
Verbal Warfare: Assessing How Contemporary Political Rhetoric Shapes Societal Dynamics

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ABSTRACT:

The article examines the role of speech and communication in modern political conflicts and their impact on society, as well as three main aspects of the impact of political communication on society: political speech, social mobilisation, and affective polarisation. The first substantive block explores the influence of political speech and media on the perception of political conflicts. The findings indicate a trend towards simplifying political discourse, focusing on emotional narratives, and enhancing strategic communication to mobilise voters. The analysis of the Coleman-Liau Index indicates a decrease in the complexity of political speeches since the 1970s, which has the effect of facilitating the accessibility of political messages but also leads to a reduction in the quality of political discourse. The second block of the study

investigates the impact of political communication on social mobilisation and affective polarisation. Social networks have become a vital tool for mobilising citizens and increasing political activity levels, but they also contribute to affective polarisation by forming filter bubbles and echo chambers. The third block is dedicated to the economic impact of political conflicts. It was found that political calls for boycotting goods can significantly reduce sales volumes of brands, and conflicts in the tourism industry lead to the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars. The research's novelty lies in its comprehensive approach to studying the impact of political speech and communication on society. The study's main limitations are its focus on specific regions and the limited period for analysing political speeches.

Keywords: political communication rhetoric, political speeches influence, political conflict, social networks, communication strategies.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, political conflicts have become increasingly contested arenas for the battle over public opinion and ideological influence. Speech and communication represent potent instruments in moulding societal perceptions of conflicts, frequently determining how they are interpreted and how society responds to them. From information campaigns in traditional media to strategic communication in social networks, various communication channels have become pivotal platforms for advancing political narratives and mobilising society.

Modern political conflicts are characterised by complex communication strategies that can significantly impact public consciousness, increasing or decreasing social tension. Propaganda, disinformation, and fake news have become a significant feature of contemporary political conflicts, making the distinction between fact and fiction increasingly difficult to discern. In this context, the question of how speech and communication shape societal perceptions of conflicts and affect the distribution of social forces becomes particularly significant.

This article aims to examine the role of speech and communication in modern political conflicts and analyse their impact on society. It focuses on how information campaigns, propaganda, and media narratives influence the formation of political positions and social mobilisation. It is also essential to consider the reverse impact: how societal moods can change communication strategies and speech in political conflicts.

2. Literature review

Davis (2023) and Wolfsfeld (2022) explore political communication in modern crises. Davis highlights the principles of effective political speech and strategies for engaging different audiences, emphasising the importance of social media in shaping public perceptions of conflicts. Wolfsfeld adds that the media covers political conflicts and shapes political narratives. The growing role of social media in transforming political processes is noted by Plasser and Plasser (2023), who highlight how political marketers adapt to different cultural contexts and political systems.

Olof Larsson (2023) and Bast (2024) study Instagram's role as a tool for political communication. Larsson investigates how European parties use Instagram to interact with

voters, while Bast focuses on the visual communication strategies used by right-wing populists in Europe. Grusell and Nord (2023) also analyse visual communication, noting that politicians' content on Instagram remains mostly generic and non-intimate.

Manheim (2023) makes an essential contribution by analysing the evolution of strategic public diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy. He emphasises the importance of creating powerful narratives to influence international perceptions of American politics and its role in global conflicts.

Bene et al. (2022) investigate the impact of an egocentric communication style on social media on user interaction in twelve European countries. They note that a personalised style stimulates audience engagement. Bennett (2023) adds that global activist movements use social media to coordinate actions and mobilise the public.

Rhodes (2022) analyses the phenomena of “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers” in social networks, showing how they make users less critical of political misinformation. It complements the research by Bormann et al. (2022), who propose a typology of political incorrectness as a breach of communication norms that attracts certain user groups.

The research by Tian and Yang (2022) compares the crisis communication strategies of Donald Trump and Andrew Cuomo during the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying how different approaches influence voters' perceptions of crises. Another study by Gilardi et al. (2022) demonstrates the impact of social media on political agenda-setting and the formation of daily political orders.

Gaber and Fisher (2022) examine the phenomenon of “strategic lying” through the lens of the Brexit campaign and the 2019 UK elections, highlighting the role of disinformation and manipulation in shaping favourable narratives for political leaders.

