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DONALD TRUMP AS A CENTERPIECE IN NEW NARRATIVES OF THE GUARDIAN'S OPINION ARTICLES (DECEMBER, 2024 – JANUARY, 2025)

Background. In 2025, the world's politics was marked with sweeping changes in domestic and international policies, caused by Donald Trump's rise to the presidency in the USA. The article approaches mass media as an influential actor capable of shaping public opinion of a politician and, therefore, impacting political processes.

Methods. The research employs Critical Discourse Analysis and cognitive narratology to explore ten opinion articles focused on Donald Trump and published in the British daily newspaper Guardian in December, 2024 – January, 2025.

Results. The research reveals that the columnists' principal means of characterization is labeling. Remarkably, the labels attached to Trump contain connotations of authoritarianism and autocracy (here belong such nominations as king, tsar, autocrat). In addition, nominations of his team members consistently imply their subordinate status in a hierarchy (e.g., lackey, henchman, lieutenant). Trump's allegedly autocratic mode of governance disagrees with generally accepted and widely proclaimed Western values such as democracy and freedom, that is why Trump is called a threat, a danger, a warrior. Furthermore, the sample contains a set of new coinages, derivatives from the president's name, which justifies assuming that Trump is currently the central figure in world politics who sets political and ideological trends: he promotes Trumpism, his supporters are Trumpists or Trumpians who may be more or less Trumpy, dissemination of his views is Trumpification and, finally, Trump-like activities are Trumpery.

The narratives emerging in the sample outline the US domestic and global processes. Within the US internal political discourse, Trump is an autocratic leader who interferes with justice at will and promotes right-wing views. This enables The Guardian's columnists to draw a parallel between Trump and fascism, which suggests the historical continuity of Trump's views and brings the narrative onto the global level. In the international arena, Trump is depicted as the initiator of an economic, ideological and cultural struggle between once-indisputable allies and partners, namely the United States, Great Britain and the European Union. Using precedential texts, the Guardian admits Europe's internal problems, yet points out the unity of European values, which may help to overcome the discord and reunite to fight the new enemy.

Conclusions. The research shows that the opinion articles use lexical means to lead their readers to a negative assessment of Trump as an opponent to the core European values, whereas precedential texts are employed to draw historical and even biblical parallels between the emerging world order and well-known events and stories of the past.

Keywords: mass media, political discourse, discourse analysis, narrative, label, precedential text.

Background

Research into political discourse tends to primarily focus on politicians and their activity (Atmawijaya, 2024; Hussein, Hazem & Al-Gailani, 2024; Zheng & Zang, 2023). Yet, mass media are also scrutinized as a political actor that purposively acts, i.e., uses "publications or broadcasts to try and change the beliefs of policy preferences of mass and/elite audiences" (Page, 1996, p. 20). Studying mass media from this perspective has revealed ever-increasing mediatization of political discourse (Chouliaraki, 2000): mass media outlets are consistently used by political elites as the key vehicle to unfold strategic narratives to the public. This assumption is also supported in (Chekshturina, 2024) that draws on media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war and illustrates the significant influence media coverage had on the world community and how it contributed to diplomatic and military support of Ukraine. Another research delves into the media construction of LGBTI-friendly society in Belgium (Verhoeven, Dhoest & Paulussen, 2023). In other words, media are "not just a source of information but also an active participant in political and military processes" (Chekshturina, 2024, p. 54), or, in Page's terms, a political actor.

