views was provided. A subset of candidates also supported a measure that violated an important democratic principle. Each respondent saw twenty experimental candidate scenarios. The vote shares for undemocratic candidates were then compared with those of democratic but otherwise identical candidates. Two groups punish the least: supporters of the illiberal right and non-liberal. There are two conditions for the erosion of a democracy: political leaders who act undemocratically and many citizens who condone and allow that behaviour to happen. In a democracy, the door is also open to candidates who seek a lot of power and want to weaken democracy. The citizens can stop that politician or let the gang go. Voters of the illiberal right and the disengaged revealed less willingness to punish such policies. The differences between the popularity of the illiberal right and the disengaged are smaller and less visible if only the question 'How important is it for you to live in a democratically governed country?' had been asked. Supporters of the illiberal right give politically correct answers to several direct questions. 'If we focus on actions rather than words, as our candidate choice experiments did, the location of Europe's democratic vulnerabilities becomes clearer: in Europe, democracy on the right is eroding' (Svulik, et al., 2023: 18).

Claassen et al. (2024) also criticize most existing research on support for democracy because it relies on survey questions that ask respondents to rate democracy or express their preference for democracy over autocratic regimes while public understanding of the concept varies across individuals and contexts and the word democracy induces socially desirable responses. To advance the measurement of public support for democracy they also developed and tested a new approach. This approach involved asking respondents 'to evaluate the more granular and concrete rights, processes, and institutions that constitute liberal democracy' rather than directly asking whether they support abstract and complex regimes like democracy. The starting point is the definition of liberal democracy used by the Varieties of Democracy Institute and its operationalization in eight component institutions. To measure support for these eight clusters of rights and institutions, 17 survey questions were selected or developed. These were presented to samples of citizens from 19 countries across different regions and levels of development. Next, the researchers identified a concise subset of seven of the items for a unidimensional scale of support for liberal democracy.: 'The government should be able to censor media sources that are too critical; This country would be better off if there were only one political party; The universal right to vote must be questioned when so many voters are poorly informed and easily misled; Governments are justified in bending electoral rules in their favour when their opponents have also done so in the past; The [government/president] should be able to ignore court rulings that are regarded as politically biased; If [national parliament] hinders the work of the government, it should be ignored; and The government should be able to bend the law to solve pressing social and political problems'. These items form a coherent and reliable scale in all samples and also show evidence of convergent and divergent validity in its solid correlations with existing measures of support for democracy as well as weaker correlations with more distinct concepts like political trust. The authors hope that among other things, this scale will serve as a springboard for future studies of public support for democracy.

**Conclusion.** At the beginning of this section, we asked ourselves Who keeps track of the support for democracy in the world? How is support for democracy measured? How much popular support is there for democracy? Is support of democracy declining also among mature democracies?

Only a few studies are international comparative and asked identical questions in a large number of countries spread over the entire world: Pew Research Center: 2023: 24 countries, and World Values Surveys: Wave 7: 2020: 66 countries, but only once in the five years. The Eurobarometer has asked almost the same questions in European countries but not recently while the Robert Bosch Foundation studied support for democracy in five countries in Europe with mostly different questions resulting in hardly any comparative data, and the research by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement was limited to 23 almost exclusively continental European countries and moreover to only 14-year-olds. It is time for a new initiative to join forces for truly international comparative research on support for democracy.

In the analysed research reports and articles, many items were found with which support for democracy was measured. In no question the word 'support' or 'supportive' was used. The questions and thus the answers are at most partially comparable. It is striking that in various studies almost identical questions were asked but with small differences in the making, which makes comparability difficult. Some researchers have developed items to measure not just any support for democracy but a robust, deeply rooted support that is firmly anchored in the person. For example, a World Values Surveys question asks to indicate how important it is to live in a country that is governed democratically on a scale from 1 meaning it is 'not at all important' to 10 meaning 'absolutely important'. There are survey questions that directly ask for an opinion about 'democracy' and survey questions that indirectly ask for it without the word democracy but with, for example, 'free elections'. With indirect questions, validity is an issue. With one direct question, there is a chance that respondents uncritically endorse democracy (Schedler and Sarsfield, 2007). If they did answer that question honestly and thoughtfully, they may have had quite different ideas about democracy in mind. For that reason too, it is better to ask not one but two or more questions. Respondents get a better idea of what is meant by democracy in the research if that question is embedded in a combination of questions about representative democracy, direct democracy, leader rule, expert rule, military rule, and theocracy. Support for democracy asks for a preference for democracy and at the same time rejection of autocracy. The Pew Research Center and World Values Surveys have such a combination of questions in their research, but they are partly different (World Values Surveys has included a system governed by religious law and Pew Research Center not). 'Only multiple indicator scales allow controlling for random and non-random measurement errors and test for the convergent and discriminate validity of the scale, as well as testing for cross-cultural invariance of meaning and scale use' (Ariely and Davidov, 2010: 104). The Eurobarometer 1988 had a three-item scale on democracy and dictatorship. Inglehart developed a democracy/autocracy index (2003) and Welzel and Klingemann an index for 'intrinsic preference for democracy' (2008). Fuchs and Roller (2006) combined support for democracy in general and support for democracy in one's own country and on this basis distinguished three types of democrats: 'strong democrats', 'critical democrats', and 'nondemocrats'. Pew distinguished 'committed democrats' who support a representative democracy without also supporting a rule by experts, a strong leader or a military rule (roughly a quarter of all respondents), 'less committed democrats' who support a representative democracy but also at least one non-democratic form of government (almost half of all respondents), and 'non-democrats' who do not support representative democracy, but they do support at least one non-democratic form of government (about one-tenth) (Pew Research Center, Wike et al., 2017). Claassen et al. (2024) developed a scale of support for liberal democracy for future studies of public support for democracy.

How strong or weak is the support for democracy among the world population? Large majorities say that representative democracy is a very or somewhat good way of governing the country (Pew Research Center: 24 countries: median of 77%, and World Values Surveys: 66 countries: very and fairly good: 82%). But only a minority said that a representative democracy is a 'very good' way of governing the country (Pew Research Center: from 14% to 43% and World Values Surveys: 45%). Even fewer respondents support a representative democracy without also supporting a non-democratic rule by experts, a strong leader, or the military. Less democratic or undemocratic options also receive positive reactions from significant numbers of respondents (experts' system: Pew Research Center: 58% and World Values Surveys: 57%; strong leader rule: Pew Research Center: 26%, World Values Surveys: 48%; military rule: Pew Research Center: 15%, World Values Surveys: 29%). Less than half (47%) of the World Values Surveys' respondents said they found it 'absolutely important' to live in a country that is governed democratically. Pew Research Center observed that the numbers of people that view representative democracy as a 'very good way' to govern decreased significantly in 11 of the 22 countries and increased in only 3 countries and that the support for a strong leader system increased in 8 of 22 countries and declined in 4 of 22 countries.

## Democracy support explanations

Only a minority in the world said in the Pew studies that a representative democracy is a 'very good' way of governing the country and even less people support a representative democracy without also supporting a non-democratic rule by experts, a strong leader, or the military. Assuming that people with a robust, firm positive attitude towards democracy are more likely to want democracy in their country and to resist leaders who try to weaken that democracy than people with an ambivalent or negative attitude, then it is an important question how we can explain that one person has a positive attitude towards democracy and the other has no such attitude or just the opposite, a negative one.

Nobody is born as a democrat and there are probably no democratic genes. Theoretically variance in an attitude of an individual can be explained by the person's previously acquired knowledge, beliefs, preferences, other attitudes than the object under study, values, emotions, and previously performed behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). From Cho (2014) we know that knowledge of democracy contributes to a positive attitude towards democracy. 'To know democracy is to love it' is the title of the article. We expect that knowledge of what it's like to live in an autocracy also contributes to a positive attitude towards democracy. Attitudes from which we expect a positive effect on attitudes towards democracy are satisfaction with democracy in one's own country, trust in key political institutions, and satisfaction with the economy. More general attitudes that have already shown a positive effect in research are subjective well-being (Inglehart, 1977) and interpersonal trust (Norris 1999). We also already know that important emancipatory, post-materialist values have a positive effect on attitudes towards democracy (Inglehart 2003).

People acquire these orientations through experience and socialization. Learning by experience has potentially profound influence ('I have seen it myself'). Positive subjective experiences with democracy are expected to have a positive influence on attitudes towards democracy. Claassen (2020b) studied this potential effect of democracy on democratic support and found a thermostatic effect. Hu, Tai and Solt (2024) have shown that if survey responses are coded in another way and missing responses are treated in another way than Claassen did, the conclusion is that increases in democracy do work, over time, to increase the public's support. In new de-

mocracies, generations that have lived under autocratic regimes are more likely to support democracy than the younger generations (Fuks, et al. 2018). Exposure to communism contributed to weaker support of democracy (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2013). Also important is the proportion of a country identifying as Muslim (Fish, 2002). In many countries people do not have only positive experiences with democracy, on the contrary many people are not satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country (Pew Research Center, 2024a: 24 countries: 59%; Foa, et al., 2020a).

The second process – political socialization - details that people receive, accept, and internalize cognitive and affective messages about democracy from others (Dekker, et al. 2020; Foa, et al., 2020b). Through these messages people acquire knowledge about democracy, particular beliefs, certain attitudes, emotions, values, and behavioral intentions. Theoretically, those others are persons and structures in eight societal domains, from childhood until later in life, in family, school, church, media, peer groups, workplace, social movements and politics (Olar and Neundorf, 2024; Stallbaum, 2024). Citizens interiorize the orientations to which they are exposed through regime-specific socialization and develop their democratic expectations accordingly (Heyne, 2018).

## Democracy perspectives

Only a small fraction of the world's countries are democracies, and only a small fraction of the world's population lives in a democracy. Moreover, many existing democracies suffer from a gradual erosion. The main cause: 'authoritarian and antidemocratic leaders who seek to enrich themselves through corruption and remain in power indefinitely' (Freedom House, Smeltzer and Karppi, 2024: 3). Only a minority of the citizens in many countries said that a representative democracy is a 'very good' way of governing the country. Democrats who want to halt this erosion are having a challenging time.

Yet, I read in certain publications that the prospects for democracy are positive. Optimism is based on modernization theory, which says that positive economic development leads to more education, which in turn leads to more knowledge, which in turn leads in secure material environments to the development of emancipatory values, which call for more democracy. But positive economic development cannot always be expected, especially not in times of war and climate crises. A negative economic development puts pressure on the political system. Politicians may be inclined to position themselves as saviours of the country. Then it is extra important that the mass publics recognize early undemocratic temptations of the elected leaders, and do not trade democratic principles for political ideology, policy preferences, partisan loyalty, or charisma but are willing to punish politicians for subverting the democratic process and get them vote away, elect new truly democratic leaders, and defend and strengthen democratic institutions tooth and nail. The question is whether all citizens of the future can be expected to acquire these insights and motivations by themselves. We suspect not and expect that it would be good to offer all young people an effective education in democracy at school.

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# Trump's New Face of Power in America

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**Abstract:** This article proposes that the advent of Trumpism was an historical moment of danger that compels us to analyze the micropolitics of the present. In the first part, I describe the constellation that gave rise to Trumpism. In the second part, I recall Goffman's concept of face-work and discuss how it remains relevant for describing Trump's aggressive face-work. In the third part, I take Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality as a point of departure for understanding micro-fascism. As an abstract machine, Trump's faciality engendered and diffused fascisizing micropolitics around a messenger/disruptor in chief. It worked in connection with a landscape and relative to a collective assemblage of enunciation that extracted a territory of perception and affect. In the micropolitics of the present, the defining feature of Trumpism was how the corrupt abuse of power and the counterforces limiting his potency collided on an ominous, convulsive political reality TV show that threatened US democracy.

**Keywords:** Trumpism, micropolitics, face-work, faciality, assemblage, landscape, impeachment, micro-fascism

We are all sufferers from history, but the paranoid is a double sufferer, since he is afflicted not only by the real world, with the rest of us, but by his fantasies as well.  
– Richard Hofstadter (1964)

When a man unprincipled in private life desperate in his fortune, bold in his temper, possessed of considerable talents, having the advantage of military habits—despotic in his ordinary demeanor—known to have scoffed in private at the principles of liberty—when such a man is seen to mount the hobby horse of popularity—to join in the cry of danger to liberty—to take every opportunity of embarrassing the General Government & bringing it under suspicion—to flatter and fall in with all the non sense of the zealots of the day—It may justly be suspected that his object is to throw things into confusion that he may “ride the storm and direct the whirlwind.” – Alexander Hamilton (18 August, 1792) quoted by Rep. Adam Schiff (20 January, 2020) in his opening argument for President Trump's Senate impeachment trial

## Introduction

2016 was a tumultuous year in US politics and the turmoil continued since Donald Trump was elected president. His rhetoric and demeanor in the political theatre of struggle prompted a range

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of views on whether fascism has already happened, is on the rise, or cannot happen in the US. In this debate, the difficulty is that whatever fascist traits we see, echoes we hear, or themes we interpret, depends on how we define “fascism.” Paxton (2005) tackled the problem of definition and noted that the language and symbols of a future, popular American fascism need not resemble historical European fascism. Amid all the chaos after Trump’s election, Grossberg (2018) claims that the similarities between Trump’s administration and fascism as a form of political behavior do not warrant the conclusion that he is a fascist. Paxton offers a comparative analysis of historical stages that begins in Europe while Grossberg emphasizes the cultural particularism of the contemporary US political context. Their accounts come close to converging when theorizing the link between choices, actions and “mobilizing passions” or political struggles and the “affective landscape.” Likewise, in a genealogical study, Connolly traces “aspirational fascism” by attending to affective flows of communication and contagion. His approach gives due weight to “multiple resonances between words, techniques, bodily demeanor, facial expressions, fears, images...” (Connolly 2017, p. 5). Colasacco (2018), however, suggests that fascism and Trumpism have a few features in common: “radicalism, populism, and perhaps above all, what Griffin calls ‘paligenetic ultranationalism’ (paligenetic denoting renewal or rebirth—or ‘making great again’)” (p. 28). Gounari (2018) describes a shift in discourse that took a “neofascist authoritarian turn” while Lebow (2019) and Morris (2019) make parallel cases that Trump’s “neoliberal authoritarianism” is best characterized as “inverted American-style fascism.” Relatedly, many other observers and commentators have noted how Trump’s affective political communication promulgated post-truth politics, intensified political polarization, deepened fear and hostility, and encouraged violence.

What remains to be explored is how Trump’s shock politics spread like a contagion in the direction of micro-fascism. One starting point is Deleuze and Guattari’s observation that “What makes fascism dangerous is its molecular or micropolitical power...” (1987, p. 215). If, as Guattari (2016, p. 104) suggested when he was working with Deleuze in the 1970s, “micro-fascist conjunctions of power can spring up all over the place,” then this article proposes that such a conjunction sprang up in the US. In this conjunction, Trump’s political performances are for all to see, read about, react to, and to rate. And as Garcia (2018) remarks:

Trump’s political performance must be taken as a possible opening, as a symptom capable of generating ethical repositionings that would lead the American community to genuinely ask about its political order (p. 332).

Trump’s fascisizing micropolitics threw the US political order into disorganization so he could wield more power in the executive branch. In October 2019, House Democrats voted for a formal impeachment inquiry that led to a momentous vote on whether the president acted ethically and legally, or jeopardized the constitution by usurping Congressional power and undermining the system of separated powers. But after Senate Republicans acquitted Trump, it would be up to voters in the next presidential election and the courts to check and balance his efforts to consolidate power.

In the first part, I describe the constellation of Trumpism. In Benjamin’s (1969) sense, an historian “grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one” (p. 263). Looking back at what happened, we can see how Trump’s politics surged up from historical tendencies and past events. But there was also a rupture in historical patterns and unprecedented presidential actions that disregarded democratic norms, rules, practices and laws. Going beyond the boundaries of other presidents, Trump learned to *ride* the storm and *direct* the whirlwind. As Adorno (2020, org. 1967) once warned, meteorological metaphors can naturalize the very real political problem of right-wing extremism.

In the second part, I revisit Goffman's (1967a, orig. 1955) essay "On Face-Work." Trump's style of aggressive face-work broke the ritual code and the result was sustained confusion and chaos. His repertoire of face moves arose from reality TV and a war model. Because his style was the message, the political impact carried far beyond his presentation of self; it induced micropolitical struggles, galvanized far right collective action, destabilized government, and set off stress tests for US liberal democracy. Guattari extends Goffman's insight that face-work makes impressions that matter to the faciality of power by analyzing faciality traits and refrains in the passage of desire.

In the third part, I draw upon Guattari's (2011, 2016) theorization of "molecular fascism" and "faciality." Understanding Trump's new face of power, I suggest, can be enhanced by a dual focus on face-work and faciality. Both are inseparable from social interaction but the latter is derived from the film close-up of a face that gathers and expresses various affects (Deleuze 1986). Whereas Goffman approached expression as a microsociological problem of ritual syntax, social roles and order, Guattari's micropolitical approach to the mixed semiotics of expression problematizes '*the political matter of expression with which the group is confronted*' (Guattari 2016, p. 61, italics in original). Through the concept of faciality, Deleuze and Guattari address the meshing of the micro and the macro, the interpersonal and the institutional, in collective assemblages of enunciation. Facial expressions do not just express individual selfhood and adorn spoken interaction; rather, ways of speaking, facial expression, gestures, and nonverbal components become pertinent when framed on the face. For Guattari, faciality traits are semiotic components of capitalist systems that play a "primordial role" through television in political struggles and presidential elections. They can enter into a "miniaturized formation of power" where "a faciality of power hangs over institutions and social relations of power" (Guattari 2016, p. 50).

According to Genosko (2018), the key to Guattari's micropolitical approach is the relationship between mass desire and fascism. In the transition from classical fascism to "molecularized micro-fascisms, desire is at once liberated and subjected to repressive attributions tailored to new modes of production" (Genosko 2020, p. 173). Behind the appearance of Trump's face, there is an abstract faciality machine that combines significance and subjectivation, and that arranges and connects flows of belief and desire. Once we find and outline this machine, we can ask how it works in connection with a landscape and relative to a right-wing assemblage that promotes a mode of enunciation. I go on to argue that Trump's faciality is on a path of molecular, micro-fascism with a multitude of black holes of subjectivation that resonate with each other. I conclude that Trump's televisual face-work and Twitter feedback/forward loops are coextensive with a faciality machine in a new era of right-wing, mediated populist politics. In closing, I deliberate upon the micropolitics of the present, and, as COVID-19 ravaged America, his final face-saving stratagem after losing the 2020 election.

## The Constellation of Trumpism

Trumpism challenges us to understand the constellation that set the stage for Trump's ascendancy to state power. Based on election day exit polls, the Reuters News Agency took the measure of his victory as "pure populism"; in his supporter's eyes of desire for change, he was a "strong leader"... the "un-Obama" who would "Make America Great Again" by restoring the "Old America" (Schneider 2016).

Media and cultural studies scholars have linked Trump's popularity, first campaign, and way of governing to reality TV, social media, self-promotion and branding (Hearn 2016, 2017;

Schleusener 2020). As a real-estate tycoon who ran his business from the 26<sup>th</sup> floor of Trump Tower in New York City, Trump played himself on *The Apprentice* (2004-15), a reality TV show that made him look presidential (Grynbaum & Parker 2016). In his biographical trajectory from real-estate mogul to reality TV show producer and celebrity, his presentation of self and his brand became indistinguishable (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Trump on his 2015 press tour for *The Celebrity Apprentice*, photo by Chris Pizzello, Invision, The Associated Press

In 2015, Trump transformed the set of *The Apprentice* into campaign headquarters for “the greatest infomercial in political history.” With the soul of a con man, he was the dealmaker who would negotiate better deals for America. As a court filing later revealed, while running for president, the Trump Organization communicated with President Putin’s office about building a Trump Tower in Moscow while Putin’s government was conducting a hacking and propaganda campaign to boost his candidacy. Trump was the first president to keep his assets in a family-managed trust; during his conflict-of-interest ridden single term, he waged a legal battle with Democratic lawmakers to keep his tax returns secret. When they were finally released in December 2022, they undermined his image as a self-made billionaire (Tankersley, Craig & Buettner 2022).

As Ronald Reagan showed, there is power in acting (Massumi 2002). Trump’s celebrity persona reflects the logic of his reality TV show and the staged ‘reality’ of professional wrestling was a preview of his campaign. He was advised by Roger Ailes, the founder of the Fox News Channel who had advised Nixon, Reagan, and Bush Sr. His skill set for getting attention, which he developed in the 1980s New York tabloid press, and Fox TV’s emphasis on visual presentation converged in Fox’s coverage of the Republican primaries. Trump reportedly watched replays of his interviews with the sound muted (Concha 2016). His campaign was a movement of simplification and repetition against bad reality. Selling the fear of others and mistrust in government and the news media was primary. In his inaugural address, he presented his double vision of “This American carnage” and “America First.” In response to low presidential approval ratings, Trump returned to campaign mode to bolster his ego in front of cheering crowds. In his National Scout Jamboree speech on 24 July 2017, he lambasted “fake news” and “fake polls,” railed against the “cesspool or sewer” of politics, and jokingly threatened to fire his health secretary. The next day at his sixth campaign-style rally since taking office, he

boasted that “It’s so easy to act presidential. But that’s not going to get it done.” To outdo Reagan, “the great communicator,” Trump rejected the notion that “the President himself must be a skilled actor and that he must *perform* the role of the President rather than simply *be* President” (Meyrowitz 1985, p. 303, italics in original). With the West Wing as his TV set, Trump became the executive producer of his presidency.

US political populism has also been mediated by media convergence and the rise of social media (Hay 2011; Papacharissi 2015; Gerbaudo 2018). To stake his claim to political populism, Trump organized mass rallies in airport hangars, ate fast food, wore a red baseball MAGA cap, and used Twitter to engage in the politics of debasement (Ott 2017). He was the first president to use Twitter to insert his statements into live TV news coverage, to drive and disrupt the news cycle and narrative, and to insult or troll people. His administration “mainstreamed cruelty as a daily political strategy” (Levina & Silva 2018). On one hand, he is fascinated with his own image on cable TV news and obsessed with his TV ratings. On the other, here is Trump tweeting in February 2017 about the press and cable news channels: “The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @CNN, @NBCNews and many more) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American people. SICK!” The exception is the right-wing media. Since 2011, Trump has enjoyed appearing on Fox TV. After he became president, the Fox-Trump partnership and feedback/forward loop grew stronger. As Hemmer (cited in Mayer 2019) argues, the cable news network “acts as a force multiplier for Trump, solidifying his hold over the Republican Party and intensifying his support.” According to Scherer (2017), Trump consumes his own presidency on a 60-inch flat screen TV with TiVo, feels wronged on TV, and enjoys doing play-by-play commentary in response to TV. After two years as president, he continued to view his presidency by TV ratings (Dawsey & Kim 2019). Outside the right-wing media environment and MAGA movement, the audience experiences The President Trump Show as an accelerated maelstrom of inaccuracies, lies, accusations, denials, leaks, investigations, scandals, spectacles, and crises.

In addition to these sources of Trump’s persona and populism, we need to apprehend the wider historical context in which he came to occupy the White House. The 2008 global economic collapse was followed by stimulus packages, austerity agendas, and deepening inequality. In the US and Europe, an anti-globalization backlash combined economic anxiety, nationalism, and anti-immigration forces. The US right has been moving right since President Reagan, the first president and celebrity spokesperson of the “new conservatism” (Grossberg 1992). As Grossberg (2016) reminds us, it was Nixon that invented a politics of *ressentiment* that set “ordinary” folks against the socio-cultural elite. Trump updated the Republican Party’s “southern strategy” of using racial paranoia (Heer 2016). In Grossberg’s (2018) conjunctural story about the conservative battle for power since the 1950s, the Trump administration brought the war between the “New Right” and reactionary conservatives into the political and cultural mainstream. Through a Žižekian lens, Flisfeder (2018) describes the rise of the new “alt-right” and foregrounds the role of overlapping contradictions in postmodern practices of transgression and subversion, democratic and commercial logics of mainstream media, and the failure of the Left in the wake of the global financial crisis. Trump’s electoral victory was also due to other precipitating factors such as gerrymandering to create Republican districts, voter suppression, and Citizen’s United v. Federal Election Commission.

Trumpism evokes “Thatcherism” and “authoritarian populism” in Britain during the 1970s (Hall 1979). In the European context, Gandesha (2003) describes how “right-populist” discourse translates anxiety generated by globalization “into a determinate fear of a particular object... the figure of the ‘stranger’” (p. 1). Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, immigration and terrorism have been linked and Muslim populations in Europe and the US have been singled out. In response to the migrant crisis of the 2010s, nationalist and far right parties have made electoral gains in Europe. In the UK, Brexit’s nationalist appeal and anti-immigration UK Independence

Party were precursors of Trump's political rise. In the US context, Trump's populism is rooted in the "paranoid style of American politics" (Hofstadter 1964), corporate "friendly fascism" (Gross 1980), American reactionary populism (Seaton 2017), American authoritarianism (Mac Williams 2016) and "soft authoritarianism" (Beauchamp 2017). Regarding the role of television, Morgan and Shanahan (2017) found heavy viewers are "more likely to be authoritarian, and that authoritarians are more likely to support Trump" (p. 424). He exploited the polarization of party politics where differences in opinions reflect differences in individual's levels of authoritarianism (Hetherington & Weiler 2009). White, male, older, less educated Trump voters shared his prejudices. Their wish for a domineering, aggressive leader who would punish the "undeserving" coalesced with the "wish for a reversal of what his base perceives as an inverted moral and racial order" (Smith & Hanley 2018, p. 207).

"Build the Wall," which began as a mnemonic catchphrase to help Trump remember to talk tough on immigration, became his premier campaign pledge. In his campaign launch speech, he expressed anti-immigrant sentiment when he said Mexico was bringing drugs and sending "rapists" and "killers" to the US. Such accusations bolstered this pledge even though only 3 percent of unauthorized immigrants have committed felonies (Chisti & Mittelstadt 2016). During his presidency, his obsession with building a wall and fuming over the immigration crisis led to more extreme measures and border policies. Defying conventional wisdom and leaning towards anger about immigration, border security, and free trade, Trump amplified economic angst, racism, sexism, xenophobia, as well as fear of crime and gang violence.

According to Hochschild (2016), Trump was the "emotions candidate" who released himself and his crowds from "feeling rules" (p. 225, 227). She describes how the experience of unifying good people and scapegoating bad people in his rallies made people feel entertained and energized; consequently, the "desire to hold on to this elation became a matter of *emotional self-interest*" (p. 228, italics in original). People joined him in jeering at foes and chanted "Lock her up" at Hillary Clinton. Quiet *ressentiment* towards the political system was transformed into the loud politics of hate (Browne 2016). Richardson (2017) argues that disgust was one of the affective drivers of his political success; as he puts it, "Performing disgust in train with the desire to Make America Great Again becomes a looping intensification of the desire for a return to the lost body politic" (p. 751). Compared to President Obama's first inauguration, Trump's election and inauguration signaled a shift in emotional regime towards "angry populism" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018). Emotion and affect were mediated by pro-Trump media to shape the field of political possibilities. Picking up where the "Tea Party" movement of anger and distrust left off, the Trump campaign parlayed suspicion of Obama, hatred of the federal government, and white male identity politics into electoral victory.

The great subterfuge of Trump's populism is that rolling back Obama-era regulation combined with his budget proposals expressed his allegiance to rapid economic growth at any cost, plutocracy and the military. By pushing for more privatization, deregulation, and deep cuts to non-defense discretionary spending, Trumponomics is a part of a longer project to transform the liberal state-market nexus. In this false economic populism, the figure of the individual, white American worker who was left behind after the Great Recession and freedom from the federal government is conjoined with conservative ethno-nationalism and national self-interest in foreign policy.

After eight years of conservative claims about Obama's "socialism," Trump's mythology of the "art of the deal" proved to be unsuited to the reality of working with Congress and foreign governments. Besides Trump's own business interests and his cabinet of multi-millionaires and billionaires, there is Steve Bannon, an "alt-right" figurehead who believes the Judeo-Christian West and "enlightened capitalism" is in crisis and that "we are in an outright war against jihadist Islamic fascism" (Bannon 2016). He sees "globalists" as the enemy within and promotes the

“deconstruction of the administrative state.” As CEO of Trump’s campaign, he tuned Trump’s message into “alt-right” grievances and fear of open borders. As Chief Strategist and Senior Counsellor for the president, he and senior immigration policy hardliner Stephen Miller influenced Trump’s travel ban on Muslims. For Bannon, immigration is connected to unfair competition for jobs from foreign labor and an issue to “carve out space” for a right-left populist coalition drawn from the 25 to 33 percent of left populist, economic nationalists (Bannon 2018). He exaggerated localized Islamist terrorism and believed Trump’s “economic nationalist” agenda would make America great again by getting John Maynard Keynes’ “animal spirits” flowing in financial markets.

Within this constellation, Trump entered presidential politics and bet on the escalation of right-wing populism. Comparing close-ups of Obama’s and Trump’s faces on TV suggests the power of facial images that emit signs and invest affective energies. Between 2009 and 2017, Obama’s refrain of “Yes we can” became “No we can’t” and we saw the hope of “a more perfect union” drain from his face. The 2008 financial crisis defined his presidency and market deference limited Obamanomics to an adjustment of the neoliberal order (Peck 2010). For his presidential bid, Trump abandoned any faith in the unity of “the people” in favor of getting the many to help him get elected. Both he and “the people” were “victims” of establishment condescension. His is not the face of friendly capitalism; instead, it is belligerent, scowling, impudent, petulant, or malicious. If Reagan’s credibility was “exactly equal to his transparency and the nullity of his smile” (Baudrillard 1988, p. 34), Trump’s face has a “smile deficit” and a surplus of grimaces. For his base, his credibility is exactly equal to his anger and belligerence (Anderson 2018). In addition, his face is a “major component of his ability to orchestrate shame” (Schaefer 2020, p. 11); hence, the recirculation of preferred images of his face convert supporters’ shame into a feeling of dignity. Embedded in his face, his words are an incessant flow of disjointed statements, fragments, asides and digressions. He speaks an emotive, demotic language that was already popular on talk radio, reality TV, and social media (Packer 2019).

As Showalter (2017) argues, Trump “incorporated the political aesthetics of reality television in his approach to governance.” He cast all the supporting roles and fired, or tried to fire, those in non-supporting roles. After writing his “You’re Fired” letter to FBI director James Comey, he disclosed how the mediated political is personal; he fired Comey after watching him testify on TV because “He’s a showboat, he’s a grandstander.” After the Justice Department appointed special counsellor Robert Mueller to investigate Russian interference and possible collusion with the Trump campaign, Trump tweeted: “This is the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history!” It is enough for him to brandish his face as a boss or victim, become a little megalomaniac, and impose his style of politics. During his first impeachment, he cast himself as a victim of persecution and defender of democracy against corrupt House Democrats. Through the intermediaries of TV, his smart phone and Twitter, Trump’s face became a macroface of national power and center of significance and subjectivation.

## On Face-Work

In an essay on face-to-face or mediated contact, Goffman (1967a) describes how face-work produces an image of self and acts out a line that expresses his or her view of the situation and others. The self is doubly defined as “an image pieced together from the expressive implication of the full flow of events” and “a kind of player in a ritual game” (p. 31). Face-work “serves to counteract ‘incidents’— that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face” (p. 12). While mainly located in or on the body, a person’s face, through “interpersonal agencies,”

can also be “diffusely located in the flow of the events in the encounter and becomes manifest only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them” (p. 7). Since Goffman studied face-to-face interaction in the 1950s, there has been continuity of immediate spoken interaction and great transformation of mediated social interaction. But whether individuals abide by or break the rules, “something significant is likely to be communicated” (1967b, p. 51). Trump’s style of aggressive face-work is the message. As a repeat offender, his own face mattered more than the face of others. Moreover, his business and career conduct was based on a courtroom model whereby litigation was used to neutralize threats, defend aberrant behavior, and avoid damage or being punished. As for his political undertaking, Trump was not first figure of “reactionary conservatism” to break the rules and make political statements by performing incivility (Grossberg 2018, p. 12).

Goffman’s essay also describes the aggressive use of face-work when encounters or undertakings are less a scene of “mutual considerateness” than an “arena in which a contest or match is held” (1967a, p. 24). His consideration of “aggressive interchanges” for an audience is still somewhat applicable to political campaigns. Because Trump’s aggressive face-work and lewdness—as revealed by an *Access Hollywood* audio tape—gave him the worst pre-election image ever of any presidential candidate, with a Gallup 61 percent unfavorable score, pundits did not expect him to win. Against the odds, however, he scored points against his adversaries and made gains for himself by remixing popular culture and politics. As Kanzler and Scharlaj (2017) argue in their analysis of political communication after the invective turn, *The Apprentice* and Trump’s campaign were oriented towards the ‘gamedoc,’ a “genre of reality tv in which the competitive game dominates as symbolic form” (p. 319). The genre promises viewing pleasure in “spectacles of emotionally charged rivalry among contestants and the humiliation of those identified as losers” (p. 322). Relying on the symbolic logic of *agôn*, he denigrated opponents to valorize himself as a strong leader.

Despite winning the 2016 electoral college vote, Trump attacked the voting system as “rigged” because he lost the popular vote (Graham 2019). Beyond agonistic logic, Trump’s face-work employed a war model. As the documentary *Get Me Roger Stone* (Bank, DiMauro & Pehme 2017) shows, Trump’s political playbook was written by political strategist Roger Stone, who presumes there is no difference between entertainment and politics, and believes “in doing whatever is necessary to win short of breaking the law.” Stone’s rules of the political game include: “One man’s dirty trick is another man’s civil political action,” “Attack, attack, attack—never defend,” “Admit nothing, deny everything, launch counterattack,” and “Nothing is on the level.” In the film, Jeffrey Toobin comments that: “...Roger Stone created Donald Trump as a political figure. There is no doubt that in tone, in affect, in profile, the Trump candidacy was a pure Roger Stone production.” Trump and Stone’s *modus operandi* can be traced back to the Red Scare prosecutor and notorious political fixer Roy Cohn. During the Republican primaries, he weaponised personal, economic and ethnic shame (Haslett 2016). On the campaign trail, he attacked black NFL athletes for protesting police brutality and racial injustice. In office, he renewed the culture wars to turn America into two warring camps with impassioned protestors and Trump supporters facing off against each other. Picking up from where the conservative war on so-called “liberal media” left off, he framed the media as the political opposition and led a hate campaign to attack “fake news” and “failing” news organizations (Rosen 2018). By imposing tariffs on other countries, he escalated trade wars, especially against China. To sustain the obsession with fossil fuels, his administration withdrew from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and waged war on climate science. After two years of turmoil, the government was shut down in a battle over the funding of his border wall. Trump was isolated in the oval office, watching TV, tweeting insults at Democrats, and scanning the headlines. In his words, “Can you believe this? I’m doing great, but it’s a war every day” (cited in Baker & Haberman 2018).

