CZU: 81`42:32.019.5:316.77 https://doi.org/10.59295/drgl2026.40

THE POST-TRUTH POLITICS FEATURES DECONSTRUCTED IN THE PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE

Galina PETREA
MH, university assistant, PhD student
Free International University of Moldova, Republic of Moldova
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4784-7260

Abstract. Critical discourse theories, semiotic as well as political and sociological studies deal with a bifurcation of post-truth approaches: alarmist/mainstream and the more critical one. The latter approach researches three manifestations of post-truth politics: the rejection of scientific research arguments: anti-expertism, anti-intellectualism – a proselytism of agnotology (deliberate propagation of ignorance, as a strategic and active ploy); as opposed to epistemology, knowledge, research, facts – based narratives. The second feature would be: post-truth nostalgia for some golden era politics and standards in opinion congruence; as opposed to a new reality characterized by a decay of morality, resentment and antagonistic narratives. The third feature is a post-truth, a predilection for an appeal to emotions rather than to veridic facts. Overall post-truth politics is rather not a reductionist relativism but a neo-fundamentalist discourse, when truth is no longer relevant, purely the positional advantage counts. The truth in this construct is considered as hyperbolic. Through the study of the full-spectrum granulation of the pragmatic effects present in the parliamentary discourse the present article, both de-constructs and de-bunks.

Key words: *Epistemology; agnotology; topos, deontic authority, discourse-pragmatic emphasis, cognitivist triad, information warfare*

The concept *post-truth* applied to politics, refers to a complex contemporary relation between how power, media, truth and falsehood interact. Despite even a cognitive dissonance that society might experience, they accept vehiculated, circularly reiterated arguments, as part of a forcefully promoted discourse which is in consonance with their feelings, emotions - affect and beliefs, ideological alignment, rather than based on objective or logical facts. The given concept is different from *ideology* and *propaganda*, refers to the weakening of the relevance of rational reasoning that invites the counterfeit, unverified information which is readily accepted.

Researchers, among others, Saul Newman and Maximilian Conrad frame the new political paradigm as *post-truth populism* (PTP), symptomatic of a highly dysfunctional state with a lack of trust in leaders struggling with a legitimization and validity crisis, no real leadership, with a highly antagonistic, polarized political landscape, promoting in that vacuum fertile alternative medium counter narratives. However, post-truth is not relativism but a new kind of *neo – fundamentalism* [11, p. 8], that seeks to impose an authoritarian order of truth based on socially conservative values.

The post-truth political culture constitutes, actually, a threat to the institutions, norms and democracy. The possibility of relatively undistorted communication in the public sphere, a form of rational deliberation and ***a reasonable consensus*** regarding facts, is imperative. John Rawls among others, praises the relevance, for a liberal criterion of legitimacy of the "***reasonable consensus***".

However, it was Jürgen Habermas, according to Cooke Maeve in his article *Pragmatics in Habermas' Critical Social Theory*, who, more than any other contemporary philosophers, made the idea of *consensus* the bedrock of truth. Habermas advanced a theory where consensus is the final quest of human communication. Proceeding from the concept of validity claim, in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas distinguishes between three validity claims: *truth*, *normative rightness* and *sincerity*; associated respectively with language functions: *cognitive use*, *interactive use* and *expressive use*; rooted in Habermas' ontology: reality as *the objective world*, *the social world* and the *subjective world*. Habermas explained that all three claims are inherent in all speech acts when speaking or engaging in rational communication [6, p. 294]. Researchers promote concomitantly a compromise known as **Consensus on No-Consensus Paradox.**

Hannah Arendt was warning that it is the nature of the political realm to be at war with truth, in all its forms. Arendt [1, p. 555] highlights that: "*truth carries within itself an element of coercion*". What Arendt further on deduces: "*Seen from the viewpoint of politics, truth has a despotic character*".