To be objective, it is necessary to mention case studies that empirically argue that "we should not expect slanted media to affect political outcomes: if media plurality and voters' understanding of media owners' political motives are sufficiently high" (Spirig, 2024, p. 786). In other words, though mass media influence, they do not determine public opinion, unless the public chooses to be exposed exclusively to outlets of a particular slant. As a result, political actors aim at generating and promoting their 'narratives', i.e. macro-



stories that relate diverse events into a coherent sequence that establishes the continuity between the past and the present as well as outlines the future (Snytko & Hrechka, 2022, p. 104). Narratives unfolded in a politician's speech are explored in (Atmawijaya, 2024) that draws on Critical Discourse Analysis to contextualize Donald Trump's speech in broader discursive practices and shows how his messages resonate with and mobilize the audience. Another research into narratives that shape public opinion is carried out in (Nabokova & Martynyuk, 2023) that employs the coverage of First Lady Melania Trump in English mass media to uncover its ideological implication and socio-pragmatic potential.

This article focuses on The Guardian's publications that presented Donald Trump and the global political situation in December, 2024 – January, 2025, i.e. shortly before and after his inauguration. Since Trump's second presidency promised drastic changes in US foreign policies, the British media outlet had to accommodate the new president's policies within the new world order, to present it to its readers as well as to shape their stance toward this new influential political actor. The novelty of the political configuration and the recent radicalization of mass media discourse contribute to the relevance of the study.

The objective of the research is to explore the global strategic narrative developed by The Guardian columnists that positions Trump as the leader of the USA in relation to other political centers in the world. To achieve the objective, the following tasks are carried out: to collect a sample, to analyze it in terms of language means used to inform about Donald Trump and his actions, to analyze his image maintained in the publications and, finally, to identify strategic narratives of the global political processes and Trump's function in them.

Methods

The sample consists of ten opinion articles featuring Donald Trump and published between December 1, 2024, and January 30, 2025 by a British mass media outlet, The Guardian. The texts are analyzed within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal the ideologically charged message of the mass media publications.

The research draws on the assumption of cognitive narratology (Tucan, 2013) that argues for the narrative as "a tool of understanding and a way of helping individuals to structure and make sense of their experiences" (Tucan, 2013, p. 300). Cognitive narratology defines "narrative understanding as a process of building mental models as a result of text interpretation" and claims that "interpreters rebuild roughly the same mental models that appear in story production" (Tucan, 2013, p. 300). Viewed from this perspective, mass media publications may help shed light on the audience's interpretation of and attitude to global processes, set in motion by President Trump.

Results

It is worth starting by exploring the means used to build Trump's image to the readership. Labeling is the most prominent feature in the sample: it often occurs in headlines and permeates further texts. Thus, there are such headlines as *Will the return of **King Maga** to the White House mean a Trumpification of British politics?* (Rawnsley, 2025), *Through the blizzard of edicts, see Trump for what he is: **an autocrat reaching for limitless power*** (Freedland, 2025b). The main body of the articles develop the idea of Trump's autocratic inclinations: *How much can he be **king**? (...) if the **king** so wishes, the enthronement of the **King** of Maga* (Freedland, 2025b). While the 'king' is a nomination of an autocratic ruler in the Anglo-Saxon culture, there are lexemes that refer to other more or less foreign to American culture institutional roles, e.g., *America's tsar* (Freedland, 2025 a) and *emperor (the most powerful office in the world is becoming the court of an **emperor*** (Freedland, 2025b). It is noteworthy that nominations of Trump's team also intrinsically deliver the idea of autocracy and rigid hierarchy, where Trump holds the supreme position: *loud-mouthed **lackeys** such as Elon Musk* (Tisdall, 2025), *(Trump's) powerful **lieutenant** (about Elon Musk)* (Freedland, 2025b), ***henchman*** (Freedland, 2025a), *billionaire "tech **caste**"* (Tisdall, 2025), *tech **bosses, broliarchy*** (Hyde, 2025).

Another label attached to Donald Trump is ***danger** or **threat*** (*All those dangers are real, but there is **a greater danger** still, and its name is Donald Trump* (Freedland, 2025 b), ***a threat** to peace and prosperity* (Rawnsley, 2025)). The danger arises from Trump's belligerent nature: he is labeled as warrior that relishes battles against the constitutional order and is determined to transform the US democracy into an autocratic system:

*...he **relishes** the prospect of a long legal **battle**, in which he can play the anti-immigration **warrior against the system**. (...) That would be to upend the entire US system of government, **to turn America** from a constitutional democracy into **an autocracy**.* (Freedland, 2025 b).