Here it is important to expand upon Trump's war on truth, that is, persuasion that draws upon the "repetition of Big Lies" for his political base to spread (Connolly 2017, p. 19). In retrospect, Ben-Ghiat (2021) qualified this by noting that a leader's Big Lie "has traction only if the public has been fed many, many smaller lies." Trump's first press secretary's lie about "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration" was an attack on the truth value of National Park Service aerial photographs of the National Mall before Obama and Trump were sworn into office.

Since his inauguration, Trump's lying worsened and it would take a database to keep track. According to Dale (2018), his "dishonesty density" increased over time. He made most of his false claims in speeches, the second most in interviews, and most of these were on Fox News. In July 2018, a CBS "Battleground Tracker Poll" indicated that 91 percent of strong supporters trust Trump for accurate information—more than friends, family and mainstream media. By August 2020, the Washington Post tallied 22,257 errant claims in 1316 days (Kessler, Rizzo & Kelly 2020). In his first year, he averaged 6 a day; in his fourth year, he averaged 27 a day. His most repeated claim was that the US economy is the best in history and his second most repeated claim was that the border wall is being built. The novel coronavirus pandemic generated a new genre of falsehoods. Running against Joe Biden, Trump's barrage of false or misleading claims exceeded the ability of the fact checking team to keep up. It was left to White House press secretaries and surrogates to put a straight face on his lies, and to right-wing media to reinforce them. Meanwhile, journalists and late-night comedians mined the media archive of his statements to expose the falsehoods, contradictions or absurdities, and question his competence or mental state.

In Goffman's terms, Trump was a non-self-regulating, self-aggrandizing candidate and president. His aggressive face-work took a hard line that only values winning. Despite his self-image as the "best dealmaker," he gave the impression of falsely possessing the attributes he claims to have. As many political commentators often pointed out, he lacked the tone and temperament to act as president. Anger over what was done to his face functioned as a primary move. If, as Goffman noted, the main principle of a ritual order is not justice but face, Trump invested in his and insulated himself not only "by blindness, half-truths, illusions, and rationalizations" (1967a, p. 43) but also by serial lying, revisionist claims, evasion, retaliation, and disguising his politics as legal strategy. He expected others to display loyalty to his line or face dismissal or banishment. To be consistent with his political messaging, his former personal lawyer and 'legal fixer,' admitted he lied to Congress about a Moscow real estate deal "out of loyalty." Aides and appointees discovered how selective and temporary his loyalty to them would be. The most striking feature of Trump's face-work was how frequently he broke the ritual code without making corrective moves. As president-elect, he called Twitter "his method of fighting back that's very tough." Concerned about the political and legal implications of his Twitter battles in the context of numerous investigations, his advisors urged him to use restraint. But after Comey testified before Congress, he fought back on Twitter by calling Comey a liar and a leaker. For his supporters, his unscripted, off-the-cuff, style of public speaking and twitter tirades were signs of his authenticity.

In debates, interviews, and on #realDonaldTrump, Trump engaged in the defacement of others and took a defensive orientation to saving his own face. In his first 100 days, he was the topic in 41 percent of all news stories. He did most of the talking but set a new standard for unfavorable coverage. Consequently, "he's been on the defensive during most of his 100 days in office, trying to put the best face possible on executive orders, legislative initiatives, appointments, and other undertakings that have gone bad" (Patterson 2017). Later, he exercised presidential prerogatives and asserted executive privilege to push the constitutional limits of presidential authority to protect himself or his inner circle. As the Russia investigation widened into

the Trump campaign, White House, and family, he tweeted about his “complete power to pardon.” His disinhibited, unruly performance changed the meaning of the oval office as a ‘bully pulpit’ and raised questions about his adherence to the oath of office. His norm-breaking rhetoric has been analyzed as a “double-edged rhetorical identity and signature” (Jamieson & Taussig 2017-18). Likewise, Trump’s presentation of presidential self deviated from conventional standards, protocol, custom, or precedent to disrupt political norms. His effort to introduce unfavorable information about others introduced more unfavorable information about himself. And in playing the political game, his reputation for bad play became part of the face he must play.

“Power of any kind,” Goffman observed, “must be clothed in effective means of displaying it, and will have different effects depending on how it is dramatized” (Goffman 1959, p. 241). Before taking office, Trump told his aides to think of each day as an episode in a TV show in which he vanquishes his rivals (Haberma, Thrush & Baker 2017). After he was elected, journalists waited for him to pivot and act presidential. After 100 days, his job performance was assessed by journalists in terms of a “steep learning curve” and “on the job training.” His first meetings with foreign leaders indicate that his aides tried to teach him the rules of presidential conduct. Notwithstanding any such advice, there were cycles of aggressive face-work, combative face-saving practices, and wars of words on Twitter. After the first impeachment inquiry against him began, his face-work became more brazen and his demeanor became completely unhinged. His confrontational face-work with the leaders of allies gave the US a reputation for being unpredictable and unreliable on the global geopolitical stage. As Tucker (2018) notes, the “individualism” of individual actors is not what it was in the 1950s when Goffman was writing about the “presentation of self,” nor is personal politics what it was in the 1980s and 1990s. For Trump, transgressing the ritual code and breaking the political rules was a way to fight the power of the elite. And yet, because face-work is required to gain public recognition in the networked digital media environment, Goffman’s microsociological view of face-work still has some relevance for understanding mediated, socio-political interaction in the late 2010s.

## On Faciality

Whereas Goffman’s microsociology drew upon Durkheim’s sociology of religion, Deleuze and Guattari’s interest in micropolitics pays homage to Tarde. For Goffman, the individual is a kind of actor that does face-work to maintain face, save face, or make aggressive use of it, whereas in Tarde, subjectivation is centered on semi or unconscious imitation-suggestion and the propagation of beliefs and desires. On the basis of Tardean analysis of “imitative rays” and the flow of social encounters, events and desires, faciality is a political-philosophical problem of the consistency of the socius as “an affair of resonance” (Guattari 2016, p. 50).

As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualize it, “The face is a politics” (p. 181). From their viewpoint, faciality is an abstract machine that mixes significance and subjectivation. This machinic faciality is neither an envelope nor a mask, included in the body, or ready-made. Rather, it is engendered by a “white wall/black hole” system (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 168). Behind the gaze is a black hole “from which a central signification will irradiate all local significations” (Guattari 2016, p. 183). Multiple black holes can proliferate and echo around this empty point. Subjects do not choose faces, nor does the face engender social power; instead, it is the assemblage of power that requires the social production of face. Thus, faciality is a machinic, unconscious process that draws the body across this “holey surface” system. Moreover, “*Certain* social formations need face, and also landscape” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 180, italics in original).

Following their approach, we can apprehend Trump's macroface by outlining the abstract machine that produces subjectivity and channels mass desire in a confluence of subjective affects and machinic effects. For Deleuze and Guattari, the faciality machine is not just a site for the expression of mental or affective states; it is adjacent to signification and infrasubjective. Even though we may attribute it to the individual named "Donald Trump," Trump's particular faciality is individuated but not individual. Furthermore, faciality is associated with a refrain, a "significant redundancy," that is associated with a face and a voice (Guattari 2011, p. 109). Before Trump became president, he brandished the face of a boss during a job interview on TV and "You're Fired!" was a catchphrase of the times. As a president under investigation, on 23 August 2018 at 1:10 am., he tweeted his new double refrain "NO COLLUSION—RIGGED WITCH HUNT."

Facialization has a pole of revolutionary potential and a "paranoiac, reactionary, and fascisizing pole" (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, p. 366). At the molecular level of the politics of desire, this machine comes before formal power and there are liberatory and micro-fascist options. In this regard, Trump's particular faciality took a rightist, micro-fascist direction. He posted new faciality traits for a president that some political crowds and TV audiences desired. In tandem with political rhetoric and representation, there were recharged molecules of fascism that give a direction to flows of desire in the social field.

Deleuze and Guattari explain how the abstract machine functions in two ways. First, the "black holes" act like a computer and a binary relation of "yes/no," acquiescence or refusal. The black hole absorbs or rejects; there is sense or non-sense. Trump's faciality machine worked within standardization to produce a steady repetition of binaries: winners/losers, real news/fake news, us/them, friends/enemies. The only thing that matters are binary effects: Is he winning or losing? Did he win the election or not? Is he in total control or not? Is someone or something American or foreign? The effect of binarizing reduction is this: You are either for Trump's face-voice or you are for non-sense. Second, the machine is a "deviance detector" that computes "normalities." Given a concrete face, the machine "judges whether it passes or not, whether it goes or not, on the basis of elementary facial units" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 177). For example, to rile up his base before the 2018 midterm elections, Trump tweeted that the caravan of Central American brown people seeking asylum has "criminals and unknown Middle Easterners mixed in" as if this was a reason to declare a national emergency. In this case, "[t]here are only people who should be like us and whose crime is not to be" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 178). Racism propagates waves of sameness so that the dividing line is not only on the US-Mexico border but internal to "signifying chains and successive subjective choices" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 178).

Deleuze and Guattari also understand faciality as a process of decoding the face from corporeal codes and overcoding by the Face—a "holey surface" system. By way of an unconscious, machinic operation, the face, head, hands, body, clothing, mannerism, and ways of speaking is drawn across the holey surface. A painting of Donald Trump by Stephen Lee Naish that hovers between the abstract and the figural illustrates this system (see Figure 2). In this painting of deformation, "Amerika" references Kafka's unfinished novel. It is not a matter of making it resemble Trump's face but of the sense of intensity. A face has taken shape on the white wall, but it also begins to appear in the black hole. The cornerstone is the eye-nose-mouth triangle, that is, subjective black holes of affect. The face and head are facialized but so is the body, which is losing its form. This hasty, crude painting is less of a portrait and more of a map of contagious affects that radiate unconsciously outward. An unnatural, orange-faced, blond-haired, capitalist faciality had passed through the electoral system without being made over or cut off.

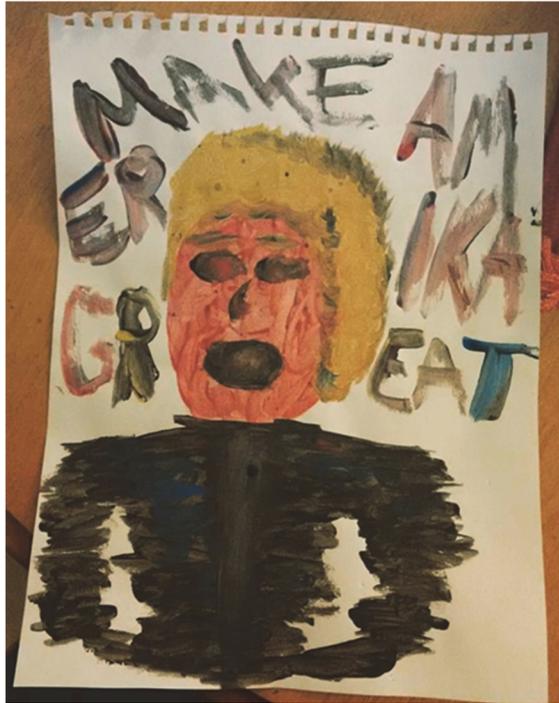


Figure 2. Painting of Donald Trump by Stephen Lee Naish

In his analysis of the semiotics of Trump's body, Bennett (2016) notes that his body is a "semiotic salad, an assemblage of incongruous, clashing elements that would have normally been smoothed out and homogenized but instead slide over and jostle with one another, never quite cohering into a single figure." Trump's decomposed face may touch on other parts of the body, like his hands. His signature gestures are either precision moves—shape and pinch, palms out, pointing at people, slicing or wild gestures that register chaos. Thrusting his index finger out, he singles out people for approval or jabs at a target of his wrath. One could go on to decode particular body parts and gestures. For example, Hall, Goldstein and Ingram (2016) describe how his depictive hand gestures have entertainment value that accrues visual capital in celebrity-driven, mediated politics. Arias-Benavides (2017) decodes his hands as discrete sign of virility and a fetish that operates on a mythological level to replace political acumen with "masculine" values. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), however, the machine "performs the facialization of the entire body and all its surroundings and objects..." (p. 181). For example, Emad Hajjaj's depicts Trump's blonde hair blowing in the wind and adhering to the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, the bald eagle, and the flag (see Figure 3). Here we have a faciality trait that eludes the organization of his face and implies a landscape. This cartoon illustrates a molecular flow of desire that spreads like a contagion and connects to signifiers of America. From the side of signification, we can interpret body parts and gestures. But these diverse semiotic components cross interior reaction/action and exterior reaction/action. From the side of subjective resonance, faciality "functions as a centre of resonance for micro black-holes that exist at the level of diverse semiotic components" (Guattari 2016, p. 179).

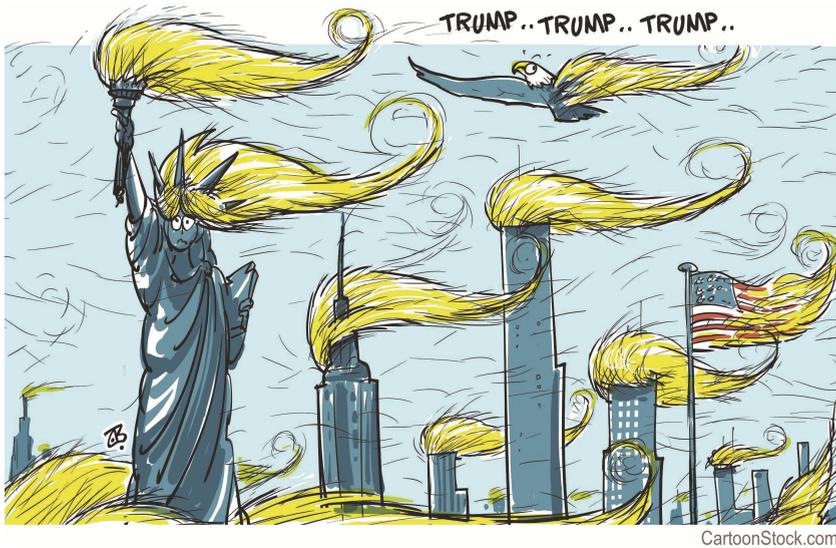


Figure 3. Trump's hair covers America and blows in the wind by Emad Hajjaj

Before Trump became a candidate, he tested the political waters as a white face leader by taking charge of the “birther movement” to reject Obama’s face as the legitimate macroface of the presidency. On the campaign trail, Trump’s faciality became a locus for crowd passion. At rallies, he loves riling up the crowd to a frenzy, and their size and visibility on TV matters to him. Dean (2016) argues that the crowd’s egalitarian discharge may revive the form of the party on the left. But with deepening cynicism towards politics, Trump’s rallies showed how molecular semiotic energy can flow in the opposite direction. Embodying political rudeness, he thrilled supporters by attacking “political correctness,” a shifting term for a vague enemy—liberals and progressives attempting to silence him (Weigel 2016). If the crowd is not just an aggregate of individuals but a force of its own, Trump encouraged physical responses to protestors and violence against reporters. The more critics assailed Trump, the more his avid supporters dug deeper to defend him (Peters 2018). To energize voters for the mid-term elections after the Judge Brett Kavanaugh confirmation battle in the Senate Judiciary Committee, he and other Republicans tapped into conservative rhetoric to characterize resistance to his presidency as an “angry left-wing mob” (Young 2018). During his reelection campaign, Trump increased the salience of street violence in “Democrat-run Cities” or “Joe Biden’s America” to appear as the ‘law and order’ president while leading a hate movement and inciting violence.

Deleuze and Guattari further propose that faciality is correlated with landscape. What landscape, they ask, “has not evoked the face that would have completed it, providing an unexpected complement for its lines and traits?” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 173). Supported by right-wing media, Trump scaled up outrage to a national-popular political level to make the “forgotten men and women of our country,” the “people who work hard but no longer have a voice,” appear on the American landscape (Smith 2016). Hochschild’s (2016) ethnography of Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana describes the landscape that would become “Trumpland.” For the people she interviewed, the American dream is a line on a landscape and some of the people perceive themselves as “strangers in their own land” somewhere in the middle of the line. But various others—Blacks, women, immigrants, Syrian refugees—have been cutting in. For these Louisiana strangers, the line has slowed down and stalled. As we later learned, economic fatalism and fear of cultural displacement were motivating factors for white, working-class voters (Cox, Lienisch

& Jones 2017). Trump's crowds responded to his celebrity and reacted to each other's responses in waves of enthusiasm. His pledge to "Drain the swamp" was a war cry against the corrupt establishment in Washington. While crowd desire also manifested itself on the left in Bernie Sanders's campaign to shake up the complacent Democratic Party, Trump's faciality machine resonated at the level of molecular insecurity and crowd desire swung toward new right-wing extremism. In his eyes, his crowds looked like "the people" but, rather than a unity, "the people" is temporary, a multiplicity of scattered, singular intensities. This is why Trump returns to Twitter as his online platform of crowd desire and makes incendiary statements on TV to fire up his base. As his presidency sank into moral, diplomatic, constitutional and pandemic crisis, he watched politics on TV and used Twitter as a here-and-now medium of outbursts, blamecasting, and the instant takedown. Revising Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Trump's face was a "veritable megaphone" (p. 179) with a Twitter account.

What remains to be considered is the assemblage that effectuated Trump's faciality machine. This faciality machine depended on an assemblage that was a political force for disorganization. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of assemblages as arrangements of heterogeneous elements—bodies, actions, passions, all the means of expression. They speak "on the same level" as states of affairs, states of facts, and subjective states" (Guattari 2011, p. 14). Most importantly, they promote a mode of enunciation, and stake out and envelope a territory. A list of elements would include but not be limited to: Trump's face-work, advisors, allies, campaign strategists, political advertising, Republican Party, Fox News, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Hannity*, *Fox & Friends*, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, *The Ingraham Angle*, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, *Justice with Judge Jeannine*, *The Mark Levin Show*, *National Enquirer*, Alex Jones's *Infowars*, *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, Breitbart News Network, *Drudge Report*, The Daily Caller, Newsmax, Sinclair Broadcast Group, the Koch brothers (billionaire oil barons), Robert Mercer (a big-data billionaire who partly owns Cambridge Analytica), super PACs, ACU, NRA, white evangelicals, armed far-right militias, white supremacist organizations, conspiracy theory, r/The\_Donald subreddit, micro-targeted ads on Facebook, and Twitter. This is the macro assemblage where right-wing political life is played out. The (re)arrangement of elements involves the interplay of new and old media. Fox News was established in 1996 to break what the Right perceives as the liberal stranglehold over politics. It became an established channel for molding audiovisual sensibility towards the Republican Party and conservative causes. As president, Trump treated Fox News like his own state-run, TV news channel; by the end of his term, he gave 119 interviews to Fox News and 0 to CNN. But he also made habitual use of what Guattari calls new "micro-equipment of semiotization" (Guattari 2016, p. 87), namely, Twitter to form or divert attention, weigh in on issues, and modulate preoccupations.

The above list cannot possibly represent the map of this assemblage, not to mention the articulation of multiple components, networks, constituencies, alliances, platforms, and paths to radicalization. It will have to suffice to say that through synthesis, this right-wing assemblage extracted a territory of perception and affect. Its function is not to make everyone agree but to articulate all the "material, semiotic, economic and social components that produce a collective desire, a group eros..." (Guattari 2016, p. 74). Another key point is that some components are centralized and hierarchized on Trump's faciality and refrains while others behave like a "kill-reality" by "thwarting the effects of resonance, by catalyzing a rhizome, by unraveling the globalization of redundancies of the face, everyday life, and landscape, while making refrains and mutant faciality traits work on their own account" (Guattari, 2011, p. 106). This collective assemblage of enunciation mobilises, connects and concentrates the energy of desire to reactive micropolitics. Trump's faciality responded to Obama's macroface with suspicion, and through this assemblage's mode of enunciation, a "people" became attuned to each other by regular repetition. The intensity of oppositional forces between local versus federal government control

and against the left ballasts the form of expression. Trumpism snowballed, took hold of desire, and stimulated gut-level attraction to his face-work. His tweets mixed policy and disinformation with fervor. Fox News mixed his political messaging with moral panics. White Christian anxiety about changing demographics appeared on the faces of hosts Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham for a mostly white middle and working-class audience. This massive assemblage is open to an array of small, far-right groups in niche assemblages where white rage, pride, and fear of replacement flows on social media (Ganesh 2020). On the farthest online fringe, QAnon's array of baseless conspiracy theories emerged from the anonymous imageboard 4chan and then moved to 8chan to protect Trump and his supporters from an alleged "deep state."

Trump's breakaway from the facial formula for a president triggered an upheaval in the Republican Party. Without ever holding elected public office, his primary campaign defeated his rivals. As the nominee, he departed from the Republican script by appealing to the worried, white working class. To undo Obama's diverse "new majority," he connected to Christian fundamentalism and neoconservative movements that were central to the Bush Jr. regime (Holland 2008). In the last days, he campaigned in Democratic Party territory. As Shafer and Doherty (2017) explain, the national media missed the territory of the Trump surge because of changes in the American media map that produced the Clinton wave. In the shift from newspaper to Internet publishing, local newspapers continued their long decline and national media was concentrated on the coasts and in Democratic-leaning, urban counties. For conservative or independent voters in the "heartland," the 'media' in the media bubble trope was a synonym for "liberal" and "coastal." Despite losing the popular vote to Clinton, Trump redrew the electoral college map by only 79,646 votes in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Trump's faciality machine played against the semiotic power of the state, government bureaucracy, and 'liberal/leftist' media. With his face/voice, "[s]ense occurs through acquiescence to the faciality of power" (Guattari 2016, p. 189). At a molecular level, black holes captured assignable subjective affects. In the Republican convention presidential nominee's speech, Trump said "I am your voice" (Smith 2016), and in the 2016 election, many people accepted Trump as their voice in their name.

His surprise victory was deemed a stunning repudiation of the establishment by the *New York Times*, but at the same time, this mutant faciality deviated too much, spun outside of common sense or violated the law, and a "whole machinery of rectification" was put to work (Guattari 2016, p. 189). For example, several executive orders and measures were blocked by judges. In October 2017, Mueller's indictment of Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort signaled a new phase of the Russia investigation. On 22 April 2019, the redacted, 2-volume, 448-page Mueller report described ten episodes where Trump or his campaign engaged in potentially obstructive behavior, including his effort to protect himself from investigation by firing Mueller. Barr published a 4-page letter to Congress and conducted a live TV news conference before the report was released that echoed Trump's refrain of no collusion. But when the report was released, it became evident that the Trump campaign sought Russian political "dirt" on Clinton, and that the 2016 election was altered by Russian hacking and leaking of Democratic Party emails and the Russian Internet Research Agency's campaign to magnify divisions within the electorate. Emboldened by his Attorney General, Trump asserted executive privilege over the full Mueller report and underlying evidence while the House Judiciary Committee would hold Barr in contempt of Congress. In this political struggle between the executive and legislative branches, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler announced the time for testing whether the US republic would remain the same or change into a tyrannical form of government had arrived (Bade, Leonnig & Zapotosky 2019).

## Micropolitics of the Present

Juxtaposing face-work and faciality yields an analysis of the micro-fascist conjunction of power that sprung up around the 45<sup>th</sup> president. Fleeting facial expressions and aggressive face-work in the social interaction order are semiotic components in assemblages where desire and micropolitics are fused together. From a microsociological perspective, it was not just Trump's rhetoric that disrupted political norms but his style of aggressive face-work. Significantly, on the global stage, he had friendly, official exchanges with dictators and strongmen of the far right: Putin, Jong-Un, Erdoğan, bin Salman, Duterte, Orbán, al-Sisi, Modi and Bolsonaro. His face-work distinguished him from all previous presidents by agitating the micropolitics of desire. From the perspective of micropolitical analysis, Trump's faciality machine functioned to concentrate the energy of desire, take hold of it, and channel it along a retrogressive vector. The right-wing assemblage makes possible a mode of collective enunciation that channels resentment and grievances into angry populism, conspiracy theories, and paranoid delusion. And yet, while Trump was less popular than past presidents, his Gallup 2017-21 term average was 41 percent.

Grossberg (2018) concludes his analysis of the reactionary right and reactionary counter-modernity by suggesting that Trump's "chaotic assemblage of conservatism" points us toward the "possibility of the emergence of an anti-political, 'alt-fascism'" that clears "the space for the dispersed power of a new 'popular corporatocracy'" (p. 133). However that vision may be, from a Guattarian perspective on capitalist societies, "*fascism has already taken place/passed!*" (Guattari 2016, p. 61, italics in original). Since the micropolitics of the present is a question of not only what has happened but also of what possible future is taking place in a micro-fascist conjunction of power, we can affirm both viewpoints. Within the right-wing assemblage, the name "Trump" refers to a faciality machine. From this angle, micro-fascism was a mutation, if not a new strain, that spread like a virus. But more than that, during his time in office, his conduct deteriorated, his hardcore fans became more fanatical, and this mutation became more dominant and ultimately coalesced on the Capitol.

An extraordinary low point was reached on 15 August 2017 when Trump held an impromptu news conference and insisted there was "very fine people" and "blame on both sides" after a white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia killed an anti-racist protestor and injured 35 others. The suggestion of moral equivalence sent out shock waves. But there were also regular outrage and response cycles, deflection, diversion or distraction to defend himself when threatened, and smear campaigns against political opponents. Wishing to make Democratic representative Ilhan Omar, one of the first two Muslim women ever elected to Congress, the face of the "Democrat Party," Trump retweeted doctored videos that combined footage of some of her words and dancing with footage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to amplify Islamophobia. Along with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, and Tlaib Rashida, she is one of four progressive women of color known as "The Squad" who faced waves of harassment, hatred and death threats each time he attacked them. In 2020, after the police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd triggered protests against police brutality, he not only violated Twitter's rules about "glorifying violence" but also declared himself "your president of law and order." On 1 June 2022, after US and D.C. park police, along with the D.C. National Guard, violently cleared out peaceful racial justice protestors in Lafayette Park near the White House, Trump, after a Rose Garden speech, walked through the park to St. John's Episcopal Church to hold up a Bible for a photo op. In 2020, as the coronavirus spread across America, he lied about the pandemic and the federal government's response, politicized the science, and undermined public health. Trump's whirlwind became a deadly vortex. Contrary to the view that his appalling performance only makes him a weak president with a record of more debacles

and failures than legislative wins, Green and Nader (2020) calculate the sum of his particulars as “deviant fascism American-style.”

In this micro-fascist conjunction of power, Trumpism shaped the “elective affinity” between post-truth communication and populist politics in a fragmented media environment (Waisbord 2018). He exceeded by far the sense of enmity towards the press that we heard when Nixon’s secretly-recorded, private Oval Office conversations in the early 1970s were released. In a speech to the Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Kansas City on 24 July 2018, Trump warned the audience: “It’s all working out. And just remember: What you’re seeing and what you’re reading is not what is happening,” which echoes George Orwell’s *1984*: “The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command.” Regarding his administration’s interactions with the White House press corps, the ritual of formal daily press briefings became monthly events, then more sporadic and shorter, before being halted altogether. To give Trump more control, they were replaced by impromptu, South Lawn “Chopper Talk” sessions in front of Marine One and cameras where Trump’s free-wheeling face-work and voice could dominate the interchanges. If Trump could diminish the role of the press corps, if most mainstream reporting on the White House could be discredited, and if most evidence-based sources of information could be attacked as unreliable, then only he should be believed. The political decision here, besides avoiding transparency and accountability, is a refusal to be legitimated or lead by evidence. His rejection of science, lack of a national strategy, and pressure to reopen the economy during a global pandemic made America first in total coronavirus cases and deaths.

At the facialized centre of the Trump presidency, there was no sense of limits on his power. The more unspecified enemies became discernible and specified—as “criminal aliens” who were the internal and external enemy—the more micro-fascism proliferated. In Trump’s quest to build a border wall and push “zero-tolerance” immigration policies, he manufactured a crisis at the southern US border and proposed a solution that was illegal and inhumane to distract from the real humanitarian crisis in the northern triangle of Central America. Trump had the faciality traits of an authoritarian head without forging concentric circles towards national unity or unified collectivity. The conjunction of micro-fascism coalesced into a MAGA movement while his antidemocratic impulses transformed the microtexture of the White House and tilted conservative politics towards a reactionary pole. When he talked about “treason,” which is punishable by death, he broadened the definition and accused Democrats and critics of being guilty of it. His style of politics was a contagion within the Republican Party with effects on political races, candidates, registered Republicans, and independent supporters. Trump’s cabinet and staff turnover as well as Republican followership in Congress enabled him to consolidate power in the presidency. As his own adviser on foreign affairs and national security, he ignored intelligence and politicized intelligence agencies. Breaking the norms for lifetime appointees set by Obama and Bush, his most enduring legacy will likely be a rightward-leaning federal judiciary (Ruiz, Gebeloff, Eder & Protesch 2020). The death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg gave Trump and Republican Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell the opportunity to nominate and confirm a third social conservative and “originalist” to the Supreme Court; before the end of his term, they installed more than 230 judges on the Federal bench to push the law rightward for generations. With McConnell as his endless enabler in the Senate, Trump was capable of passing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that favoured corporations and wealthy Americans but could not replace the Affordable Care Act.

Trump demonstrated time and time again that he was a messenger/disruptor-in-chief who does face-work for his base on TV and Twitter. But for many other Americans, seeing his face on TV was uneasy to unbearable and resistance was possible. Connolly (2017) suggests that “multifaceted democracy” with an “ethos of pluralism and pluralization” and an “assemblage

of resistance” could limit “aspirational fascism.” Beginning with the first Women’s March, there was a movement in resistance. As Meyer and Tarrow (2018) write:

Trump’s inconsistent and often erratic behavior, his lack of deference to well-established norms, and his savage attacks on opponents made it possible for those in the Resistance to downplay their differences on tactics and ultimate goals—at least during the first year of his presidency. (p. 21)

The anti-Trump movement apparently affected the electoral process. In the November 2018 mid-term elections, widely believed to be a referendum on an unpopular president, voter turnout was the highest on record and Democrats gained 40 seats in the House of Representatives.

With control of the House come oversight committee probes, subpoena power and more investigations. The Mueller report revealed that Trump’s effort to obstruct justice failed because the former White House counsel and aides “declined to carry out orders or accede to his requests” to protect him and themselves. After Attorney General William Barr’s April 2019 press conference on the Mueller report, Trump blasted the “Crazy Mueller Report” on Twitter by using a *Game of Thrones* meme to send a political message. Both Trump and characters in the serial fantasy drama express distrust of elites and represent struggles over who will rule (see Figure 4).

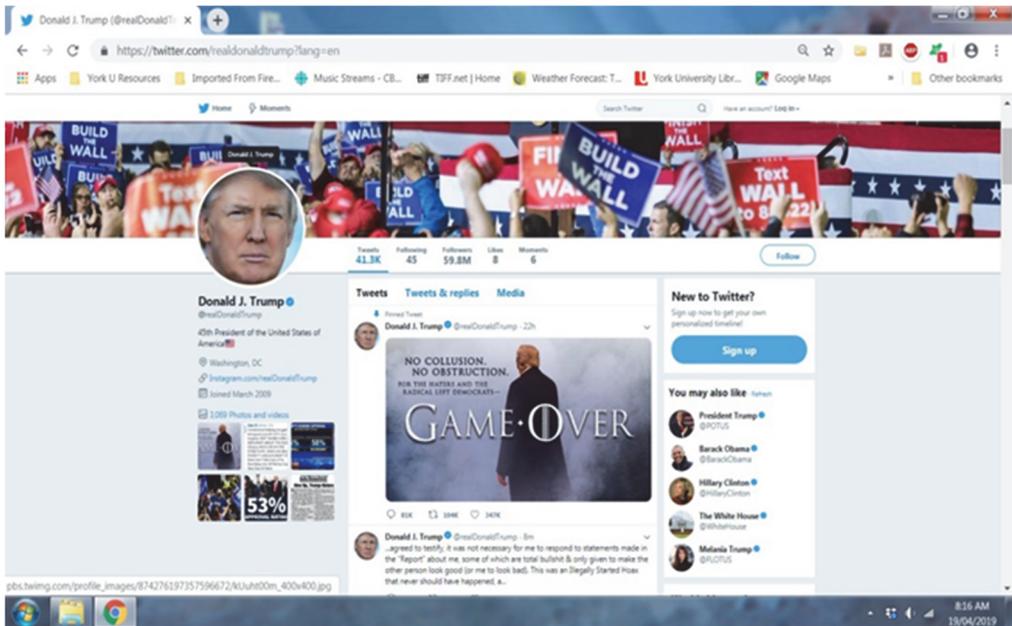


Figure 4. Donald J. Trump @ realDonaldTrump, Twitter, April 19, 2019, 8:18 am

According to Mueller’s report, however, it was not yet “game over”; Trump was not exonerated, there was much incriminating evidence, and it is up to Congress “to determine the full scope of his alleged misconduct.” During his tenure, his (mis)conduct became subject to partisan politics and the law that defines “collusion,” “criminal conspiracy,” “obstruction of justice,” “endeavor to obstruct,” “corrupt intent,” “knowingly” and “willingly,” “abuse of power,” “high crimes and misdemeanors,” and last but not least, “impeachable offence.”

