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Language, Power, and Ideology: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Speeches

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study examines how political language constructs ideology, legitimizes authority, and organizes public interpretation through a corpus of fourteen English-language public political speech transcripts produced between 2016 and 2021. The corpus includes coded governmental addresses, parliamentary speeches, electoral communication, crisis statements, public-health addresses, rights-and-inclusion speeches, democratic-accountability speeches, and international forum speeches. The main article identifies speakers by institutional speech codes, so the analysis foregrounds discourse structures rather than individual political personalities. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to connect textual patterns with discourse practice and socio-political context. Its analytical framework integrates Fairclough's three-dimensional model with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and draws on discourse-historical analysis, social actor representation, legitimation theory, and critical metaphor analysis. The analysis examines lexical selection, inclusive and exclusive pronouns, modality, transitivity, metaphorical framing, repetition, presupposition, and ideological categorization of social actors. Four dimensions organize the findings: ideological framing, identity construction, legitimization strategies, and in-group/out-group representation. The analysis shows that political authority is discursively legitimized through crisis-and-renewal frames, collective pronoun alignment, moralized representations of responsibility, and strategic boundary-making between citizens, institutions, opponents, threats, and victims. Negative and contrasting cases show that political speeches can also soften conflict, repair legitimacy, or reduce personalization of blame. The study contributes an evidence-linked Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework for tracing how textual forms become ideological resources when interpreted through discourse practice and socio-political context.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; political speeches; ideology; political discourse; legitimation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political speeches are among the most visible public genres through which leaders make social reality intelligible. They do not merely report decisions; they define crises, assign responsibility, construct audiences, project collective futures, and invite citizens to treat particular positions as reasonable, urgent, or necessary. In moments of election, institutional transition, national emergency, international conflict, or policy reform, speeches become especially consequential because they convert political preference into public meaning. The relationship between language, power, and ideology is therefore not incidental to political speech; it is central to it. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is well suited to this problem because it treats discourse as a social practice in which linguistic choices connect to institutional power, cultural assumptions, and ideological struggle [1].

The study adopts the sociolinguistic and applied-linguistic assumption that political discourse is never only a sequence of words. It is a socially organized mode of action through which speakers position

themselves and others. Van Dijk's account of CDA emphasizes that discourse reproduces and contests dominance by organizing knowledge, belief, and evaluation [2]. Wodak's discourse-historical approach further shows that political texts must be interpreted through historical context, intertextual relations, argumentation, and institutional setting [3]. These perspectives justify a design that moves from textual detail to broader social practice without reducing the analysis to grammar alone or to political commentary alone.

Language refers to observable textual and rhetorical resources: lexical choices, pronouns, modality, metaphor, repetition, transitivity, presupposition, and narrative sequencing. Power refers to public discourse's capacity to authorize decisions, define legitimate membership, establish responsibility, and stabilize selected interpretations. Ideology refers to patterned assumptions through which political actors present certain values, identities, and social relations as natural, moral, inevitable, or common sense. Political discourse analysis therefore concerns not simply what leaders say, but how public speech organizes audiences around meanings, disagreements, duties, and imagined futures [4], [5].

The study examines how rhetorical and linguistic patterns participate in ideological framing and the legitimization of authority. The central problem is evidential: many discussions of political speech identify persuasive devices such as repetition, metaphor, pronouns, or crisis vocabulary, but do not always show how such devices operate within discourse practice, how they position social actors, what assumptions they presuppose, and how they legitimate a particular distribution of agency, obligation, or blame.

This study addresses that problem through a corpus of fourteen English-language public political speeches produced between 2016 and 2021. This corpus boundary captures electoral disruption, sovereignty debates, public-health emergency, democratic transition, security crisis, and international representation, civic inclusion, and democratic accountability. The speeches are coded rather than named in the main analytical sections. This choice does not anonymize public data in an ethical sense; rather, it prevents the article from becoming a personality-driven commentary and keeps attention on discourse structures. Full source metadata, transcript repositories, and extract locators are specified in the supplementary source file so that the analysis remains auditable. The corpus includes governmental addresses, parliamentary speeches, electoral communication, rights-and-inclusion speeches, democratic-accountability speeches, and international forum speeches, allowing comparison across speech genres while retaining genre consistency as public political address.

The international gap addressed here is not merely that political language is persuasive, which is already well established. The gap concerns how ideological framing, identity construction, legitimation strategies, and social actor representation work together across genres of public political speech. Many CDA studies focus on one leader, one speech, one political event, or one linguistic resource. Such work is valuable, but it can leave unclear how different discursive mechanisms combine to reproduce or repair authority across transitions, emergencies, elections, and international forums. The present study therefore uses a cross-genre design to examine political discourse as a patterned configuration of textual resources rather than as a set of isolated rhetorical devices.