Statement of the problem, its connection with important scientific and practical tasks. The theoretical relevance of the post-truth politics theory derives from the fact that the dependent variable of my thesis: the *hybrid war* construct has the component of information warfare. Post-truth is a characteristic of the period, epoch, like post-modernism, it determines, effects, impacts the information production and distribution, causing the information disorder. The concept of *truth* is described as having 10 types of meanings and uses according to Julian Baggini. One of them is the truth-conditional – semantic level, compositional meaning of the utterance in a discourse, one layer of a *scalar paradigm of pragmatics*.

According to some authors [5, 11], "*modern war is a war in the minds and for the mind*". It is a war for cognitive and communicative control, for power over people's consciousness, their emotions, thinking, intelligence and, consequently, over their behaviour.

The weaponization of truth and conspiracy theories, the anti-expertism on the other hand, a populist challenge to "*elites*" is part of a project of power and domination. Post-truth populism aims at the construction of a new kind of post-liberal ideological hegemony [11, p. 8]. Liberal democracies, under the pressures of right-wing populism and post-truth, sometimes morph into illiberal "*hybrid*" regimes - part democracies, part dictatorships, *"democratorship"* - in which media manipulation and control of information are the main tools of power.

Vittorio Bufacchi explains, "*While a lie* ***subverts*** *a specifc truth, post-truth tries to* ***subvert*** *truth itself*" and the prefx "*post*" refers to the claim that a specified idea has become redundant and therefore can safely be discarded. Post-truth, according to Bufacci, is a deliberate strategy aimed at creating an environment where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion, in order to make it impossible for someone to make sense of a certain event, phenomenon, or experience, and where scientific truth is delegitimized [3, p. 4].

The critical discourse, semiotic, linguistic, and multi-faceted cultural approaches have paid attention to form, ideology, and potential effects on belief. The post-truth and populism, has focused on the formal and stylistic performances of trustworthiness at the granular level, moving outwards toward cultural and historical as well as media technological constraints and affordances that shape the whole experience of performance.

While the research paradigm of Critical Discourse Studies analyzes the political discourse at three level: **Micro level** of social events, examining how meaning is made

through semiosis; **Meso level**, the analysis, of social practices as orders of discourse; **Macro level**, examines the temporal/historical framing of social events and social practices. We can attribute the post-truth politics phenomena to the macro level of analysis, determining the social practices and overall the granulation of semiosis.

The Discourse Historic Analysis lenses elaborated by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer identifies three forms of critique: a) Discourse inherent critique, aimed at identifying internal contradictions, inconsistencies or dilemmas; b) Socio-diagnostic critique: to detect the manipulative character of some discursive practices; c) Prognostic critique [13, p. 65]. The DHA considers ***intertextual*** and ***interdiscursive relationships*** between utterances, texts, genres and discourses, as well as extra-linguistic social variables, situational frames.

Martin Reisigl lists nine examples of *topoi*. The *topos of authority,* for example, may rely on *epistemic authorities*, which are imported to warrant a truth claim, or *deontic authorities* (someone or something with the power to determine the duties and obligations of others), which are brought into warrant a claim of *normative rightness*. This *topos* thus abides by the following logical reasoning [12, p.13]:

If authority X says A is true/that A has to be done → A is true / A has to be done

The relevance of the *post-truth* construct for my thesis is emphasized by a study by Lesia Dorosh et all., who focus on the impact of post-truth politics as a hybrid information influence on the status of international and national security [7, p. 3].

Post-truth and information warfare. Post-truth politics is connected to manipulation of information in the forms of: disinformation / misinformation. Ignas Kalpokas: *Post-truth* and *information warfare* can be seen as cousin concepts that share similar premises but differ in terms of intentionality [10, p. 101]. **Post-truth** refers to a general transformation of the information environment and a reconfiguration of the relationship between veracity political beliefs and action. Deviations from truth generally happen organically, as a result of the transformations of the information ecosystem. While **information warfare**, refers to the deliberate and strategic manipulation of the information environment, among other things, post-truth tendencies to guide audiences towards predetermined patterns or thinking.