For Deleuze & Guattari (1987), politics “operates by macrodecisions and binary choices, binarized interests” but political decision making “descends into a world of microdetermina-

tions, attractions, and desires..." (p. 221). On 24 September 2019, Trump declassified the quasi transcript of his 25 July 2019 phone call to Ukrainian President Zelensky. On one hand, this phone call was about macrodecisions pertaining to US foreign policy interests and Ukraine's national security. On the other, Trump's decision making operated at a micro level. To many observers, he had disclosed a "quid pro quo" where Trump withheld military aid to pressure the Ukrainian president to announce investigations of the Bidens on TV. Months before the public heard of Trump's "quid pro quo," Sean Hannity and Fox News was a nexus of Trump's shadow foreign policy maneuvers to energize his base and demonize Clinton and Biden. An intelligence-community whistleblower complaint (filed on August 12 and released on September 26) exposed far-right conspiracy theory inside Trump's inner circle. His obsession with Ukraine conspiracy theories led him to use presidential power to establish an "irregular, informal channel of US policy-making" to withhold military aid for political favors that would benefit his re-election campaign. By October 2019, the House was moving more rapidly toward impeachment. An October 8 Washington Post-Shar School poll showed that 49 percent of adults approved an impeachment inquiry to remove the president from office. A day later, even a Fox News Poll found that 51 percent of registered voters wanted him impeached. On 31 October 2019, House Democrats and Republicans voted 232 to 196 along party lines on a resolution to formalize the public phase of an impeachment inquiry.

Supplementing Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) insight into the limit of power centers where power and impotence complement and reinforce each other, a defining feature of Trump's macroface is how the corrupt abuse of power above the constitutional rule of law and the counter-forces limiting his potency have collided on an ominous, convulsive political reality TV show. We have seen migrant children separated from their immigrant parents and detained in large chain-link 'cages,' torch-wielding white supremacists and neo-Nazis chanting "White lives matter" and "Jews will not replace us," the deadliest attack on Jews in a synagogue, attempted mail bombings of CNN and prominent Trump critics, and a surge in hate crimes related to race, ethnicity and ancestry. Beyond the sway of humanitarian impulses, the place where Trump really speaks his mind is Twitter. With more than 80 percent of Democrats and nearly 30 percent of Republicans endorsing an inquiry, he tweeted about his political persecution: "It was all just a continuation of the greatest Scam and Witch Hunt in the history of our Country!" On TV, his face-work veered between promoting his greatness and persistent aggressiveness, overt disagreeableness and casual menace. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) observe: "It is always from the depths of impotence that each power center draws its power, hence their extreme maliciousness, and vanity (p. 226).

Throughout his tenure, we witnessed how Trump's "faciality of power" hung over the presidency and relations of power, aided and abetted by Republicans. When the televised spectacle of the House impeachment inquiry began on 13 November 2019, affective flows of communication flowing through the public hearings, the media and affective publics reached a peak. The inquiry delved into how absolute the power of the president is and to what extent the US remains a constitutional republic. On Twitter, on 15 November 2019, Trump attacked Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch in real time as she described to the House Intelligence Committee how he attempted to hijack foreign policy. Against all the evidence of pressuring the Ukraine to investigate his political rivals and efforts to block Congressional investigation, a leaked Republican memo revealed their impeachment committee members' plan to defend Trump was to say, in effect, 'there's nothing to see here.' In response to three top career professional's testimony, Republican Jim Jordan, Trump's pugnacious ally and defender, insisted that "What you heard didn't happen."

On 19 December 2019, the House of Representatives voted on two articles of impeachment: On Abuse of Power, 237 house members voted Yea and 197 voted Nay; on Obstruction of

Congress, 229 voted Yea, 198 voted Nay. This set the stage for the Senate impeachment trial led by McConnell and a debate over what constitutes a fair trial. Senators took an oath to do “impartial justice according to the Constitution and the laws” and then voted 51- 49 against witnesses. In the end, Republican senator’s continuing fealty to Trump prevailed, senators voted on party lines, and Trump was acquitted. The failure to impeach the president based on evidence of serious misconduct revealed that Congress had lost its ability to limit the president’s power; hence, with impeachment turned into a “cynical instrument of partisan warfare,” presidential oversight would be left to the 2020 election (Wehle 2020).

But even the magnitude of the first impeachment spectacle was diminished when Trumpism led the US into an intersecting public health catastrophe and economic calamity. During Trump’s re-election campaign, he went from downplaying to denying COVID-19. He also undermined trust in science by dismissing face masks; consequently, the non-use of masks became a predictor of support for Trump. Perhaps the most striking example of mediated demagogic face-work came after Trump tested positive and was airlifted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Centre. Before leaving, despite 210,000 American deaths, he tweeted: “Feeling really good! Don’t be afraid of Covid. Don’t let it dominate your life.” In a defiant return to the White House, infected Trump stopped on the balcony in front of live TV cameras and photographers, took off his mask, posed, and walked into the West Wing despite a growing outbreak inside (see Figure 5).

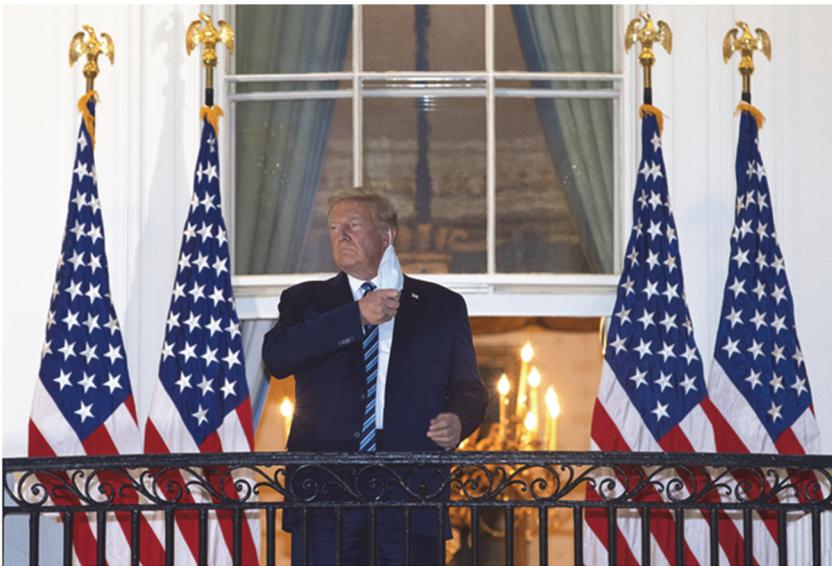


Figure 5. Trump Removes Mask on White House Balcony, photo by Win McNamee, Getty Images

In the 2020 presidential election, deemed by the *Washington Post* to be a referendum on Trump’s norm-breaking, Biden won the popular vote by more than 80 million votes. The results canceled The President Trump Show but did not neutralize Trumpism. Despite his inability to carry out the duties of his office and exposing himself to criminal prosecution, Trump received more than 74 million votes. During the interregnum, foreign threats to the integrity of 2016 election were matched by an internal threat as he refused to concede, disrupted the peaceful transition of power, and attempted to overturn Biden’s victory. For his expanded, devoted base, Trump released a 46-minute Facebook video and took to Twitter to attack the integrity of a free,

fair and secure election, which left supporters with the conviction they had been cheated. Right-wing media took up his social media messages and promoted election denialism. Trump's final face-saving stratagem to cling to power and protect himself consisted of the Big Lie that Biden stole the election from him (which many Republicans adopted), purges, a Texas lawsuit and amicus brief to the Supreme Court to challenge election procedures in four states (seditious abuse of judicial process to invalidate millions of votes), litigation to contest election processes or overturn results (filing 65 cases and losing 64 times), soliciting election fraud from the Georgia secretary of state (to find enough votes to overturn his defeat), abusing pardon power, and an ultimate loyalty test of Republicans (allegiance to Trump or the Constitution). Angry, disaffected and gullible Trump supporters who refused to accept his defeat responded by donating money to his campaign, leadership PAC and the RNC, and by rallying to "Stop the Steal."

In the post-election, hyperpartisan, divided states of America, Trump and loyalist Republicans, afraid of Trump and his voter base, attempted a procedural coup to disenfranchise citizens who mainly live in cities where minorities and immigrants live. The last episode of his reality TV show was staged for a joint session of Congress and could be titled "This American Carnage." It was set in Washington and made for right-wing media and those who continued to believe the Big Lie. At the "March to Save America" organized by Women for America First on 6 January 2021, Trump, still afflicted by a fantasy of his "sacred landslide election victory," became the inciter-in-chief and motivated mostly maskless supporters, including many who were already radicalized by viral disinformation and receiving calls to violence on unmoderated social media platforms, to march to the Capitol to "take back our country." He urged the crowd to "fight like hell," cheer on "brave" congressional Republicans objecting to the counting of electoral college votes, and to cast their ire on "weak" Republicans. With instigators from right-wing extremist groups, some marchers became rioters—an aggrieved, lightly-armed, almost all white mob—who confronted and overwhelmed Capitol police to storm the Capitol building and swarm inside, delaying the certification proceedings. Back at the White House, Trump watched domestic terrorism on live TV and attacked Vice-President Mike Pence for not having the courage to defy the Constitution and reject the Electoral College vote count. After a 4-hour siege with vandalism and violence, 147 congressional Republicans still voted to overturn the Electoral College election results. Hours after Trumpism had reached a peak of disorder, ferociousness and death, Biden was certified as president. In Trump's binarized view, the terrorists were "great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long." The next day he made a statement that framed the end of his presidency as the "greatest first term in history" and "only the beginning of our fight to Make American Great Again!" In the context of this violent insurrection and plans circulating online for future "armed protests," Twitter permanently banned his personal account with 88.7 million followers citing the "risk of further incitement to violence." But Trump had already given a call to arms that resonated with what QAnon believers call "the Storm" to ride the whirlwind of mayhem and sedition to Capitol Hill. For Paxton (2021), Trump's incitement of civic violence to overturn Biden's election warrant the conclusion that Trump is a fascist.

With a legacy of impeachment and other ignominies, as well as policy failures that exacerbated the dual health and economic crisis, his presidency ended where it began, with Trump pushing voter or election fraud conspiracy theory. A second impeachment put him far beyond the pale of previous bad presidents. On 13 January 2021, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump for "incitement of insurrection"; 222 Democrats and 10 Republicans voted Yea but 197 Republicans, rather than abandoning Trumpism, voted Nay. Trump is out of office but the right-wing assemblage, MAGA movement, millions of Republican who absolutely believe the election was stolen, "alt-right" platforms, and far-right extremist groups are still present. Following the assault on democracy, polls indicated 74 percent of voters said democracy is

under threat while 34 percent of Americans said they no longer believe in democracy. After shattering norms, mainstreaming right-wing extremism, and fomenting political violence, he would return to Mar-a-Lago to undertake an intra-party campaign of intimidation against any opposition to reshape the Republican Party around himself. During the 2023-24 presidential campaign, he promised to use presidential power for retribution and revenge. In these volatile times, electoral, autocratic leader centred, fascisizing micropolitics would push the US from a government legitimization crisis into a constitutional crisis. The micro-fascist conjunction of power around the 45<sup>th</sup> president was an historical moment of danger that will have far-ranging, long-term political ramifications for US democracy.

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# Work in Progress

## The State of America IV: A Nation Divided, But Still Strong

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**Abstract:** America continues to be the world's number one (1st) economy as it is the leading innovator in digital applications. Meanwhile, it has fallen somewhat on “democracy” measures. Three of the world's leading democracy monitoring organizations. Freedom House, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) have, among many issues, particularly noted a dangerous political polarization and a rejection of the electoral rules of the game in America. EIU cites America as having become a “flawed democracy” especially on the rejection of the political culture variable of acceptance of electoral defeat by Donald Trump and allies.

**Keywords:** United States, deeply divided, flawed democracy, still strong

America has eight of the world's topmost valued companies by market cap. Furthermore, the top five are digital companies. World's Largest Companies by Market Cap:

1. Microsoft (computing) - USA
2. Apple (mobile phone) - USA
3. NVIDIA (chip production - USA)
4. Alphabet (Google) - USA
5. Amazon (cloud computing) - USA
6. Saudi Aramco (oil) – Saudi Arabia
7. Meta Platforms (Facebook) - USA
8. TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. LTD) - USA
9. Berkshire Hathaway (business holding company) - USA
10. Eli Lilly (pharmaceuticals - USA) (Source: Largest Companies by Market Cap. companies-marketcap.com)

Microsoft became the #1 most valued company at \$3.342Trillion after it partnered with OpenAI to launch GPT Chat. American companies lead China, Europe and the world in the development of digital technology with NVIDIA the #1 chip maker for AI. This digital lead results in strong economic development for America which has avoided recession in recent years after an eco-

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conomic slowdown due to Covid 19. Of the 60 largest companies in the world 35 are American while 7 are Chinese which has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy.

## Democracy Challenged

While America continues to exhibit strong economic development, it has experienced a deeply divided political/cultural society which presents challenges for democracy. Three major sites offer ratings for democracy in the world, 1. Freedom House, 2. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and 3. The International Initiative for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). These are leading organizations researching the state of democracy world-wide. Freedom House is located in Washington D.C., United States (US), EIU's offices are in London, United Kingdom (UK) and IDEA operates out of Stockholm, Sweden. Freedom House is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the US State Department and a variety of private donors including the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, Google, Meta and the Lilly Foundation. EIU is the product of a privately produced newspaper/magazine The Economist. IDEA is funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Commission of the European Union (EU), Carnegie Europe and other public and private donors.

At the outset, it must be stated that these advocates of democracy agencies were critical of the former President Donald Trump's denial of the 2020 presidential election and the political right, populist movement which supports his 2024 candidacy. The division of America into left vs. right camps is notable and approaches a cultural civil war. The right sees the nation run by a left leaning establishment which represents liberal values such a women's rights, voting rights, immigrant rights, abortion, anti-established religion, expensive government shared income programs, big government regulating everything and taxing everyone, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) rights, an inflation ridden economy, mass illegal immigration and, in general, an unraveling of the fabric of traditional America. The left sees the Trump populist movement as being anti-abortion, anti- minority and women's rights, isolationist on international affairs, religious zealots, prone to violence, undemocratic and supportive of authoritarianism, antisemitic, anti-government, anti- education, supportive of low taxes for the rich anti- climate change environment friendly programs and, in general, being against any further extension of democratic values.

## Freedom House

Freedom House rates the US as "Free", but with a score decline in recent years to 83 out of 100.

1. Electoral Process. Freedom House reports with regard to the 2020 presidential election that President Joe Biden received 7 million more votes than former President Donald Trump. Trump refused to concede and supported the "Save America" January 6 assault on the nation's Capital housing the US Congress.
2. Political Pluralism and Participation. Freedom House stated that:"...unfounded doubts about the fairness of election administration continued to cause concern that future transfer of power could be disrupted." (Freedom House. 2024. United States. B2)

3. Functioning of Government. With the US Senate Democrat and the House of Representatives Republican some obstructionism was evident. A plus for democracy is that the Freedom of Information Act of 50 years allows transparency of Congressional activities.
4. Freedom of Expression and Belief. Freedom of press and religion are intact. There are aggressive disinformation efforts especially by foreign governments such as Russia which tried to spread negative information about the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign in 2016 and false info about the war in the Ukraine.
5. Associational and Organizational Rights. The Black Lives Matter movement connected with police mistreatment of George Floyd showed that rights organization can be effective.
6. Rule of Law. Women continue to make less than men.
7. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights. Travel is sometimes restricted. Women's right to an abortion has been restricted in the Supreme Court Dobbs decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and move abortion rights decisions to the state level. There is a very unequal income gap. Property rights are intact. The rating on this measure moved from a 4 to 3. (Ibid, E-G)

## Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

In Canada and the US "...public disaffection with the political status quo is obvious." (Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). 2023, p. 5) The US has fallen from a "Full Democracy" rating by EIU to a "Flawed Democracy" obtaining a score of 7.85 out of a 10. (Ibid.) EIU states that "democracy is likely to slide deeper into division and disenchantment" if Trump is re-elected. (Ibid., p.6)

On foreign policy, EIU sees Biden as a Wilsonian (after Woodrow Wilson) internationalist while Trump could withdraw from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), cease aid to the Ukraine, and impose higher tariffs on imported goods. (Ibid., p.26) In this sense, Trump is an isolationist. So, we have the national divide on foreign policy – internationalist vs. isolationist.

America exhibits "...rising polarization and diminishing confidence in government." (Ibid., p. 39) Additionally, there are "...baseless attempts...to overturn the 2020 presidential results..." (Ibid.)

EIU puts an emphasis on political culture and polarization in the US. The issues revolve around 1. Covid-19 (whether to vaccinate), 2. Election outcome, 3. Racial equity, 4. LGBTQ+ rights, 5. Climate policy, 6. Reproductive health, and 7. The Israel-Hamas war (Ibid., p. 41). EIU refers to a PEW Research Center poll in which Republicans (62%) and Democrats (54%) have a "very unfavorable" view of each other. (Ibid., p. 41) The EIU report states that pluralism and competing alternatives are essential for a functioning democracy. But reigning sectarianism and institutional gridlock are the current norm.

EIU says that, if re-elected Trump will: 1. Use the Justice Department to go after the opposition, 2. Invoke the Insurrection Act to quell protests, and 3. Put loyalists in the civil service with ideological screening. (Ibid., pp. 42-47).

EIU concludes that a successful democracy depends on the peaceful ceding of power from one faction to another. Each side should accept the transfer of power to assure the "legitimacy, smooth functioning and, ultimately, the sustainability of democracy." (Ibid., p. 65)

## The International Initiative for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

IDEA rates the US as Free. It ranks high on the Rule of Law (29<sup>th</sup> in the world), 28<sup>th</sup> on Rights and 12<sup>th</sup> on Participation. But it ranks 50<sup>th</sup> on Representation due to disillusionment on the right with the electoral process and harassment of election workers. IDEA is in step with Freedom House and EIU noting Donald Trump's "big lie" about the rigged 2020 election (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance – IDEA, 2022, p. 32). They note the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision which pushed women's abortion rights from national legality to be decided by each state. (Ibid., p.34) IDEA notes that: "In the USA threats to democracy persist after the Trump presidency, illustrated by polarization, counter-majoritarianism and the rolling back of long established rights." (Ibid, p.28) They note that the diversity of media has resulted in personalized information streams which contribute to increasing polarization on issues such as these.

## Former Presidential Donald Trump on the Legal System

Not only does Donald Trump attack the 2020 election outcome which is a rejection of a pillar of democracy – the peaceful transfer of power – but he attacks a second pillar of democracy – the rule of law. He calls the indictments against him as being rigged. Trump was convicted of felony charges for unlawful hush money payments to former sex partners. Trump maintains that the New York State trial was biased by the presence of an overwhelmingly Democrat judge and jury. The polarization of America appears again on this issue. In a 2024 ABC News poll on this issue 83% of Democrats say that the verdict was correct whereas only 16% of Republicans say it was correct. (Murray, June 2, 2024)

## Discussion

These organizations are among the leading raters of democracy in the world. They are in unison on their negative evaluations with EIU being more pessimistic. The measure that fell the most in the EIU report they call "political culture". The Freedom House and IDEA reports agree with the EIU report without using the terminology "political culture". What is "political culture?" The term is defined in *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*: "Political Culture is a product of the history of a given nation as shaped by important events (for instance, a violent conflict such as a civil war, a revolution, or major social upheaval), and peoples' characteristics, shared values, beliefs, and perspectives." (German and Goldenberg-Hart, 2011, p.1240). EIU states: "A successful democratic political culture implies that the losing parties and their supporters accept the judgement of the voters and allow for the peaceful transfer of power." Trump refuses to concede the 2020 election result which could indicate a rejection of the concept of democracy. Many of his followers accept this electoral evaluation. According to these leading organizations monitoring democracy this is a rejection of democracy.

When it pertains to "social upheaval" the January 6, 2021, riot/insurrection attack on the US Capital certainly qualifies and ties into the rejection of the 2020 presidential election. The Capital police were over run, and the Capital breached in an attempt to prevent then Vice President Mike Pence from exercising his duty to accept the Electoral College state results. The

effort failed to prevent Pence from affirming the election of Joe Biden as President. Subsequently, Trump and Pence have fallen out and Pence does not support the 2024 re-election of Trump as President. Freedom House's statement on the election results is: "A raft of lawsuits by the Trump campaign and its allies were dismissed by state and federal courts, but many Republicans and Trump supporters were persuaded that voter fraud was widespread and Biden was not the rightful winner." (Freedom House. 2024)

Democracy, while still the prevalent label for America, has declined in that nation according to these democracy monitoring organizations. America's economy in the meantime remains very strong as it leads in digital innovation and continues to economically grow.

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# Book Review

**Title:** Brothers at Each Other's Throats: Regularity of the Violent Ethnic Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space. By Isaenko, Anatoly (2021) San Diego. Cognella

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Brothers at Each Other's Throats is about the century's old ethnic conflicts in the Southern rim of the former Soviet Union. The nations involved include the Ukraine to the Southeast running through the Black Sea, Moldova, Georgia, North and South Ossetia, Ingushetia, Abkhazia, Armenia to Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea. Major external players are Russia and Turkey with some intervention from Western nations. Especially in the Ukraine. The prediction is that the ethnic differences including Christian vs. Muslim religions, language variations, a history of warfare, external power dominance, and nationalism will produce endless clashes and war in this region.

There have been seven recent wars in this geographic area as reported in detail by Isaenko. Russo-Ukraine, Russo-Moldovan, Georgian-South Ossetian, North Ossetian-Ingushian, Georgia-Abkhazian, Russian-Chechen and Armenian-Azerbaijani wars have occurred. Among the triggers leading to war in all but the Ukraine and Moldova is a Christian vs. Islam religious difference. Georgia, North and South Ossetia, Russia and Armenia are Christian whereas Abkhazia, Chechia, Ingushia and Azerbaijan are Islamic.

The author was born and raised in the Caucasus and received a PhD in History from Moscow State University. This book could be of "must read" interest to professors and students as well as foreign affairs and military personnel concerned with this area of the world.

This author is familiar with ethnic conflict in East Europe. In an issue of *A Political Portrait Of Ukraine: Interethnic Relations & National Tolerance In The Countries Of Central & Eastern Europe* in the lead article I co-authored (with Russell Farnen) an analysis of ethnic relations in Central and East Europe (CEE). The article reached the following conclusions which are applicable to the nations included in the Isaenko book:

1. The people of CEE remember their history including incidences of warfare and the often-insulting consequences.
2. There is no real tradition of civil rights in CEE and democracy always failed.
3. National borders often separated ethnic groups.
4. Minorities often do not fare well during economic downturns.
5. Governments often whip up emotions/sentiments and initiate aggressive actions without popular support.

6. Definite intractable, unsolvable minority problems exist in CEE.
7. Political education CEE states is one-sided.
8. Throughout CEE there is inadequate law enforcement training in minority law enforcement.
9. The decline of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON under the Soviet Union) resulted in a drop in economic cooperation which served to promote mutual interdependence. (Farnen and German, 1995, p.11-15)

That A Political Portrait Of The Ukraine was published by Democratic Initiatives funded by Freedom House (United States -US), National Endowment for Democracy (US), United States Agency for International Development, International Renaissance Foundation/Soros Foundation and Eurasia Foundation (US) is significant. The Western Ukraine is heavily oriented toward the Western nations of Europe and the United States. The Eastern Ukraine is Russian. Freedom House rates Azerbaijan, Crimea, and Russia as Not Free. They are autocratic nations. Russia supported the taking of Crimea and the Donbas region from the Ukraine and would be very paranoid if the West makes Ukraine part of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) and/or the European Union (EU).

Most of the nations covered by the Farnen-German article have become part of NATO and the EU. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia, Albania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the former East Germany are members of NATO. All except North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania are members of the EU. These nations constitute the Western rim of the former Soviet Union. Russia will not accept particularly the Ukraine and Georgia, additionally maybe North Ossetia and Armenia or any other nation in the Southern rim as being part of NATO.

Left alone without significant change, as Isaenko points out, these Southern rim nations will engage in endless conflict with each other. Isaenko finds the conflicts in this region bewildering:

“The folks of my generation who grew up in the Soviet Union, probably remember the speeches of our schoolteachers and what they taught us. One of the least of these lessons was how, irrespective of our own ethnic origins, all of us are brothers and sisters who should be as united and eternal as the Soviet Union itself. As sad as it is to say, the story of Cain and Able, once again, has reared its head.” (p.305)

This observation reminds me of my colleague Ivan Siber from Zagreb, Croatia telling me that he did not at all understand the breakup of Yugoslavia. He said that we went to school together, we played sports together and intermarried. Now we play a deadly game called The Balkan Inn. Three men go into a room, the lights are turned out, knives are pulled – only one can leave. Isaenko also states:

“I remember how, during his 1993 visit to the Caucasus, my friend and benevolent colleague Professor Peter Petschauer told me that he was amazed at how the locals recounted their chosen traumas, some of which had taken place hundreds of years prior, as if they had just happened the day before.” (p. 297)

This author learned that if you grew up in Serbia, you were told that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empires’ Turkish army defeated the Serbs in a battle. The Serbian bodies were irreverently left unburied on the battlefield for blackbirds to feast upon. When Yugoslavia fell apart, Serbs shelled Muslim areas of Sarajevo until only rubble remained. NATO responded by engaging in a successful cyber war, disrupting the Serbian military’s communications, grounding the Serbian air force and bombing infrastructure targets and the Serbian military without opposition. Slobodan Milosevich who served as President of Serbia was captured and sent to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, The Hague, Netherlands to be tried as a war criminal. Hostilities ceased.

Never forget. Wait for revenge.

Isaenko responds to this hostile state of affairs by citing the recommendations of three American scholars. Carol Barner-Barry and Cynthia Hody call for a “Political Culture of Democracy and a Road Map for the Countries of Post-Soviet Space to Heal the Violent Ethnic Conflicts.” Among their recommendations is: “Different racial, religious, or ethnic groups should live together in peace and a spirit of mutual trust.” Second is the advice of Arend Lijphart creating in multiethnic states a policy based on “a consociational democracy model.” There should be: “Cooperation among political elites to the formation of coalition governments and executive power sharing.” Establish: “A high degree of autonomy for each ethnic community to run its own affairs.” (p.307)

None of the countries in Isaenko’s area of inquiry are listed by Freedom House as being democratic, i.e., “Free.” Russia, Crimea and Azerbaijan are rated “Not Free.” Even the Ukraine is listed as “Partly Free.” According to Freedom House in the Ukraine “corruption remains endemic.” “Attacks against journalists...members of minority groups are frequent, and police responses are often inadequate.” ([freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world2021/democracy-under-siege](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world2021/democracy-under-siege))

This author would rate the Ukraine followed by Georgia and Armenia as possible candidates for the Isaenko conflict resolution suggestions. Maybe North Ossetia, but the remainder are unlikely, not impossible, entries for the peaceful resolution of ethnic conflict. Maybe they all have reached a necessary point for the settlement of differences without external interference. Isaenko’s plan would be a good starting plan for a move toward peace. However, let us remember the distinction between de jure, by law, and de facto, fact. Nations can pass laws, but if they are not supported by the people in the culture, reality will be the wall that is hit by hope.

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Vol. 15, 2024: Special Issue:  
Political Identities Challenged:  
Exploring the Consequences of Communicative Changes

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with Christ'l De Landtsheer (University of Antwerp, Belgium)*



# Foreword

The study of political communication, discourse, and propaganda has become increasingly important in understanding how political actors influence public opinion, shape national identities, and mobilize support. The four articles in this issue contribute to this field by examining different aspects of political language, media representation, and the strategic use of communication by political actors. These articles collectively explore how language, metaphors, and propaganda are employed to construct political realities, influence public perception, and achieve strategic goals.

Equivocation, or the intentional use of vague and ambiguous language, is a common tactic employed by politicians in interviews and public debates. Bull's study on *Equivocation in Political Communication: The Art of Not Answering Questions* examines the extent to which British political leaders equivocate during televised interviews and Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). He introduces the concept of "reply-rate," which measures the proportion of questions that politicians answer directly. His findings reveal that politicians often avoid giving direct answers, with reply-rates as low as 11% in some cases. By analyzing the techniques of equivocation, Bull provides a framework for identifying when and how politicians avoid answering questions, offering insights into the strategic use of language in political discourse. Bull identifies 43 different techniques of equivocation, ranging from ignoring the question altogether to attacking the question or the interviewer. These strategies allow politicians to control the narrative, avoid controversial topics, and present themselves in a favorable light without committing to specific positions. The article also highlights the role of personalization in political communication, where politicians direct attention to the interviewer personally, either through flattery, criticism, or other forms of personal engagement. This tactic can be particularly effective in deflecting difficult questions and shaping public perception of the politician's character.

In their article on *Metaphors and Political Discourse: The Case of European Integration in Ukraine*, Polegkyi and De Landsheer focus on the discourse surrounding European integration in Ukraine. Polegkyi and De Landsheer analyze the metaphors employed in Ukrainian newspapers between 2005 and 2010, showing how they can shape public perception and influence political behavior. They find that the European Union is often depicted as a "house" or "fortress," with Ukraine positioned as an outsider knocking on the door. This metaphor reflects the tension between the desire for integration and the perception of exclusion from Europe. Polegkyi and De Landsheer identify several key metaphors in the discourse, including the EU as a "closed club," a "fortress," and a "dream." These metaphors shape how Ukrainians perceive their relationship with Europe, often emphasizing the difficulty of gaining entry and the exclusivity of the EU. The metaphor of the "path" or "journey" is also prominent, symbolizing the long and arduous process of European integration. These metaphors not only reflect the political realities of Ukraine's relationship with the EU but also influence public opinion by framing the issue in specific ways. By analyzing the metaphors used in Ukrainian media, Polegkyi and De Landsheer provide insights into the ways in which political issues are framed and understood, offering a valuable perspective on the role of language in shaping national identity and political aspirations.

In their article on *ISIS Propaganda: Adapting Messages for Different Audiences* Onur Sultana and Ismail Aslan analyze ISIS magazines published in English, French, and Turkish, using a combination of computational and qualitative methods to measure the similarity between articles and identify thematic differences, showing how the group uses language and imagery to

recruit supporters and spread its ideology. The authors find that ISIS is highly skilled at producing unique propaganda content for different audiences, rather than simply translating the same material into multiple languages. For example, the English-language magazine *Dabiq* focuses on themes such as state-building, ideology, and jurisprudence, while the Turkish-language magazine *Konstantiniyye* emphasizes jihad and heroism. These differences reflect the group's strategic efforts to appeal to the specific concerns and values of each target audience. The authors also highlight the role of metaphors in ISIS propaganda, noting that the group uses metaphors of “home,” “family,” and “journey” to create a sense of belonging and purpose among its followers. These metaphors are tailored to the cultural and linguistic context of each audience, reinforcing the group's message and encouraging support for its cause.

This special issue is completed with a review of two books about the implications of AI in the social landscape. Before that, however, Richard D. Anderson, Jr., in his article on *Voicing Politics*, critiques the book authors' conclusions, arguing that the observed differences in responses are not due to grammatical features of the languages but rather to the unspoken context that respondents bring to the survey questions. The book *Voicing Politics: How Language Shapes Public Opinion* by Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits, through a series of experiments involving bilingual speakers of Estonian and Russian, demonstrates that the grammatical features of a language—such as gender markers or the expression of futurity—can shape how individuals respond to political questions. Anderson highlights the limitations of survey research in controlling for context, suggesting that the variability in responses is more likely due to the different cultural and historical contexts associated with each language rather than the linguistic structures themselves. This debate underscores the complexity of disentangling the effects of language from the broader socio-cultural context in which it is used. The implications of this research are profound for political science, particularly in understanding how linguistic structures might influence political behavior and attitudes. If language indeed shapes political beliefs, as Pérez and Tavits suggest, then political campaigns and public policy initiatives could be tailored to the linguistic characteristics of target populations. However, Anderson's critique serves as a cautionary note, reminding researchers of the importance of context in interpreting survey data and the potential pitfalls of attributing causal effects to linguistic features alone.

In conclusion, four articles in this special issue, together, provide a comprehensive overview of the role of language, metaphors, and propaganda in political communication. From the influence of linguistic structures on political attitudes to the strategic use of equivocation by politicians, these studies highlight the complex ways in which language shapes political realities. The analysis of metaphors in Ukrainian media and ISIS propaganda further underscores the power of language to frame political issues and influence public perception. As political communication continues to evolve in the digital age, these studies offer valuable insights into the ways in which language and media are used to achieve political goals. By understanding the strategies and techniques employed by political actors, we can better navigate the complex landscape of political discourse and make informed decisions as citizens.

# The analysis of political equivocation by British political leaders

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**Abstract:** Equivocation, sometimes referred to as “the intentional use of precise language”, is the focus of this article. Data are reported concerning the extent to which politicians equivocate in televised interviews and Prime Minister’s Questions (so-called *reply-rate*). In addition, methodological techniques devised by Peter Bull and colleagues for the analysis of equivocation are discussed. These involve the identification of different types of questions, whereby it is possible to establish whether a politician has provided an answer. An equivocation typology is presented, whereby 43 techniques of not replying to a question are identified. Examples of equivocation by recent British political leaders are discussed: *Conservative Prime Ministers*: Margaret Thatcher, John Major, David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson; *Labour Leaders of the Opposition*: Neil Kinnock, Ed Miliband, Jeremy Corbyn; *Liberal Democrats leaders*: Paddy Ashdown, Nick Clegg, Tim Farron; *UKIP leaders (United Kingdom Independence Party)*: Nigel Farage, Paul Nuttall.

**Keywords:** equivocation; equivocation typology; reply-rate; questions; non-replies; Prime Minister’s Questions

## Introduction

Politicians are notorious for not answering questions, but is this just a social stereotype? Thus, is it true that politicians never answer questions, as some would have us believe? Or do some questions receive an answer? If so, what is the proportion of such questions?

The term equivocation refers to the use of vague and ambiguous language. It has been variously described as “...nonstraightforward communication ... ambiguous, contradictory, tangential, obscure or even evasive” (Bavelas et al., 1990, p.28), “the intentional use of imprecise language” (Hamilton & Mineo, 1998), and as “calculated ambivalence” (Wodak et al., 2009). The prime focus of this paper is on equivocation as used by British politicians, specifically in the context of televised political interviews and Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons. However, some data on Japanese televised political interviews are also included for comparative purposes (Feldman, Kinoshita & Bull, 2015).

According to Bavelas et al. (1990), equivocation can be understood as a multidimensional construct, in terms of four specific dimensions (*sender*, *receiver*, *content*, and *context*), which are defined as follows. Sender refers to the extent to which a response reflects the speaker’s

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opinion; statements are considered as more equivocal if the speaker fails to acknowledge the statement as his/her opinion, or attributes it to another person. Receiver refers to the extent to which the message is addressed to the other person in the situation (the less so, more equivocal the message). Content refers to comprehensibility (an unclear statement being considered more equivocal), and can be distinguished from context, which refers to whether the response is a direct answer to the question (the less the relevance, the more equivocal the message).