The study's originality lies in this integrated, evidence-linked design. It combines Fairclough's text-discourse-social practice model with van Dijk's socio-cognitive understanding of ideology, while also drawing on discourse-historical interpretation, social actor representation, legitimation theory, and metaphor analysis. This combination allows the analysis to trace how micro-level textual features link to macro-level social meanings. Social actors are not merely mentioned; they are included, excluded, activated, passivated, individualized, collectivized, or moralized. Transitivity and modality are not merely grammatical categories; they assign agency, certainty, obligation, and inevitability. Metaphors do not simply decorate the text; they organize political reasoning by mapping crises as battles, nations as bodies, or politics as a journey.

The study makes three contributions. Theoretically, it clarifies how CDA can connect language, power, and ideology in a single analytical chain. Methodologically, it demonstrates a transparent procedure for corpus construction, source documentation, coding, reliability review, evidence selection, and interpretive validation. Empirically, it offers a comparative reading of speeches across crisis, election, sovereignty, transition, and global leadership contexts. Its central research question is: How do selected political speeches

construct ideology, legitimize authority, and shape public opinion through linguistic and rhetorical strategies within defined sociopolitical contexts? This question directly aligns the title's three core constructs: language as textual resource, power as discursive authority, and ideology as patterned representation of political reality.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIM, OBJECTIVES, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem is that political speeches often make ideological meanings appear neutral, consensual, or inevitable. Public speeches can present policy choices as necessary, define opponents as threats or obstacles, selectively locate responsibility, and invoke collective identity without making these ideological operations explicit. A rigorous CDA must therefore show the evidential pathway between linguistic form, discursive strategy, ideological framing, and the legitimization of power. The problem is not simply that political speech persuades, but that persuasion frequently works through ordinary textual patterns that become meaningful only when interpreted within political context.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study has five objectives. First, it identifies the main linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in the selected speeches. Second, it examines how speakers construct political legitimacy, authority, unity, opposition, crisis, and national identity. Third, it analyzes how ideology is embedded in lexical choice, pronouns, modality, metaphor, presupposition, repetition, transitivity, and social actor representation. Fourth, it interprets how citizens, political opponents, institutions, threats, victims, and national communities are represented. Fifth, it develops an evidence-linked CDA interpretation of the relationship between language, power, ideology, and cultural-political meaning.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by one central research question: How do selected political speeches construct ideology, legitimize authority, and shape public opinion through linguistic and rhetorical strategies within defined sociopolitical contexts? This central question is developed through five subsidiary questions: how are power and legitimacy constructed through lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical patterns; what ideological meanings are embedded in pronouns, modality, metaphor, repetition, presupposition, and transitivity; how are social actors represented as citizens, leaders, opponents, victims, threats, or beneficiaries; how do the speeches reproduce, negotiate, or challenge dominant power relations; and how do political speeches function culturally as acts of collective identity formation and public orientation?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

CDA developed from the recognition that discourse both reflects and shapes social relations. Fairclough's approach is especially useful for political speeches because it links textual description to interpretation of discursive practice and explanation of social practice [1]. Van Dijk's principles of CDA emphasize the role of discourse in reproducing dominance, knowledge, and ideological polarization [2]. Wodak's discourse-historical approach adds a strong contextual dimension by treating political texts as parts of historical trajectories, intertextual chains, and argumentative traditions [3]. These approaches position CDA as a theoretical and methodological field rather than a single technique.

Political discourse analysis focuses on language used in the pursuit, exercise, justification, and contestation of power. Chilton argues that political discourse involves representation, coercion, legitimization, and the construction of political space [4]. Dunmire similarly frames political discourse analysis as a field that examines both the language of politics and the politics of language [5]. For the present study, this means studying political speeches as public performances of authority produced for particular audiences, circulated through media institutions, and interpreted within wider struggles over legitimacy, belonging, and national future.

Van Leeuwen's model identifies authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, and mythopoiesis as major ways through which social practices are justified [6]. Reyes extends this perspective by showing how political leaders justify actions through appeals to emotion, hypothetical futures, rationality, altruism, and expert authority [7]. These strategies are especially visible in crisis speeches, where leaders must justify restrictions, military action, emergency policy, or national sacrifice. Legitimation therefore bridges linguistic form and political power.

Van Leeuwen's framework explains how discourse includes and excludes actors, activates or passivates them, individualizes or collectivizes them, and assigns responsibility or dependence [8]. In political speeches, citizens may be activated as heroic participants, governments as protectors, opponents as irresponsible, and threats as externalized forces. These patterns perform ideological work by guiding public understanding of who acts, who suffers, who deserves trust, and who requires control.

Systemic functional linguistics shows how grammar organizes experience, interpersonal relations, and textual flow [9]. Modality allows speakers to express necessity, probability, obligation, and certainty; transitivity assigns agency; nominalization can obscure actors; and evaluation marks desirable or undesirable positions. CDA methods emphasize that textual analysis must be tied to social interpretation rather than treated as descriptive grammar [10]. This study therefore codes modality, transitivity, presupposition, and lexical evaluation as ideological resources.