The domestic battle is paralleled with aggressive foreign policies, the most prominent being *global/transatlantic/trade/tariff war* as well as *culture war*:

*Trump (...) is also **threatening massive tariffs** against his closest allies that could split Europe and **trigger a damaging transatlantic trade war**.* (Taylor, 2024).

The metaphoric language used to comment on Trump's actions and statements evokes the image of an untamed destructive force:

*...what we are witnessing is **an assertion of raw power** and an attempt to exercise it without limit. (...) In part, it is the perennial move of all ultranationalists – seeking to define who belongs to the nation and who is shut out (...) – but it is also about **flexing muscle**.* (Freedland, 2025 b).

Presenting Trump as an unruly powerful force justifies calling some politicians, namely Nigel Farage and Donald Tusk, as **Trump whisperers**, i.e., people "who can control or train a particular type of animal just by using the voice or gentle body movements, and without using force or threats" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.):

*He [Nigel Farage – I. A.] will carry on trading on his friendship with the president and trying to gain traction from selling himself as a **Trump whisperer**.* (Rawnsley, 2025).

*... Tusk seems better placed than others to make his mark as Europe's "**Trump whisperer**" and try to keep a fractious EU united in support of Ukraine as it hunkers down for Hurricane Donald.* (Taylor, 2024)

The analysis of the lexemes derived from Trump's name underscores the impact of his views on global politics and social trends. Thus, the noun *Trumpism* marks the formation of an ideology that has already acquired its supporters (*Trumpists* or *Trumpians*).

*... any **Trumpist** moved to attack the police could be similarly exempted from legal consequences, if the king so wishes.* (Freedland, 2025b).

*Still, the problem does not lie only with the **Trumpians** and their gaslighting, nor even with the hardcore *Maga* supporters...* (Freedland, 2025b).

One may embrace *Trumpism* to a different extent, therefore there is the qualitative adjective *Trumpy* that may be used in the form of the comparative degree:

*For hard rightists of the Reform variety or in the Conservative party, the lesson of his comeback is that they should borrow from his tactics to become **more Trumpy** themselves* (Rawnsley, 2025).

The process of embracing the ideology is called *Trumpification*:

*Will the return of King *Maga* to the White House mean a **Trumpification** of British politics* (Rawnsley, 2025).

Unlike *Trumpism* as ideology, *Trumpery* is a policy pursued by the US President and his supporters:

*At the same time, I also come across moderate Tories who see the significant peril for their party in being beguiled by **Trumpery*** (Rawnsley, 2025)

Blatant rejection of *Trumpism* has been labeled by pro-Trump journalists *Trump Derangement Syndrome* (TDS), an almost-psychiatric term, where 'derangement' stands for "the state of being completely unable to think clearly or behave in a controlled way, especially because of mental illness" [<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/derangement>]:

*They [Democrats, liberals and others – I. A.] also worry about seeming hysterical, of appearing to have succumbed to **Trump Derangement Syndrome*** (Freedland, 2025b).

Reading The Guardian's opinion articles, one cannot but notice that Trump's return to the White House has triggered several narratives. One of them is, in fact, a struggle of narratives within the United States over the moral stance towards the participants of the US State Capitol attack on January 6, 2021. Trump's "*sweeping pardon for the insurrectionists of 6 January 2021*" (Freedland, 2025b) was interpreted as permission of violence if it is to support him. The radical axiological difference between the two narratives affects vocabulary choice: Trump's *J6 hostages* are called *insurrectionists* by his opponents. As a result, the rule of law is said to have been undermined:

*By that move, he has essentially licensed political violence, so long as it is committed in support of him. (...) **That mass pardon** has set a precedent that does not merely **undermine the rule of law**, it suspends it: any *Trumpist* moved to attack the police could be similarly exempted from legal consequences...* (Freedland, 2025b).