In the context of this multidimensional approach, a substantive study of political equivocation was conducted in Japan by Feldman, Kinoshita and Bull (2015). In an analysis of 194 televised interviews, 145 politicians were compared with 49 non-politicians. The non-politicians had varying degrees of expertise, for example, university professors, social critics, and economists, and were considered competent to speak on specific issues and make them understandable to the layperson.

Responses to questions by the interviewees were analysed in terms of four Bavelas et al. (1990) dimensions as described above (Feldman et al., 2015). Significant differences were found on three of the dimensions (namely, sender, receiver and context). In comparison to the non-politicians, politicians were less inclined to disclose their own thoughts and ideas (sender), and more inclined to address people other than the interviewers asking the questions (receiver); they were also less inclined to give direct answers to the questions (context).

Whereas in the foregoing study, equivocation was based on the four Bavelas et al. (1990) dimensions, an alternative approach has been devised, based on the analysis of what is termed *reply-rate* (Bull, 1994). This refers to the proportion of similes questions that receive a *direct answer*, defined as a response in which politicians explicitly provide the information requested in the question. So, the lower the reply-rate, the more equivocal the politician (Bull & Waddle, 2023). In terms of the four Bavelas et al. dimensions, reply-rate corresponds to equivocation in terms of context. Reply rates formed the basis for a series of studies of equivocation in the context of British political interviews and PMQs (Bull, 1994; Waddle & Bull, 2020a).

## Political interviews

Thirty-three interviews broadcast between 1987 and 1992 with UK political party leaders were reviewed by Bull (1994). There were three different sets of data. Firstly, there were eight interviews from the 1987 General Election, four with the Conservative Prime Minister (PM) Margaret Thatcher, four with the Labour Leader of the Opposition (LO) Neil Kinnock. Secondly, there was an analysis of seven interviews with the Conservative politician John Major, four from 1990 when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the other three from 1991 after his appointment as PM (28 November, 1990). Finally, the third study was of 18 interviews broadcast during the 1992 General Election with the leaders of the three main political parties at that time: six with John Major (Conservative PM), six with Neil Kinnock (Labour LO), and six with Paddy Ashdown (Leader of the minority Liberal Democrats). Overall, the politicians answered slightly less than half of the interviewers' questions (mean reply-rate of 46% over all 33 interviews).

More recently, a study was conducted of 26 interviews from the 2015 and 2017 General Election campaigns (Waddle & Bull, 2020a). The interviewees were again UK party leaders: in 2015, David Cameron (Conservative PM), Ed Miliband (Labour LO), Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrats), and Nigel Farage (United Kingdom Independence Party[UKIP]). In 2017, the leaders were Theresa May (Conservative PM), Jeremy Corbyn (Labour LO), Tim Farron (Liberal Democrats), Paul Nuttall (UKIP). In 2015, the reply-rate was 42.8%, in 2017 it was 33.8%; overall, across all 26 interviews, the reply-rate was just 38%. Interestingly, in a completely in-

dependent study (Harris, 1991) of a totally different set of interviews but also featuring two leading politicians (Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock), the politicians gave direct answers to only 39% of questions, thus, answering slightly less than half the questions would seem very much par for the course in all these political interviews.

In comparison, it is interesting to consider reply-rates in televised interviews with people who are not politicians. The late Diana, Princess of Wales, in her celebrated and now infamous interview with Martin Bashir, answered 78% of questions (Bull, 1997). The British au-pair Louise Woodward, who had been convicted in the US of the manslaughter of eight-month-old Matthew Eappen (also interviewed by Bashir) answered 70% of questions (Bull, 2000b). Monica Lewinsky (the White House intern who had been involved in a sexual relationship with the then President Bill Clinton) answered 89% of questions in her interview with the journalist Jon Snow (Bull, 2000b). The mean reply-rate of 79% across these three interviews is significantly higher than that of 46% for the 33 political interviews analysed by Bull (1994). From all the data presented above, the widely held view that politicians characteristically do not answer questions in broadcast interviews appears not to be a mere social stereotype, it is well supported by empirical evidence.

## Prime Minister's Questions

Reply-rates have also been analysed in the context of PMQs, a weekly session in which the PM responds to questions from MPs. This takes place every Wednesday at noon whenever Parliament is sitting and lasts half an hour or so. The event is an opportunity for any MP (through a prearranged process) to ask the PM a question on a topic of their choosing. There is no requirement for the PM to be made aware of the question topic, thereby maintaining the possibility of surprise as well as a degree of political accountability (Bull & Waddle, 2022). The LO is allowed to pose up to six questions in each session, and this allows us to analyse not only equivocation by the PM, but also follow-up questions by the LO.

Notably, there is much more equivocation by the PM in PMQs than by politicians in broadcast interviews. One analysis was conducted of the first 20 PMQs following Jeremy Corbyn's election as Leader of the Labour Party (20 September 2015), when David Cameron was PM. Results showed that Cameron answered just 21% of Corbyn's questions (Bull & Waddle, 2019).

A second study (Bull & Strawson, 2020) was carried out when Theresa May was Conservative PM (2016-2019). This study was based on all 23 PMQs during Theresa May's first period of government (from succeeding Cameron on 13 July 2016 until she called a snap election on 8 June 2017). The LO throughout was Jeremy Corbyn. Of the 138 LO questions, May gave an explicit answer to only 11%. This was significantly lower than the reply-rate for Cameron at PMQs as quoted above (Bull & Waddle, 2019). The reply-rates cited above are based on a detailed coding system for the analysis of question-response sequences in broadcast interviews and PMQs, which is described below.

## Methodology

### Questions

What is a question? This may seem perfectly obvious to the layman, but to the analyst, is not always so self-evident. Questions are often characterised by what is termed *interrogative syntax*, either through so-called *subject/verb inversion* and/or the use of a *question word*. So, for example, the statement “You have seen the film” may be turned into question through the simple process of inversion (i.e., placing the verb *have* before the subject *you* “Have you seen the film?”

Question words may include *what*, *when*, *why*, *who*, and *which* to formulate so-called *wh-questions*, manifestly because they begin with *wh-* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). However, the word *where* is not included in this list, although it can function perfectly well as a question word. Furthermore, the list does not include the word *how* which clearly does not begin with *wh-*, but can also function as a question word. Thus, because the term *wh-question* is potentially confusing, the terms *question word* and *interrogative word questions* are used throughout this article.

However, interrogative syntax can be used without requesting information, most notably in the form of *rhetorical questions*, which are typically not expecting an answer, indeed they may be unanswerable. So, for example, a late arriving schoolboy who is greeted by the teacher with the utterance “So what sort of time do you call this then?”, is not being asked to tell the time, but in receipt of a reprimand. Indeed, if the schoolboy responded with “It’s 9.15 Sir”, this would not be seen as helpful, rather as cheeky.

Furthermore, it is possible to pose questions without using interrogative syntax. Most notably, so-called *declarative questions* take the same form as declarative statements, but may conclude with rising intonation to turn statement into a question (e.g., “You saw the film I mentioned?” “You met with Charlie the other day?”) Indeed, declarative questions may not even be accompanied with rising intonation, yet it is perfectly clear from the linguistic and social context that they are questions.

Two further types of question that take non-interrogative form have also been identified from political interview research, termed *moodless* and *indirect* (Bull, 1994). Moodless questions are those that lack a finite verb (Jucker, 1986). For example, an interviewer might interrupt a politician bragging about their party’s achievements with the interjection “like what”, or if the interviewer who wants some clarification on details of expenditure might say “above £60 million?” Because neither of these interjections require a verb but nevertheless do seek information, they would be regarded as moodless questions. Finally, there are indirect questions, where a question is posed through reporting words of another person or persons. For example, an interviewer might say to the Conservative PM Rishi Sunak “Many people have wondered why you did not wait longer before calling a general election”.

Clearly, syntax does not provide definitive criteria for identifying questions, given that not all questions take interrogative syntax, nor are all utterances with interrogative syntax necessarily questions. Arguably, it is not the form of an utterance that signifies a question but rather its function, namely, to request information (Bull, 1994).

Overall six question types have been identified: three using interrogative syntax (*polar/yes-no*, *alternative/disjunctive*, and *interrogative word*), and three using non-interrogative syntax (*declarative*, *moodless* and *indirect*). This sixfold typology was used in an analysis of 33 political interviews broadcast on UK television between 1987 and 1992 (Bull, 1994). Most of the utterances coded in these interviews (79%) were found to utilise interrogative syntax. Of the remaining 21%, by far the most frequently occurring type were declarative (18% of the overall

total). Notably, and highly supportive of the typology, all of the 1,045 questions identified across these 33 interviews could be classified in terms of the foregoing six categories.

Not only does this typology provide us with clear categories for defining what is or is not a question, it can also be used to specify whether a politician's response can be regarded as an answer. This point is elaborated in detail below.

## Identifying answers to questions

Identifying answers to questions might (like identifying answers) seem to the layman a relatively simple procedure. So, for example, in the case of polar questions, "yes" or "no" would seem obvious answers. However, the process is not necessarily so simple. For example, if someone who was asked "Do you like Leeds?" responded with "Only a little", although their response would seem to be an answer, it does not utilise the word "yes". Again, in the case of disjunctive questions, responding with one of two proffered alternatives would seem to be an answer, but again this not as simple, because not all choices are necessarily reducible to two alternatives. For example, if a person asked "Would you like to go for a walk, or to go to the cinema tonight?" responded with "Actually, I would prefer to stay at home", this would seem perfectly acceptable as an answer, although neither of the alternatives has been selected.

Thus, identifying answers to questions for research purposes is by no means necessarily a simple process. For this reason, the foregoing typology of questions is particularly useful, because the criteria for what constitutes an answer can be facilitated in terms of the structure of the question. Once that has been established, the researcher has a much clearer understanding of the information being requested.

Thus, the three types of interrogative syntax questions can be categorised in terms of the form of reply that is expected (Quirk et al., 1985). So, polar/yes-no questions expect a reply either in the affirmative or the negative, (e.g., "Did you watch the television play last night?"). Alternative/disjunctive questions expect as an answer a choice between one or two (or possibly more) alternatives offered in the question (e.g., "Would you like to go out this afternoon or stay at home?") Interrogative-word questions often expect a reply from a more open-ended choice of options (e.g. "What did you think of that novel you have just read?" or "Why did you choose to stay at home this afternoon?") These criteria can also be used to categorise responses to non-interrogative questions.

When a politician fails to provide the information requested in the interviewer's question, such a response is coded as a *non-reply* (Bull & Mayer, 1993). The term non-reply was introduced rather than the more pejorative term *evasion* (Harris, 1991), because there are some circumstances in which it can be considered justifiable not to answer a question. For example, questions based on inaccurate or contentious presuppositions may legitimately be challenged by the politician - and such challenges should not always be dismissed as evasive. Indeed, should the politician attempt to answer such questions, they may fall into the trap of appearing to accept a presupposition that is seriously open to dispute. For example, a question like "Why do you think your party is going to lose the next election?" presupposes political defeat, a presupposition that the politician might well want to challenge.

The criteria for analysing responses to questions are discussed in greater detail below with particular reference to the sixfold categories of question type presented above (polar/yes-no, alternative/disjunctive, interrogative word, declarative, moodless and indirect).

### *Polar questions*

If the response “yes” or “no” is given to a polar question, this would seem to be an answer, given that such questions invite such a response. However, this requires some important qualifications. Firstly, to make a positive or negative response to polar questions, does not require the use of the words either yes or no. So, for example, a clear affirmative response might be “of course” or “indeed”; similarly, a clear negative response may be “never”, or “not at all”. Secondly, polar questions may receive an answer that falls between the two poles of affirmation-negation, for example, “probably”, “possibly”, or “sometimes”.

Furthermore, a response that includes the words *yes* or *no* does not necessarily mean that a question has been answered. For example, “yes” may be used to acknowledge a question rather than to answer it. Thus, a politician might respond by saying “yes, well that’s a really interesting question, but first of all let me say that.....”, and then never answer the question. Similarly, “no” rather than being an answer of negation, might precede an attack on the question. If the interviewer quotes from something allegedly said by the politician, the politician might say “No, you’ve got their quotation wrong” or “No, I never actually said that”, rather than responding directly to the issue raised in the quotation.

### *Alternative/disjunctive questions*

In these types of questions, politicians are asked to choose between two or more alternative options. If one option is chosen, this can be taken as an answer. An alternative third option (not necessarily specified in the question) may also be used as an answer. However, the response of a politician who chose neither of the two options, nor offered a third alternative, would be coded as a *non-reply*.

### *Interrogative-word questions*

These types of question typically request details that are to be provided or require clarification. If the requested information is provided, then the politician can be said to have answered the question. The following seven interrogative words are applicable to such questions - *what*, *when*, *which*, *who*, and *why* (Quirk et al., 1985); *how* and *where* (Bull, 1994). The criteria for the evaluation of the politicians’ responses are based on the customary dictionary definitions. So, typically *how* asks by which means or to what extent, *what* requests information to specify something, *when* seeks information concerning time (or, for example, the circumstances of an occurrence), *where* asked about location or position, *which* asks for details specifying one or more options, *who* asks about what person or which people, and *why* seeks information concerning reason or purpose. If the politician provides the requested information according to these criteria, then the response is coded as an answer; if not, the response is coded as a non-reply.

### *Questions that do not take interrogative syntax*

Non-interrogative syntax questions might seem to present a problem for the kind of analysis presented above, since they are not based on the same question structures. However, because questions identified as declarative or moodless tend to seek either agreement or disagreement from the politician, they typically function as polar questions, so responses can be coded according to the criteria above. For example, the declarative question “You will not increase the top rate of tax?” like a polar question seeks either affirmation or negation.

Support for this proposal was found in the study of televised political interviews reviewed above (Bull, 1994). Of the full dataset of questions, 21% utilised non-interrogative syntax, of which 92% could be regarded as polar. Furthermore, the remaining 8% could be regarded as either alternative or interrogative-word questions. Thus, the criteria for categorising answers to interrogative-syntax questions could readily be applied to all the non-interrogative-syntax questions identified from the overall total of 1,045 questions in these 33 interviews.

## Intermediate replies

It is sometimes assumed that politicians simply either do or do not answer questions, but the overall picture is rather more complicated. This is because certain responses can be identified as falling somewhere between answers and non-replies, referred to as *intermediate replies* (Bull, 1994), or as *indirect answers* (Harris, 1991). Three types of intermediate reply can be distinguished: *answers by implication* (an answer is implied but not explicitly stated); *incomplete replies* (a question is answered but only in part); and *interrupted replies* (the interviewer interrupts the response, so it is not possible to say whether the question would have been answered). Each type of intermediate reply is discussed below

### *Answers by implication*

In these cases, the interviewee's views are implied but never explicitly stated. A celebrated example comes from the 1995 televised interview between Diana, Princess of Wales, and Martin Bashir. When asked "Do you think Mrs Parker Bowles was a factor in the breakdown of your marriage?", the Princess answered "Well there were three of us in this marriage so it was a bit crowded", accompanying her response with a wry smile. Clearly, this reply carried an implied affirmative answer (yes, she did regard Mrs Parker Bowles is a factor in the breakdown of her marriage), although this was never explicitly stated (Bull, 1997).

### *Incomplete replies*

These can be divided into three subcategories: *half-answers*, *fractional replies*, and *partial replies*. Sometimes, interviewers ask two questions in the same speaking term, referred to as *double-barrelled questions*. If the politician answers only one of the questions, this is referred to as a *half-answer*. Occasionally, interviewers pose what might be termed *multi-barrelled questions* (Bull, 1994) on a whole number of topics (for example, education, inflation, unemployment, homelessness). If the politician addresses only one of these issues (e.g., homelessness), this would be referred to as a *fractional reply*.

In a *partial reply*, the politician answers only part of a *single-barrelled* question. For example, in response to a question "Do you intend to raise taxes?", a politician might reply "Well we certainly don't intend to raise income tax". This would be categorised as a partial answer, because income tax (direct taxation) is only part of the tax which people pay. There are also indirect taxes, such as those taxes on goods and services, which would not be addressed by this response.

## Equivocation Typology

In seeking to understand how politicians equivocate, a typology has been devised, which currently distinguishes between 43 different ways of not replying to question. The typology is divided into what are called *superordinate* and *subordinate* categories. For example, *attacks the question* is a superordinate category, which can be further subdivided into eight subcategories (see item 4 below). The typology was originally devised for analysing political interviews by Bull and Mayer (1993), but has been subsequently modified so that it can be utilised for the analysis of question-response sequences in PMQs (Bull & Strawson, 2020).

One useful feature of this typology is that it can be used to capture distinctive features of a politician's communicative style. Examples are given below for Margaret Thatcher (Conservative PM, 1979-1990), Neil Kinnock (Leader of the Labour Opposition, 1983-1992), John Major (Conservative PM, 1990-1997), Tony Blair (Labour PM, 1997-2007), Gordon Brown (Labour PM, 2007-2010), David Cameron (Conservative PM, 2010-2016), Theresa May (Conservative PM, 2016-2019), Jeremy Corbyn (Leader of the Labour Opposition, 2015-2020), and Boris Johnson (Conservative PM, 2019-2022).

It should be noted that the categories listed below are not mutually exclusive. An equivocal response can be coded along several dimensions of the typology in total, 13 superordinate categories (with their associated subcategories) have been identified, which are listed below.

### 1. Ignores the question

The politician not only fails to answer the question, but even to acknowledge that a question has been asked. This category needs to be distinguished from the next category below.

### 2. Acknowledges the question without answering it

In this case, the question is acknowledged by the politician (e.g., "That's a really interesting question"), who then continues speaking without making any attempt to answer.

### 3. Questions the question

Two different forms of this superordinate category can be identified:

- (a) *Request for clarification*. The politician asks for further information about the question, or seeks to clarify it.
- (b) *Reflects the question*. The politician makes no attempt to answer the question, but instead reflects it back to the interviewer (e.g., "Well, what do you think?")

### 4. Attacks the question

This is one of the most frequent forms of equivocation. In a study of 15 interviews with three leading British politicians (Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock, and John Major), it was found that a mean 32% of their equivocal responses included examples of *attacks the question* (Bull, 2003). In this respect, the category was second only to the superordinate category of *makes political points* (Bull, 2003). Eight subordinate categories can be distinguished, as listed below. Each should be prefaced with: The question...

- (a) Fails to tackle the important issue
- (b) Is hypothetical or speculative.
- (c) Is based on a false premise.
- (d) Is factually inaccurate
- (e) Includes a misquotation.
- (f) Includes a question taken out of context.

- (g) Is objectionable.
- (h) Is based on a false alternative.

#### 5. Modifies the question

This was a new superordinate category, introduced by Bull and Strawson (2020) to capture a unique aspect of the equivocation style of Theresa May. Following her appointment as PM (13 July, 2016), May gave an interview to Andrew Marr (4 September, 2016), in which she gave responses which could not be readily subsumed within the existing typology. Accordingly, a new category was introduced, entitled “*Gives non-specific response to a specific question*” (Bull, 2016).

Thus, to Marr’s question “In your view, should we have access to the single European market”, May responded: “Well what I want to see is the best possible deal for the United Kingdom in trade in goods and services”. To Marr’s question about a second independence referendum in Scotland (“... would you prevent that second referendum happening?”), May responds “I don’t think it’s a question of whether there could be a second referendum, it’s whether there should be a second referendum” (author’s underlining). May’s responses were polite and relevant to the substance of the question, but did not provide the requested information. Thus, she does not say whether the UK should have access to the single European market, nor whether she would prevent a second independence referendum happening in Scotland. May gave a second interview more Marr (4 October, 2016), and notably, across the two interviews, a mean 88% of her non-replies include this strategy of giving a non-specific response to a specific question (Bull, 2016).

Interestingly, May used the same style of equivocation in her responses to questions in PMQs. For example, she made the following response to a question (2 November, 2016) from Jeremy Corbyn regarding Universal Credit [a system of welfare benefit]: “Is it not the case her cuts to Universal Credit will leave millions worse off?”:

On the point that the right honourable Gentleman raised in relation to Universal Credit, the introduction of Universal Credit was an important reform that was brought about in our welfare system. It is a simpler system, so people can see much more easily where they stand in relation to benefits. Crucially, the point about Universal Credit is making sure that work always pays. As people work more, they earn more. It is right that we do not want to see people just being written off to a life on benefits and that we are encouraging people to get into the workplace.

Although May’s response was relevant to the topic by providing a broad overview of Universal Credit and her opinion of its merits, it failed to address Corbyn’s question about the specific effects of cuts to the system.

Bull and Strawson (2020) considered how this kind of equivocal response might be included in an updated version of the equivocation typology. They proposed that, as May’s response appeared to address a different question (but one still related to the overall issue), she was effectively answering a self-selected, modified version. Thereby, such equivocation could be categorised as *modifies the question*. Furthermore, equivocation of this type can be considered as highly covert, as there may be a deliberate attempt on the part of the politician for the response to be accepted as a direct answer. In this way, the questioner - and perhaps the viewing public - may be satisfied at the time that a reply was forthcoming. This scenario highlights one distinctive benefit of the equivocation typology, in that it facilitates the recognition of such evasion.

This analysis of May’s performance at PMQs not only made the front page of a British national newspaper (Hope, 2019), it also featured in a question at PMQs! On 1 May 2019, May was asked by a Scottish National Party Member of Parliament (Marion Fellows): “May I be lucky enough to be one of the 27% who get their question answered by the PM?” (Fellows presumably was referring to the press article published that morning. Notably she actually mis-

quoted the PM's low reply-rate, which had been shown by Bull and Strawson (2020) to be just 11%).

## 6. Personalisation

In the original version of the equivocation typology, a category of *attacks the interviewer* was introduced to represent a distinctive feature of Margaret Thatcher's communicative style (Bull & Mayer, 1993), defined as criticising the interviewer rather than attacking the question (Bull, 2003).

For example, she famously (on two different occasions) addressed the very experienced and celebrated political interviewer Sir Robin Day as "Mr Day". This failure to use his correct form of address (Sir Robin) could be construed as an overt insult and put-down, especially given that it was Mrs Thatcher who in the first place had been responsible for awarding Sir Robin Day the knighthood (in 1981).

With a different interviewer - Jonathan Dimbleby - Mrs Thatcher used another form of put-down, asking him, "Do you remember Harold Wilson? Well perhaps you don't, you're too young". Harold Wilson was a former Labour PM (1964-1970; 1974-1976), Jonathan Dimbleby was born in July 1944. Clearly, political journalist Dimbleby was more than old enough to remember Harold Wilson, of which Mrs Thatcher would have been only too well aware.

Attacking the interviewer was very much a distinctive feature of Margaret Thatcher's communicative style, but in a subsequent revision of the equivocation typology it was incorporated into a more general category called *personalisation*. Waddle and Bull (2016) queried whether the existing category (attacking the interviewer) encompassed the full range of personal comments used by politicians in interviews. Furthermore, they queried whether an equivocal response aimed personally at the interviewer necessarily needs to be critical to be effective. They cited an observation that former Labour PM Harold Wilson was "the first politician to discover how an utterly simple conversational device could be used to neutralize, albeit temporarily, the forceful interviewing style of Robin Day" (Atkinson 1984, p.174). Wilson's method was simple: to address Day by his first name (i.e., as Robin). This is an interesting example of how personalised rhetoric may be used with great effect in a non-adversarial fashion.

Accordingly, a range of broadcast political interviews were sourced from the video-sharing website YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>) and viewed online, based on eight politicians and eight interviewers. Only television interviews by established broadcast journalists with current or former members of UK parliaments were considered. Each of the selected examples was analysed for instances where the politician responded to a question or a statement by directing attention to the interviewer personally. Such personalisations might be critical, accusatory, insulting, advisory, playful, or complimentary. Their manner could be serious, patronising, or jocular and could take the form of a comment, statement, or a question. A proposed typology of personalisation comprising different categories of personal focus was devised from those analyses, and is listed below:

- (a) *Interviewer bias*. Suggestion that the interviewer is biased in their personal views.
- (b) *Broadcast organisation bias*. Suggestion that the organisation (e.g., the BBC) represented by the interviewer is (or was) in some way biased.
- (c) *Interviewer incompetence*. Claiming that the interviewer is mistaken, lacking in intelligence, or showing incompetence.
- (d) *Interviewer conduct*. Bemoaning the interviewer's behaviour in the interview (e.g., suggestions of impoliteness or hostility).
- (e) *Interviewer history*. Making comments about, for example, the interviewer's employment record or past conduct.

- (f) *Interviewer frame of mind*. Suggestions that the interviewer is in a state of agitation or anger (e.g., “Calm down!”)
- (g) *Blandishments*. Comments intended to be positive or genial in nature (e.g., flattery or banter).

Of particular interest here is the category of blandishments. This is a highly distinctive feature of Boris Johnson’s interview style in which rather than attacking interviewers, he praises them. For example, before Johnson became PM, he was asked by the interviewer Jeremy Paxman about his leadership ambitions. He responded by saying that he thought Paxman would make a much better leader than he would. Again, in the following sequence, Johnson can be seen to use the same technique of blandishment:

Andrew Marr: Why are you avoiding being interviewed by Andrew Neil?

Johnson: Because I think we’ve got a perfectly brilliant er Andrew interviewing here....

Both Andrew Marr and Andrew Neil are professional political interviewers. Andrew Neil is highly combative and well-informed about politics, and probably more than a match for Boris Johnson, hence his refusal to be interviewed by him. Notably, Johnson evades the issue by lavishing praise on the other interviewer (Andrew Marr).

A notable feature of the concept of personalisation meant that the original version of the equivocation typology (Bull & Mayer, 1993) could be effectively extended to PMQs (in this context, the previous category of *attacks the interviewer* would obviously not be appropriate). In PMQs, (unlike political interviews), personal attacks between the two party leaders are so common that they might be regarded as normative. A detailed study was conducted of PMQs discourse (Waddle, Bull & Böhnke, 2019), based on the premierships of Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and David Cameron over a period of five decades (1979-2016). Results showed that for the five PMs overall a substantial proportion (31%) of their response turns included a personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition (LO). Individually, David Cameron’s level of personal attacks was the highest (39.2%). The corresponding overall figure for LOs in their questions was 31.8%. Individually, the LO who made the highest proportion of personal attacks was again David Cameron, with 61.7% during Gordon Brown’s premiership. From this perspective, personal attacks in PMQs can be seen to be very much a feature of David Cameron’s communicative style.

David Cameron was succeeded as PM by Theresa May (13 July, 2016). In the study of May’s first 23 PMQs referred to above (Bull & Strawson, 2020), just 23.4% of her response turns took the form of personal attacks. On 23 July, 2019, May was succeeded by Boris Johnson as PM. An analysis was conducted of his first and last 10 performances at PMQs (Waddle & Bull, 2020b; Bull & Waddle, 2023). His overall level of personal attacks (early and later periods combined) was 47.5% of his response turns, a level well in excess of the six foregoing PMs. In the first 10 PMQs, his personal attacks were more than half of his response turns (53.3%), in the second period less so, but still 41.7%. Thus, personal attacks are very much a feature of Johnson’s communicative style.

## 7. Declines to answer

The original equivocation typology was based on eight interviews with Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock from the 1987 general election (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Despite her success in that election, Mrs Thatcher was obliged to resign as PM in 1990. Her successor as Conservative PM was John Major, and seven additional interviews with him were analysed (as listed above).

From these analyses, two new additional sub-categories were introduced for the *declines to answer* superordinate category. One was labelled the *deferred reply*, in which the politician

claims to be unable to answer the question of the time being. So, for example, Major declined to answer questions from Brian Walden regarding a new local services tax. Major simply told Walden that he would have to “wait and see” as to what be proposed in a forthcoming consultation document. This “wait and see” form of equivocation was very characteristic of the Major interviews. Throughout this premiership, Major was occasionally criticised as weak, ineffectual and indecisive, which might have reflected this “wait and see” strategy.

A second new category introduced for *declines to answer* was that of *pleading ignorance*. This was highly characteristic of Major, and perhaps most surprising coming from a leading politician, who might have been expected to be better informed. While both Kinnock and Thatcher might admit to an inability to answer questions, this usually applied to topics arguably difficult to predict, such as inflation or unemployment. In contrast, Major would plead ignorance to questions on topics where it was widely assumed that it was better informed, even that he did in fact know the answer. For example, it was common knowledge at that time that Mrs Thatcher made extensive use of image makers. When asked about this by Sue Lawley, Major denied any knowledge, perhaps because he did not wish to comment on this.

Pleading ignorance could be seen as a particularly ineffectual strategy, exposing Major as either naïve and ill-informed, or even as deceitful. Furthermore, an interviewer is highly likely to pursue such response, even to challenge the aired lack of knowledge. Since Major also tended to equivocate through deferred replies (the “wait and see” strategy), pleading ignorance would only be likely to reinforce the impression of ineffectuality and indecision.

#### 8. Makes political points

Unsurprisingly, *makes political points* is the most frequent forms of equivocation. In a study of 15 interviews with three leading British politicians (Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock, and John Major), it was found that a mean 69% of their equivocal responses included examples of the superordinate category of *makes political points* (Bull, 2003). Eight different subcategories have been identified:

- (a) *External attack*. Responds by attacking political opponent(s) (or, e.g., a rival state).
- (b) *Presents policy*.
- (c) *Justifies policy*.
- (d) *Gives reassurance*.
- (e) *Appeals to nationalism*.
- (f) *Offers political analysis*.
- (g) *Self-justification*.
- (h) *Talks up own side*.

#### 9. Gives incomplete reply

Five different forms of incomplete reply are distinguished:

- (a) Starts to answer but doesn't finish (self-interruption)
- (b) Negative answer. The politician states what will not happen instead of what will happen.  
e.g.:

Robin Day: Would you have no incomes policy?

Kinnock: ...what I'm setting aside is the idea either the the guiding lights of Selwyn Lloyd or the legislated incomes policies of Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Wilson in the sixties or the incomes policies of fixed norms or Ted Heath's counter-inflation incomes policy those whilst having possibly an initial impact never managed to last and all they did was store up difficulties for the future much better to follow through...

Day: [interrupts] That is why I'm asking what you would do

This negative answer is quite distinctive for Neil Kinnock, no other examples have been observed for any other politicians. Kinnock was frequently ridiculed as a “Welsh wind-bag” – (e.g., Aitkenhead, 2013), and the concept of the *negative answer* (stating at length what you not going to do) would fit in with that characterisation.

- (c) Partial reply
- (d) Half answer
- (e) Fractional reply

These three categories (c, d, & e) have already been described in section Incomplete replies above.

10. Repeats answer to previous question

11. States or implies that the question has already been answered

- (a) The question has been asked already
- (b) The question has already been answered

Two sub-categories are listed here, based on a distinction between asking and answering a question. The original equivocation typology just listed *states or implies that the question has already been answered*, but it was noted that Theresa May used a variant on this by claiming a question had been asked before, although in neither case provided an answer.

12. Apologises

It is extremely rare for a politician to apologise in interview, and only one example was noted in which Mrs Thatcher seemed to apologise in response to the following question from David Dimbleby:

Dimbleby: ... isn't one of the difficulties for the Tories that your way of governing and talking about government gets up the noses of a lot of voters?

Thatcher: Well I'm sorry if it does it's not intended to I'm very sorry if it does

Interestingly, not only did Mrs Thatcher fail to reply to the question, she did not really apologise, in the sense that she did not acknowledge the presupposition of Dimbleby's question that “[her] way of governing and talking about government gets up the noses of a of voters”. She only said “I'm sorry **if** it does” (author's underlining and bold).

13. Literalism

The literal aspect of the question which is not intended to be taken literally is answered. This form of equivocation is unique to John Major, there are no examples from any other politician.

A good example can be seen in his response to the following question from Sue Lawley. Lawley's question was clearly intended to ask Major about the transition from his lowly origins in Brixton to the elevated position of PM. By taking the question literally and turning it into a joke, Major is able to avoid giving an answer, hence also to avoid talking about aspects of his early life, which perhaps he found potentially embarrassing (Bull, 2003):

Lawley: So are you suggesting in fact that rooming houses in Brixton and Downing Street are not so far apart after all?

Major: Well they're about four miles as the crow flies

A much more substantive example comes from an interview with Brian Walden in the 1992 General Election (22 March). In this instance, Major used literalism as a means of avoiding discussion of a serious policy issue. Walden cited a statement made by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont in which he referred to unemployment and recession as “the price we’ve had to pay to get inflation down ... a price well worth paying”. Walden responded “... I can’t imagine a more uncaring statement than that and that’s true isn’t it?”

Being uncaring about unemployment was a charge often levelled at Conservative governments between 1979 and 1992. Major’s defence against the charge is interesting. In an extended response, he referred to the condition of what were then called unemployment offices. “Practically the first speech ... that I made in the House of Commons was about actually improving the conditions in what were then called unemployment offices. They were such bare sparse nasty places to go into, it’s no way to treat people and to deal with people when they’re facing the very real difficulty they’ve changed dramatically across the country and they will change dramatically elsewhere....” Thus, rather than dealing with the substantive issue of unemployment, Major dealt with the question in a rather literal way by confining his response simply to the physical state of unemployment offices (Bull, 2003).

## Conclusions

Equivocation, “the intentional use of precise language”, has been the focus of this article. Reply-rates for televised interviews are reported as 46%, based on an analysis of 33 interviews (Bull, 1994), reply-rates for Prime Minister’s Questions are much lower: In response to questions from Jez Corbyn, David Cameron answered 21% of questions (Bull & Waddle, 2019), Theresa May just 11% (Bull & Strawson, 2020).

In addition, methodological techniques on which these figures are based are described in some detail. These techniques involve the identification of different types of questions, whereby it is possible to establish whether a politician responds with an answer or a non-reply. In addition, an equivocation typology is presented, whereby 43 techniques of not replying to a question are identified.

Examples of equivocation are discussed, based on the performance of recent British political leaders in televised interviews and Prime Minister’s Questions. From these analyses, Margaret Thatcher, David Cameron and Boris Johnson emerge as the most aggressive of these politicians, scoring highly on personal attacks, John Major as more diffident, and Neil Kinnock as the most verbose through his technique of negative replies. Theresa May seems to be the most equivocal of all the politicians, especially through her technique of modifying the question, whereby she responds to a different question from the one posed. Thus, through this detailed analysis of discourse, equivocation typology provides a novel way of characterising the communicative style of individual politicians.