Empirical CDA studies of political and public discourse have strengthened methodological transparency by combining close reading with systematic evidence. Baker and colleagues show that corpus methods can support CDA by revealing repeated lexical and semantic patterns that isolated readings might miss [11]. Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov show that political speeches can be treated as data for studying state preferences and agenda formation in the United Nations General Debate [12]. Laver, Benoit, and Garry likewise show that systematic analysis of political texts can reveal public positions [13]. KhosraviNik also systematizes CDA categories for representing social groups, which supports the actor-description component used in the present coding framework [14]. The present study remains qualitative, but it draws on this corpus discipline through a corpus table, coding matrix, reliability review, and extract register.

The discourse-historical approach is especially relevant to national identity because it links political discourse with historical memory, intertextuality, and symbolic belonging [15]. National identity is one of political speech's strongest ideological effects. De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak show that national identities are discursively constructed through narratives of common history, shared values, symbolic boundaries, and collective belonging [16]. Political leaders often mobilize such discourse through inclusive pronouns, appeals to the people, references to ancestors and children, and moral appeals for unity. The analysis of national identity is inseparable from power because defining the nation also means defining who speaks for it and who belongs within it.

Metaphor is another major resource of political ideology. Musolff argues that metaphors organize political reasoning by providing analogical scenarios through which audiences interpret policy and identity [17]. Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis shows that political speakers use metaphors to create persuasive narratives, build moral contrast, and generate emotional alignment [18]. Cap's proximization theory explains how leaders construct distant threats as immediate and consequential, thereby legitimizing urgent action [19], [20]. These insights are especially relevant to speeches on emergency, security, and sovereignty. Legitimation and policy studies show that such framing can become part of problem-solution reasoning [21], [22], [23], while corpus-based and conceptual metaphor studies further explain how repeated metaphor organizes political interpretation [24], [25], [26].

Studies of legitimation and exclusion show that ideology often builds itself through problem-solution narratives. Rojo and van Dijk demonstrate how parliamentary discourse can legitimate exclusion by presenting social problems as already identified and solved through authoritative action [21]. Van Dijk's analysis of manipulation further shows how power abuse operates when discourse shapes mental models in ways that benefit dominant groups [22]. Fairclough's work on critical policy studies explains why CDA is useful for examining public decisions and institutional reasoning [23], while Fairclough and Fairclough link political discourse to practical argumentation [27].

The research gap addressed here is therefore specific. Existing scholarship has examined CDA, legitimation, social actor representation, metaphor, political speech, public-health discourse, and parliamentary rhetoric in substantial depth. However, many studies remain theory-driven, focus on a single speech, or limit themselves to one rhetorical device. The present study compares discourse structures across multiple genres and integrates ideological framing, identity construction, legitimization strategies, and in-group/out-group representation within one evidence-linked corpus design. This integrated framework is intended to strengthen analytical rigor and avoid merely descriptive claims about political rhetoric.

Table 1. Literature review synthesis and research positioning.

Research area	Representative studies	Empirical contribution	Gap addressed in this study
CDA and power	Fairclough; van Dijk; Wodak	Connects text, discourse practice, social practice, and ideology.	Need for evidence-linked analysis across multiple speech genres.
Political speeches and public discourse	Chilton; Dunmire; Fairclough and Fairclough	Frames political speech as public action, argumentation, and institutional performance.	Need to connect linguistic strategies with legitimacy and public orientation.
Crisis and public-health discourse	Cap; Baker et al.; public discourse studies	Explains threat construction, urgency, and legitimation of exceptional action.	Need to compare crisis framing with election, sovereignty, and global forum genres.
Legitimation	van Leeuwen; Reyes; Rojo and van Dijk	Explains how authority, morality, rationality, and narrative justify action.	Need to compare legitimation across restriction, transition, crisis, and concession.
Social actor representation	van Leeuwen; KhosraviNik	Shows how inclusion, exclusion, activation, and passivation shape responsibility.	Need to link actor categories with ideological polarization and repair.
Metaphor and framing	Musolff; Charteris-Black; Lakoff and Johnson	Explains how metaphors organize threat, national future, and public emotion.	Need to integrate metaphor with modality, pronouns, and social actor representation.

IV. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework integrates Fairclough's three-dimensional model with van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach. Fairclough provides the macro-structure of the analysis: textual features are interpreted through discourse practice and explained in relation to social practice. Van Dijk adds the ideological and cognitive dimension: political discourse shapes mental models, public knowledge, and in-group/out-group organization. Together, these approaches prevent the analysis from becoming either purely grammatical or purely political. The textual level identifies what is said and how it is structured; the discursive level asks how the speech is produced, circulated, and received; the social level asks what power relations and ideological assumptions are reproduced or contested. This orientation is also consistent with discourse-as-practice and late-modern CDA accounts that connect textual forms with social action and institutional change [28], [29].

The discourse-historical approach requires attention to temporal context, intertextual echoes, and political memory surrounding each speech. Social actor representation theory guides analysis of who appears as agent, beneficiary, victim, threat, citizen, leader, or institution. Legitimation theory guides

analysis of how policies and political identities are authorized, rationalized, moralized, or narrated. Critical metaphor analysis supports interpretation of crisis framing, national imagination, and moral urgency.