The cognitivist triad of *known knowns*, *known unknowns*, and *unknown unknowns.*

Cognitive theory is actively applied to decode and deconstruct mis/disinformation in a post-truth era and debunk fake news or counterfacts. The authors of the textbook "*Cognitive-Informational Warfare*" bring in the concept of *Unknown unknowns* attributed to Donald Rumsfeld used first on February 12 2002, in a briefing at the Pentagon, as part of the triad of known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns [5, p. 15]. Only this last category represents the really difficult elements in reconnaissance, intel collection. One of the explanations of modern era threats is that processes are channeled to relativize all values, leading to the conclusion that nothing is worth being defended! This enables inactivity and leads to non-participation in elections or overall in the social life. Disinformation / misinformation erode democracy.

Nostalgic Post-truth. Post-truth politics and populism, both of which are academically mediated by an information-reductive or "*infocentric*" conceptualization of perceived public epistemic problems. In d'Ancona's [8, p. 31] framing, post-truth is presented as an era characterized by not only an "*epidemic of lying infecting public discourse*" but even more fundamentally, *"the wanton disregard for truth and the abnegation of values and virtues that undergird its pursuit*" [11, p. 316] in stark contrast with some other epochs of reference with a golden standard of truth.

In order to illustrate this aspect of the post-truth politics, I would cite an awesome philosophical quotation from Finland's President, Alexander Stubb's speech that he delivered at the Chatham House on March 17, 2026.

Ex. *"I think we human beings make three mistakes. The first mistake is that we overrationalize the past. We think that the world worked in a certain way and juxtapose examples thereof. The second mistake we make is that we overdramatize the present. And when we do these two mistakes, the problem is that we end up underestimating the future. But we quite often draw parallels between the past and the present, sometimes to make convincing sounding predictions and sometimes just to make the case that the world was more orderly and much better in the good old days".*

The main topoi is actually, rational anti-past nostalgia; explicitly expressed in a nuanced manner stylistically, by the phrase *the good old days*. The contrast between reference to past and present both prefixed with *over-*: *overrationalize*, *overdramatize,* indicating an exaggeration, and emphasis on the other hand, a warning that the consequence of not learning the lessons, and not moving onward, would be *underestimating* the future. The author adds prognostic critique, moving beyond the uncertainty of the temporal historical framing. The deixis markers of representation **I/We** clearly indicate that the author, owns, assumes authorship of the idea and resonates with it. There are several uses of the Ist person plural pronoun – **we** - indicating that the author associates, including himself, into the comprehensive category of *human being*, and in particular, he refers to the country he represents as President – Finland, as a member of the regional organization to which they belong – the EU. The repeated **we** – denotes and reiterates the agentive characteristic through association, participation, involvement, legitimization.

The following example is by the British Prime Minister in office Keir Starmer, as a response to Kemi Badenoch (leader of the opposition party, whom he derogatorily calls *leader of the opportunity*) during some heated PMQs in the British Parliament on Mar 11, 2026:

Ex. *Mr. Speaker, last week, she's not the only one, the leader of Reform as well. "We should be part of this with the US and the Israelis. We have to get rid of the regime. We should do all we can to support the operation". I make that perfectly clear. She said until yesterday, screeching U-turn "We shouldn't get ourselves involved in another foreign war". Two parties packed with failed tries led by leaders who are not fit to be Prime Minister*".

This quotation contains several allusions which are of interest for DHA as interdiscoursive instances. The topos covered is the major decision made by the Government to refuse to engage in the Iran war. The macrostructures contained are referencing different functions of the Government: executive oversight and accountability, intra-party control and rivalry, indirectly they are touching on the constituency representation and future election candidacy and eligibility. Another topos present is ***contradiction*** or incoherence of the opposition, changing their mind on serious matters such as participating in a war. But the most severe accusation by the PM is the ***historical mistake*** made by the party Reform who lobbied for the Brexit. We have an allusion here: *packed with failed tries,* the PM indicates to both parties in point as failed in their past endevours. The metaphor *screeching U-turn,* makes a comparison to driving a vehicle and turning, reversing so abruptly that it produces a mechanic sharp noise. Pragmatic, cooperative strategies that can be mentioned are: the opening form of address to the Speaker of the House of the Commons – expressing courtesy and observing the hierarchy and protocol subordination. As in relation to the leader of the opposition, he refers in the third person as *she,* reactive or even strategic impoliteness, they have had very antagonistic interactions, surpassing normal party rivalry. The last thrown

accusation is to both the historical deceptive, manipulative party, that lead the country on a wrong digression, but also the Conservative party, for which he does not predict much success in the future elections.