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# Knocking at the House with Closed Doors: Metaphorical representation of European integration in Ukrainian media discourse before 2014

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**Abstract:** The idea of European integration played an important role in Ukrainian political discourse, but was attributed different meaning in the course of its political development. This idea was crucial for a definition of Ukrainian foreign policy preferences and for the construction of Ukrainian national identity. In the Ukrainian context, this idea was found to be primarily constructed in regard to the question of the historical and geopolitical place of Ukraine. Public opinion in general largely reflects the instability in Ukraine-EU relations, as well as the inconsistent European integration policy of the Ukrainian government and the lack of a coherent policy from the side of the European Union.

This article focuses on a study of how the European integration was conceptualized and metaphorically presented in the Ukrainian press in the period of 2005 – 2010. By examining the metaphors used to describe this process in the Ukrainian media between 2005 and 2010, we gain valuable insights into the historical and discursive nuances that have shaped contemporary perceptions of European integration in Ukraine. Based on the Critical Metaphor Analysis and Conceptual Metaphors approach, we investigate the main frames and metaphorical representations of Europe and the European integration in the Ukrainian media.

It can be noticed that the European integration was described in Ukraine before 2014 with a tension between the two discourses – the discourses of closeness and of openness. The European Neighborhood Policy was created for an opening of the door for Ukraine to Europe and as a ‘road map’ for the Ukrainian way towards the EU. Despite that, for the majority of Ukrainians the EU before 2014 was still an unrealistic ‘dream’ where doors were ‘rather closed’ then opened.

**Keywords:** European integration, Europe, Ukraine, discourse, media, metaphors

## Introduction

The discourse surrounding European integration in Ukraine has undergone a profound metamorphosis since the Euromaidan Revolution of 2014 and the subsequent Russian invasion in

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2022. This study which focuses on the pre-2014 period discourse is relevant due to the enduring impact of conceptual frames used by Ukrainian media before 2014 on Ukrainian public opinion and political discourse even nowadays.

Since 2014, the discourse of Europe and European integration in Ukraine has undergone significant transformations, reflecting the profound shifts in the country's geopolitical situation and national identity. The Euromaidan revolution, which culminated in the ousting of President Yanukovich, marked a decisive turn towards Europe, driven by a popular desire for integration with the European Union (EU). The 2022 full-scale invasion by Russia further intensified these dynamics, with European integration becoming not only a political and economic goal but a symbol of resistance and survival.

The changes in Ukraine's perception of European integration after 2014 have had a profound impact on both media narratives and political rhetoric. Prior to 2014, the European Union was often depicted as a distant, unattainable dream. Metaphors of closed doors, fortresses, and exclusive clubs dominated the discourse, reflecting a sense of exclusion and longing. Post-2014, however, the discourse has shifted towards one of urgency and inevitability, with European integration framed as a critical pathway for Ukraine's survival and success in the face of Russian aggression. This has influenced Ukrainian media to adopt a more assertive tone in discussing EU integration, often highlighting it as a matter of national security and identity rather than mere economic or political alignment.

This article delves into the metaphorical frameworks that have shaped and continue to influence Ukrainian public discourse on European integration because main conceptual frames of European integration were established in the period before 2014. Metaphors, as powerful tools of political language, offer deep insights into how events and policies are understood, framed, and communicated to the public. That is why we decided to look once again into metaphorical representation of Europe and EU integration which was in Ukrainian media in 2005-2010. The study of metaphors used in Ukrainian discourse around European integration provides a window into the evolving perceptions of Europe, the EU, and Ukraine's place within this broader geopolitical landscape.

This study of metaphorical level of discourse could be useful for understanding the shifts in political discourse in Ukraine, particularly how the ongoing conflict and the quest for European integration are interwoven in the national consciousness. It sheds light on how metaphors help construct political reality, influencing both public opinion and policy decisions. As Ukraine continues to navigate its path towards the EU amidst the challenges posed by Russian aggression, the metaphors used in its political discourse will likely continue to evolve, reflecting and shaping the nation's journey.

## Theoretical and methodological background

Periods of substantial social and political changes are always accompanied by transformations in the public discourses and in political language. In the case of post-communist countries, therefore, political communication and the language used by symbolical elites may have direct practical and political significance. We examine in this article the metaphors that are prominent in the Ukrainian press discourse about Europe and European integration. First, we explain the theoretical background of the study, which relies on conceptual metaphor analysis. Second, we detail the method and the press sources that we used for the conceptual metaphor analysis in the empirical part. Third, we give an overview of the metaphors that we choose to select, after which we conclude the article with a discussion section.

How people interpreted the political events is highly dependent on how the media present the information on these events. We therefore want to reconstruct the frames and metaphors that are dominant in the Ukrainian public discourse. In order to do this, it is necessary to analyze different discursive practices and their influence on public perception.

The premise of contemporary framing theory is that every issue can be regarded in different ways (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Highlighting one perspective in building a story has important implications. In fact, framing experts fully expect that a particular formulation of a problem affects our reasoning and even decision-making. Metaphors are crucial framing devices in texts, in maintaining and shifting political ideas and meanings. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) see the essence of metaphor as the understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another. Metaphors play a significant role in the discursive construction of political and social reality at the micro level and help to introduce certain frames of events at the macro level.

In their cognitive view on metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) consider metaphor as a conceptual phenomenon that is realized at the surface level of language. Metaphors provide the cognitive framework of speakers' world view. Cognitive metaphor analysis claims to look behind explicit utterances to find conceptual structures that the users themselves may not be aware of. Metaphors constitute the mechanisms of conceptualization for understanding and expressing complex concepts or situations. This conceptual view also implies that metaphors are pervasive in both everyday life and political discourses. Lakoff & Johnson have argued that our conceptual system is metaphorically structured: in their view, frequently used metaphorical expressions are evidence of concepts underlying our everyday understanding of events and experience. Metaphors are among the powerful tools for creating new meanings and for influencing public discourse (Ricoeur 2003). In political discourse metaphors are not just embellishments but policy tools (Chilton, 2004, 203). Every discourse topic is commonly associated with a particular "stock" of metaphors (Huelsse 2006, p. 403-404). The analysis of political metaphor can account for how power is represented in language, how language has power, and how the powerful is language (Beer and De Landtsheer 2004, p. 7).

The aim of metaphor use is to influence the audience, which is also the goal of political actions. Metaphors have emotional power and as an emotional device introduce a certain link towards a social phenomenon, with negative or positive evaluations. Metaphors are a primary rhetorical tool for provoking emotions and have a manipulative potential which help persuade audiences. Metaphors, accordingly, direct attention to what seems to be important and meaningful for politicians (De Landtsheer and De Vrij, 2004, p. 163-189). We argue that the use of particular metaphors leads to raising the affiliated meanings in discourses.

Metaphors are able to modify the public's attitudes towards certain issues and could eventually lead to a change in perceptions and behavior. Charteris-Black argues that metaphors should not only be analyzed cognitively, but also pragmatically, because metaphor selection is governed by the rhetorical aim of persuasion: "in many cases, therefore, metaphor choice is motivated by ideology" (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 247). Thus, metaphors can influence political and social opinion as well as develop new ideologies by shaping new ways of communicating.

Analytical part of this study was based mainly on the Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) approach developed by Charteris-Black (2004). Metaphor analysis, according to him, consists of three stages: identification, interpretation and explanation of metaphors. Metaphor identification deals with determining which metaphors are present in a text, and "whether they show semantic tension between a literal source domain and a metaphorical target domain". Metaphor interpretation is concerned with interpersonal meaning – aims "to determine the type of social relations that are constructed through the metaphors identified". Metaphor explanation is concerned with a textual meaning - with the way metaphors interact within the context in which they occur. (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 35)

Charteris-Black considers the identification stage of metaphors as a checking whether they present in a text, and whether they demonstrate a tension between a literal source domain and a metaphoric target domain. The identification stage can be divided into: preliminary identification of metaphors in a text, which “requires a close reading of a sample of texts with the aim of identifying candidate metaphors.” (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 35) The second step is a further qualitative phase to examine the corpus to determine whether each use of key-words is metaphoric or literal. The key-words we consider here as words or group of words that is supposed to be the metaphor. The interpretation stage in this research is based on cognitive linguistic theory and it relies on interpreting the identified metaphors by finding the conceptual metaphors or keys that underlie them. “The interpretation involves establishing a relationship between metaphors and their cognitive and pragmatic factors” (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 37). The last stage consists of explaining the findings. According to Charteris-Black the cognitive semantic approach needs to be complemented with a study of the social context of text producing and an analysis of the overall context of metaphor. “Explanation of metaphors involves identifying the social agency that is involved in their production and their social role in persuasion.” (Charteris-Black 2004, p. 39) The purpose here is to determine the relationship between the findings and the contexts in an attempt to uncover the ideological motivations behind the choice of the given metaphors.

The main sources for conceptual metaphor analysis in the present study consist of press materials from three main Ukrainian newspapers: *Zerkalo nedeli*, *Segodnia* and *Fakty i Kommentarii* (in short – *Fakty*). The *Zerkalo nedeli*, was selected as an example of the quality press. This weekly employs high journalistic standards and offers political and social analysis, exclusive interviews and different opinions and could be characterized as a qualitative one. *Fakty* and *Segodnia* were selected as the biggest popular daily newspapers in Ukraine (according to *Telekritika* 2012). They represent the popular press and were widely circulating among different groups of Ukrainian society.

For the search, the internet version of each newspaper was used. At the beginning, we took all of the articles from 2005 and 2010 from all three newspapers, which include any kind of relation to the word combinations: Europe and European Union or EU and European integration or Eurointegration, or Ukraine-EU, Ukraine- European integration. We started with reading through all of the automatically retrieved data, selected articles based on their relevance to the research topic, and then manually analyzed the texts for the analysis of metaphors. This search strategy resulted in 270 articles which were subjected to detailed analysis.

The time-frame for the selection of the press materials for an analysis was limited to the period from 2005 till 2010. This period was chosen because it provides the full range of the discussion on the topic of European integration and Ukrainian relations to it, and during that time the main positions and discourses were formed and presented by the different social and political groups.

## Selection of Metaphors

By describing metaphorical representations of Europe and the European integration, we'll try to show pair metaphors, representing both positive and negative characteristics. Accordingly, for example, if the metaphor of Europe as a house represents positive connotations related with the image of Europe, then the metaphor of a fortress or closed club will come out as its opposition.

Musolff (2004) has identified several source domains, the following four being the main ones to conceptualize the European integration: path-movement-journey, love- marriage-family, body-life-health and building-housing source domains.

One of the popular metaphors in the European integration discourse is the house metaphor. For instance, Chilton and Ilyin (1993, p. 7-31) studied the metaphor of the ‘common European house’ brought into the European public discourse by M. Gorbachev at the end of the Cold War.

Huelsse (2006) analyzed the 1990’s discourse on EU Eastern enlargement in Germany to decide whether European identity is constructed according to the national model or in a post-national way. According to him, there are a few metaphors which seem to dominate political thinking about European integration and the Enlargement process. He distinguished Enlargement as a family reunion, as a homecoming (returning to home), as growing together, as a path and as an entry into a house.

### European integration as entry into a house/home or a fortress

One of the key metaphors in the Ukrainian discourses concerning European integration is the metaphor of the home or house. The house metaphor constructs a civic European identity as Huelsse (2006 p. 406) reminds us. The EU nations are united by the common perception of building the common European house. The states in the EU live in the same house. They follow certain rules and over time develop common social practices and habits. This metaphor places a clear difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ — ‘we’ are inside, but ‘they’ are outside the house. The house’s external walls mark the boundary that keeps the self and others apart, leaving no ambivalence. Houses have doors and it is exactly the purpose of doors to enable entry and exit. By stepping through the door, candidates enter the house and at this moment become part of the self.

According to Ringmar (2007 p. 132), modern politics began when naturalistic metaphors were replaced by constructivist ones. As he pointed out: “instead of seeing society as a natural organism – a body, family or garden – or as an impersonal mechanical device, it came to be regarded as something man-made, something constructed, most commonly as some kind of a building”. The idea that if society is created by people, we should be able to fully understand it, including the most obscure of its technical elements - comes along. The construction plans are drawn up by people, not by a God, so people can create any kinds of projects. And the better we understand society, the better we will be at reconstructing it in accordance to our plans and visions (Ringmar 2007 p. 132).

It is necessary to divide the metaphor of the house into two groups: the ‘building’ and ‘construction’. If the first group refers to a certain state of affairs, where there are already existing structures of relations (structure of the home – has a permanent character), then the second group refers to the process. Construction involves active participation; the ability to influence on the process and its outcomes. In the Ukrainian political discourse, a frame of the house as a ‘structure of the building’ is widely used. This indicates that Ukrainians do not perceive themselves as participants in the construction of a ‘common European home’.

“Where is the key to the European Union? Ukraine will not stand and whine near the door of the EU” (Zerkalo nedeli, 15.04.2005)

In the domain of Europe as house, the words: door, key, windows and other constructive parts of a building are very commonly used. The house is very often used as a metaphor for the state system. From the mid of 90’s, the EU’s enlargement to the East was seen as a settlement of the "European home" by new residents. The metaphorical presentation of the country as a house, itself implies an existence of hosts and guests.

For a pro-European discourse in Ukraine, the EU appears as a house where Ukraine only tries to enter. Those who are inside the house have to decide that they wish or do not want to open the door. But for Ukrainian public discourse typical perception is that the door of this house is not open and there is no readiness to accept Ukrainians.

“Meanwhile, the European Union, perfectly hearing "the knocking at the door" from the Ukrainian side, had not responded to the external stimuli.” (Fakty, 17.06.2005)

“EU: for Ukraine the entrance is closed” (Segodnia, №127 (2069) 08.06.2005) “Before knocking to the door of the EU, it is necessary to know what is waiting you there. [Rybachuk] promised to break down the door of EU’s, if Brussels would not open it.” (Zerkalo nedeli, 17.06.2005)

Doors may separate, but also may connect. Basically, any entrance or doors suggest the transitions, changes, or at least possibilities for a change. In this context the metaphor of doors - widely used in different frames - also has the potential to be positive (if opened) and negative (if closed). Some entrances represent boundaries, or limits, to be overcome, so in this sense the door metaphor can be a challenge for Ukraine to overcome its imperfections.

The images of doors being closed and safeguarded evoked an interpretation of the European house in terms of a fortress. In the dominant Ukrainian perception – European doors are rarely closed to admit newcomers, thus requiring them to constantly knock at the door while standing outside. In sum, the metaphor of closed doors shows that Ukraine is located outside of the European Union.

Similar to the family metaphor, the house metaphor emotionalizes the EU. “No longer is it just a political organization, but as a home (or family), it is something people have strong feelings about.” (Huelsse 2006 p. 406) The house metaphor (and especially, the metaphor of home) indicates a clear difference and border between those who are originally part of Europe and those who are not inhabitants of the house.

Europe is very often represented as a synonym of success and harmony in the pro-European Ukrainian discourse. But also as an unreachable ideal, to which Ukrainians were aspiring for centuries. For many in Ukraine, the European Union is still a dream. It means that EU occupies the symbolic point of reference and attracts Ukrainians, but there is no clear vision of how to reach it. Such a vision of Europe, as of a dream, is typical for the romantic Ukrainian discourse. Using metaphors of European integration as a returning home characterizes this frame. Here-with, it is supposed that Ukraine belonged from the very beginning to the European civilization, and only historical unfairness tore it off from the European community.

“European idea or, if you wish, a dream turned to be that forbidden fruit, after having tried which, a Ukrainians won’t be able to dream about anything less.” (Zerkalo nedeli, 21.05.2010)

Europe is very often represented as a synonym of success and harmony in the pro-European Ukrainian discourse. But also as an unreachable ideal, to which Ukrainians were aspiring for centuries. Such a vision of Europe, as of a dream, is typical for the romantic Ukrainian discourse. Using metaphors of European integration as a returning home characterizes this frame. Here-with, it is supposed that Ukraine belonged from the very beginning to the European civilization, and only historical unfairness tore it off from the European community.

Images of the home are typically connected with images of a warm and welcoming space. In the romantic versions of the Ukrainian imaginary about Europe (often described as naïve by the opponents of the European choice of Ukraine) integration of the country into the EU is presented as a return to the European family. But mostly Ukrainians do not feel themselves as members of a family who are returning home. In this case, Europe frequently appears as a fortress or closed club.

The European Union is often represented in the Ukrainian public discourse as a kind of closed elite's club, consisting of a few countries and closed for others who are not members of the EU. The image of the EU as an entity closed to outsiders, inward- oriented, and separated from the outside world by the Schengen wall was reinforced by the frequent description of EU as a rich closed club of 'privileged countries'. It connected with an image of Europe as a paradise, dreamland etc. So, EU appears as an attractive entity, but only for those who are inside.

While the notion of family represents the unconditional acceptance of all members, the metaphor of a club represents an alliance of people based on selective membership and common interests. Exclusivity means separating and suggests an existence of privileges for the members of this club with firmly guarded doors.

By declaring the European Neighborhood Countries as 'friends' and 'neighbors', the EU made quite clear that it did not consider them as "members of the club" that is, after all, based on the very values, norms and principles enshrined in the ENP. This somewhat hypocritical approach undermines the legitimacy of the EU's demands for domestic change. (Börzel 2010, p. 20)

As we mentioned above, the typical negative metaphor in the domain house is a metaphor of Europe as a fortress. Important metaphors closely connected to this metaphor are the bastion, or closed door. In the dominant public perception the doors of Europe are closed for Ukrainians. Such metaphor separates Europe into 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Ukrainians are, according to these metaphorical representations, no doubt, outside of the house. The dominance of the above mentioned metaphors reflects the perception in Ukraine that the EU does not see Ukraine as a part of 'Europe' or even as a potential future member.

The image of the fortress Europe is in sharp contrast with the principles underlying the creation and development of the Union itself. For EU citizens, the free movement in the Schengen zone becomes one of the most valued benefits of the European integration. The experience of the EU neighbors is entirely different. The EU enlargement united many countries in Europe, but "it also built a visa wall higher than at any time in European history" (Popescu and Wilson 2009, p. 33). In this sense, the visa restrictions and complications for Ukrainians are perceived by them as an instrument to keep the door of Europe closed.

## European integration as a family reunion

The family is an obvious metaphor widely used in descriptions of social life (Lakoff 1996). The nation as a family – this type of metaphor belonged to the domain of metaphors regarding kin. Conceptualizing Europe through family metaphors is also quite common. Families are characterized by the fact that membership is given by birth and ends only with death. As Huelse (2006, p. 406) claims, "families, as natural entities, have clear boundaries", indeed we can easily distinguish the 'different' family, but we should disagree with Huelse in this point that families are not so much natural, but rather social entities. The source of identification here can be not only the shared and natural origin, but also it is possible to become a member of the family by marriage or joining.

As it was argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), anthropocentric metaphors are common in most languages, because they allow us to express the new experience in terms of human relations, motives and actions. Personifying metaphors can be used to give meaning to the phenomena of the world in a human, anthropomorphic form. Relations between Ukraine and Europe are often interpreted in terms of human relations. In the family metaphor domain, very often the ruler is a pater and the state is depicted as a family, which should follow the order established by pater. Consequently the people are children, so the relations between state and people are

necessarily paternalistic. “In the paternalistic state, just as in the family, care is inseparable from control.” (Ringmar 2007, p. 124)

For many people in Ukraine who claim the European roots of country – Ukraine is an inseparable part of the European family. Viktor Yushchenko: “Europe without Ukraine is defective. We are not neighbors of Europe, we are part of Europe” (Fakty, 10.03.2005). “Ukraine – is a member of the European family of nations.” (Zerkalo nedeli, №9, 06.03.2010)

These kinds of metaphors are built on the feeling of belonging and they are directly connected with distinctions of ‘we’ and ‘they’. As stressed by van Dijk, the principles of their use follow the overall goals of the positive self-presentation and negative other- presentation we have found in the ideological square, “we, our people and our actions and properties will tend to be described in metaphorical meanings that derive from conceptual fields with positive associations, whereas the opposite is true for the description of our political opponents or enemies.” (Van Dijk 1997, p. 36)

### Teacher – student relations

In the Ukrainian political discourse, relations between Ukraine and Europe are also represented in the model: teacher – student (or pupil). “Ukrainian state is on the long and thorny path of hard work and study.” (Zerkalo nedeli, 05.10.2005)

Very often access to the EU or even signing the Association’s agreement is depicted as entrance exams. “EU-Ukraine Summit: what grade will Yanukovich get?” (Fakty, 21.11.2010) [The EU] “for us is not ready to open the road to membership today, offering a variety of alternatives - from the Eastern Partnership to honorary status of the best pupil in the classroom for losers.” (Zerkalo nedeli, №8, 27.02.2010)

### European integration as a path

Path, journey and movement metaphors are very common in the discourses of the European integration. The metaphor of a path occupies one of the key places in describing the European integration of Ukraine. Accordingly, the European integration is perceived as a path, journey, and travel. The typical expression is: “Ukraine is going the way of European integration.” (Segodnia, 31.01.2013)

What are the specific characteristics of this metaphor? There are direction and quality of the path, the presence of the subject of moving, which uses certain means and ways of transport, the presence (or absence) of the aim of movement, and different path attributes. First of all, this is a movement in the space. It means that for the European integration Ukraine has to move from one place or condition to another one.

The concept of the path is related with a number of surrounding circumstances which are following this movement – so called metaphoric consequences. Generally speaking, moving the road, it is impossible to calculate the time necessary for its overcoming. Viktor Yanukovich: “We’ll choose by our own temps and methods of the Euro-integration according to the national interests”. (Fakty, 08.10.2010)

According to observations of Yavorska (2006, 66-71), the concept of the path is related with a number of surrounding circumstances; in particular, it’s impossible to calculate precisely how much time for its overcoming is needed. The path should surely be long and difficult, while only the road can be easy.

The word road foresees the participation of a person in its creation, so it contains not only distance between points, but also the need for active participation in the process of travelling,

and of joining efforts for achievement of the goal. Diverse types of roads point to different types of development and their perception by political activists. For example, the main road means the main line of society and the economy's development. There are dangers on the road. Dangerous or unpopular decisions are presented as a dangerous road. Metaphoric names of points and parts of the road are often used in the modern Ukrainian political discourse. Traversing the path, you can unavoidably find yourself on the crossroad, that is to say, before the choice. The path, in contrast to the road, is surely long. You can lose the way; that's why you can find indicators there. It's better to walk on the path with friends.

If the journey can be pleasant, joyful, and interesting, then the path is difficult. It is hard work, with many obstacles. Very often images of heaviness, the difficulty of such a travel, barriers, and obstacles emerging on the way, are connected to the metaphor of path. So, in such case, the path of Ukraine to Europe – is undertaken not because of wish, but because of needs.

“We are devoted to the matter of building a strong, independent Ukraine in the structure of prosperous Europe. This path is not easy, but we've chosen it and we are following it” – Viktor Yanukovich. (Fakty, 03.04.2010)

On the path you have to be careful; it isn't worthwhile being in a hurry here, in contrast to the sport distance. You should consider every step. It constantly refers to the inadmissibility of rash decisions, fear of moving too fast and so on. “Ukraine stands on the crossroad, it can go forward or come back.” (Fakty, 29.03.2005) Completed political process is represented as a traversed path. Following a certain direction means the presence of guiding lines and key tasks, which influence political decisions.

The success of the journey (reaching a posed goal) supposes the presence of favorable conditions. “Ukraine is so obviously “unlucky” on the European path. There is a number of measures, which Ukraine has to undertake in order to make the journey as safe as possible.” (Segodnia, 27.02.2012)

“Will it gain success following the way beaten by the Eastern-European countries, or will it choose its own mean of transport, due to which it will finally get to the united Europe in spite of the unfavorable geopolitical current situation?” (Zerkalo nedeli, №23, 19.06.2010)

### ‘Eurointegration’ – as means of transport

An accent here is made on the instrumental role of the European integration for Ukraine to achieve its goals. Words from the domain traveling and transport are used very often (train to Europe, ticket, suitcase, railway station, train, ship, sharp turn, etc.) Transport metaphors are very important characteristics for the political reality in the Ukrainian media discourse. Vehicular metaphors, resulting from personal experience of driving or being in vehicles moving along the road, are a complement to this kind of spatial imagery. As any other metaphors, they contain additional information about the subject of the speech's attitude to political events. In particular, they give a certain meaning to political processes by means of characteristics such as dynamic of traffic, means of transport, overcoming of distances and obstacles for the realization of political programs, etc.

But vehicular metaphors also bring mechanical elements in depictions of Europe as it means impersonal authority without a name – “Eurocrats from Brussels”. If the state is a machine, then the various parts of society become the elements from which the machine is constructed, suggest Ringmar (2007). Machines have to operate according to some definite and quite impersonal rules. “This means that the ruler becomes a clockmaker or an engineer whose main job it is to oversee the operations of the machine, as the machine comes to work quite independently of the

ruler's personal will and whims" (Ringmar 2007, 125). The state-as-machine seems to have more repressive implications than the state-as a body or organism.

Very often Ukraine is represented as a ship which follows the course. Wherein, Ukraine can follow the course on Europe as well as distance, drift, find itself outboard etc., depending on the situation and the goals of the subjects of speech.

Thus, for example, by means of transport metaphors describe difficulties emerging on the way to Europe for Yanukovych's team. "Quick changes of geopolitical landscape, hard pressure with the aim to make us drift to any direction, not necessarily to one, favorable for us, - these are elements of external policy surrounding while V. Yanukovych stands at the helm of the foreign policy." (Zerkalo nedeli, №8, 27.02.2010)

To drift here means to move according to the will of external circumstances, not to own interests and preferences. The parts of the means of transport often become synonyms for metaphoric names of political processes. For example, an often used word like "wheel" has a meaning of "power" in the political context.

Ukraine is compared with a broken car: "A car, which Yanukovych has to drive, is not just broken and disordered, spit and written over by swear-words. Its motor is stolen, its wheels are punched. It almost ran out of fuel. Will President Yanukovych be able to make such a car move forward and if so, how far will he get?" (Zerkalo nedeli, №8, 27.02.2010)

Thus, a metaphor of the path to Europe reflects a certain image of the Eurointegrational process and, at the same time, is somehow programming further actions in this direction. A certain vision of the world and a corresponding scenario of actions are standing behind it. Those politicians, who use this scenario, are rarely able to overstep its limits.

From another side, the path metaphor reconstitutes the dependent relations, i.e. it implies the possibilities of EU's control over the process of integration and the relations with its neighbors. "It allows the EU to set the conditions the applicants have to fulfill if they want to continue on the path towards the EU". (Huelsse 2006, 412)

## Ukraine as a bridge and Ukraine as a buffer

Perception and conceptualization of the European integration is tied directly with the positioning of Ukraine towards Europe. There are typical metaphors of Ukraine here as a bridge and Ukraine as a buffer. Both complexes of metaphors are used in the frame of the geopolitical opposition of the West and Russia. The representation of Ukraine as a bridge between Europe and Asia (Russia) is typical (Yavorskaya and Bogomolov 2010). Ukraine – is a crossroad between the East and the West. "Ukraine is situated on the border between Europe and Asia. Ukraine has to maneuver between its relations with the West and Russia." (Fakty 29.09.2010)

"Ukraine is ready to come out as a certain bridge in this question for rapprochement of the EU and Belarus"- Yanukovych said (Segodnia, 09.06.2010).

In the post-colonial discourse, Ukraine is represented not even as a buffer, but as an East-European outpost, or bastion. In this case Ukraine is a defender of the European civilization from despotic, wild, barbaric Asia, which is associated, first of all, with Russia. It is often criticized by many pro-Ukrainian politicians that Ukraine as a neutral buffer between east and west will sacrifice in the name of European security.

Ukraine – as a buffer is a neutralizer between two worlds; a mediator, it used to have and will have a stabilizing role in this "in-between". For example, "Ukraine is ready to become a bridge between the EU and other former Soviet republics" (Segodnia, 09.07.2010).

“Hungary – is a way to Europe for Ukraine. Ukraine – is a way to Russia and other post-soviet countries for Hungary.” (Zerkalo nedeli, 11.02.2005)

Stable Ukraine is often presented as a condition of Europe’s security in this context. The bridge fulfills a connecting function, drawing together cultures, nations and countries. Politicians are “raising bridges”, helping to consolidate economic and political ties between countries.

Followers of strengthening ties with Russia are using this frame as well (using metaphor - Ukraine as a bridge between Europe and Russia), explaining that Europe itself is interested in the partnership of Ukraine and Russia. This thesis has become especially popular after Yanukovich’s return to power in 2010. Moreover, the Yanukovich team often places Ukraine’s success in European affairs as a dependent of good relations with Russia.

“The normalization of our relations with the RF not only doesn’t prevent Euro- integrational processes, but even helps them. United Europe needs an economically strong, democratic Ukraine, which, together with Russia, contributes to the consolidation of stability”, - President Yanukovich claimed (Segodnia, 24.08.2010).

## Conclusion

Europe is still a powerful point of reference in Ukrainian public discussions. Ukrainian media reflected the diversity of opinions and visions of the future direction of developing country. The Ukrainian media also reflected a range of changes and ongoing conflicts on the topic of European future of Ukraine. Ukraine was uncertain about its future in Europe. Visions of Europe in the Ukrainian political discourse were heterogeneous and ambivalent. The Ukrainian media widely employed a limited number of underlying conceptual metaphors formed by previous experience, history and specifics of post-Soviet culture.

We distinguished a few typical ways of metaphorical representation of the European integration in Ukrainian public discourse.

Firstly, the main role was played by metaphors of movement, where Eurointegration was mostly depicted as a path (with different organic and mechanical attributes).

So, we can conclude that in Ukrainian public discourse spatial metaphors played a dominant role, among which an important place is occupied by the metaphor of European integration as a path and Ukraine as a bridge. Ukraine often appeared as a bridge between Russia and the rest of Europe, or as a bridge between Europe and Asia. For the post-colonial discourse, it’s typical to present Ukraine not as a bridge, but as a buffer, or even outpost. In this case Ukraine became a defender of the European civilization from despotic, wild, barbaric Asia, which is associated, first of all, with Russia. Secondly, the metaphor of Europe/European Union as a house/structure played an important role. Here the EU was often presented as an exclusive space to enter – closed rich club or even fortress. Europe as an organism was not very typical for Ukrainian media discourse. The more widespread vision of the EU was as a construction (building), which was created with some purpose. The European Union was regularly depicted in Ukrainian public discourse as a heavily guarded fortress looking for any opportunities to ‘limit’ or ‘deny’ access to other countries who do not already belong to the union. The EU was also presented in the Ukrainian imagery by using the conceptual metaphor of the closed elite’s club.

Thirdly, metaphors of personification represent the relations with the EU and the Eurointegration process as persons involved in different kind of relations and have emotions, human characteristics, etc. To this group we can probably also relate the metaphor – European integration as a study or learning process. The relations of EU-Ukraine were presented here in the frame of teacher-student. In this frame Europe was clearly in the dominant position, where the

EU occupies the role of a teacher who has the right to demand, evaluate and even dictate. These kinds of relations were widely criticized by the opponents of European integration. Such asymmetrical relations have the following consequence: the responsibility on the results and outcomes of European aspirations of Ukraine lies on the side of the teachers, the European Union. Thus, this frame allows some kind of passivity and mistakes for the Ukraine's side.

One of the characteristics of the Ukrainian public sphere and the way of presenting politics in the media was a very high level of 'personalization' and 'psychologization' of events and the actions of political actors. The personalized perception of political events turned Ukrainian politics into an endless "soap serial" of personal relationships between "actors". Personal-psychological interpretation of what is happening in Ukrainian politics triumphed in public discussion. It was also related to the representation of European affairs by Ukrainian media. Very often the Ukrainian media did not reflect the institutional and procedural issues of decision-making and the implementation of public and foreign policies. The personification of understanding the events in the public sphere has the effect of the denial of the critical and rational discussion of the contents of public policy in favor of emotive relationship to the events. A consequence of it was a total 'psychologization' and 'personalization' of political discourse in general, and foreign policy issues and relations between Ukraine and the EU in particular.

Perhaps the most visible tendency observed when we analyzed the metaphorical representations of relations of Ukraine with European Union was that within each identified frame, every positive consideration there was a negative counterpart.

The EU's positive image, which was largely based upon stereotypes of the high living standards and welfare in European countries, was the dominant factor in the Ukrainian public opinion. "Sometimes the 'European choice' has tried to fill up the targeted vacuum that had been created after the USSR's collapse..." (Sushko and Parkhomenko 2003, p. 7). The mythological or even a romantic image of Europe prevailed in the public discourse among the pro-European parts of the society. Ukrainians knew so little about contemporary Europe in the studied period, that they were ready to accept any of myths and stereotypes depending on circumstances and dominant narratives.

Compared with 2005, in 2010 there was a visible and significant reduction in the frequency of using the path metaphor in official discourse. We can agree with Yavorska (2002), that the idea of Ukraine's path to Europe reflected a lack of awareness of European identity for Ukrainians before 2014. In comparison - the relationship with Russia in that period of time was conceptualized quite differently: to build a relationship with Russia, it was necessary just "did not turn your back on Russia"; there was no need for a path to Russia because both countries were already close enough. Relations with Russia were often conceptualized by using metaphors of the family or family relations (even if there are stressed negative moments in relations). Konstantin Hryshchenko: "What is Europe for us if Russia is our family? You know, we're all in the European family, just different children, parents are the same." (Segodnia, 22.03.2010). Although the opponents of rapprochement with Russia often characterized the relationship between Russia and Ukraine only as a relationship of neighbors. "Russia is our neighbor. Such geography - is our destiny" - said Grigoriy Nemyria (Fakty, 21.01.2010).

Despite the rhetoric that remains similar, the change from the presidency of Yushchenko to the presidency of Yanukovich shifted the vectors of Ukrainian foreign policy. 'European choice' of Ukraine, together with the rhetoric of national revival, was crucial during the period of Yushchenko presidency. After the return of Viktor Yanukovich to power, an economical frame in the European integration issue was actualized. Ukraine's relations with the EU were described mainly in official discourses as a 'business partnership'. This was quite a logical consequence of the declared 'pragmatic' approach to foreign policy proclaimed by the team of President Yanukovich. And as the pragmatic framing of the European integration was domi-

nating the Ukrainian foreign policy narratives of the Yanukovich government, it also affected the decisions and actions taken by the Ukrainian government after 2010. President Yanukovich did not mention any more that Ukraine was an ‘undivided part of Europe’, as Yushchenko claimed, but declared that Ukraine would be a partner of Europe and act as a bridge ‘between the West and Russia’. At the same time, European integration has remained a key object of political discourse.