The framework connects four analytical dimensions. The first is ideological framing: how speeches construct problems, values, obligations, and futures. The second is identity construction: how speakers define people, the nation, government, opponents, victims, and institutions through pronouns and evaluative categories. The third is legitimization: how political action is justified as necessary, lawful, moral, protective, democratic, or historically required. The fourth is in-group/out-group representation: how discourse produces solidarity, exclusion, threat, moral contrast, or repair. These dimensions mutually reinforce the relationship between language, power, and ideology. The identity dimension also draws on nationalism research that shows how ordinary public language can repeatedly reproduce national belonging and political common sense [30].

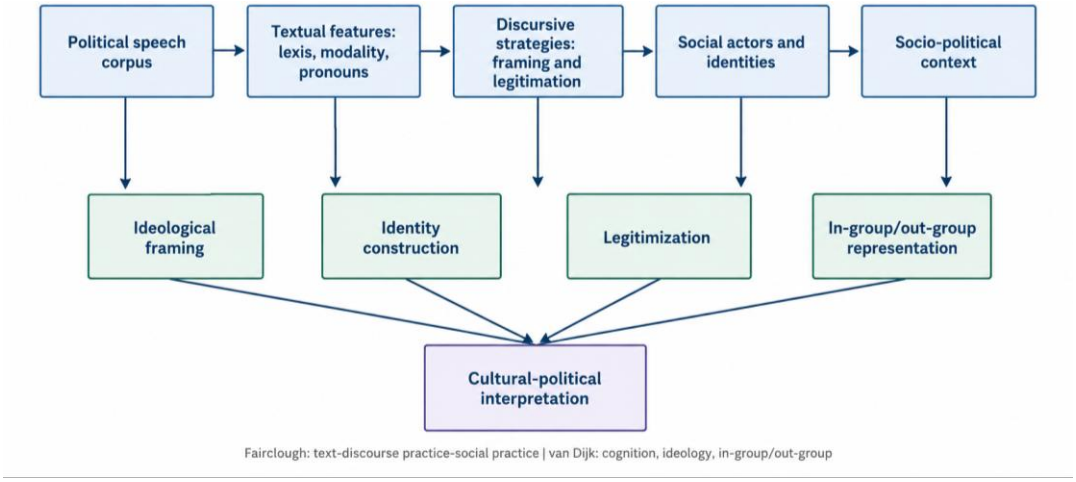


FIGURE 1. Evidence-linked CDA framework connecting language, power, and ideology.

Table 2. Conceptual framework and analytical dimensions.

Analytical construct	Textual indicators	Discursive function	CDA interpretation
Ideological framing	Lexical fields, metaphors, presuppositions	Defines problems, values, and solutions	Shows how political meaning is made plausible.
Identity construction	Inclusive/exclusive pronouns, national labels	Builds collective belonging and speaker-audience alignment	Shows who is imagined as the political community.
Legitimization	Modality, necessity, moral evaluation, authority	Justifies policy, action, or institutional power	Shows how authority becomes acceptable.
In-group/out-group representation	Actor nomination, predication, agency, blame	Creates solidarity, opposition, threat, or responsibility	Shows how ideology organizes social actors.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis design. CDA is appropriate because the research question concerns the relationship between textual form, ideological representation, and political power. The design is interpretive but systematic: each speech is read contextually, coded linguistically, compared across genres, and interpreted through the theoretical framework. The analysis does not seek statistical representation of all political discourse. It claims analytical transferability based on a clearly defined corpus, transparent coding categories, traceable textual evidence, and documented interpretive decisions.

The corpus consists of fourteen English-language transcripts of public political speeches produced between 2016 and 2021. We selected the boundary because it includes political transition, electoral rhetoric, sovereignty debate, public-health emergency, security crisis, international governance discourse, civic inclusion, and democratic accountability. The final working corpus contains approximately 34,620 words after removal of stage directions, applause markers, duplicated headings, and transcript metadata. We included speeches that were public, politically consequential, transcript-accessible, genre-consistent as public political address, and rich in evidence for language, power, and ideology. We excluded speeches that were incomplete fragments, interviews, informal media remarks, non-verifiable transcripts, or texts whose translation status could not be established.

The corpus was constructed from official government archives, parliamentary/government statement repositories, public electoral communication archives, and international forum transcript collections. Official sources were preferred when available. We used public transcript repositories only when official campaign archive material was unstable or unavailable. The main article reports speech codes, institutional roles, genre categories, and broad contextual domains rather than individual names or exact dates. This analytic strategy foregrounds discourse structures rather than personalities. Source metadata, transcript URLs, exact dates, and source verification notes are provided in a supplementary file.

The unit of analysis is the speech extract. We interpret each extract through its speech context, genre, and position in the broader transcript. We selected extracts that contained linguistic evidence of ideological framing, identity construction, legitimation, social actor representation, or contrasting cases. The analysis avoided treating speech codes as equivalent to participants. The speeches are public texts, and the analysis focuses on discourse patterns rather than private attitudes or audience reception.