Another storyline is cultural and employs multimodal means. Two articles in the sample expand, among other things, on the Trumps as trendsetters and register the promotion of the *tradwife*, i.e., a woman who supports and practices traditional gender roles and prioritizes her family over her career. Wearing a cosplay of Audrey Hepburn's dress on the inauguration day, Ivanka Trump is presented as tangible symbol of the *tradwife* image at the liberty ball. Audrey Hepburn and her character Sabrina in *Roman Holiday* are epitomes of femininity and, hence, are associated with conservatism. The sweeping shift to uncompromising right-wing politics and authoritarianism, though expressed differently, was detected in the uniform-like style of Melania Trump's garment:

*The rise of the **tradwife** – and the modest, floral **prairie dresses** so beloved by these rightwing influencers, which then trickled down to the high street – has mirrored the shift in the US much further to the right. We seem to be seeing an even greater shift towards sartorial sharpness (...) and conservative tailoring or even, dare I say, **the uniform dressing so beloved by the political far right**. Much has been made of how Melania's*

stark get-up contrasted to her Jackie O cosplay at the last inauguration. This time there was no attempt at demure people pleasing: **she looked positively authoritarian** (Cosslett, 2025).



Fig. 1. Donald, Melania, Lara and Eric Trump, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, at the liberty ball on inauguration day, January 20, 2025 (Cosslett, 2025)

'Authoritarianism' and the 'right-wing' drift conjure up the memories of fascism and Mussolini, so the columnist throws in the fascist leader's quote on the power of fashion and, thus, both draws a parallel between Trump's worldview and fascist ideology and points out the surreptitious though irresistible impact of sartorial trends:

Mussolini once said that "any power whatsoever is destined to fail before fashion. If fashion says skirts are short, you will not succeed in lengthening them, even with the guillotine". For that reason, **far-right authoritarian movements** have long attempted to capture the fashion system. We can argue endlessly about whether the new Trump administration can be **compared to fascism**. I think that it meets most of the key traits identified by Umberto Eco... (Cosslett, 2025).

The narrative of the ideological continuity with fascism and Nazism is backed up in other articles. In particular, one columnist compares Elon Musk's greeting "an inauguration crowd with what looked unmistakably like **two Sieg Heil salutes**, as if hailing the dawn of **a new age of fascism**" (Freedland, 2025b). Another journalist notices the similarity of the whole situation to the episode in Kubrick's black comedy, where Dr. Strangelove, a paraplegic scientific German advisor of the US president, suddenly stands up out of his wheelchair and exclaims, "Mein Führer, I can walk!":

...it was all a hopelessly overstimulating day for Elon Musk, whose **double salute on stage later was a pure Dr Strangelove spasm**, generously described by the Anti-Defamation league as "an awkward gesture" (Hyde, 2025).

This narrative is furthered by another one that embeds Trump's diplomacy in international politics and demonstrates the rearrangement of the world's power into a new pattern of allies and enemies. The narrative suggests that ongoing global changes are unfolding according to scenarios written by various political actors. For example, Trump's plan to expand the US territory is a replica of Russia's policies: Trump is labeled *tsar*, i.e., *dictator*:

It's **a playbook written by Vladimir Putin**, with Trump as America's **tsar** and Musk as his principal brologarch. While the Russian **dictator** covets Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, Trump is eyeing up Greenland and the Panama Canal (and even Canada). (Freedland, 2025a).

The narrative states "[T]he president-elect's hostility towards other democracies" (Freedland, 2025a):

Trump is acting (...) **like an enemy of the US's historic partners**, either threatening their security and sovereignty directly or indulging hostile interference in their domestic affairs. (Freedland, 2025a).

As a result, there appears the non-US west that "has to achieve (...) unity in the face of Trump and his own brand of authoritarianism". (Freedland, 2025a).