To summing up, European integration was described in Ukraine in 2005-2010 with a tension between the two discourses – the discourse of closeness and of openness. The European Neighborhood Policy was created for an opening of the door for Ukraine to Europe and as a ‘road map’ for the Ukrainian way towards the EU. Despite that, for the majority of Ukrainians it was still unrealistic ‘dream’ where doors were ‘rather closed’ then opened. The metaphor of closed door showed that Ukraine was located outside of the European Union. The images of doors being closed and safeguarded evoked an interpretation of the European house in terms of a fortress. In this context the metaphor of doors - widely used in different frames - also had the potential to be positive (if opened) and negative (if closed). In the dominant Ukrainian perception – European doors were rarely not opened to admit newcomers, thus requiring them to constantly knock at the door while standing outside.

The changes in Ukraine’s perception of European integration after 2014 have had a profound impact on both media narratives and political rhetoric. Prior to 2014, the European Union was often depicted as a distant, unattainable dream. Metaphors of closed doors, fortresses, and exclusive clubs dominated the discourse, reflecting a sense of exclusion and longing. Post-2014, however, the discourse has shifted towards one of urgency and inevitability, with European integration framed as a critical pathway for Ukraine's survival and success in the face of Russian aggression. This has influenced Ukrainian media to adopt a more assertive tone in discussing EU integration, often highlighting it as a matter of national security and identity rather than mere economic or political alignment.

Metaphors are particularly useful in understanding these developments because they encapsulate complex ideas and emotions in accessible and resonant imagery. They help to shape public perception by framing the EU not just as a political entity but as a symbol of hope, freedom, and alignment with Western values. Analyzing these metaphors allows us to see how Ukrainian society’s view of Europe has evolved from a dream of economic prosperity to a vital component of its national defense and identity.

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# Mere Duplication or Original? ISIS Ability to Adapt Propaganda to Different Target Audiences

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**Abstract** :ISIS's ability to recruit new members and spread its message has been widely attributed to its prolific production of propaganda items and its ability to adapt its message based on target audience. We tested these two hypotheses by analysing magazines published by ISIS central media in three languages (English [Dabiq], Turkish [Konstantiniyye] and French [Dar al-Islam]) in two one-month periods in 2015 and 2016. To see how far the terrorist organization could generate original content in different languages instead of translations, we conceived a pre-trained deep learning model that measured similarity between articles in magazines, leveraging a sentence-based approach. In order to test ISIS ability to adjust message based on target audience, we further conducted qualitative content analysis. Our deep learning model test results showed, except for re-publication of one article in the second period, ISIS was in fact able to publish discrete propaganda items. The results of the qualitative content analysis showed ISIS was successful in differentiating thematic coverage of its propaganda content for English-, French-, and Turkish-speaking audience.

**Keywords:** Daesh, ISIL, magazine, translation, propaganda, similarity check

## Introduction

ISIS, also named as the Islamic State or Daesh, has become notorious for its effective use of propaganda in its efforts to recruit new members and promote its ideology (Philips, Bucci, Florance, Dale, & Brookes, 2014; Johnson, 2015; Barrett, October 2017; Lister, 2014; Singer & Brooking, 2018; Sultan & De Landtsheer, 2019). Scholars have noted that massive propaganda has been central to the group's strategy (Milton, 2016), serving to bolster its legitimacy (Anfinson, 2021; Frissen, Toguslu, Van Ostaeyen, & d'Haenens, 2018; Boutz, Benninger, & Lancaster, 2018; Ubayasiri, 2021), recruit new members (Lakomy, 2021), and spread its message of terror and violence (Venkatesh, Podoshen, Jason, Rabah, & Glass, 2020).

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While much of this propaganda is distributed online through social media and other digital channels (Mitts, Philips, & Barbara F. , 2022) , ISIS has also been prolific in terms of producing print propaganda items such as magazines, pamphlets, and posters (Zelin, 2015) alongside a range of materials ranging from children's books (Engel, 2016) to textbooks on Arabic literature, history and physical preparedness (Olidort, 2016).

Several studies have examined the extent of ISIS's print propaganda output. For example, a study by Aaron Zelin that provides a snapshot for the totality of ISIS official media productions in a sample week in 2015 (from April 18 to April 24) shows that out of 123 total media outputs 88% were visual (63% picture, 20% video, and 5% graphic) whereas only 12% were textual (2% statement, 5% news report, 5% pdf). In terms of linguistic distribution, 8 of the items were in English, 5 in Russian, 4 in Kurdish, 2 in French, 1 in Urdu and the remaining 103 in Arabic. Accordingly, 78% of its media outputs came from provincial-level media operations whereas the remaining 22% came from central media (2015).

Due to the breadth of ISIS official media releases, Zelin's article provides insight into the general share of print propaganda material within overall ISIS media production. Yet, it only provides a picture of the status in April 2015. Both Milton and Winter argue the number of ISIS propaganda outputs decreased as the organization fell from power in time (Milton, 2016). Winter's study comparing number of propaganda items released for one week randomly selected in late summer 2015 and one week in January 2017 shows a decline by nearly 50 % in numbers. Accordingly, 892 unique items were released in 2015 whereas this number decreased to 463 in 2017. In 2015, the share of central media outlets within overall media releases was only 16, the remaining 84% coming from 29 provincial media offices. The share of central media rose to 41 percent in 2017 due to decline in number (only 22 remaining) and productivity of the provincial media offices (2018). This means, despite ups and downs of ISIS and resulting decline in provincial media output due to loss of territory, its central media outlets have been relatively prolific.

ISIS's "*communication strategy is comprehensive, cohesive, and multi-dimensional*", and textual propaganda has played a key role as in its "*full spectrum propaganda*" (Ingram, 2020, p. 20). The organization has instrumentalized especially the magazines to impose its worldview and ideology, and relaying its message to both ingroups and outgroups. The fact that four different volumes of ISIS' Dabiq magazine were sold over Amazon to the Western readers for a period of time in 2015 testifies for the terrorist organization's obsession to communicate its core messages to outer world (BBC News, 2015).

In the book they edited in 2019, Baele et al. indicate ISIS central media office has published 7 different magazines in English, French, Russian, Turkish and Arabic between August 2012 and 2019 (2019, p. 89).

Table 1. ISIS magazines (Baelc, Boyd, & Coan, 2019)<sup>3</sup>

Magazine	Language	Title interpretation	Total number of issues	Duration of magazine	Average length
al-Naba'	Arabic	The Announcement	391	Aug 2012 - current	16 pages
Al-Waqar	Arabic	Dignity, Lordliness	2	October 2016	22 pages
Dabiq	English	Eschatological place in Syria'	15	July 2014 - July 2016	61 pages
Dar al-Islam	French	House or abode of Dar Al Islam	10	December 2014 - August 2016	44 pages
Istok	Russian	The Source	4	May 2015 - May 2016	45 pages
Konstantiniyye	Turkish	Transliteration of the Ottoman spelling of "Constantinople"	7	June 2015 - August 2017	59 pages
Rumiyah	10 languages	Rome	13	September 2016 - September 2017	45 pages

Especially between July 2014 and August 2017, ISIS has published 51 magazines with an average of 50 pages each. This alongside the diversity of the languages suggests that ISIS has been highly prolific in terms of producing print propaganda items.

Many studies have also analyzed the content of these materials and found that they are often highly sophisticated and targeted towards specific audiences. For example, a study by Ingram argues both Dabiq and Rumiyah magazines were designed to appeal to Western audiences, "*coaxing audiences into seeing the world through ISIS's strategically constructed lens*" which makes it easier to recruit and radicalize supporters (2018).

Overall, the literature suggests that ISIS has been highly prolific in terms of producing "*quality*" print propaganda items, and that these materials are an important part of the group's broader propaganda strategy diversifying its message to the audience native in different languages. While the group's territorial losses and other setbacks have reduced its overall propaganda output, it is arguable that ISIS has continued to use print propaganda as a tool for recruitment and messaging throughout its existence.

The research at hand aims to test the validity of the arguments made in research regarding productivity of ISIS propaganda machinery, through analysis of its magazines, the backbone of its print propaganda items, leveraging computational and qualitative methods. It tests the following hypotheses:

H1: ISIS shows skill in publishing discrete propaganda items to audience native in different languages.

H2: ISIS shows skill in diversifying its message based on target audience.

The objective is to explore ISIS propaganda disseminated through its official media structures across different languages and thus different target audience across time. In this regard, all ISIS published journals have been downloaded and coded for their names, publication dates and languages. Two timeframes with approximately one-year intervals have allowed for a longitudinal study to compare media outputs in three different languages, namely English, French, and Turkish.

3 The number of the Naba' magazines was indicated as 86 in the original book. As of writing this article, ISIL published 391st issue on 18 May 2023.

Table 2. Researched ISIS Publications in Two Timeframes

Period	Name	Issue	Issue Date	Language	Cover Name
Period 1	Dabiq	9	May 21, 2015	English	They Plot and Allah Plots
	Dar_al-Islam	4	June 1, 2015	French	Le Combat Contre Les Apostats
	Konstantiniyye	1	June 1, 2015	Turkish	Konstantiniyye'nin Fethi
Period 2	Dabiq	14	April 13, 2016	English	The Murtadd Brotherhood
	Dar_al-Islam	9	April 26, 2016	French	L'Etat Islamique Sur Les Pas Des Compagnons
	Konstantiniyye	6	April 22, 2016	Turkish	Mürted Kardeşler

## Methodology

In this study, a novel methodological framework with two steps is proposed. To test the research Hypothesis 1, a pre-trained deep learning model has been used to measure similarity between articles in magazines, leveraging a sentence-based approach. Subsequently in Step 2, a qualitative analysis is made to lay bare how ISIS has been able to differentiate the themes it broaches based on the audience it addresses. In a more detailed way, in **Step 1**, the model developed follows the steps below:

- Extraction of each article [1\_1, 1\_2, ..., 2\_1...] in the six magazines and their preparation in “.txt” format as separate files.
- Cleaning of the text.
- Parsing sentences (SpaCy)
- Getting embeddings for each sentence [1\_1\_1, 1\_1\_2, ...] (Universal Sentence Encoder (Cer, et al., 2018))
- Calculation of cosine similarity between each sentence among article pairs (Yang, 2018; Yinfei, et al., 2019; Aslan & Topçu, 2021)
- Calculation of sentence weight within the article, which refers to the total count of characters in the sentence over total number of characters in the whole article (1102)

Table 3. Representation of Sentence Weight Calculation

	1_1_1	1_1_2	1_1_3	1_1_4	1_1_5	...
Sentence Character Count	8	91	227	251	336	...
Article Character Count	6423	6423	6423	6423	6423	
Weight	0,00124552	0,01416783	0,03534174	0,03907831	0,052312	...

- Retrieving maximum similarity score from among scores showing similarity between the compared sentence and each sentence of the article to be compared, in other words finding the most similar sentence in the compared article.

Table 4. Retrieval of Maximum Similarity Scores

	<b>2_1_1</b>	<b>2_1_2</b>	<b>2_1_3</b>	<b>2_1_4</b>	...	<b>2_1_n</b>
<b>1_1_1</b>	0,36287782	<b>0,40262296</b>	0,24870643	0,13686114	...	...
<b>1_1_2</b>	0,13686114	0,29758247	<b>0,3129881</b>	0,28558247	...	...
<b>1_1_n</b>	...	...	...	...	...	...

- h. Sum of multiplication of maximum similarity score for each pair of articles with their respective weights.

In **Step 2**, qualitative content analysis has been conducted. For content analysis, Holsti adopts the definition as any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages. (1968, p. 597) As Weber also points to the utility of the method to make valid inferences from the text (Weber, 1990) Kerlinger adds “quantitative” element in his definition. (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). For Lasswell, “content analysis operates on the view that verbal behavior is a form of human behavior, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events.” (Lasswell, Lerner, & Pool, 1952, s. 34) Along the same lines, Krippendorff contends, content analysis examines data to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does.”

Within the context of this study, this methodology has been used to measure respective weight of themes ISIS addressed in its print propaganda and make comparisons between different magazines in a given period and comparing the two periods per se. Accordingly, the magazines have been split into articles to be further coded across three parameters: theme, length (number of pages), and language. Overall in the research universe, a total of 73 articles have been grouped under 19 thematic categories: Terror Attack, Competition [with other Terror Groups], Jihad, Worldview, History, Governance, Military Success, Ideology, Heroism, Jurisprudence, State-building, Eschatology, Hijrah, Humanism, Piety, Incitation to Terror, Terror, Communication Security, and Justice. The themes were not pre-defined but rather they form a compilation of the themes encountered during the coding process. Upon completion of coding, the volume of each theme within respective magazine has been found. The volumes have formed the basis for comparison among different magazines to provide insight about the extent of difference. The coding has been made only by the first author. Yet, in times of analyzing and drawing insights from results of analysis using computational methods, co-author has been involved.

## Results and Discussion

### Period 1: May 21 – June 1 (2015)

In line with the methodology described above, for this first period, we extracted 35 articles from out of 3 magazines cited above:

Table 5. Researched ISIS Publications in the First Period

Period	Name	Issue	Issue Date	Language	Cover Name
Period 1	Dabiq	9	May 21, 2015	English	They Plot and Allah Plots
	Dar_al-Islam	4	June 1, 2015	French	Le Combat Contre Les Apostats
	Konstantiniyye	1	June 1, 2015	Turkish	Konstantiniyye'nin Fethi

The two magazines, Konstantiniyye (Turkish) and Dar-al Islam (French) were translated first into English using DeepL. Then, we ran the first iteration of our deep learning model. The results showed “1” similarity score for comparison of originally English documents with themselves. This meant exact match (semantic and syntactic) or sameness. Exact semantic and syntactic discreteness would be represented by “0”.

To disambiguate the results, we directly removed the instances from model results where the originally English documents were compared with themselves. The similarity results for the remaining documents showed the results below, seen in descending order:

Table 6. Monodirectional Similarity Scores

No.	Source Article	Source Character Count	Target Article	Target Character Count	Similarity Score
0	3_13	421	3_8	7329	0,767752589
1	4_7	61589	6_3	61790	0,679455452
2	6_3	61790	4_7	61589	0,639896299
3	1_2	17657	6_4	18958	0,639110236
4	6_4	18958	1_2	17657	0,602347658
5	6_6	1769	4_5	14628	0,571226604
...	...	...	...	...	...
4155	5_3	46725	2_8	187	0,07957583
4156	5_4	36195	3_2	672	0,077729498
4157	5_4	36195	5_6	1052	0,076583369
4158	5_4	36195	3_13	421	0,071278916
4159	5_4	36195	2_8	187	0,045737194

The highest similarity score, 0,768, was attributed to two articles with varying lengths. Below you will find screenshots from the two documents.



Figure 1. Article 3\_8



Figure 2. Article 3\_13

Our model punishes cases where longer articles are compared to shorter articles. In cases where the shorter article is a subset of the longer article, in other words, when the former is an excerpt from the latter, the model would yield 1 similarity score. To verify this premise, we checked the similarity between 3\_8 and 3\_13 which revealed a score of 0,36 as can be seen below:

Table 7. Monodirectional Similarity Scores for Articles 3\_13 and 3\_8

No.	Source Article	Source Character Count	Target Article	Target Character Count	Similarity Score
0	3_13	421	3_8	7329	0,767752589
1445	3_8	7329	3_13	421	0,35971399

Thus, we took two actions. First, we removed 5 documents (1\_14, 2\_8, 3\_13, 4\_13, and 6\_7) from our analysis sample. These were basically pages with one or two paragraphs in the back cover of the magazines as can be seen at Figure 2. Second and more importantly, we took average of two similarity scores to make up for the inconsistency stemming from varying lengths. Accordingly, the results for the first period showed the following scores:

Table 8. Adjusted Similarity Scores for the First Period

No.	Source	Target	Similarity Score 1	Similarity Score 2	Source Char.Cnt.	Target Char.Cnt.	Avg. Sim.Score
1	2_0	2_1	0,563248	0,450266	3368	18024	0,506757
2	3_8	3_1	0,503588	0,434235	7329	9202	0,468911
3	2_2	2_1	0,467267	0,45536	12043	18024	0,461313
4	1_1	1_10	0,472983	0,449399	6423	28493	0,461191
5	2_1	1_1	0,478385	0,435942	18024	6423	0,457163
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
591	3_9	1_5	0,204464	0,200803	4530	3798	0,202633
592	3_4	1_13	0,226452	0,177165	1563	9852	0,201809
593	3_4	1_5	0,234817	0,166519	1563	3798	0,200668
594	2_4	1_5	0,203623	0,189174	4789	3798	0,196398
<b>595</b>	<b>3_2</b>	<b>1_5</b>	<b>0,251345</b>	<b>0,105695</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>3798</b>	<b>0,17852</b>

The two articles that attained highest similarity score are 2\_0 INTRODUCTION of Dar-al Islam and the first article in the same magazine with the name: THE ISLAMIC STATE APPLIES ALLAH'S JUDGMENT. The two articles, in fact touch upon similar subjects with varying lengths and details. But they are not the same articles, and they don't even have an excerpt from one another.

The least similar two articles that attained 0,17852 similarity score are 3\_8 HIJRAH (Holy Emigration) and 3\_1 CONQUEST OF CONSTANTINOPLE. The two articles with similar lengths discussed totally different themes. The former discussed eschatology about Armageddon and conquest of Istanbul whereas the latter touched upon the issue of Hijrah and invited audience to emigrate to Iraq and Syria to join ranks of ISIS.

As we looked into the 32 articles<sup>4</sup> published in three magazines in this first period, we did not find identical articles. This means, ISIS has in fact been capable of generating unique propaganda content, differentiating its message based on different audience native in different languages. An average of the average similarity scores of 595 article pairs retrieved a score of 0,335683.

In the second step, we conducted qualitative content analysis, coding texts based on their lengths and main message. Having negated the use of same articles across different magazines, we wanted to see if the same themes were covered in different articles, trying to see the extent ISIS can differentiate its message to distinct audiences. In this first period, the number of the themes covered was 16. Per magazine, the distribution / volume of themes covered in their respective magazines is as below:

4 Initially the number of articles was 35. But, we removed 3 very short articles in the previous step as explained.

Table 9. Themes covered and their volumes in the respective magazines

<b>Annotation / Volume in Magazine (%)</b>	<b>Dabiq #9</b>	<b>Dar_al-Islam #4</b>	<b>Konstantiniyye #1</b>	<b>Average</b>
Terror Attack	2,53164557	4,761904762	1,086956522	2,793502284
<b>Competition [with other Terror Groups]</b>	<b>12,65822785</b>	<b>26,19047619</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,94956801</b>
Jihad	7,594936709	0	13,04347826	6,879471657
Worldview	7,594936709	0	0	2,53164557
History	3,797468354	0	0	1,265822785
Governance	8,860759494	0	2,173913043	3,678224179
Military Success	12,65822785	4,761904762	2,173913043	6,531348551
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>15,18987342</b>	<b>9,523809524</b>	<b>15,2173913</b>	<b>13,31035808</b>
Heroism	3,797468354	0	0	1,265822785
<b>Jurisprudence</b>	<b>7,594936709</b>	<b>14,28571429</b>	<b>19,56521739</b>	<b>13,81528946</b>
<b>Statebuilding</b>	<b>5,063291139</b>	<b>23,80952381</b>	<b>21,73913043</b>	<b>16,87064846</b>
Eschatology	1,265822785	0	10,86956522	4,045129334
Hijrah	0	0	6,52173913	2,173913043
Humanism	0	0	4,347826087	1,449275362
Piety	0	2,380952381	0	0,793650794
Justice	0	9,523809524	0	3,174603175

As can be seen from the table, in this period, the terrorist group pays particular attention to cover issues related to statebuilding and ideology to attract more recruits, to jurisprudence to mimic a state with a legal system and criticize other terror groups to differentiate its brand. The latter is not visible in Konstantiniyye 1, published in Turkish.

Tamar et al.'s study to measure impact of ISIS propaganda between 2015 and 2016 concludes content "conveying the material, spiritual, and social benefits of joining ISIS increased online support for the group, while content displaying brutal violence decreased endorsement of ISIS across a wide range of videos. Only the group's most extreme supporters reacted positively to violent propaganda" (Mitts, Philips, & Barbara F. , 2022). The first period, with emphasis on statebuilding, jurisprudence, ideology and worldview, aligns with this study.

Below is a more virtual representation of this differentiation of themes covered:

Period 1 (Annotations per Magazine)

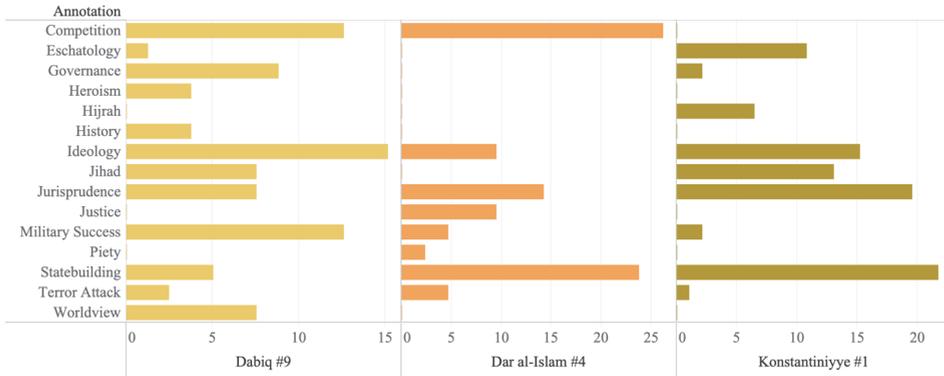


Figure 3. Themes Tackled in Different Magazines in the First Period

### Period 2: April 13 – April 22 (2016)

In this second period, we extracted 22 articles from out of 3 magazines as can be seen below:

Table 10. Researched ISIS Publications in the Second Period

Period	Name	Issue	Issue Date	Language	Cover Name
Period 2	Dabiq	14	April 13, 2016	English	The Murtadd Brotherhood
	Dar_al-Islam	9	April 26, 2016	French	L’Etat Islamique Sur Les Pas des Compagnons
	Konstantiniyye	6	April 22, 2016	Turkish	Mürted Kardeşler

We translated the two non-English magazines, Dar-al Islam (French) and Konstantiniyye (Turkish) into English first. Then, we ran our model. Accordingly, the results showed the following scores:

Table 11. Adjusted Similarity Scores for the Second Period

No.	Source	Target	Similarity Score 1	Similarity Score 2	Source Char.Cnt.	Target Char.Cnt.	Avg. Sim.Score
1	4_7	6_3	0,679455	0,639896	61589	61790	0,659676
2	5_7	4_5	0,511067	0,475458	6419	14628	0,493262
3	4_8	4_3	0,489245	0,470723	20595	33592	0,479984
4	6_6	4_5	0,571227	0,383739	1769	14628	0,477483
5	4_3	5_2	0,497225	0,450213	33592	80979	0,473719
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
319	4_6	5_4	0,243193	0,09933	2263	36195	0,171261
320	4_2	5_4	0,203005	0,131409	5846	36195	0,167207
321	4_11	5_4	0,210951	0,100875	4636	36195	0,155913
322	6_6	5_4	0,217706	0,088242	1769	36195	0,152974
323	4_5	5_4	0,179758	0,12546	14628	36195	0,152609

The two articles that attained highest average similarity score, 0,659676, are 4\_7 The Murtadd Brotherhood (Dabiq) and 6\_3 APOSTATE BROTHERS. As can be understood from their names, the two articles are in fact the same article in two different languages. The reason behind fact that the similarity score is not 1 is the variation caused by machine translation, using DeepL.

The least similar two articles that attained 0,179758 similarity score are 4\_5 ISLAMIC STATE OPERATIONS and 5\_4 IT SECURITY. The two articles with different lengths discuss totally different issues. The 4\_5 informs readers about terrorist operations ISIS held in the past one month in different cities and countries whereas 5\_4 informs readers about how to attain IT security using VPN and other IT based privacy solutions.

So, apart from one identical article in English and Turkish, ISIS has, in fact, been capable of generating unique propaganda content, differentiating its message based on different audience. An average of the average similarity scores of 323 article pairs retrieved a score of 0,327038.

In terms of content, the number of the themes covered is 15. Per magazine, the distribution of themes can be seen in Table below:

Table 12. Themes covered and their volumes in the respective magazine

Annotation / Volume of the Annotation in Magazine (%)	Dabiq #9	Dar_al-Islam #4	Konstantiniyye #1	Average
<b>Terror Attack</b>	<b>11,76470588</b>	<b>5,128205128</b>	<b>3,846153846</b>	<b>6,913021619</b>
Jihad	0	0	13,46153846	4,487179487
<b>Worldview</b>	<b>22,05882353</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36,53846154</b>	<b>19,53242836</b>
History	8,823529412	0	0	2,941176471
<b>Governance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,128205128</b>	<b>15,38461538</b>	<b>6,837606838</b>
Military Success	0	1,282051282	0	0,427350427
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,07692308</b>	<b>3,846153846</b>	<b>8,974358974</b>
Heroism	5,882352941	15,38461538	0	7,088989442
<b>Jurisprudence</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21,15384615</b>	<b>7,051282051</b>
<b>Statebuilding</b>	<b>20,58823529</b>	<b>17,94871795</b>	<b>1,923076923</b>	<b>13,48667672</b>
Eschatology	1,470588235	0	0	0,490196078
Piety	5,882352941	0	0	1,960784314
Incitation to Terror	14,70588235	1,282051282	0	5,329311212
Terror	5,882352941	0	0	1,960784314
Communication Security	0	19,23076923	0	6,41025641

In this period, the terrorist group continues to pay particular attention to cover issues related to statebuilding and ideology. Jurisprudence is also covered to assert its inhumane application of laws are based on Islamic precepts. To complement this picture, it has enhanced coverage on governance to reinforce the state image, covered terror attacks in Brussels to bolster image of “competence” evidencing itself in the form of hitting Europe at its heart, and finally impose its worldview to offer its followers an alternative reading of the events.

Below is a more virtual representation of this differentiation of themes covered:

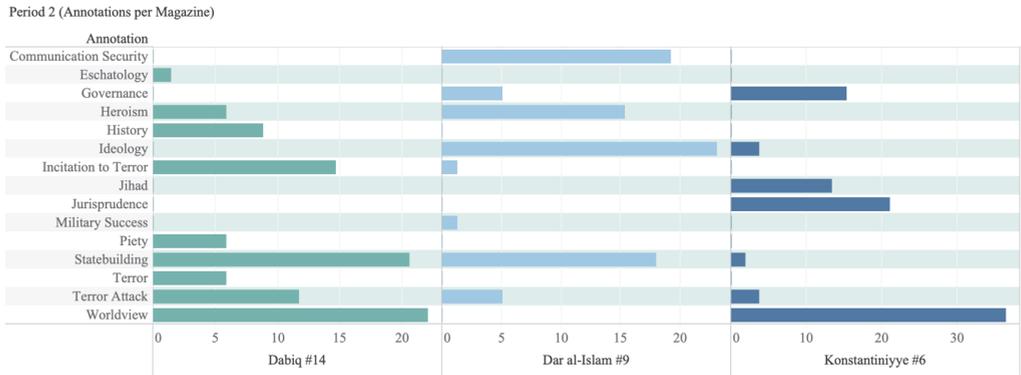


Figure 4. Themes Tackled in Different Magazines in the Second Period

### Interperiod Comparison

In the previous two steps we verified that ISIS was able to differentiate its message to different target audiences, producing unique items. In this step we want to understand

- a. If the same content is used across the two periods, and
- b. If there is enough differentiation in the themes addressed across different periods.

The model showed the following similarity scores:

Table 13. Adjusted Similarity Scores for Both Periods

No.	Source	Target	Similarity Score 1	Similarity Score 2	Source Char.Cnt.	Target Char.Cnt.	Avg. Sim.Score
1	1_2	6_4	0,63911	0,602348	17657	18958	0,620729
2	2_1	4_3	0,518148	0,476642	18024	33592	0,497395
3	4_5	1_6	0,495465	0,48612	14628	8752	0,490793
4	2_1	5_2	0,534776	0,43937	18024	80979	0,487073
5	2_0	4_3	0,531587	0,419951	3368	33592	0,475769
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1022	3_2	5_4	0,228351	0,077729	672	36195	0,15304
1023	1_5	5_4	0,189363	0,107695	3798	36195	0,148529
1024	2_8	5_4	0,24249	0,045737	187	36195	0,144114
1025	2_7	5_4	0,190587	0,080955	1083	36195	0,135771
1026	1_5	4_13	0,134294	0,125977	3798	1731	0,130136

The average of the average similarity scores for 1026 article pairs from different periods retrieved a score of 0,324369663. The two articles that attained highest average similarity score of 0,620729 are 1\_2 THE VIRTUES OF RIBAT FOR THE CAUSE OF ALLAH and 6\_4 RIBAT IN THE WAY OF ALLAH AND ITS VIRTUES. The two articles, although not verba-

tim translation, are quite similar. The latter is a shorter translation of the English version with additional explanations for Turkish speaking audience. The structure and subtitles in the two articles are same.

The two articles that attained the second highest average similarity score of 0,497395 are 2\_1 The Islamic State Applies Allâh's Judgment: Fight Against Apostates (Dar al-Islam #4) and 4\_3 Kill the Imâms of Kufr in the West (Dabiq #14). The two articles are discrete. So, there is only one re-publication across the two periods. This means, apart from this one example, the organization has in fact been capable of generating unique propaganda content, differentiating its message based on different audience.

In terms of content, the distribution of themes across the two periods can be seen in Table below:

Table 14. Themes covered and their volumes in the respective magazine

Annotation / Volume in Magazine (%)	Period 1	Period 2	Average
Terror Attack	8,380506853	20,73906486	14,5597859
Competition [with other Terror Groups]	38,84870404	0	19,424352
Jihad	20,63841497	13,46153846	17,0499767
<b>Worldview</b>	<b>7,594936709</b>	<b>58,59728507</b>	<b>33,0961109</b>
History	3,797468354	8,823529412	6,31049888
Governance	11,03467254	20,51282051	15,7737465
Military Success	19,59404565	1,282051282	10,4380485
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>39,93107425</b>	<b>26,92307692</b>	<b>33,4270756</b>
Heroism	3,797468354	21,26696833	12,5322183
Jurisprudence	41,44586839	21,15384615	31,2998573
<b>Statebuilding</b>	<b>50,61194538</b>	<b>40,46003017</b>	<b>45,5359878</b>
Eschatology	12,135388	1,470588235	6,80298812
Hijrah	6,52173913	0	3,26086957
Humanism	4,347826087	0	2,17391304
Piety	2,380952381	5,882352941	4,13165266
Incitation to Terror	0	15,98793363	7,99396682
Terror	0	5,882352941	2,94117647
Communication Security	0	19,23076923	9,61538462
Justice	9,523809524	0	4,76190476

In this period, the terrorist group continues to pay particular attention to cover issues related to statebuilding and ideology. It is remarkable though, at a time when about three years have passed over declaration of the so-called caliphate, the publications to disseminate its worldview and political stance has increasingly gotten more than half of the volume of its publications.

Below is a more virtual representation of this differentiation of themes covered:

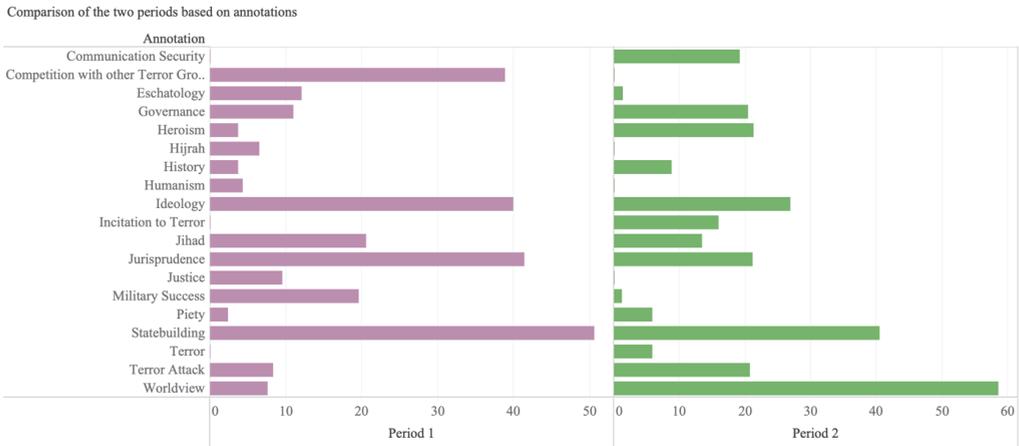


Figure 5. Comparison of Themes Tackled in the Two Periods

## Conclusion

Overall, the literature suggests that ISIS has been highly prolific in terms of producing “quality” print propaganda items, and that these materials are an important part of the group’s broader propaganda strategy diversifying its message to the audience native in different languages. To test validity of this argument, we leveraged a two-step methodology. The first step involved development of a computational method that would quantify the extent that content produced is similar, same or discrete. The second step involved conduct of qualitative content analysis, coding each article within respective magazine in terms of themes it elaborates upon and calculation of thematic coverage of the magazines.

Our model was successful in retrieving similarity scores in Step 1. A run of the model within sample universe in Period 1 showed no duplication or re-publication in different languages. In Period 2, we located one translation / duplication. While analyzing articles across the two periods, we located another article from Period 1 that was re-published in Period 2 in a different language. So, from among 54 articles we analyzed, only 2 articles were duplicate or re-publication. This means, the content is 97,4 percent different.

In terms of thematic distribution, our qualitative content analysis showed ISIS successfully adapted themes it elaborated in its print propaganda material according to the linguistic target audience. In neither first nor second period, none of the themes covered in one magazine was covered in other magazines within 5 percent difference ratio to mention a statistically significant correlation. On the other hand, a closer look into interperiod analysis revealed a preponderance of coverage on “state-building”, “ideology” and “worldview”.