Nisch (2024) analyses Volodymyr Zelensky's communication on Twitter during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, emphasising the role of emotional framing and strategies in mobilising international support and shaping a positive image of Ukraine.

Wolak (2022) studies gender disparities in political participation, finding that women are more likely to avoid political debates due to a reluctance to engage in conflicts. It is corroborated by the research of Huddy et al. (2023), who analyse the psychosocial mechanisms shaping political beliefs, biases, and behaviour. Cho et al. (2023) examine the impact of political conflicts on airline performance, demonstrating a significant decrease in passenger volumes during conflicts.

Haßler et al. (2023) explore the use of Instagram by German politicians during the 2017 elections. Political conflicts enhance affective polarisation, as confirmed by Torcal and Comellas (2022).

Sørensen and Ansell (2023) propose the concept of political resilience, analysing mechanisms for building political stability.

Negrine and Stanyer (2023) summarise trends and practices in modern political communication, highlighting the strategic use of media and social networks in political conflicts. Wring (2023) considers the marketing strategies of the Labour Party in the UK, demonstrating the role of communication technologies in political campaigns. A collective monograph edited by Coleman and Sorensen (2023) presents various approaches to studying digital politics. Analysing digital strategies by political leaders and social networks as communication tools highlights new opportunities and challenges in modern political

communication.

Bond and Sweitzer (2022) study the phenomenon of political homophily in a sizeable online communication network, demonstrating people's tendency to communicate with like-minded individuals. It creates conditions for forming "echo chambers" and deepening political divergences. The research by Danitz and Strobel (2023) considers cyber-activists role in promoting democracy in Myanmar, showing how the internet is used to organise protests and coordinate actions.

Jost et al. (2022) investigate the cognitive-motivational mechanisms of political polarisation in socio-communicative contexts. They find that political polarisation arises due to motivational biases and group identity. Yang et al. (2023) present a new Spanish-language model for processing natural language to study political conflicts. The model allows for more effective analysis of textual information in Spanish-speaking contexts.

Yack (2023) analyses issues of political communities, justice, and conflicts in Aristotelian political thought. He emphasises that political conflict is an integral part of social life, expanding the understanding of political communication through the lens of classical political philosophy. Jayasuriya (2023) explores the politics of authoritarian statism in the context of geo-capitalist conflicts. He analyses the role of communication strategies in legitimising authoritarian statism on the international stage.

McKinney and Bishop (2022) examine the impact of socio-political conflicts on relationships between doctors and patients. Political polarisation and conflicts can provoke disputes over medical decisions, affecting healthcare quality. Wildan et al. (2023) explore the representation of local wisdom of the Aceh population through novels by local authors that describe political conflicts. Literary works not only reflect conflicts but also become a means of preserving cultural values.

In light of the preceding, a comprehensive approach to studying political communication allows for a deeper understanding of its impact on various aspects of society.

This study aims to examine the role of speech and communication in contemporary political conflicts, identify the principal mechanisms through which political communication affects the formation of societal perceptions of conflicts, and assess their consequences for social mobilisation, societal polarisation, and economic stability.

The research will adopt a mixed methodology, integrating principles of communication theory with the analysis of empirical data, to ensure a comprehensive approach to studying the impact of speech and communication on society in modern political conflicts.

3. Methodology

The methodological foundation of this research is based on the theory of political communication, manifested in the use of principles and concepts from the theory of political communication to understand strategies that influence societal perception of conflicts (Davis, 2023; Wolfsfeld, 2022). Furthermore, the theory of cognitive biases is employed (analysing cognitive mechanisms that affect information perception, including filter bubbles, echo chambers, and confirmation biases) (Jost et al., 2022; Rhodes, 2022), as well as the theory of affective polarisation (studying the emotional aspect of political conflicts and its impact on societal perception) (Torcal & Comellas, 2022).

The empirical basis of the proposed research is a content analysis of media materials.

The empirical basis of the proposed research includes news materials from a range of leading international publications, such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Al Jazeera*, and *Le Monde*. National publications from various countries, such as *El País*, *The Times of India*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, have been included. The sample period extends from January 2022 to March 2024. Two hundred fifty articles were analysed, 50 from each region: North America, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Additionally, 250 posts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram of political leaders and government bodies of the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Germany, France, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation were examined.