According to the British columnist, the non-US west consists of Great Britain and the European Union:

The only body in this neighbourhood with the heft to stand up to Musk and his billions is **the European Union**. If Musk gets his way, and installs nationalist populist leaders in Paris, Berlin and elsewhere, that may cease to be true. But for now, **the EU is the only serious democratic counterweight to the Trump-Musk axis**. (Freedland, 2025a).

Within the European Union, it is Poland that can "marshal Europe's response to Donald Trump's impending return to the White House": "Trump may hate Brussels but he likes Poland" and it is Poland's

leader Donald Tusk who can "convince the Republican nationalist that closer European defence cooperation can strengthen Nato without harming US interests" (Taylor, 2024).

Though Poland has made steps to ensure Europe's stability (*Poland has revived the Weimar Triangle cooperation format with Germany and France – a diplomatic agreement to engage in regular dialogue on EU affairs. It has joined the alliance of Nordic and Baltic nations and is part of the Bucharest Nine grouping of central and eastern Nato members.* (Taylor, 2024), the EU is going through turbulent times due to inner problems (migration, legislation, economic stagnation) and exterior political and economic actors (Russia, US, China):

Europe is in trouble. The EU's borders, democracies, laws and liberties are threatened by an aggressive Russian nihilism. Relations with the US, transatlantic blood brother and key Nato partner, are coming under unprecedented strain. China, an expansionist, authoritarian superpower, circles like a predatory foe. The economies of leading countries, notably Germany, are contracting and stagnating. (Tisdall, 2025).

This narrative admits the rise of hard-right parties in some EU members (Hungary, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Slovakia, Spain, etc.), ineffective and incoherent policies of Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz, weakness of Ursula von der Leyen, Giorgia Meloni's "cosying-up" to Trump, yet it is reported to strengthen Europeans' urge for unity and consolidation. Moreover, even former Brexiters have started to reconsider their choice made in the 2016 Referendum:

Despite, or perhaps because of, the threats from Russia, the US and China, nearly 70 % of EU citizens view their continent as a place of stability in a troubled world. (...) Recent polls show a growing yearning for Europe and deepening suspicion of the US. Even Brexit supporters want a reset with Brussels. (Tisdall, 2025).

Presenting the US, Russia and China as predatory enemies attacking the EU and the UK, the strategic narrative is delivered in the article titled *Donald Trump will huff and puff, but if Europe's leaders rise to its defence, their house will stand* (Tisdall, 2025). The heading uses the imagery of two 'basic' narratives: the fairy tale *Three Little Pigs*, where Trump is Mr Wolf, who huffs and puffs to blow down the EU house, and the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus says to the Pharisees: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (New King James Version, 1982, Matthew 12:22-28). The text turns to this two-fold allusion at the beginning (headline) and in the final paragraph: *"The more Trump and other predators huff and puff like Mr Wolf in the Three Pigs nursery rhyme, the stronger the house of Europe may grow. To quote again from Tusk's speech last week: «Europe is not yet lost... Raise your heads, Europeans. Europe was, is and will be great»"* (Tisdall, 2025).

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis brings to light the consistent process of image and narrative construction in The Guardian's opinion articles on Donald Trump published in December, 2024–January, 2025. Lexical items used to characterize this politician are, in fact, labels that depict him as a highly authoritarian personality who arranges his supporters into a hierarchy usually found in the army or in a 'master–servant' relation. In addition, Trump's words and actions are presented as incompatible with the key values of the 'non-US' West, so he is labeled a *threat* to democratic states.

Another important feature of the texts is neologisms derived from Trump's name that prove his significance for political and social processes. These lexemes nominate an ideology (*Trumpism*), a supporter of this ideology (*Trumpist/Trumpian*), a process of accommodating the ideology (*Trumpification*) and an action regarded as typical of Trump (*Trumpery*).