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# Voicing Politics: Linguistics and the Debility of Political Science

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**Abstract:** *Voicing Politics* claims that political attitudes vary with the language that people speak. Experiments with random assignment of bilinguals to answer survey questionnaires presented in either Estonian or Russian show that their answers do change when the language of the questionnaire is switched. First, relative to gendered Russian, genderless Estonian elicits more support for women’s rights. Second, relative to futured Russian, futureless Estonian elicits more willingness to invest now for future gain. Third, relative to dominant Estonian, minority Russian elicits more awareness of the “most nationalist” party in Estonian politics. But the first claim is inconsistent with the authors’ own evidence. The second claim is inconsistent with both Estonian and Russian’s joint use of linguistic aspect to express futurity. The third claim is invalidated by Russian’s lack of any translation for English “nationalist” that does not signal “anti-Russian,” to which Russian speakers will be more sensitive regardless of dominant or minority status. The experimental asymmetries reported by the authors are attributable, not to differences between the Estonian and Russian languages, but to unspoken context, on which the use of any language for communication must rely but which varies from one language to the next and for which survey research cannot control. Since no practicable survey questionnaire can control what context respondents choose to activate in interpreting a question and deciding how to respond, rather than identifying “beliefs” or “attitudes,” any survey research reveals unspecifiable variation in context. Since much of what purports to be known about politics has been inferred from inherently unreliable surveys, this implication of the errors in *Voicing Politics* is debilitating enough. But since the institutions that political science attempts to explain are uniformly consequences of language use, the uncritical endorsement of *Voicing Politics* by the discipline’s most prestigious American academic press, its board, editor and referees, prominent endorsers and multiple reviewers is evidence that the debility revealed by this study’s errors afflicts a broad sweep of the discipline extending far beyond survey research alone.

**Keywords:** *Voicing Politics*, survey questionnaires, Estonian and Russian languages, survey language context, political linguistics

“The languages people speak can affect what they think and how they think about the political world around them” (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 130). To substantiate this proposition, *Voicing Politics* advances three hypotheses. First, genderless languages induce their speakers to express more support for women’s political opportunities than do speakers of gendered languages. Second, “futureless” languages induce their speakers to express more support for paying costs today to secure gains tomorrow than do speakers of futured languages. Third, in every state, some language is “dominant” because used for politics; it may also be the language spoken by the majority of the state’s population. The authors categorize any languages not used for politics

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but spoken by inhabitants of the state as minority languages, even if spoken by the majority. A minority language induces its speakers to express more sensitivity to issues concerning relations between dominant and minority populations and to be quicker to recall political organizations advocating the supremacy of the dominant language and its speakers, while a dominant language induces its speakers to recall more information about politics in general.

The empirical test of each hypothesis is ingenious. The investigators isolate the effect of language by randomly assigning bilinguals to respond to a survey questionnaire presented in either of two languages. One author's background in Estonia motivates a search there for bilinguals proficient in both Estonian and Russian. Estonian is genderless, "futureless" by the authors' definition, and dominant in the sense of now being used for politics as well as being the first language of most Estonian citizens. Conversely, Russian is gendered and, by their definition, futured, and it is also the first language of a minority of Estonian citizens, although before independence Russian was used for politics. The investigators also examine the question of information recall by randomly assigning Americans bilingual in Spanish and English to recall information about politics in the United States. Finally, all their findings from random assignment of bilinguals are also tested for external validity. Their test begins by categorizing languages used in the World Values Survey as genderless or gendered, "futureless" or futured, and dominant or minority. The categorization predicts responses about women's rights, about investing now for future gains, and about favorability toward minority rights.

Here I examine whether the investigators' case is as watertight as they think. It is not. But my goal in examining the case is not to discredit their effort. *Voicing Politics* makes two substantial contributions. First, it demonstrates beyond question that switching between languages used in survey questionnaires can alter responses. It goes astray when it attributes variation in responses to grammatical features of a language, such as genderlessness or "futurelessness." That attribution is provably invalid. Second, it pioneers the introduction into survey research of the discipline of linguistics. Survey researchers reliant on language to pose their questions and to formulate the answers have rarely if ever consulted the theoretical or empirical literature in linguistics about how languages work. *Voicing Politics* begins to introduce some of that literature. Its authors' case is leaky not because they venture into linguistics but because they do not venture nearly far enough.

What linguistics teaches about variation in languages concerns not merely and not mainly grammar. Grammar does vary, but where it varies, some other feature of the language compensates for the variation. In this sense, there is the universal grammar that Noam Chomsky and his adherents have labored to define. Part of the compensatory mechanism universally used by languages, when their grammar does not specify everything that might be overt in the grammar of some other languages, is context. No language fully specifies all the information needed to formulate or to interpret the meaning of any utterance or text, but every language relegates some of that information to unstated context presupposed to be shared among speaker and audience, author and readership, or signer and viewership. What is relegated to unspoken context varies across languages. Not grammar, but neglect of differences in the context missing from questionnaires presented to and answered by bilinguals randomly assigned to use Estonian or Russian, accounts for the differences in their responses. No survey questionnaire can control for variation in the context that the respondent must generate to choose an answer. This incapacity is the debilitating quandary that the study of linguistics reveals for survey researchers and not only for them but for political scientists in general.

## Context as the Cause of Differences in Support for Women's Political Opportunities

Three propositions test agreement to expand women's political opportunities. Bilinguals randomly assigned to hear either Estonian or Russian declare in that language whether they agree with paternity leave for men, with appointment of a qualified woman to serve as minister of defense, and with increased recruitment of women to political office. Both individually and as a scale, all three propositions elicit more agreement when presented to bilinguals in Estonian than in Russian, and the differences are consistently large enough, relative to the variance, to reject attribution of the differences to random chance (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 130). That result is convincing, but the issue is whether to attribute the result to the contrast between the absence of grammatical gender from Estonian and its presence in Russian. Trying to bolster the case for grammatical gender as cause, the investigators revise one of their three propositions to test whether the absence of grammatical gender equates to neutrality between men and women rather than to a preference for women over men. Sentence (1) is the third proposition in their battery used to evaluate support for women's political opportunities; sentence (2) is the revised proposition used to test for neutrality between men and women.

- (1) "women should be recruited 'to top-level government positions'"
- (2) "parties should be required 'to reserve some space on their list of candidates for women, even if they have to exclude some men'"

Logically proposition (1) entails proposition (2): an increase in women's occupancy of offices at the "top level" necessarily excludes some men from those very offices. The only difference between the two propositions is the presence in the second of a reminder of the effects of the first proposition on opportunities for men that is absent from the first. The authors' Figure 2.3, copied here from their original, displays the effect of replacing proposition (1) with the explicit mention of its logical entailment in proposition (2).

In Figure 1, exposure to genderless Estonian *increases* support for women's political opportunities relative to gendered Russian, when both groups are presented with a translation of proposition (1), here labeled "Female political recruitment." But when the same choice is presented as proposition (2) with additional context, making explicit what is entailed but not mentioned in proposition (1), exposure to genderless Estonian *reduces* support for women's political opportunities relative to gendered Russian. Addition of context about the effect of political opportunities for women on men's opportunities predictably reduces support for women's opportunities among respondents exposed to both languages, but the additional context reduces support much more among respondents exposed to genderless Estonian—reducing it enough that they express less support than respondents exposed to gendered Russian. It is not grammatical gender that affects relative support for women's political opportunities, it is whether the effect of women's opportunities on men's opportunities is mentioned. Addition of context reverses the effect.

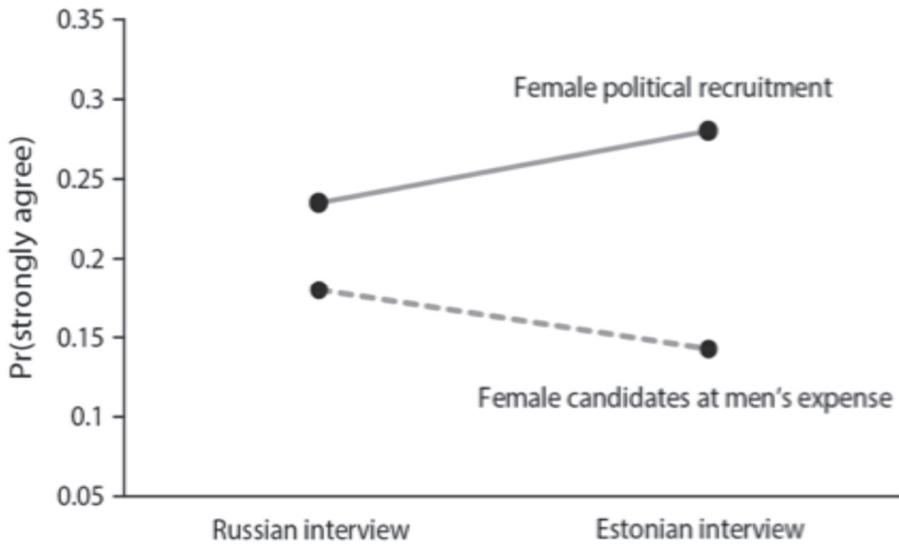


Figure 1: Effect of adding context on relative support for women's political opportunities among bilinguals interviewed in either Russian or Estonian (figure 2.3 from *Voicing Politics*)

Both other propositions used to measure support for women's political opportunities are like proposition (1) in omitting any mention of effects on men's prospects to hold office if paternity leave were expanded or if a woman were eligible for appointment as minister of defense. If more context were provided, those propositions might show the same effects as the replacement of proposition (1) with proposition (2).

## Context as the Cause of Differences over Investing Now to Realize Future Gains

While the authors' own evidence is inconsistent with their claims about the effect of grammatical gender on attitudes toward women's political opportunities, some evidentiary problems also arise for their claim that, relative to Russian, exposure to Estonian increases bilinguals' approval of costly investments now for gains to be realized in the future. Among the four items they use to observe temporal preferences, only three items produce differences between the responses of their two samples that are not attributable to random chance, and while responses on the fourth item vary in the predicted direction, the probability of obtaining responses in the other direction is just short of fifty-fifty (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 87). Nevertheless, evidence is far from the main problem with this claim about effects of differences in language. The main problem is instead the authors' description of Estonian as "futureless" and Russian as "futures." Because the authors argue that "futureless" languages make the future seem more similar and "closer" to today than "futures" languages that make the future seem farther away (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 88), this distinction between "futureless" and "futures" is their whole case for the causation of

the real differences that they do find when bilinguals are presented in Estonian or Russian with choices whether to agree to propositions about accepting costs today for future gain.

The authors correctly observe that Estonian verbs lack a future tense. But tense is only one option for languages to vary the temporal reference of a clause. Pérez and Tavits rely on one major specialist on future time reference who does use “futureless” to describe “Finnish and Estonian ... as somewhat extreme examples of languages with no systematic marking of future time reference,” but they overlook his parenthetical observation “this does not imply a total absence of devices that show future time reference” (Dahl 2000, 12). This specialist’s remark is odd, since ten years earlier the same specialist has contributed the opening chapter (Dahl 1990) to a collective volume that includes a chapter with a concise discussion of how future reference is marked in Finnish (Raible 1990, 203). Pérez and Tavits also actually cite, twice in passing (2022, 80, 82), one linguist who denies that tense distinguishes temporal reference in one language, West Greenlandic. But they fail to quote that linguist’s assertion that absence of tense makes absolutely no difference: this “truly tenseless” language “has an alternative system that conveys temporal information, even about the future, as precisely as the English tenses” (Bittner 2005, abstract). Many languages, including both Russian and Estonian, may also rely, either additionally or instead, on this alternative system, which linguists call “aspect.” Despite citing the study of West Greenlandic that focuses on aspect, the authors use the English word “aspect” on multiple occasions but only in its customary sense of “appearance” or “perspective,” often figurative. They *never* mention linguistic aspect—an omission that is perplexing, to say the least, if Tavits is proficient in Russian, where a notice of *vid* “aspect” accompanies every mention of any verb in any dictionary, and they never cite studies of aspect in Estonian.

Both Russian and Estonian use aspect to talk about the future. In Russian, aspect is encoded in verbs. Often said to occur in aspectual pairs, one “perfective” and one “imperfective,” with rare exceptions of verbal isolates, in the standard Russian language—the one taught in schools—verbs actually occur in clusters that vary in quantity from pairs of verbs to multiples. Perfectives are distinguished from imperfectives within each cluster by a variety of prefixes or suffixes, as well as by one case of suppletion. One linguist criticizes as inadequate a standard view of the difference between Russian perfectives and imperfectives: “In brief, the meaning of the perfective is a total situation bounded by a terminal end-point [n.b.: at either start or finish], whereas the imperfective makes no statement about this feature” (Dickey 2024, 11). This linguist warns against supposing that boundedness adequately characterizes the difference and proposes an improved understanding. He proposes that perfectivity is a figure-ground phenomenon in which Russian perfectives stand out against a background that hearers expect to be described with some corresponding imperfective. Since it involves speakers’ anticipation of hearers’ expectation, for this linguist perfectivity is a pragmatic rather than a linguistic or semantic phenomenon. For my purposes here, his proposal might be a more suitable way of understanding perfectivity, but his simpler, more familiar explanation also suffices.

Either way, only imperfectives can describe the present. Any action occurring in the present cannot have ended yet, nor can it be yet to begin. Similarly, since speech occurs in the present, speakers expect unmarked speech to concern the present. Markings, whether tense or aspect, move description out of the present, either into the past or the future. Consequently the tense markers of Russian imperfective and perfective verbs are identical relative to the phonology of the underlying infinitive. It is the aspect of a verb that keeps the sense of the clause in the present or displaces it into the future. (Both imperfectives and perfectives can form a past tense, normally marked with a suffix /l/, and imperfectives can also form a future by using the perfective of the copula as an auxiliary verb coupled with the verb’s infinitive).

Like Russian ones, Estonian verbs afford an inflection for past tense but lack any inflection for future tense (Lõo et al. 2022, 3). But Estonian clauses are just as able to differentiate future

from present as Russian clauses, and Estonian is just like Russian in using aspect to do the differentiation. Estonian differs only in doing it with a suffix on a noun rather than a marker on the verb. Examples are easy to find where only the nominal suffix varies:

- (3a) *Avan akent*. I am opening [a/the] window
- (3b) *Avan akna*. I will open [a/the] window (Unilang 2019-01-20, 20:40)
- (4a) *Ma ostan raamatut*. I am [engaged in] buying the book.
- (4b) *Ma ostan raamatu*. I will buy the book. (Unilang 2019-01-20, 22:11)
- (5a) *Siim ehitab maja ümber aeda*. Siim is building a fence around [his] house.
- (5b) *Siim ehitab maja ümber aia*. Siim will build a fence around [his] house. (Miljan 2008, 131)

The examples (3a-5a) express a present meaning by marking the noun that is the patient of a transitive verb's action ("window," "book," "fence") with a suffix containing a dental (/t/ or /d/)—respectively, *akent*, *raamatut*, *aeda*. This suffix marks a partitive case expressing partial, that is, incomplete, action. Where the meaning is future, as in (3b-5b), the suffix marking a partitive case is absent. The partitive case is not used in the future examples because these examples imply that the action on the noun is complete—total rather than partial (Sulkala 1996). Estonian would, in the abstract, express completed action with an accusative case, which the language is often said to have lost. But Estonian may also be described, not as having lost its accusative, but as lacking a morphologically distinct accusative, with genitive inflection substituting for the missing accusative singular, as in (3b-5b), and nominative inflection substituting for the missing accusative plural. These substitutions form a "non-autonomous accusative" (Norris 2018, 8) that I prefer to call "covert." Since action being discussed as taking place now cannot be complete yet, only the partitive can express the present. Since the partitive expresses the incompleteness of action in the present, its sense is unmarked imperfective, and the covert accusative is relegated to the perfective expressing the future, as in Russian. Like Russian speakers expecting an imperfective verb, Estonian speakers expect a partitive case suffix describing action as incomplete.

Hence, rather than contrasting as "futureless" versus "futures" *languages*, Estonian and Russian are in fact alike in their shared reliance on perfectivity to express futurity. Somebody might want to contrast Russian's marking of the verb with Estonian's marking of a noun, but even that contrast, though real, would mislead. In the "minimal program" that emerged as the final stage of Noam Chomsky's generative linguistics, the minimal clause is taken as a combination of a noun phrase (NP) plus a verb phrase (VP) (Zwart 1998). In (3a-b) above, the NP is a zero-form in an elliptical clause with a deleted first-person singular pronoun as its subject, and the VP is the combination of a verb (V) and a noun (N) acting as V's direct object. That is, the VP is a second combination of V and N subordinate to the first combination constituting the clause. The latter N is in turn another combination, now a noun stem combining with a suffix expressing case, in (3a-b) either partitive or covert accusative, now subordinate to the VP. Since either member of each combination at a superordinate level determines, "m-commands," processes of combination at any subordinate level, the first-level V m-commands the nominal suffix in the third-level NP consisting of N plus suffix. From the point of view of m-command at the superordinate level, whether an aspectual marker, denoting perfectivity or imperfectivity, appears as a clitic on V or on N at some subordinate level is a matter of complete indifference. Languages vary in this respect, and although the clitics on the noun encountered in Estonian may be less frequent than clitics on the verb, nominal clitics are widely distributed (Nordlinger and Sadler 2004).

A readily available dissertation written in English (Miljan 2008), now a book, analyzes grammatical case in Estonian. The dissertation does reveal one salient contrast between Russian

and Estonian. Even if Dickey rightly characterizes perfectivity in Russian as pragmatic rather than grammatical or semantic, still the Russian boundary between perfective and imperfective is more definite than the Estonian boundary. In Estonian, “case as a nominal category can indicate verb-related concepts such [as] aspect ... [but] aspectual contrast [is] not always expressed and a variety of other nominal or sentence level meanings are produced instead” (Miljan 2008, 198). Estonian’s greater reliance on context to distinguish perfectives from imperfectives motivates its speakers to jury-rig perfective markers to make perfectivity more definite. Estonian speakers accomplish this purpose in part by converting certain lexical items, particularly those with directional denotations, into verbal particles. Examples include *läbi* “through” and *ära* “off, away” (Metslang 2001).

The need for additional context to discriminate future readings from available present readings of Estonian covert accusatives raises the question whether omitted context, instead of non-existent or at most trivial grammatical difference, explains the contrast between responses from the bilinguals randomly selected for exposure to Russian and responses from the bilinguals randomly selected for exposure to Estonian when either group is asked about investing now for future gain. An omitted context springs immediately to mind. This context is an interaction of the experimental context with the external context from which the experimental groups are drawn.

Anyone conducting any experiment by randomly assigning human subjects to contrasting groups also conducts, often inadvertently and even unknowingly, an experiment belonging to the so-called “minimal-group” paradigm (Brown 2020; Otten 2016). “Remarkably, randomly assigning participants to minimal groups... produces discrimination in favor of in-group members” (Cikara and Van Bavel 2014, 248). Discrimination often takes the form of saying something favorable about in-group members but does not require also saying something derogatory about any out-group (Mummendey and Otten 1998). Apparently without noticing, the authors of *Voicing Politics* issue an explicit instruction that reinforces the discriminatory effects of random assignment of bilinguals into groups exposed to either Estonian or Russian. Regardless of the respondents’ first language, those exposed to a questionnaire in Estonian are instructed, “We are simply interested in your opinions as an Estonian speaker”; those exposed to a questionnaire in Russian are instructed, “We are simply interested in your opinions as a Russian speaker.”

Hence, the authors’ use of random assignment constructs two groups that will each discriminate in favor of their own members, who include persons outside each experimental group. Although research demonstrates that random assignment can counteract the discriminatory effects of familiar stereotypes (Cikara and Van Bavel 2014, 249-252), random assignment may also activate familiar stereotypes instead. It activates familiar stereotypes if the minimal groups constructed by random assignment coincide with opposing groups to which familiar stereotypes pertain. This coincidence is a deliberate feature of the two minimal groups that the authors of *Voicing Politics* construct. “Russian speakers” and “Estonian speakers” exist both within the experiment and outside it, and it is from this external context that the group members derive the stereotypes of Estonian and Russian speakers that generate the differences in survey responses about investing now for gain in the future—differences mistakenly attributed by the authors to variation between Russian and Estonian grammars that is, at the very most, trivial.

The activated stereotypes represent speakers of Russian as preferring enjoyment now and speakers of Estonian as preferring future gains. The opposing stereotypes are expressed in the 1859 Russian tragicomic novel *Oblomov*, which remains popular among people literate in Russian and at least known to those, including at least many of the bilinguals in the authors’ experiment, who have experienced formal instruction of Russian either as a first or a second language. The novel’s title character is a Russian landed aristocrat whose surname translates “Wreckage.” A principal subplot consists of interactions between Wreckage and a friend who is a Russified

German named Štol'c, Russification of German *stolz*, “proud.” In Sankt-Peterburg where the novel is set, Proud recurrently visits his friend Wreckage to recommend expensive investments in his friend’s decaying rural estate that will restore Wreckage’s deteriorating finances. Wreckage repeatedly expresses enthusiasm for Proud’s projects, only to lapse back into indolence when his friend departs.

For experimental groups in *Voicing Politics*, invocation of the opposite stereotypes represented by Wreckage and Proud allows members of either experimental group to flatter other speakers of either Russian or Estonian, both inside the experimental groups and in the broader communities that each experimental group is meant to represent. To anyone influenced by the northwest European heritage that colonialism has spread worldwide, attribution of indolence to Wreckage may sound derogatory rather than flattering, but Russian speakers’ reactions have been demonstrably far more complex (Brajuc 2018; Walker 2013; Andrews 1988). The third sentence of the novel, quoted in abbreviated form and translated as (6) below, defines Wreckage in a manner that reveals his positive appeal for Russians, or for that matter for anyone:

- (6) *Mysl' guljala vol'noj pticej po licu... potom sovsem propadala, and togda vo vsem lice teplilsja rovnyj svet bespečnosti* (Worth 1977, 94).

[A thought wandered like a loose bird across his face [affecting each feature in turn], then faded out altogether, and then his whole face warmed with the even light of carefreeness (slightly revised translation from Worth’s original)]

The stereotype of the carefree Russian is exactly what Pérez and Tavits (2022, 86) ask about in the prompts that they choose to measure temporal preference in their two bilingual samples. They expect more frequent agreement from their sample exposed to Russian, than from their sample exposed to Estonian, with “if things don’t get done on time, you don’t worry about it” and with “taking each day as it is rather than try to plan it out”—that is, carefreeness. They expect their sample exposed to Russian to disagree more often that they persist in “difficult, uninteresting tasks if they will help you get ahead” and about their ability “to resist temptations” when work is due.

Meanwhile, although Estonians are certainly not Germans, plentiful evidence indicates that they conceive themselves as more like Germans than they think Russians are. In the Imperial era that ended in 1917 and after independence was written about by the late linguist Mati Hint (Metslang 2001, 478), not coincidentally also elected to the Riigikogu, the territory that is now Estonia belonged to one of three Imperial provinces officially classified as “German-speaking.” Although inhabitants of the territory now Estonian overwhelmingly spoke Estonian at the time, the aristocratic minority ruling the territory continued to speak German. Estonians then ambitious to rise in social rank learned German and then rose by qualifying for jobs for which Russian state servitors considered Germans especially suitable (Leppik 2008). Estonians’ learning of German influenced the development of both forms of written Estonian that later combined into contemporary written Estonian, with the result that constructions modeled on German examples entered Estonian prose (Metslang 2001, 453-4; Grünthal 2007; Ehala 2006). Because some of these same constructions remain absent from spoken Estonian, any Estonian speaker learning to write Estonian encounters an opportunity to realize that the learner is acquiring expressions that the same learner will not say, and this common feature of languages is especially prominent in Estonian (Vihman and Walkden 2021). Any visitor to the old center of the Estonian capital Tallinn, who is also familiar with Holland or the German coast and with Russia, cannot help noticing immediately the architecture of a Hansa town, not a Russian city. Buildings in Tallinn can be found in the Imperial yellow, but the contrast is jarring. Like their Finnish neighbors to the north linked to them by linguistic similarity and shared historical experience of Russian oppression, many Estonians welcomed the German invaders in 1941 and some collaborated

with them. This past merits denunciation, but Estonians also deserve some degree of empathy when it is recollected that they had then endured almost two years of terror at the hands of Stalin's merciless NKVD and that the terror predictably resumed when Soviet forces reconquered the territory. The markers of greater similarity to Štol'c than to Oblomov are all over the circumstances that an observer would expect to contribute to Estonian identity, and they account for the haste with which Estonians gaining independence rushed to join the German-dominated European Union and the German-protecting North Atlantic Treaty Organization, both symbols of the West's challenge to Russia once personified in the fictional character of Štol'c, despite the requirement by both organizations for Estonians to sacrifice some of the sovereignty so recently regained at so much cost.

In short, despite the authors' claims, they have neither proposed nor tested any hypothesis about the effect of language on temporal preferences. To qualify as a hypothesis, a proposition would need to relate variation in some independent variable, here language, to variation in the dependent variable, here temporal preference. But the Russian and Estonian languages do not vary in their joint reliance on aspect to signal the difference between present and future, and how they use aspect differs only in the degree to which speakers of Estonian need more of the context that no survey questionnaire can provide. In fact, what the authors present as experimental results are dependent on the context of stereotypes of which both the bilinguals exposed to Russian and the bilinguals exposed to Estonian are certainly aware, regardless of whether they have read the novel *Oblomov*, and of which Tavits certainly knew, as a native Estonian speaker claiming proficiency in Russian, when she joined in designing the putative experiment. No prediction has been made other than the one assured by the context of stereotypes, and not having been made, it cannot have generated a null hypothesis for observed response to have disconfirmed. When reading the first few pages of the chapter about time preferences, despite not having read any passage from the novel for fifty-seven years, I still felt immediate astonishment: "Why are they asking about *Oblomov*?"

## Context and Responses to "Nationalist"

The authors' third claim concerns effects of hearing and speaking either a dominant or a minority language. They hypothesize that random assignment to use a dominant language should remind bilinguals of more information about politics in general and that random assignment to use a minority language should remind more bilinguals of political organizations that the authors call "nationalist" (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 103). In contrast to their first two claims, the authors report much more modest differences in responses pertinent to their third claim. In fact, to find any secure difference on a number of items in their questionnaire, they must conduct a meta-analysis of all their questions, pooling their results from two rounds of experiments with Mexican-American bilinguals. That meta-analysis does provide evidence that the bilingual samples interviewed in either the members' first language Spanish or their second language English do differ in their responses in the predicted direction, but Pérez and Tavits (2022, 122-4) explain their decision to examine pooled results by candor about the wide variation and resulting inability to assure non-randomness in responses to individual items included in their questionnaire.

The results of their experiment in Estonia on bilinguals' awareness of their country's most "nationalist" party shed some light on the uncertainties that the authors encounter when they try to ask the same question in different languages. Citing Pérez's own 2009 paper, the authors (2022, 145) affirm that "detecting real opinion differences assumes that people share the same

notion of what is being asked.” But the question is whether people *can* share the same notion presented in different languages.

The leitmotif of *Voicing Politics* is the authors’ claim (2022, 37) to “fuse” the concept of “belief sampling” (Zaller and Feldman 1992), influential in survey research, with the concept of “thinking for speaking” advanced by the linguist Dan I. Slobin. Explaining this concept, Slobin (2003, 157) repeats his 1987 formulation of “thinking for speaking” as “fitting one’s thoughts into available linguistic forms.” While repeatedly citing Slobin’s work, the authors never inform their readership that Slobin (2003), and especially (2005), questions whether translations *do* express the same notion in different languages. If they do not, people responding in different languages cannot “share the same notion of what is being asked,” and Pérez’s “real opinion differences” must be undetectable.

Slobin (2003) shows that translations between pairs of languages even with significant common background—Spanish and English or French and English—regularly either subtract or add information unspecified in the original language. Subtraction or addition occurs because the various linguistic forms available in each language relegate different information to context—that word again. While the evidence discussed in Slobin (2003) reveals only the distortion incumbent on translating between Spanish or French and English, Slobin (2005) concerns distortions in a wider variety of languages, and the problems are well known to be far more general, although no one knows enough languages to ascertain whether the problems necessarily distort every translation between every pair of the world’s approximately seven thousand living languages. The problems afflicting translation are explored in depth in a dissertation recently completed at the department of political science that Pérez has since joined—and from which I have since retired, although I very much regret not having been involved. This dissertation opens with: “I theorize translations as metaphorical relations which do not referentially link terms. Rather, I contend that translation creates an indeterminate relationship which allows words and images to appear where they are not supposed to” (Branstetter 2017, abstract).

Rather than confronting the issues of translation raised by Slobin’s additions and subtractions or Branstetter’s “indeterminate relationship” replacing referential linkage with metaphors, Pérez and Tavits content themselves with “a multi-step process” of translation. First Tavits translates the whole English questionnaire into Estonian. Then an Estonian bilingual translates the Estonian translation into Russian. Then Tavits reviews both the Russian and the Estonian versions and discusses the translation with the Estonian bilingual, with whom she agrees on modifications of the Russian as seem appropriate. Finally the Russian version is reviewed by a non-bilingual Russian for “naturalness.” Tavits is said to be “a native Estonian speaker who grew up in Estonia” who therefore has “the necessary language skills and cultural/historical knowledge to produce conceptually accurate translations” (Pérez and Tavits 2022, 180). If I read Slobin correctly, he disputes that any bilingual could have any such thing, on the grounds that for many translations “conceptual accuracy” is unattainable.

Although the translation procedure is certainly conscientious, it shows no sign of subjecting any passage in the questionnaire to the close analysis that Slobin and Branstetter each perform repeatedly on the texts either examines. Sometimes close analysis is superfluous. But sometimes it is vital and requires disproportionate attention. To translate part of one famous utterance in Russian made by Vladimir Putin that is almost always misrepresented in English, I once needed two pages of print to discuss the question of whether to translate three Russian words with four or with five English ones and which English ones to choose (Anderson 2021, 19-21). To decide whether close analysis has been needed, let us examine the question posed by Pérez and Tavits about Estonia’s “most nationalist” party.

Pérez and Tavits (2022, 180) know that this question does not translate readily: “the notion of ‘nationalism’ as we know it [in English] sounds very different in many Slavic languages.”

The attested sentence (6) presents an example of how different it sounds, or rather reads, in Russian.

(6) *Ja goržus' svojej naciej i svoim narodom.* (kremlin.ru...69335)

I take pride in my ? and in my ?.

Translation requires a question mark for two Russian words, either of which might be offered as a translation of English “nation” but neither of which perhaps should be. The rightmost, *narod* in the instrumental case m-commanded by the reflexive verb *goržus'* “pride myself,” was adapted in the nineteenth century from an earlier and continuing pejorative usage. First attested in northeastern Slavic as a designation for a relatively privileged portion of the population outside the ruling group, it then pejorated into a synonym for *čern'* “black,” designating the large overwhelming majority of the Russian population most subject to oppression. But when the French Revolution converted French *nation* into a label for a populace rising in arms to exercise citizenship, panicky Imperial officials sought a translation that would label the Russian populace with loyalty to the Emperor instead, thus denying it revolutionary agency. Those officials settled on *narod*, which became no longer solely pejorative but remained denied agency (Miller 2008). Communists who ultimately replaced Imperial officialdom after 1917 may have apotheosized *narod* but were no more willing to imbue it with independent agency than had been their Imperial predecessors.

Meanwhile the word to the left in (6), *nacija*, again represented in instrumental case, is the Russian orthography for a phonology that replaces the sibilant represented by ordinarily dental /t/ in French *nation* with a Russian affricate /c/, representing the sound written /ts/ in English adoptions of foreign words such as “tsetse,” “tsunami,” or “tsar.” Then the Russian phonology deletes the nasalization of the final French vowel and reduces that vowel to ə. But a spelling of French *nation* in Russian does not imbue *nacija* with the meaning of “nation” either.

Context reveals the contribution of both words to the interpretation of Russian clauses and the absence of any Russian equivalent to English “nation.” The occasion for (6) is a gathering of mothers whose sons have participated in Putin’s “special military operation” against Ukraine. The speaker is a mother from Chechnya, two of whose sons are said to have died in combat in Ukraine. On an earlier occasion Putin himself has said (7).

(7) *Ja goržus' tem, čto ja čast' ... mnogonacional'nogo naroda Rossii.* (kremlin.ru...67903)

I take pride that I am part ... of the many-*nacija*-[compound suffix] *narod*-[suffix] of Russia.

Here Putin has said that the *narod* of Russia, whatever that may be, is composed of many *nacii* (the plural of *nacija*), whatever those may be, and his statement duplicating the Chechen mother’s “I take pride” provides the context for her statement. She takes pride both in her belonging to part—the Chechen *nacija*—and in her belonging to the larger whole, the *narod* of transnational Russia. Notice what linguists call iconism: when she claims two attributes as her own, she places the mention of the one more specific to her (her Chechen *nacija*) closer in the clause to her self-reference *ja* and before her mention of the more general attribute. Neither *nacija* nor *narod* expresses the meaning of English “nation,” and there is no Russian term that does.

Because no Russian term equates to “nation,” the question about “most nationalist party” posed in Russian cannot mean what its original means in English, even though unfamiliarity with Estonian precludes even speculation about what the question posed in Estonian might mean. Nor do Pérez and Tavits reveal what translation they have chosen! They say only (2022, 180), “we translated ‘nationalist’ using the word, in each language, that is commonly used to describe the ideology of ... Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica,” a translation of the name at the time of the party whose status as the most nationalist in Estonia they describe as “uncontro-

versial.” Their statement explicitly withholds the information needed for inquiry into any possible distortion by translation. Of course, the authors’ reticence is presumably an innocent omission, but if so it betrays a surprising inattentiveness to the possibility that translation might distort, despite the abundant documentation of such distortion by Slobin whose concept they claim shapes their investigation.

While their Russian translation of “nationalist” is unmentioned, there is a very probable candidate. The party that was “Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica” became IRL by the date of *Voicing Politics*’ composition, and since 2018 it has called itself *Isamaa*. Its parliamentary website provides a Russian-language version. The party’s own Russian text repeatedly describes the party’s ideology with a Russian adjective formed from adoption of the French adjective *national* that is also the original of English “nationalist.” The Russian adoption begins with taking over the French adjective as a whole, again in an orthography */nacional’-/* representing Russian phonology. It then treats the adopted adjective as if it were a Slavic noun and complies with the requirement of Russian morphosyntax for a terminal eligible for adjectival inflection by adding a Russian adjectival suffix */-nyj/*. This process of adoption produces Russian *nacional’nyj*. *Isamaa*’s terse Russian website ([riigikogu.ee/ru](http://riigikogu.ee/ru)) uses *nacional’nyj* four times to describe the party’s ideology, once in hyphenation with a preceding *konservativno*. Since Pérez and Tavits (2022, 181) report that the party now known as *Isamaa* “defines itself by a nationalist-conservative worldview” that appears to translate, in transposition, the *konservativno-nacional’nyj* found on *Isamaa*’s Russian website, it seems very likely that they translate “nationalist” with *nacional’nyj*.