The following example for analysis is from US Senator Roger Wickman, **Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee at the** Senate Hearing on 12 Mar 2026.

Ex. *In Putin's twisted view of the world, Russia is the victim of historical injustices. He has proven willing to take on extreme risks to re-address these perceived historical injustices against Russia, most notably by launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and entirely a war of choice*. The topos is accusation of victimization for historical injustices by the author of this assertion regarding Putin's one of the conspiracy theories launched to justify his aggression war against Ukraine. The Senator's position regarding this hypothesis is expressed by the stylistic formulation: *twisted view of the world,* by *twisted,* meaning manipulative and deceptive perspective. The *perceived historical injustices,* reinforce the idea of subjectivity and distortion. The qualification overall does not support the pretended nostalgia after an once existing world order, but rather indicates the ploy of revisionist aggression of his own decision and choice.

In the next example, another one by Alexander Stubb, we have the topos of comparison and contrast regarding the economic and political standing of EU back 25 years ago and nowadays, but also between on one side the EU and USA and China on the other:

Ex. *The EU in many ways in those days was defined as an economic giant but a political dwarf and that's kind of turned around. I'm not saying we are an economic dwarf, but we are not as powerful economically as we used to be relatively to China or the United States.*

Stylistically expressive contrast between economic vs political domains, characterized by the antithesis *giant – dwarf,* denoting competitive impoliteness*, "in those days*" – during better times. In the next sentence the author retracted, reformulated to clarify, that it is in contrast with the other giants that EU may be perceived as weaker, because they progressed stronger, not because EU might have stagnated. In this other example from the brilliant discourses of the EU dignitary, we can trace again the representational deixis by the personal pronoun **I** – for personalization and ownership of the idea, and **WE** inclusive for His person – Finland he represents as President and EU, regional organization to which they belong.

Anti-expertism and anti-intellectualism. The mention of anti-expertism brings in the narratives, of how those aligned with the agnotological activities of think-tanks adopt a combination of victimization combined with human rights discourses when faced with academically informed opposition. Thus, just as those who make racist comments in public often claim, counter-factually, that they cannot say what they want in public because of "*political correctness*" [2, p. 49]. The expert analysis and research-based arguments are being disregarded and discarded. Moreover, the **dichotomy of epistemology vs agnotology** is relevant here. Epistemology, is the science about the nature, sources, dissemination of knowledge. Agnotology, on the contrary is the study of how ignorance is culturally created, legitimized and disseminated, the purposes and interests it serves in a society. Among the types of ignorance identified, two are relevant for the post-truth phenomenon paradigm of research: ignorance as "*strategic ploy*" [2, p. 35], an act of secrecy or censorship, with the intent of withholding information. The other one is: ignorance as an "*active construct*", as the result of a concerted effort on the part of legitimized sources to deceive, and to manufacture and manipulate collectives' understandings of particular matters.

There is a raising concern about the increasing role of the AI in the modern society with worrying unintended consequences. I can quote here the EU Chief Ursula von der

Leyen, who has promoted several restrictive laws regarding AI use which look very much like attempts of censorship and control of AI use and social networks access. The topoi is care, responsibility control for the online safety and security.

- "*Malicious actors are able to reach into our borders without ever leaving their own",* a warning about accessibility of access.
- *"Mr. Speaker, another of the realities that this new world has shown us is that dependencies can be weaponized*". This quote is from an address delivered in the Australian Parliament. EU want to implement the entire infrastructure for local social networks, servers, to ensure autonomy, control and oversight.
- *It is we parents who must raise our children and not predatory addictive algorithms.* The inclusive personal pronoun ***we,*** relates to the role of parent she also has, but additionally to the parental, supervisor role EU leaders should adopt for online safety and security.