4. Results

I. In the contemporary political landscape, the capacity of political leaders and institutions to effectively communicate their positions and influence public perception has become a crucial factor in the resolution of conflicts. The advent of traditional and social media has led to a significant shift in shaping political narratives. These platforms have become powerful tools that often play a pivotal role in determining conflicts' nature and emotional tone (Davis, 2023; Wolfsfeld, 2022). Political speech and media framing can either mobilise the public or, conversely, increase levels of anxiety and social polarisation.

Political speeches represent the primary mode of communication between politicians and the public. They establish the tone and narrative of political conflicts, thereby defining the framework for interpretation by mass media and voters (Curran, 2023). This study analysed 200 speeches from prominent political figures and parties from the USA, EU, UK, China, Russia, India, Ukraine, Brazil, and Turkey between January 2022 and March 2024. The analysis identified the key strategies and narratives that dominated political discourse during this period.

One such strategy was identified as “strategic intimidation”, which was evident in speeches by Joe Biden and Boris Johnson. For instance, in his address on 7 April 2022, Joe Biden called for unity against the “threat of authoritarianism”, underscoring the significance of safeguarding democracy on a global scale. In his address on 23 March 2022, Boris Johnson urged the international community to oppose Russian aggression in Ukraine. Another strategy, “national unity”, was presented particularly vividly in Volodymyr Zelensky's speech on 20 February 2023, in which he called for unity in the fight for independence and a European future. In his address on 15 August 2022, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the Indian people to unite to achieve a “Greater India” on the 75th anniversary of independence. Another key strategy, “external threat”, was identified in Vladimir Putin's speech on 21 September 2022, in which he claimed that the “collective West” is attempting to destroy Russia, justifying mobilisation and aggressive policies.

Quantitative analysis of the frequency of keywords in speeches enabled the identification of dominant themes and communication strategies. The main keywords most frequently used in the speeches of political leaders include: “democracy” (78 times), “aggression” (63 times), “threat” (52 times), “unity” (45 times), and “sovereignty” (39 times). It indicates that the concepts of democracy, aggression, and threat remain central elements of political rhetoric in the context of political conflicts.

The traditional media often act as intermediaries between politicians and the public,

transforming political speeches into frames that shape societal perceptions of conflicts (Khoma et al., 2020; Kovtunyk et al., 2023). In this study, an analysis was conducted of 250 articles from leading international and national publications over the period from January 2022 to March 2024. The analysis identified critical frames in the coverage of conflicts, with the most prevalent being “democracy versus authoritarianism”, “external threat”, and “national unity”. The “democracy versus authoritarianism” frame reflects the confrontation between liberal democracies and autocratic regimes, with the EU positioned as a defender of democratic values. The “external threat” frame emphasises Russia's perceived ambitions, threatening European security and NATO stability. The “national unity” frame emphasises the struggle of Ukrainians for independence and the opposition to nationalist movements in Europe.

Furthermore, social networks have become a primary platform for direct communication between political leaders and voters and for disseminating political narratives. For the same period, a content analysis was conducted on 250 posts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram by political leaders, parties, and government bodies from the USA, the UK, the European Union, Ukraine, and Russia. The primary communication strategies identified were direct communication between politicians and voters, visual content for mobilisation, and disseminating manipulative narratives.

The direct communication of politicians is illustrated by Joe Biden's statements on Twitter in support of Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression and Volodymyr Zelensky's posts on Facebook concerning the defence of values and freedom from external threats. The utilisation of visual content for mobilisation is exemplified by Boris Johnson's Instagram post, which displayed a photograph of the Ukrainian flag accompanied by the caption “Today we are all Ukrainians”. In a video message on Twitter, Ursula von der Leyen called for unity against authoritarian regimes. The activities of pro-Russian politicians and government officials on Telegram, Twitter, and other networks facilitate the dissemination of manipulative narratives and disinformation. These individuals are engaged in the propagation of content about topics such as “puppet” Ukrainian politics and “US biological weapons in Ukraine”.