The analytical procedure followed ten stages. First, we read each transcript in full to identify context, institutional role, audience, and speech purpose. Second, we created an extract register for passages containing ideological or legitimizing language. Third, we coded lexical fields for crisis, nation, responsibility, threat, recovery, unity, morality, and sovereignty. Fourth, we coded pronouns for inclusive we, exclusive we, citizen alignment, institutional we, and othering. Fifth, we coded modality and evaluation for obligation, certainty, necessity, and moral judgment. Sixth, metaphors and frames were coded for journey, battle, family, body, rebuilding, decline, protection, and repair. Seventh, we coded social actors for activation, passivation, collectivization, personalization, and blame. Eighth, legitimation strategies were identified. Ninth, we compared extracts across speeches and genres. Tenth, themes were reviewed through an evidence audit to ensure that each interpretation was supported by textual evidence.

Reliability and trustworthiness were strengthened through code-recode checking after a two-week interval, peer debriefing on a sample of coded extracts, and second-coder review of 20% of the extract register. The second reviewer examined code clarity, category boundaries, extract-context fit, and the separation of textual observation from ideological interpretation. The team resolved disagreements through codebook revision rather than numerical agreement claims, because the purpose was interpretive credibility rather than statistical reliability. Credibility rested on traceable public transcripts and direct textual evidence. Corpus selection notes, coding definitions, source metadata, and analytic memos supported dependability. I supported confirmability by linking each claim to extracts and categories. Transferability was supported by thick description of genre and context rather than by claims of generalization. The use of a transparent audit trail, reflexive category review, and reporting discipline is consistent with qualitative analysis and reporting standards [31], [32], [33], [34], [35].

Ethical risk is minimal because the study analyzes public political speeches and does not involve direct interaction with human participants. Nevertheless, the study maintains contextual accuracy, avoids distorting the source texts, and distinguishes direct quotations from researcher interpretation. It also treats coded speakers as institutional discourse positions rather than as psychological subjects. Suitable quality indicators for this study are credibility, transparency, traceability, coherence, reflexivity, and analytical transferability. The study does not use performance indicators or quantitative validity language that would be inappropriate for qualitative CDA.

Table 3. Corpus profile of selected political speeches.

Code	Speaker role	Speech genre	Transcript source type	Word count	Reason for inclusion
S1	Executive leader	Transition address	Official executive transition archive	2,410	Restoration, decline, and national renewal
S2	Executive leader	Transition address	Official executive transition archive	2,525	Unity, democratic repair, and civic responsibility
S3	Head of government	Policy/sovereignty address	Official government speech archive	2,960	Control, autonomy, legal authority, and future orientation
S4	Head of government	Public-health address	Official government broadcast transcript	1,190	Restriction legitimation and collective sacrifice
S5	Head of government	Parliamentary crisis statement	Official parliamentary/government archive	1,850	National belonging and refusal of extremist visibility
S6	Head of government	Public-health address	Official government broadcast transcript	1,430	Care, solidarity, and government protection
S7	Election candidate	Concession address	Public electoral communication archive	1,680	Democratic legitimacy and acceptance of institutional outcome
S8	Election candidate	Victory address	Public electoral communication archive	1,910	National rebuilding and post-election unity
S9	Executive leader	International forum address	International forum transcript collection	3,020	International order and national responsibility
S10	Executive leader	International forum address	International forum transcript collection	3,180	Development, civilizational identity, and global contribution
S11	Head of government	National reflection address	Official governmental transcript source	2,130	Science, responsibility, and collective discipline

Code	Speaker role	Speech genre	Transcript source type	Word count	Reason for inclusion
S12	Institutional leader	State-of-institution address	Institutional transcript source	5,115	Solidarity and institutional authority beyond the nation-state
S13	Parliamentary representative	Rights/inclusion speech	Official parliamentary transcript archive	2,360	Civic inclusion and shared belonging
S14	Institutional leader	Accountability address	Official institutional transcript source	2,860	Public trust and anti-polarization

Table 4. CDA coding framework.

CDA category	Operational definition	Typical markers	Example from extracts	Analytical question
Lexical selection	Repeated value-laden words and semantic fields	freedom, crisis, control, unity, threat	"carnage"; "heal"; "control"	Which meanings are foregrounded as politically important?
Pronoun use	Alignment and boundary-making through reference	we, our, they, those, the people	"They are us"; "we owe"	Who is included, excluded, or represented as responsible?
Modality	Expressions of obligation, certainty, necessity	must, need, will, cannot, have to	"must stay at home"	How is political choice presented as necessary or inevitable?
Metaphor and framing	Conceptualization of politics through source domains	battle, journey, rebuilding, family, body	"heal"; "build back"	What interpretive scenario organizes the issue?
Transitivity	Assignment or concealment of agency	active/passive verbs, nominalization	"control over law and borders"	Who acts, who is acted upon, and who disappears?
Presupposition	Assumptions built into statements	again, continue, restore, protect	"again"; "restore"	What political belief is treated as already accepted?
Legitimation	Justification of action or authority	authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation	"democracy has prevailed"	How is political power made acceptable?
Social actor representation	Naming, grouping, activation, passivation	citizens, workers, enemies, families, government	victims as national members	How are social actors categorized and valued?