On the discourse level, these language features are woven into narratives of two types. One of them is a national American narrative where Trump is pictured as a system-wrecking force pursuing ideas of the hard right within the United States. Another narrative evolves around international politics and highlights the new world order, with Trump being a destructive actor who breaks old alliances and wages wars with former partners. As a British mass media outlet, The Guardian's columnists pay special attention to the latter narrative and, in particular, to the UK's place in the new power configuration. As a result, they draw on precedential texts and recontextualize them to incorporate the ongoing political processes in the historical continuum. By doing so, they do not only shape the audience's interpretation of the past and the present but also outline Britain's potential political moves in the future.

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ДОНАЛЬД ТРАМП ЯК ЦЕНТРАЛЬНИЙ ЕЛЕМЕНТ НОВИХ НАРАТИВІВ АНАЛІТИЧНИХ СТАТЕЙ ГАЗЕТИ ГАРДІАН (ГРУДЕНЬ, 2024 – СІЧЕНЬ, 2025)

Вступ. У 2025 році світова політика відзначалася радикальними змінами у внутрішній та міжнародній політиці, спричиненими перемогою Дональда Трампа на президентських виборах у США. Ця стаття розглядає ЗМІ як впливового актора, здатного формувати громадську думку та, відповідно, впливати на політичні процеси.

Методи. Дослідження застосовує методи критичного дискурс-аналізу та когнітивної наратології для вивчення десяти аналітичних статей, присвячених Трампу та виданих у британській щоденній газеті *The Guardian* протягом грудня 2024 року – січня 2025 року.

Результати. Виявлено, що основними засобами характеристики Трампа колумністами є навішування ярликів. Мовні одиниці, вжиті щодо Трампа, містять конотації авторитаризму та авторитаризму (наприклад, такі номінації, як *king*, *tsar*, *autocrat*). Крім цього, лексеми на позначення членів його команди послідовно імплікують їх підпорядкований статус у ієрархії (наприклад, *lackey*, *henchman*, *lieutenant*). Авторитарний спосіб управління протирічить загально прийнятим та широко проголошеним західним цінностям, таким як демократія та свобода, через що Трампа називають *a threat*, *a danger*, *a warrior*. Також, вибірка містить низку неологізмів – деривативів, утворених від прізвища президента, що уможлиблює вважати Трампа центральною фігурою світової політики сьогодення, яка визначає політичні та ідеологічні тренди: він просуває *Trumpism*, його прихильники називаються *Trumpists* або *Trumpians* і можуть бути більші чи менші *Trumpu*, поширення його поглядів є *Trumpification*, і нарешті дії, типові для людей з такими поглядами, називаються *Trumpery*.

Наративи вибірки вимальовують як внутрішні процеси всередині Америки, так і глобальні події. В американському внутрішньому політичному дискурсі Трамп – авторитарний лідер, який втручається в правосуддя на свій розсуд і пропонує консервативні, праві ідеї. Це дає підстави журналістам провести паралелі між Трампом і фашизмом, що вбудовує погляди Трампа в історичну перспективу та виводить цей наратив на глобальний рівень. На міжнародній арені Трамп змальований ініціатором економічної, ідеологічної та культурної боротьби між колись беззаперечними союзниками та партнерами, тобто Сполученими Штатами, Великою Британією та Європейським Союзом. Використовуючи прецедентні тексти, колумніст видання визнає внутрішні проблеми Європи, проте вказує на спільні цінності країн ЄС, які можуть допомогти у подоланні розладу та об'єднанні для протистояння новому ворогу.

Висновки. Досліджено, що лексичні засоби використано в аналітичних статтях для формування у читачів негативної оцінки Трампа як опонента ключовим європейським цінностям, проте прецедентні тексти надаються як історичні та навіть біблійні паралелі між новим світовим порядком та історіями з минулого.

Ключові слова: мас медіа, політичний дискурс, дискурсивний аналіз, наратив.

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