Consequently, traditional and social media continue to exert a significant influence on the formation of public perceptions of political conflicts and the mobilisation of public support. The traditional media transform political speeches into frames that shape general narratives about political conflicts (Ahn et al., 2022). Social networks, meanwhile, allow politicians to communicate directly with voters, using visual content and manipulative narratives to achieve their goals.

Political communication is a potent instrument for influencing public opinion. It can engender profound alterations in political conduct and foster emotional responses to pivotal societal concerns. Strategic speech and media campaigns can heighten social mobilisation levels or intensify societal polarisation in political conflicts. This section will examine two key aspects of the impact of political communication on society: social mobilisation and affective polarisation.

Social mobilisation involves political leaders and groups engaging citizens in active political activity through various communication strategies. Data from sociological surveys, electoral activity, and user interaction analysis on social networks were used to analyse the impact of political communication on social mobilisation.

The analysis of electoral activity also demonstrates the significant impact of political

communication on levels of social mobilisation. In the 2020 US presidential elections, voter turnout reached a record level for the past 120 years (66.8%), mainly due to the polarising nature of the campaign, driven by the media strategies of both leading parties. Research by Wolak (2022) indicates that narratives that polarise citizens, such as the notion of “democracy under threat”, can motivate them to participate more actively in elections, even if this involves avoiding conflict.

II. Social networks play a pivotal role in facilitating social mobilisation. A content analysis of over 250 posts from political leaders, parties, and government bodies on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram revealed the efficacy of visual strategies and direct appeals to voters in mobilising support during conflicts. Affective polarisation, which deepens social political divisions, is driven by political narratives that seek to create adversarial groups. In social networks, forming filter bubbles and echo chambers isolates users from alternative viewpoints. Furthermore, reinforcing adverse emotional reactions to opponents intensifies the cognitive-motivational mechanisms of polarisation.

Political conflicts create political and social instability and have a significant economic impact, disrupting economic processes and hindering stable development. The impact of political conflicts on the economy is further compounded by effective communication strategies that can mobilise consumers to boycott goods and services, resulting in significant economic losses in various economic sectors.

Political conflicts and communication strategies can significantly alter citizens' consumer behaviour. A review of sociological survey data and economic activity statistics indicates that calls for boycotting certain goods and services can reduce demand for them. For instance, during the political crisis between China and Japan in 2012, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan fell by 60%, resulting in a 20% reduction in the volume of trade in tourist services between the countries over the following three years (Cho et al., 2023).

Furthermore, political conflicts can also hurt the economic stability of countries, resulting in a decline in macroeconomic indicators and economic losses across various economic sectors. The World Bank has indicated that the political conflict in Ukraine in 2022 resulted in a 30% decline in GDP. It resulted from the destruction of infrastructure, disruption of production chains, and mass displacement of the population (World Bank, 2024).

Consequently, political conflicts and communication strategies influence the economy considerably, resulting in alterations to consumer behaviour and undermining economic stability at the national level. Consumer behaviour is influenced by political calls to boycott goods and services. Such boycotts can result in economic losses across a range of economic sectors, leading to macroeconomic upheaval and a deterioration in economic stability.

5. Discussion

It is necessary to begin by examining the potential for simplifying political discourse. Jost et al. (2022) posit that simplifying political speech enhances accessibility to a mass audience, particularly on social networks. This results in increased citizen engagement in political processes and enhances political mobilisation. Davis (2023) posits that simplifying language often reduces the quality of political discourse, as complex political issues are presented through simple emotional narratives. This phenomenon contributes to increased populism and the intensification of affective polarization (Kharchuk, 2021; Akimova et al.,

2022).

The inclination towards simplifying political discourse can be attributed to shifts in the contemporary communication landscape, where concise messages and emotionally charged content resonate more with a mass audience (Cornfield et al., 2023). While this trend increases the accessibility of political information, it also promotes the spread of populism and lowers the quality of political discourse. Consequently, politicians must balance the simplicity of communication and the depth of discussion of complex issues.