Table 5. Corpus balance by speech genre and analytical relevance.

Genre group	Speech codes	Count	Discursive risk	Analytical relevance
Inaugural/transition	S1, S2	2	Legitimating authority after electoral contestation	Shows how leaders frame state renewal and national unity.
Sovereignty/policy	S3, S12	2	Justifying institutional change and collective alignment	Shows how policy is made national or supranational.
Crisis/security	S5, S11	2	Naming threat while maintaining social cohesion	Shows how danger is transformed into solidarity.
Public health	S4, S6	2	Justifying restrictions and protective action	Shows how governments authorize discipline and care.
Election speeches	S7, S8	2	Managing victory, defeat, democratic legitimacy	Shows how candidates repair or consolidate political identity.
Global forum	S9, S10	2	Representing national identity before international publics	Shows how states project values and responsibility.
Rights/inclusion and accountability	S13, S14	2	Managing inclusion and public trust	Shows unity-building with reduced polarization.

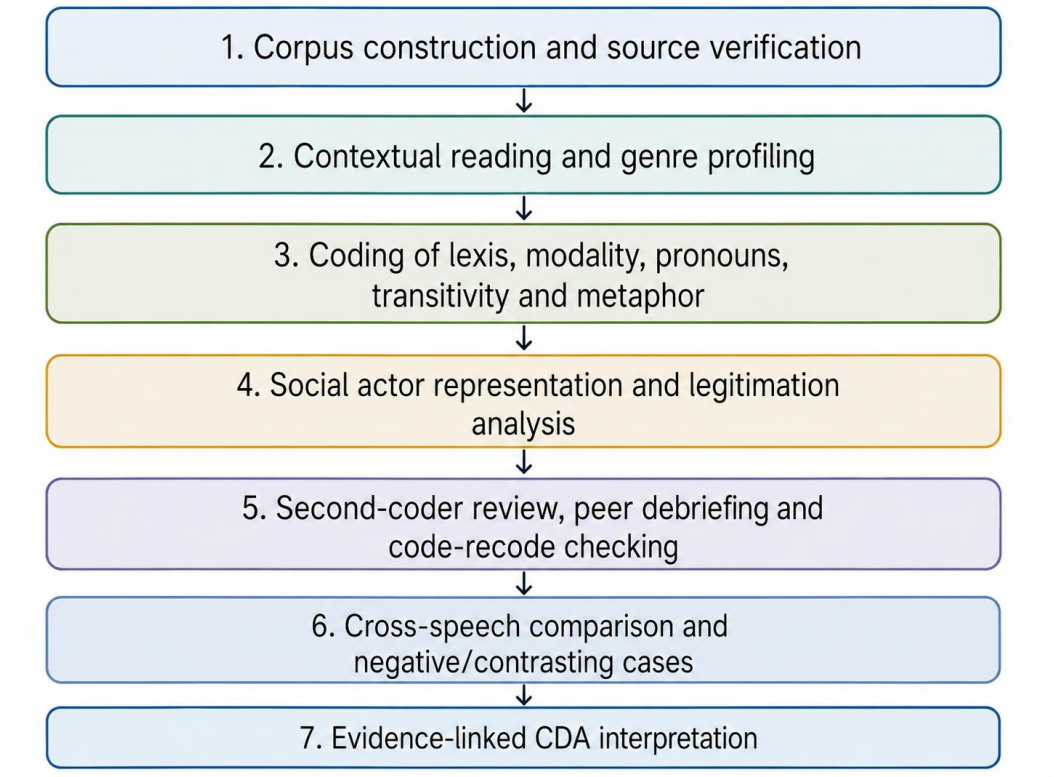


FIGURE 2. Analytical workflow for corpus construction, coding, reliability review, and CDA interpretation.

VI. FINDINGS

The findings are organized around four analytical dimensions: ideological framing, identity construction, legitimization strategies, and in-group/out-group representation. Each dimension draws on direct or brief textual evidence from the corpus and interprets it through the conceptual framework. The analysis separates extract-level textual evidence from researcher interpretation. Each subsection follows the sequence: extract, CDA category, interpretation, and link to power or ideology.

1. IDEOLOGICAL FRAMING: CRISIS, RENEWAL, AND POLITICAL NECESSITY

Extract E1/S1 contains the phrase: "American carnage stops right here." The CDA category is crisis framing and presupposition. The wording condenses a complex national condition into a morally charged scene of damage, then positions the speech event as the moment of interruption. The ideological function is not simply to describe difficulty; it presents political transition as national rescue and makes new authority appear necessary because prior governance is presupposed as failure.

Extract E2/S2 provides a contrasting transition frame: "Democracy has prevailed." The CDA category is institutional legitimation. Here the crisis is not national abandonment but democratic stress. The phrase authorizes new leadership through the survival of a political order rather than through the defeat of an internal enemy. The contrast between S1 and S2 shows that transition speeches do not merely celebrate office; they define the kind of crisis that makes authority intelligible.