If *nacional’nyj* is Pérez and Tavits’s translation of “nationalist,” then their translation has transformed beyond recognition the question they have tried to ask. It has become a radically different question presented to their sample of bilinguals randomly assigned to exposure to Russian. Whereas English “nationalist” occurs in positive, neutral, and ambivalent contexts, Russian *nacional’nyj* is unambiguously threatening. Its ominous connotation derives from the asymmetry between the contexts in which *narod* and *nacija* occur. About four out of five Russian citizens are designated by the often substantivized adjective *russkij*, “Russian,” while the other fifth belong to smaller sub-populations, counted by Putin as comprising more than three hundred groups. When *russkij* is used as an adjective and its complement is one of the paired words in (6) above, its complement is invariably *narod*. While some of the larger sub-populations are sometimes elevated to *narod*, all of them are contrasted to *russkij narod* by eligibility for designation as *nacija* instead, although the many miniscule ones might be more likely to receive the even less aggrandizing *nacional’nost’*. Since tensions between the *russkij* supermajority and the many sub-populations are continuous, use of *nacional’nyj* as the adjectival form of *nacija* cannot avoid association of this adjective, which *Isamaa* uses to describe itself, with a threat to Russian speakers.

The ominousness of *naci-*, treated as the bare stem that Russia grammar requires for inflection of the form in which French *nation* has been adopted, is reinforced by its coincidence with the orthography of the Russian for German *Nazi*, remembered to this day as Russians’ mortal enemy. For citizens of Estonia whose first language is Russian, at least for that majority of Russian-speakers who would label themselves *russkij*, a *nacional’nij* party is one that upholds the wants of first-language Estonian speakers against those of Estonia’s Russian-speaking minority. Indeed that is exactly the image *Isamaa* visibly projects. Its *nacional’nyj* ideology is overtly threatening. Its Russian website posts the Russian for a sentence translated on its English website ([riigikogu.ee/en](http://riigikogu.ee/en)) as “Russian citizens must be deprived of the right to vote in Estonian elections.” Since Russia makes *russkie* living in territories formerly belonging to the Soviet Union eligible for Russian passports, at least under some circumstances, this vague wording might threaten all of Estonia’s Russian-speakers with loss of voting rights, and it certainly

threatens to attenuate Russian-speakers' electoral clout. The webpage also describes *Isamaa*'s priority as "fully Estonian-language education in primary and general education schools ... *Isamaa* ... stands for the preservation of free higher education in the Estonian language." Where the English reads "in primary," the Russian reads *v detskix sadax*, "in kindergartens." Yet Pérez and Tavits (2022, 182-184) describe "political tensions" prominent early in the decade following Estonia's independence as having been resolved. Former tensions supposedly have succumbed to the emergence of a consensus across both communities on "the need for successful integration of the Russian-speaking minority" with "members of both communities [seen] as being responsible for integration." One statement of this emerging consensus calls for "improved language skills," later described as "the need for Russian-language speakers to acquire working knowledge of Estonian." This goal might be interpreted as requiring Estonian-speakers to make "language instruction better available." But any such program of expecting Estonian speakers to help Russian speakers learn Estonian can only be profoundly discriminatory. Any such program rewards speakers of Estonian with paying jobs as teachers of Estonian while requiring intense, unremunerated effort from Russian-speaking adults to learn Estonian, at least temporarily interfering with their earnings. And Russian-speaking teachers *lose* their jobs as instruction in Estonian becomes universal. It may be that conditions in neighboring Russia have deteriorated to the point that Russian-speakers in Estonia have indeed agreed to this supposedly consensual project, but any consensus is still one-sided—indeed lop-sided.

If "nationalist" has been translated by *nacional'nyj*, as the authors imply, this translation has transformed the question heard by the bilinguals randomly assigned to exposure to Russian. The question is no longer about identifying the "most nationalist party" but instead about identifying "the most anti-Russian party." The answer to that question is not even related to whether Russian is a dominant or a minority language in Estonia, but since Pérez and Tavits do not discuss the Estonian version of that question, they provide no reason to think that their sample of bilinguals exposed to Estonian has even heard the same question. Meanwhile the inadvertent social-identity or self-categorization experiment, which they necessarily conduct by random assignment of bilinguals to hear either Estonian or Russian, provides a clear prediction of the observation documented in *Voicing Politics* that bilinguals exposed to Russian more frequently identify the anti-Russian party—especially since the effect of random assignment is reinforced by an explicit instruction to answer as a Russian speaker. Experiments show that when an outgroup is understood to be threatening to an ingroup, the ingroup exaggerates the proximity of the outgroup, relative to its estimate of the distance separating the ingroup from an unthreatening outgroup (Xiao, Wohl, and Van Bavel 2016). Since an anti-Russian party would not threaten, and indeed might appeal to, a sample hearing Estonian asked to identify the most anti-Russian party, the bilinguals hearing Russian would be more likely to identify the threatening party as closer. If something more threatening and thought to be closer attracts more attention, people become more likely to identify it than similar people neither threatened nor overestimating proximity.

The hypothesis that distortion by translation, not minority vs. dominant language, explains the discrepancy between responses from the samples hearing either Russian or Estonian gains additional credence from uncertainty about which language should be regarded as dominant among the bilingual Estonian citizens in either sample. Comparison to the Mexican-American Spanish-English bilinguals makes the point. Spanish has been the dominant language all across the southwest of the United States, where today numerous political units and persons bear Spanish names or names associated with peoples once conquered by Spanish invaders, but Spanish has not been dominant in living memory. For participants in the experimental samples of Mexican-Americans, the dominance of English is clear to all. Not so for the samples of Estonian-Russian bilinguals questioned in either of the languages they know. Until 1989, at least,

the language of politics in Estonia was a register of Russian. The man of Estonian ancestry who headed the ruling Estonian Communist Party did not even speak or read Estonian, having grown up in Russia, and his subordinate officials were required to renounce the use of Estonian for communication in the workplace, if they even knew it. While Estonian is now the sole official language and is therefore “dominant” by the definition in *Voicing Politics*, dominance of Russian even by that definition remains very much a living memory among the members of both samples, whether Estonian or Russian is their first language. Indeed, enduring fear of the dominance of Russian explains Estonia’s “most nationalist” party’s persistence, more than two decades after independence, in its demand that everyday activities in Estonian become possible to conduct everywhere throughout the territory of Estonia.

Pérez and Tavits (2022, 41) do provide some evidence pertaining to the possibility that their samples may be unclear about which language they consider dominant. The authors calculate a median age of 52 for all the bilinguals in their two samples. The study was conducted in 2014. A median respondent reporting an age of 52 in 2014 was born approximately 1962. The 62 percent whose first language is Estonian report having begun learning Russian at age 14, while the 38 percent whose first language is Russian report having begun learning Estonian at age 15. Thus half the respondents whose first language is Estonian began learning Russian by 1976, and half the respondents whose first language is Russian began learning Estonian by 1977. While Pérez and Tavits do not report the distribution around the median for either group, probably the great majority of both groups learned the other language when Russian was dominant and Estonian was what Pérez and Tavits define as a “minority language” even though spoken by a majority of people in Estonia.

*Voicing Politics* provides no evidence about whether respondents’ judgments of “dominance” perpetuate the conditions prevalent at the time when the respondents began acquiring the other language or whether those judgments have adjusted during the period between independence in 1991 and conduct of the study in 2014. Doubtless some and possibly all have adjusted over more than two decades of independence, but evaluations of languages’ relative status can be surprisingly stable over long periods of time. At the same time, *Voicing Politics* does provide one fact whose significance the authors do not seem to have noticed even though this fact pertains strongly to recognition of the “most nationalist” party as well as to all other responses from the two samples of Estonian/Russian bilinguals.

This fact is the Estonian-first bilinguals’ having begun learning Russian at age 14 while the Russian-first bilinguals began learning Estonian at age 15. In the Soviet Union, compulsory schooling began at age 7: for the median respondent, in 1969. It continued for ten years: for the median respondent, who completed secondary education, in 1979. Therefore the median respondent beginning to learn Russian at age 14 had three years of formal instruction in Russian, while the median respondent beginning to learn Estonian at age 15 had only two years. *An extra year constituting fifty percent more* formal instruction cannot help but leave a lasting gap in competence in a foreign language, especially as the surrounding sociopolitical and economic environment changed dramatically between 1989 and 1991, when the median respondent had not yet reached the age of 30.

This evidence of a gap in competence goes unattended because of an omission by the authors. For two political scientists relying entirely on contrasts between samples of bilinguals, Pérez and Tavits surprisingly make almost no use of an extensive literature on bilingualism, from which they cite only one book, and then only in an endnote (2022, 195) for its criticism of findings by an economist (!) on whom they do rely. Yet a relatively recent review of that literature (Heredia and Cieśllicka 2014) offers suggestive indications about how the greater competence of Estonian bilinguals responding in Russian contributes to the disparities reported by

Pérez and Tavits, not only with regard to nationalism but also to their questions about gender and futurity

A fundamental distinction in the literature about bilingualism contrasts compound to coordinate bilinguals. “Compound” describes those who begin acquiring two or more languages near in time in early childhood, while “coordinate” describes those who acquire a second language long enough after having acquired the first. Age 7 appears to be the dividing line—about 1969 for Pérez and Tavits’s median respondent. Since 97 percent of their bilinguals (2022, 44) report learning one language earlier, almost their whole sample, regardless of random assignment, apparently consists almost only of coordinate bilinguals.

In coordinate bilinguals, emotionality of response, measured by skin conductance, seems more intense in response to stimuli in the language acquired earlier than in the language acquired later. The evidence, which is somewhat mixed, concerns only negative emotions; positive feelings had not been tested by 2014. At the same time, increased competence cancels out other effects of variation in age of language acquisition. For responses to all of Pérez and Tavits’s questionnaires, the evidence of greater competence among their Estonian-first bilinguals exposed to Russian, relative to their Russian-first bilinguals exposed to Estonian, has clear implications for the very emotional issues about which Pérez and Tavits ask. For coordinate bilinguals who are less competent, expression of emotionality is impeded by the need to think about how to process questions in the second language and how to express responses. For those who are more competent, expression of emotionality is unimpeded. Since, or if, the Estonian-first bilinguals are similar to the Russian-first bilinguals in their ability to express emotionality when both are exposed to the stimulus of the questionnaire in Russian, their responses and those of the Russian-first bilinguals will be relatively homogeneous. By contrast, the impeding effect of less competent Russian-first bilinguals’ need to think about a questionnaire presented to them in Estonian will cause their responses to diverge by becoming less emotional than those of Estonian-first bilinguals exposed to their native language. Of course it is mathematically possible for a heterogeneous set of responses to exhibit the same mean as a homogeneous set, but the infinite set of equal means is smaller than the infinite set of unequal means. Consequently, the difference of means between bilingual samples, on which Pérez and Tavits rely, may simply be an effect of divergent competence—attributable to the past dominance of Russian!

## External Validation

A persuasive feature of *Voicing Politics* is its authors’ attentiveness to showing that their results from switching between Estonian and Russian also prevail beyond Estonia. To do so, they categorize more than a hundred languages used in the World Values Survey between gendered and genderless, futured and futureless, and dominant or minority by their definition. They then compare responses to questions administered during the World Values Survey across the languages placed in each category.

While this attempt to secure external validation is admirable and ingenious, the same uncertainties that plague their contrasts between Estonian and Russian complicate the reliability of the World Values Survey even more intensely. If careful examination reveals that their results from administering surveys in two languages turn out to depend on unnoticed variation in context that is unspecifiable in the context-sparse setting of a pair of survey questionnaires, comparisons among surveys in more than a hundred languages must make the problem of contextual variation utterly insuperable. If, on closer examination, two languages known to one author turn

out to be equally futured by the shared use of perfective aspect, what is the potential for miscategorization of more than one hundred languages almost all unknown to either author?

Even a language known to both authors, English, claimed to be strongly futured, presents complexities. Laura Michaelis (2021, 178) offers (8).

(8) I will now give a lecture.

As its compatibility with the present-time adverbial “now” exhibits, the supposed English future tense is actually a present tense. Moreover, even if (8) is discounted, supposedly futured English also can use an unambiguous present tense in a metaphor synonymous with the future tense allegedly signaled by the modal auxiliary “will,” as in (9).

(9) I am going to give the lecture tomorrow.

Of course (9) is ambiguous: it might be said in place of (10), (11), or even (12):

(10) I will give the lecture tomorrow.

(11) I am leaving now to give the lecture tomorrow.

(12) I am leaving tomorrow to give the lecture at some unspecified future date.

Once again, the choice depends on the context in which (10-12) occur, which is irreproducible in a survey questionnaire.

Meanwhile, supposedly unambiguously futured French has exactly the same present-tense metaphorical construction as English, in (13).

(13) *Je vais donner la conférence demain.*

And although French is categorized as a strongly futured language because of the future suffix in (14), a clause synonymous with (13), it turns out that this suffix is the use of an independent verb as a modal transformed into a bound clitic.

(14) *Je donnerai la conférence demain.*

The future suffix *-ai* is the first-person present tense of the verb *avoir* “to have.” In general the future tenses of the three singular persons and of the third-person plural of a French verb are formed from the corresponding present tense of *avoir*, while the first two plural persons are formed from this verb’s suffix indicating present tense of the second- or third-person plural: *avons*, *avez*. Note also that the English and French use of “going, *vais*,” although verbal, shares the directionality of the particles otherwise meaning “through” and “away” used in Estonian to resolve contextual ambiguity about perfectivity that marks futurity in that language. Questions of this kind preoccupy serious linguists and have received decades of attention (Bybee and Dahl 1989).

While the distinctions used to support the claim that languages outside Estonia conform to the pattern found by contrasting Estonian and Russian may be unsatisfactory, the authors’ use of a count of languages to measure their sample sizes exaggerates their confidence in the probability that the correlations used to confirm validity beyond Estonia are not simply products of random chance. Although Russian and Estonian belong to profoundly different language families (respectively, Indo-European and Finno-Ugric) whose grammars have diverged widely over time, even the very few examples provided here reveal what linguists call “areal” phenomena common to languages long spoken in geographic proximity. Estonian *akent*, *akna* in (3) above are plainly different case inflections of an adoption, modified for Estonian orthography, of Russian *okno*, “window,” a variant on Slavic *oko*, “eye” (Černyx 1993 I, 594.) Estonian *avan* looks suspiciously like German *öffnen* “open,” although whether the Estonian is an adoption is beyond my knowledge. Common reliance on perfectivity instead of tense to express futurity also links

Russian to Estonian, and common use of present tense to describe future events links both to German. The emergence of a “partitive genitive” peculiar to Russian (entirely unrelated to the Latin labeled with the same name) evidently emulates the Finnic partitive. The Russian partitive genitive also resembles Estonian in another respect: just as Estonian sometimes adapts its genitive inflection to mark its covert accusative, Russian sometimes marks its partitive genitive by adapting the dative inflection of the same noun. Indeed, a little search uncovers a so-called Circum-Baltic language area, about which there is a two-volume published study (Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001). One feature of this area accounts for another topic misattributed by Pérez and Tavits to language difference: the resemblance between the gendered third-person singular pronouns in Indo-European Swedish *han* and *hon* and the genderless third-person singular pronoun in Finno-Ugric Finnish *hän*, as well as the adoption of the latter, in the form *hen*, as an officially prescribed genderless pronoun for Swedish.

Areal interaction among languages complicates the calculation of whether random chance can actually be rejected as the cause of correlations between language types and survey responses reported by Pérez and Tavits for validation of their findings beyond Estonia. Many of the languages listed by Pérez and Tavits are well known to share common characteristics. Their sample of languages includes several from Bantu, about which it has been written: “the Bantu languages ... act much more like a dialect continuum than as discrete and impermeable languages” distinguished only by “almost willful selective adoption of new features” (Schadeburg 2003, 158). Others are Indonesian, all in contact through Malay, or East Asian, all reshaped by heavy intrusion of the argot, itself changing over time, used by pre-modern Chinese officials to pronounce the characters that the officials were chosen for their ability to paint and that were adopted to paint nearby languages. Because rejection of random chance depends not on the number of cases but on that number’s square root, the likelihood of rejection decreases much faster than the number of cases. Since Pérez and Tavits base their rejections of random chance on a count of languages rather than the many fewer language areas, skepticism is warranted about the persuasiveness of their external validation of their findings and correspondingly about the findings themselves.

## Discussion

*Voicing Politics* is a product of the American academic publisher with the most prestige in political science, Princeton University Press. Its jacket is adorned with praise from distinguished scholars: Nicholas Valentino, Amaney Jamal, Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, Ewa Golebiowska. Valentino is professor at Michigan and past president of the International Society for Political Psychology, as well as holder of a UCLA doctorate. Jamal is Dean of the School of Public and Internal Affairs at Princeton. Mo may not yet have attained her full professorship at Berkeley, but the length and quality of her list of refereed publications leave no doubt that it impends. Golebiowska is a specialist on gender and ethnicity in Eastern Europe. A committee of the two previous winners has awarded the Lane Prize for 2023 from the American Political Science Association for the best book of the preceding year in political psychology. In rapid succession, reviewers for three separate journals have agreed that the book convincingly demonstrates its thesis (Bronnikov 2023; Carlos 2023; Gross 2023). Even George Marcus (2024) calls it a “very lucid account” in a review essay, although then mildly expressing one cautionary reservation that deserves notice: “experimental conditions and responding to surveys are quite unlike the mundane environments that people normally navigate as they move into various circumstances.”

The reviewer for *Perspectives on Politics* calls *Voicing Politics* “an exemplar of rigorous, yet accessible, social-scientific writing ... a master class in the iterative process of multimethod research” (Gross 2024, 1491). A master class in rigorous multimethod social science the book is indeed—yet one drawing three main conclusions, all three demonstrably erroneous. The first conclusion that a genderless language discourages sexism is contradicted by the researchers’ own evidence. The second conclusion that a futureless language encourages investing now for gains later is contradicted by proof that the language in question is no more futureless than the alternative. The third conclusion holds that relative to a dominant language, a minority language encourages awareness of a “nationalist” party. This conclusion is invalidated by the authors’ inability even to ask about “nationalist” in the supposed minority language. These are not matters of judgment or disagreement. The authors’ three main claims are all factually false. A master class in achieving thoroughgoing error is a jarring metaphor.

This jarring disjunction should alarm the authors, Princeton’s board, its editor, its referees, the book’s prominent endorsers, the prize committee, and the reviewers. But the alarms to them matter far less than the alarm bells ringing for everyone trying to do political science. Unquestionably, all three reviewers are correct. *Voicing Politics* is excellent political science, written by two outstanding scholars and endorsed by other outstanding scholars. But excellence in political science has lured all of them straight down a rabbit hole into a trap of error. The snare presented by excellence presents two implications, one for survey research and the other for the discipline more generally.

Survey research is by no means the discipline’s only epistemology and may not even be its main one, but it is the source of much of what passes for knowledge in political science. Yet the solecisms committed by the authors of *Voicing Politics* are all attributable to the same omission. The authors err because they substitute spurious claims about language for the absent context that their respondents need to interpret the questionnaire. Context is equally missing from every survey questionnaire, and its absence is equally distorting not only to the respondents but also to the survey researchers trying to conceptualize what responses represent. Here is the difference that Marcus is noticing when he mentions that survey response is “quite unlike the mundane environments that people normally navigate.” Those mundane environments supply context that survey questionnaires cannot.

Just how much context matters, linguistics makes clear. Chomsky has said, “Language is not properly regarded as a system of communication. It is a system for expressing thought, something quite different” (Wiley 2014, 1). Communication requires more than language. Cited in passing by the authors (2022, 55), Gerald Echterhoff writes a passage unnoticed by them. Echterhoff explains the difference, stressed by Chomsky by placement at the end of his sentence, between expressing thought and communicating: “From the perspective of pragmatics, language is a motivated, *context-dependent* means of interpersonal communication” (Echterhoff 2008, 271; emphasis added). Olga Yokoyama (1988) turns this interaction between linguistics and pragmatics, between utterance and context, into a Transactional Discourse Model in which interlocutors mutually modify utterances until they converge toward approximating a shared awareness of the context that each is using to interpret their own and the others’ utterances. In Yokoyama’s model, communication requires three stages. No survey questionnaire completes more than the first. This impoverishment of context massively distorts the survey researchers’ conception of the response.

The distortion is on display in the very concept of “belief sampling” that Pérez and Tavits try to “fuse” with Slobin’s “thinking for speaking”—itself a mirror image reversing Chomsky’s “expressing thought.” Belief sampling originates as a “theory of the survey response.” Its origination is motivated by two observations. First is response instability. Surveyed on a new occasion about the same question, about half of survey respondents choose the opposite answer.

Second is a variety of response effects. These arise because seemingly minor changes in wording—as in Pérez and Tavits’s Figure 2.3—dramatically alter responses. Changing the occasion of administration of a survey questionnaire and changing the wording of its questions seem to have the same effects on responses. John Zaller and Stanley Feldman (1992) try to rescue survey research by attributing response instability and response effects to the presence in each individual mind of multiple, contending beliefs about the same topic, with both occasion and wording capable of altering the relative salience of those contending beliefs. But what is the evidence for the presence of any belief—or attitude, or latent predisposition, or whatever term one likes—other than the survey response itself? Zaller and Feldman (1992, 582) even criticize “most political scientists” for their failure to appreciate that “people do not merely *reveal* preexisting attitudes on surveys; to some considerable extent, people are using the questionnaire to decide what their ‘attitudes’ are.”

Yokoyama’s Transactional Discourse Model tells what is happening. To answer any question, first the respondent must interpret it. Interpretation requires the respondent to think of a context. Occasions change answers from some respondents because those respondents think of a different context the next time they choose an answer, while other respondents’ answers do not change because they think again about a sufficiently similar context. Revised wording can also change many answers, as in Figure 2.3, because it makes explicit a context that may or may not coincide with the context that respondents think about on their own when presented with the unrevised wording. Chomsky’s generative linguistics is more than a theory of language. It is simultaneously a theory of mind, or at least of that part of the mind that activates when presented with an internal or external linguistic stimulus, including any survey questionnaire. In Chomsky’s theory the mind is not the warehouse or grab bag of mutually inconsistent beliefs postulated by “belief sampling.”

Indeed the mind is not a warehouse or storehouse at all. Instead it is a capacity for organizing motor movement. Some of that motor movement consists of speaking, writing or signing that generates utterances, often never reaching audibility in pronunciation or visibility in script or gesture. Some of these utterances, English speakers call “beliefs” or “attitudes,” without ever realizing that any utterance is patterned motor movement reacting to particular context. If, as Zaller and Feldman (1992) repeatedly question, the search for “true attitudes” is in vain because it is really a search for the context that no practicable survey questionnaire leaves room to specify, what purpose is survey research serving at all, other than reminding us of the importance of context that it cannot discover? What do Zaller and Feldman add when they propose that people answer questions by inattentively making a stochastic choice among contradictory attitudes retained in their own memories, if respondents’ only “attitudes” are utterances emerging in audible, visual or tactile interactions with stimuli presented by interlocutors, some of them administering surveys that are infrequent in any respondent’s experience? Of course, people use “beliefs” to describe what their minds do, but they make that description only in the course of conversations, possibly in internal conversations with themselves stimulated by and mimicking their conversations with others. It is the course of the conversation that creates the so-called belief.

This challenge addresses not only the vanity of survey method. A significant political scientist notices two dimensions of disagreement shaping “the classic distinctions in social thought”: deliberative and ontological (Lichbach 1994, 10). Along the deliberative dimension, thinkers have differed over whether agents “may or may not discuss” how to organize themselves. Along the ontological dimension thinkers have differed over whether “one might believe that the entities ... are individuals only, or one might believe that institutions, structures, and/or relationships preexist individuals and that they help impose order.” Regardless whether this proposal does or does not afford a convenient taxonomy for the wide variety of ideas in social

thought, the very proposal itself must also impeach social thought for sheerest mystification. Whether individual and collective human agents do or do not exercise the capacity for discussion that distinguishes humans from other organisms can scarcely require further consideration. Whether agents' discussions can occur without physical discussants "preexisting" the results of discussion, and whether institutions produced by discussion are real entities, even if not physical, and whether these real entities shape all subsequent discussions, can all again scarcely be eligible for controversy. If the familiar declaration "We the People ... do ordain and establish" suffices to bring the United States into existence, or at least to reshape the then existing United States into a new entity, is that not discussion among physical humans bringing a real institutional entity into existence that shapes all subsequent discussion? And if political science is necessarily the study of discussion that creates or dissolves entities, then no wonder the failure even to study linguistics and pragmatics produces cumulative confusion. *Voicing Politics* makes a signal contribution by advancing political science into the terrain of linguistics. It fails by not advancing anywhere near far enough.

This review article is a revision of an early draft presented to the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Political Psychology, Santiago, Chile, July 4, 2024.

The authors Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits of *Voicing Politics* have been invited to respond to this article in a coming issue of *Politics, Culture and Socialization*.

Book title: *Voicing Politics: How Language Shapes Public Opinion. Why your political beliefs are influenced by the language you speak.* Series: Princeton Studies in Political Behavior. Princeton University Press. Book by Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits. Published (US): Oct 25, 2022 Published (UK): Nov 15, 2022. ISBN-13 978-0691215136. Pages: 232.

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# Book Reviews

**Title:** Alone Together: Why We Expect MORE From Technology and LESS From Each Other. By Sherry Turkle (2017) Third Edition. New York: Basic Books  
**Title:** Tools and Weapons: The Promise and the Perils of the Digital Age. By Brad Smith and Carol Browne (2019). New York: Penguin Press

*Review by: Daniel B. German*

Both books are about the age of computer technology and its effects on humanity. However, they come from different directions. The Alone Together is written by a clinical psychologist focusing on individual and interpersonal observations. Tools and Weapons is authored by the President of Microsoft and discusses the macro world of computer's information and communication gift to mankind, but points to the challenges of dealing with privacy/civil liberties and the dissemination of misinformation/cyber-attacks. The books compliment each other since Alone Together deals with computer/cell phone effects at the micro personal level while Tools and Perils addresses how technology firms and governments must deal with looming problems nationally and internationally.

In Alone Together the author sums up the dramatic change in interpersonal communication by asking her daughter who is going to Dublin, Ireland for a year of college to send her a letter. The daughter seems to think that this is a novel idea for she mainly text messages. She responds: "Maybe if I could find a subject." This is a reference to the compose an email process where it directs you to put a to whom email address, a subject and finally a message. The daughter finally says "So send me a letter." The mother responds by dedicating her book "TO REBECCA." "My letter to you, with love." (Turkle, 2017, p.305 and book dedication) The younger generation gets robots for pets/ friends, texts on mobile phones and uses personal computers for information and communications. In person relationships become awkward and often solitude, i.e., being alone with digital devices is preferred. Seeking solitude can be real problem. Solitude is a state of being alone and in the case of this book to be together with technological entities.

The author noted that her daughter at a young age turned to a robot Tamagotchi for emotional attachment and even love. (Ibid. pp.30-32) The Tamagotchi Uni is a handheld digital pet created in Japan. Computers are considered to be intelligent, but Tamagotchi is emotional to the user. Turkle refers to Zhu Zhu pet hamsters, "...the 'it' toy of the 2009-2010 holiday season, are presented as 'better' than any real pet could be." (Ibid., p.1) The point here is that we are turning to robots instead of actual animals again resorting to machines.

In a recent book Johathon Haidt discusses how an overreliance on digital devices has resulted in the mental illnesses particularly of depression and anxiety among Generation Z (Zoom-

ers). (*The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, 2024. New York: Penguin Random House)

The concern is that whereas children used to play and interact with real children, today many spend their day with digital devices. A recent Surgeon General's release indicates that in our society the loneliness of non-human interaction has contributed to an increase in a number of health problems. These include heart disease, strokes, dementia (elderly), premature death, depression, anxiety, suicidality, infectious disease and reduced immune system. (U.S. Surgeon General. *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*)

When it comes to politics Turkle refers to being raised in Brooklyn by her grandparents who moved there from Eastern Europe. The mail was delivered by the U.S. Postal Service and arrived in total privacy. That is, in Eastern Europe the government looked at everything including one's mail. This is democracy American style. She wonders at one point whether we can have a democracy without privacy. Computer reliance translates into the politics of Michel Foucault who cites government by a panopticon (a Greek word "all seeing"). With the use of a smartphone or computer the need for government surveillance becomes unnecessary because anyone can know what you are doing online. "The panopticon serves as a metaphor for how, in the modern state, every citizen becomes his or her own policeman. Force becomes unnecessary because the state becomes its own obedient citizenry." (Turkle, p. 262)

One answer to young peoples over reliance on digital devices is to improve and build ways for them to get 1) exercise and 2) connectedness with actual human beings. Communities need to enhance parks with walkways, playgrounds for children, playing fields for baseball/softball, soccer, and tracks for children beginning at age three. Swimming pools and outdoor adventure facilities for boating, hiking, bicycling, and running need to be upgraded or built anew. Parents need to be fully supportive of and involved in these kinds of physical activities.

The trajectory of mankind seems to portray a history of individuation. Humans banded together into tribes for survival. Then, they began to explore moving away from the tribe relatives followed creating an extended family. With the industrial revolution the nuclear family emerged - parents and children who could survive financially on their own living with state services such as law and order and national defense. With the digital age mankind has an individual financial structure which crosses sexual lines enabling a single person to work and communicate with others via digital devices. We should attempt to maintain civilization by continuing to interact with each other in person, dropping the digital device and getting exercise.

The second book comes at us with a wholly different set of problems emanating from the digital age. *Tools and Weapons: The Promise And The Peril Of The Digital Age* is written by the chief lawyer and President of Microsoft along with Carol Ann Browne. Microsoft is the third most valued company in the world. (CompaniesMarketCap.Com. 2020) It should be noted that the main author, Brad Smith, is hardly likely to denigrate Microsoft. In fact, large technology companies only receive a 26% Great Deal/Quite a lot of confidence in a recent Gallup survey of the American public. (Lydia Saad. 2023) Questions always arise as to whether these companies value profit over public service, individual privacy and if they are simply too large and powerful to regulate. However, Smith and Browne raise some very appropriate questions about government's use of digital technology and citizen privacy in a democracy and the use of disinformation by non-democratic states. As a lawyer with Microsoft, Smith has a bird's eye view of looming problems in the tech world.

With regard to tools Smith and Browne note that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the ability to "... understand human speech, recognize images, translate languages, and reach new conclusions based on an ability to discern patterns." (Smith and Browne, p.224) But this tool, they note, can be used to surveil citizens. Digital cameras are every where and AI can enter a facial image and track people's movements.

They state that a court order issued by a judge should be an absolute necessity to use this tool. To illustrate how government can misuse its power the German Democratic Government's (GDR - also East Germany) Stasi (State Security Service) is used as an example (Ibid., pp39-40) The Stasi "...employed almost ninety thousand operatives backed by a secret network of more than six hundred thousand 'citizen watchdogs' who spied on their coworkers, neighbors and own family." (Ibid., p.40) This reviewer visited East and West German before and after German reunification. In a village just outside the Berliner Ring only the bus driver and the Stasi agent were allowed to have a telephone. People were kept in the dark. Not only were there numerous Stasi agents an estimated 400,000 Soviet Union troops were stationed in East Germany in part to assure order was kept. Furthermore, a wall was built to keep people from going West. Walls are usually built to keep people OUT. The Great Wall of China was built to keep Mongol armies out (it was finally breached). The GDR was designed to keep citizens IN. The East German economy was so stagnant that the government did not want its citizens to see the ultra-modernized West Germany. Innovation was so stifled in the GDR that its mass-produced Trabant two-stroke engine with two cylinders which could run on lead gas and belched black smoke was a joke. The government did not want its people to go to West Germany and see BMW, Mercedes Benz, and Audi powerful, luxury automobiles.

Regarding a second major issue with digital communication, it may be used by rogue states to spread disinformation. Russia is a major player in disseminating disinformation. The authors indicate that: "In 2016, the Russians had weaponized email to harvest and leak stolen communications, publicly embarrassing the leaders of Hilary Clinton's campaign [for President] and the Democratic National Committee with its content." (Ibid. p. 81) The Russians also went after Emmanuel Macron: "In 2017 they [the Russians] took their scheme one step further in France, leaking a combination of genuine and falsified emails attributed to Emmanuel Macron's presidential campaign" (Ibid. p.81). The Russians are still at it. Microsoft has set up a Microsoft Threat Analysis Center (MTAC) to track disinformation and communicate the findings with our government, media and citizens. MTAC indicates that Russia is attempting to infuse into the 2024 United States (US) Presidential race a portrait of Volodymyr Zelensky as corrupt. (Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, 2024) The Russians are also trying to undermine Emmanuel Macron's support for the war in the Ukraine by claiming French mercenaries were involved whereas the French Army says this is fake information. (The Economist, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, p. 43)

The final words of Smith and Browne are: "Technology innovation is not going to slow down. The work to manage it needs to speed up." (Smith and Browne, P.304). Microsoft has set up MTAC. Disinformation via AI is going to be a future risk for the user. A suggestion is not to believe anything you hear or read for the first time. Let the dust settle and get corroboration from authoritative sources.

Both books reveal that technology is the wave of the future, But, at the individual and the nation and international levels challenges loom very large on the horizon. There is no international organization to correct disinformation. The United Nation's International Court of Justice located in the Hague is not adhered to by the US. No international body can dictate laws for superpowers.

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Anna Krämling

## **Tyranny of the Majority?**

Implications of Direct  
Democracy for Oppressed  
Groups in Europe

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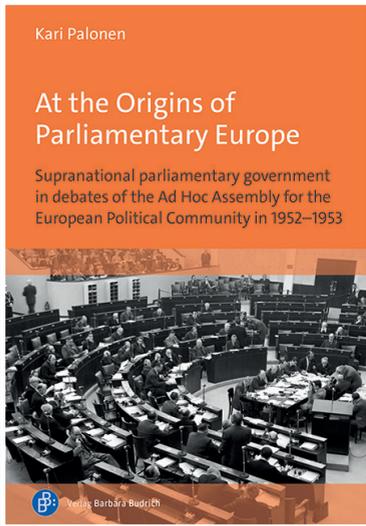
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