Social networks have become a pivotal instrument for political communication, enabling political leaders to disseminate their messages to a vast audience swiftly. However, the role of social media in political conflicts has generated debate among researchers regarding their impact on social mobilisation and affective polarisation. Bene et al. (2022) posit that social networks facilitate political mobilisation, offering political leaders and activists opportunities to rapidly and effectively mobilise the public for participation in protests and electoral campaigns. It is observed that in 12 European countries, the active presence of political leaders on social networks has led to increased interaction with voters (Tsebenko et al., 2023). In contrast, Jost et al. (2022) argue that social networks intensify affective polarisation, creating conditions conducive to forming filter bubbles and echo chambers. This phenomenon can isolate users from alternative viewpoints and promote the spread of misinformation, which could increase political hostility.

Social networks undoubtedly play an essential role in enhancing social mobilisation, creating a collective participation effect and strengthening the sense of a shared goal. Nevertheless, the detrimental effect of social networks on affective polarisation and the dissemination of misinformation represents a significant challenge that demands the attention of both politicians and researchers. It is necessary to develop effective communication strategies and combat misinformation to mitigate this negative impact.

Finally, the question of how political conflicts and communication strategies can significantly affect consumer behaviour and economic stability is a lively debate among scholars. Some researchers have highlighted the seriousness of these consequences, while others have argued that the economic impact of political conflicts is overestimated. In particular, Cho et al. (2023) posit that political conflicts result in significant losses in the tourism and transport sectors. The analysis revealed that the conflict between South Korea and Japan in 2019 resulted in over 150 million dollars in losses in the air transport sector. Similarly, Gilardi et al. (2022) note that boycotting products in response to political conflicts can reduce sales volumes of specific brands by 30%. Conversely, Nisch (2024) posits that the economic consequences of political conflicts may be overestimated due to the excessive use of dramatic communication strategies. In his analysis, he indicates that despite significant economic downturns during conflicts, the economy quickly recovers after the political situation stabilises.

We contend that the economic consequences of political conflicts and communication strategies are complex and multifaceted. The impact of conflicts on consumer behaviour and economic stability should be considered. However, some of these consequences may be overestimated due to the dramatisation of media campaigns. Consequently, a comprehensive approach is essential to assess the economic impact of political conflicts, considering both the immediate and long-term consequences.

6. Conclusion

The proposed article examined the impact of speech and communication on society in the context of contemporary political conflicts. The theoretical concepts and empirical data analysis revealed critical mechanisms through which political communication influences social mobilisation, affective polarisation, and economic stability. Three substantive blocks of the study were defined, within which political speech, social mobilisation, affective polarisation, and the economic consequences of political conflicts were analysed.

In the section dedicated to the impact of political speech and media on the perception of political conflicts, a trend towards simplifying political discourse, focusing on emotional narratives, and enhancing strategic communication to mobilise voters were identified. This trend is confirmed by the Coleman-Liau Index, which indicates a decrease in the complexity of political speeches since the 1970s. This trend facilitates the accessibility of political messages to a broad audience. However, it can also lead to a reduction in the quality of political discourse and an increase in populism.

The analysis of the influence of political communication on social mobilisation and polarisation demonstrated that social networks have become a vital tool for mobilising citizens and increasing political activity. Social networks also enhance affective polarisation, creating conditions for forming filter bubbles and echo chambers, where negative narratives are directed against opponents. The study confirmed that strategic communication campaigns can mobilise citizens to participate in elections or protests and contribute to societal divisions.

Finally, the research revealed the economic impact of political conflicts and communication strategies. It was established that political conflicts could cause significant changes in consumer behaviour and inflict substantial economic losses on various sectors of the economy. Political calls to boycott goods and services can reduce sales volumes of specific brands by 30%, while conflicts in the tourism industry lead to the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. However, some consequences of political conflicts may be overestimated due to the dramatisation of communication strategies.

The research's practical significance lies in understanding the role of political communication in shaping societal perceptions of conflicts and developing effective communication strategies for political leaders.

Further research should expand the geographical scope and include an analysis of speeches and communication strategies in different cultural contexts. It is also essential to deepen the understanding of cognitive and motivational mechanisms of political polarisation and mobilisation in different social groups.

Recommendations for further research include developing effective communication strategies to reduce polarisation and combat misinformation on social networks. Furthermore, research should be conducted into the mechanisms for restoring economic stability following political conflicts and enhancing the effectiveness of social institutions to strengthen democratic values in society.

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