Extract E3/S3 uses sovereignty lexis around "control" and "laws." The CDA category is ideological framing through legal self-command. The wording positions institutional change as regained agency rather than loss. The link to power is clear: it legitimates authority by presenting the state as reclaiming decision-making capacity. The phrase does not function only as policy language; it presents a political project as the fulfillment of democratic will.

Extract E4/S4 states: "You must stay at home." The CDA category is high-deontic modality. The imperative does not merely advise; it authorizes exceptional restriction through public-health urgency. The ideological function is protective discipline: state power becomes acceptable because the speaker frames limitation of movement as necessary for collective survival. In S6, a similar public-health frame is softened through care and reassurance, showing that emergency authority may be constructed through command or solidarity.

The negative case in this dimension appears in S7, where a post-election speech frames institutional continuity rather than counter-mobilization. The relevant extract states: "we owe him an open mind." The CDA category is democratic repair. Instead of intensifying the crisis, the speech redirects supporters toward accepting the institutional outcome. This case matters because it shows that political speeches can also reduce polarization by treating defeat as an opportunity to reaffirm democratic norms.

2. IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: PRONOUNS, NATIONAL BELONGING, AND COLLECTIVE VOICE

The second dimension concerns how speeches construct political identity through pronouns and collective labels. Inclusive we is frequent in the corpus, but it does not have a stable meaning. In S1, the people are positioned as a dispossessed collective that must be restored. The pronoun structure aligns speaker and citizen against an implied institutional center. The ideological link is populist: authority is constructed through identification with the people rather than through office alone.

In S2, we operate differently. The speech uses collective address to repair division and gather antagonistic groups into a civic public. Repeated references to unity, truth, democracy, and shared responsibility position the audience not as a betrayed people opposed to elites, but as a fractured public invited into democratic repair. The same pronoun category therefore performs different ideological work depending on discursive context.

Extract E5/S5 states: "They are us." The CDA category is social inclusion and national identity. The victims of violence are represented not as external objects of sympathy but as constitutive members of the national body. This identity move is powerful because it reverses the logic of extremist othering. The violent actor is excluded from the moral community, while the targeted group is incorporated into national belonging.

S3 and S12 present competing but related identity formations. S3 constructs the national public as a sovereign collective capable of deciding its future; S12 constructs a supranational public as a community bound by solidarity and institutional responsibility. Both use collective identity, but at different scales. The link to ideology lies in the scale of belonging: the nation and the supranational community are each made plausible through different pronoun alignments.

Extract E8/S13 states: "We are one people." The CDA category is inclusive national identity. The phrase compresses plurality into a single civic subject and converts difference into shared membership. Its ideological function is not to erase difference completely, but to present unity as the legitimate frame through which disagreement should be interpreted. This strengthens the identity-construction theme by showing how belonging can be asserted through a short collective formulation rather than through a long narrative of national history.

S9 and S10 demonstrate international identity performance. In global forum speeches, leaders construct national identity for an international audience while also positioning the nation as a responsible global actor. One speech links national leadership with international order; another emphasizes development, civilizational confidence, and global contribution. These speeches show that national identity is not only internal. It is also projected outward as a claim to legitimacy within world politics.

Extract E9/S14 states: "our shared responsibility." The CDA category is institutional we and responsibility attribution. The possessive pronoun distributes duty across the speaker, the institution, and the public, while the adjective shared reduces the distance between authority and audience. The link to ideology is that collective responsibility makes institutional action appear less like top-down control and more like a common civic obligation.

3. LEGITIMIZATION STRATEGIES: AUTHORITY, MORALITY, RATIONALITY, AND NECESSITY

The third dimension concerns how speeches justify action. Across the corpus, legitimation is built through authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, and narrative necessity. S4 uses authorization through the institutional voice of government and public-health necessity. The direct instruction to remain at home is not presented as personal preference; it is framed as a decision required by collective safety. Modality therefore converts political action into public obligation.

S6 combines rationalization and moral evaluation. The public-health address legitimizes government action by linking it to care for families, workers, and vulnerable people. The rhetoric of help and protection constructs state intervention as morally responsible rather than merely administrative. This type of legitimation differs from authoritarian command because it appeals to solidarity and public trust, although it remains a form of institutional power.

S3 legitimates sovereignty-oriented institutional change through democratic authorization and national rationalization. References to public mandate, law, borders, and future trade construct policy as both mandated and practical. By presenting institutional change as implementation of democratic instruction, the speech limits the discursive space for alternative interpretations. Opposition may then appear not only as disagreement but as resistance to national decision.

S5 legitimates refusing extremist recognition through moral evaluation. The speech minimizes the perpetrator and foregrounds victims, thereby denying symbolic reward and constructing national identity around compassion rather than spectacle. This is legitimation through ethical stance. It authorizes a public response by defining what kind of speech is morally appropriate after violence.