The much quoted in this article Finland's President Alexander Stubb, promotes the thesis of "*differentiated integration or flexibility*" as a really useful tool for managing the EU. The author who developed this idea in his PhD research paper expands on this: "*I had three categories multi-speed so you have the same aim but you reach that aim at a different time, you do that, very often in enlargement you're not ready and you get an objective and you fulfill it*". The dignitary refers to different levels of economic development, cultural heritage, mentality, political preparedness which justify this multispeed approach. The idea is that the integration is not denied, diversity should be embraced, but rationally, as the Eastern, ex-socialist camp countries come with a heavy burden of structural and system shortcomings. Here we observe the clusivity representation tool being not I/WE vs OTHER, but vs YOU, which also means opposing, different, not meeting those standards and requirements yet, thus, being let to catch up in their rhythm.

Another strong quotation from President Alexander Stubb, that needs to be highlighted is the problem of Brexit, which he calls "*a fake promise",* a deception, a hybrid attack, a cognitive warfare example, manipulation of cultural values and beliefs:

"It's just that the Brexit was just a fake promise that you would somehow regain independence and sovereignty in a completely interdependent world. And that's why I think we should have had more flexibility in the beginning with the wisdom of hindsight. So, if that were to take place, could that be sort of the beginning of a new deeper strategic partnership between?

The author's rhetorical question with a hypothetical subjunctive mood, sounds more as a suggestion, a proposal for the British, to think about rejoining the EU for their own and EU partners' benefit, after having learnt the lessons from the past *with the wisdom of hindsight*.

Emotions in Post-Truth Politics. In the post-truth era, objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. Emotions are defined as complex feelings resulting in physiological and cognitive changes which influence thought and behaviour. A strong cognitive dissonance strongly motivates people to try to reduce a psychological tension. X might be receptive to accepting arguments from *y* in favor of avoiding the scenario "*presence/abundance of B-citizens*" even if the facts on which those arguments are based are false. Thus, *x* would end up making a decision coherent (consonant) with her "*fear and rejection*" somatic marker: to vote for *y* to govern *A* [2, p. 57].

In the following example selected from one of the many brilliant discourses of the EU Parliament Chief, Ursula von der Leyen on the 9 March, 2026:

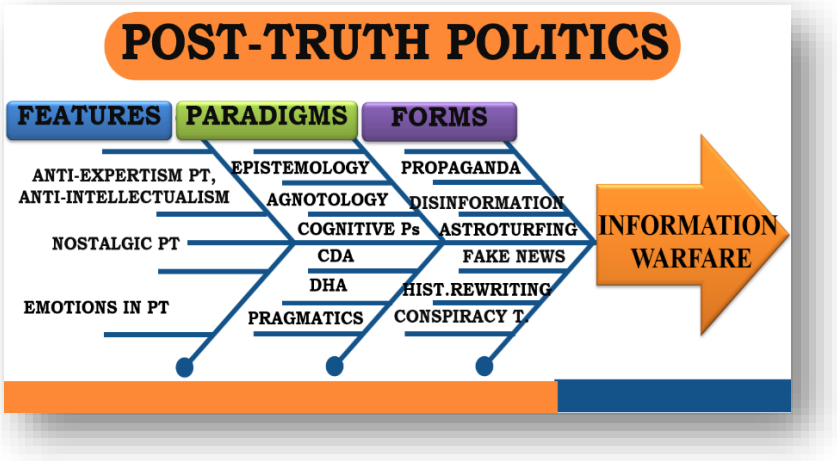
Ex. *And when some in European politics choose procedural nitpicking and institutional turf wars, we choose leadership, not hesitation, not excuses, leadership to build a Europe that protects its people and protects our prosperity. Let's deliver.*

The author exposes contradictions, rivalries, antagonism that exist within the institution: *procedural nitpicking* (derogatory, colloquial for fault-finding) and *turf wars* – another colloquial register phrase choice, meaning conflicts between clans. WE, is inclusive for the EU leaders, they by contrast have another mission of becoming the needed leadership, beyond the possibly existing emotions. The directive speech act *Let's deliver*, is an encouragement and urge to all different members and leadership to join efforts and deliver results that are expected.

The last example analysed in this article is another one from President Alexander Stubb:

Turkey has been knocking on the door since the 1960s. Shouldn't we be using flexibility for that in one way or another? Let me begin by saying that I think Brexit was a colossal mistake. I do think it's not only shooting yourself in the foot, but it's like amputating your leg without a medical reason for doing it.

The present perfect continuous here *has been knocking on the door* is an intended choice to emphasize the frustration and annoyance at an unusually prolonged duration of the pre-accession eligibility non-determination. The trite metaphor to *knock at the door* in combination with the grammatical form with stylistic effect, are implying a sort of discrimination or maybe even abuse, namely in rapport with Turkey. The rhetorical question is employed to emphasize namely this, and that a differentiated approach solution could and should have been found. On the other hand, the problem of Brexit, the author uses the strong adjective, the hyperbola: *a colossal mistake* to qualify the action. The emphatic *do* is used, the reflexive pronoun, highlights that it was self-inflicted, self-sabotage, it was attributed to internal factors. The idiom *shooting oneself in the foot* is nothing at all awful being followed by the gruesome simile *like amputating the leg without a medical reason.* This impressive expressive language is highly emotional used to colour the populism and radicalism spectrum and its consequences.



Deborah Cameron toes the fine line between criticality towards the public uses of language and *prescriptivism, corrupted discourses* which are, in essence, incorrect language. This is not the same as "*verbal hygiene*", deconstructed as "*meddling*", plain language and

transparency [4, p. 63] in language matters by people coming from a range of backgrounds. Standardized vs. vernacular varieties of language, political correctness and effective communication are seen as examples of attempts to shape how people communicate, where deemed appropriate clean up language that has been contaminated.

References:

1. ARENDT, Hannah (2000) - *Truth and Politics*. In: The Portable Hannah Arendt, BAEHR Peter (Ed.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 545–575.
2. BLOCK, David (2019) - *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*, Lleida: Palgrave, 349 p. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00497-2_3
3. BUFACCHI, Vittorio (2020) - *Truth, lies and tweets: A Consensus Theory of Post-Truth*. In: Philosophy and Social Criticism, 1/15, DOI: 10.1177/0191453719896382
4. CAMERON, Debora (1995) - *Verbal Hygiene*, London: Routledge, 240 p.
5. CHIFU, Iulian, et all. (2025) *Cognitive Informational Warfare*. București: RAO, 687 p.
6. COOKE, Maeve (2011) - *Pragmatics in Habermas' Critical Social Theory*. In: *Foundations of Pragmatics*, BUBLITZ, Andreas et all. (Eds), Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011, pp. 289-314
7. DOROSH, Lesia, et all. (2021) - *The impact of post-truth politics as a hybrid information influence on the status of international and national security: the attributes of interpretation and the search for counteraction mechanisms.* In: European Politics and Society 23/3, pp.1-24, DOI:10.1080/23745118.2021.1873041
8. D'ANCONA, Matthew (2017) - *Post-truth: The New War on Truth and How to Flight Back*. Ebury Press, Penguin Random House, 167 p.
9. FERRETTI, Ralph (2023) - *When the Truth Doesn't Seem to Matter: The Affordances of Disciplinary Argument in the Era of Post-truth*. In: Written Communication, 40/2, pp. 300–332. https://doi.org/10.1177/07410883221148676
10. KALPOKAS, Ignas (2024) - *Post-Truth and Information Warfare in their Technological Context*. In: Applied Cybersecurity & Internet Governance, 3/2, pp. 99–121, DOI:10.60097/ACIG/190407
11. NEWMAN, Saul; CONRAD, Maximilian (2024) - *Post-Truth Populism. A New Political Paradigm*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 349 p.
12. REISIGL, Martin, WODAK Ruth (2001) - *Discourse and Discrimination. Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*. London: Routledge, 312 p.
13. WODAK, Ruth; MAYER, Michael (2016) - *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. NY: SAGE, 261 p.