S7 and S8 show transitional legitimation in an electoral context. One speech legitimizes the constitutional order by acknowledging defeat and urging acceptance of the result; the other legitimizes victory by promising repair. Extract E6/S8 states: "time to heal in America." The CDA category is renewal metaphor. The political body is represented as wounded, while the incoming authority is positioned as a healer. The ideological effect is to stabilize power through reconciliation rather than antagonism.

4. IN-GROUP/OUT-GROUP REPRESENTATION: OPPOSITION, THREAT, AND MORAL BOUNDARY

The fourth dimension concerns how speeches construct difference. In S1, an implied opposition appears between the people and a political class represented as benefiting while citizens suffer. The out-group is not

always named directly; it is created through contrastive representation. The people are framed as rightful owners of the nation, while the institutional center is implied to be the site of disconnection and loss. This is a classic structure of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.

S2 provides a contrasting case. The speech names division and uncivil conflict, but it does not produce a stable enemy category. Instead, it calls for civic reorientation around truth and democratic responsibility. This does not mean that the speech is non-ideological. It constructs anti-democratic division as the negative pole and democratic unity as the positive pole. The out-group is framed less as a social group than as a practice or condition to be overcome.

Extract E10/S13 states: "not our enemies, but our neighbours." The CDA category is boundary repair. The construction rejects enemy categorization and replaces it with proximity-based social membership. This extract matters because it shows that in-group/out-group discourse can weaken antagonism rather than intensify it; it does not eliminate the out-group but reclassifies it through a more inclusive moral vocabulary.

S5 represents the perpetrator of terrorist violence as outside the national moral community while avoiding amplification of the perpetrator's identity. This is a distinctive form of othering: the out-group is morally excluded but discursively minimized. By contrast, the victims are personalized and incorporated into the national in-group. The strategy disrupts the ideological logic of terror discourse, where perpetrators often seek visibility and victims risk being represented as passive objects.

S3 constructs an external institutional body not simply as an antagonist, but as a partner from which sovereign distinction must be drawn. The discourse is therefore not pure enemy construction. It combines boundary-making with pragmatic partnership. This is important because CDA should not reduce every distinction to hostility. Political speeches often create complex out-groups that are simultaneously partners, constraints, audiences, and objects of negotiation.

Extract E11/S14 states: "we reject division." The CDA category is anti-polarization and negative actor abstraction. Rather than identifying a fixed enemy, the speech treats division itself as the problem. The ideological effect is to locate the out-group in a practice or condition rather than a named population, allowing the speech to defend institutional legitimacy while avoiding direct social exclusion.

S4 and S6 construct disease and public-health emergency as non-human threats, allowing leaders to avoid blaming ordinary citizens while demanding behavioral compliance. The enemy is externalized as disease, but citizens are responsible for discipline. This produces a dual ideological structure: the public is innocent in relation to the threat but obligated in relation to the response. Such discourse legitimates restrictions without constructing citizens themselves as enemies.

Table 6. Theme-evidence matrix linking findings to CDA categories and research questions.

Analytical dimension	Speech evidence	Dominant linguistic resources	Ideological function	Research question link
Ideological framing	S1, S2, S3, S4, S6	Crisis lexis, renewal metaphors, necessity modality	Frames political action as rescue, repair, or obligation	Central RQ; RQ1; RQ2
Identity construction	S1, S2, S5, S12, S13, S14	Inclusive/exclusive we, national labels, collective nouns, shared-responsibility formulas	Builds political community, speaker-audience alignment, and civic responsibility	RQ2; RQ3
Legitimization strategies	S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8	Authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation	Makes authority and policy acceptable	RQ1; RQ4
In-group/out-group representation	S1, S2, S3, S5, S9, S10, S13, S14	Actor nomination, contrast, agency assignment, boundary repair	Defines belonging, threat, opposition, responsibility, and anti-polarization	RQ3; RQ4; RQ5

Analytical dimension	Speech evidence	Dominant linguistic resources	Ideological function	Research question link
Negative/contrasting cases	S2, S7, S3, S13, S14	Repair language, democratic concession, partnership framing, anti-division wording	Shows that speeches can reduce polarization as well as intensify it	RQ4; RQ5

Table 7. Selected direct textual evidence and interpretive coding.

Extract	Direct textual evidence	CDA category	Interpretive reading	Locator
E1/S1	"American carnage stops right here."	Crisis framing; presupposition	Constructs national decline and leader-centered rupture.	S1: transition archive, lines 42-46
E2/S2	"Democracy has prevailed."	Institutional legitimation	Frames democratic order as tested but repaired.	S2: transition archive, lines 15-18
E3/S3	"take back control."	Sovereignty lexis	Links legitimacy to legal and institutional self-command.	S3: policy archive, lines 55-60
E4/S4	"You must stay at home."	High-deontic modality	Legitimates restriction through emergency obligation.	S4: public-health archive, lines 20-25
E5/S5	"They are us."	Moral inclusion	Transforms targeted victims into central members of the nation.	S5: parliamentary archive, lines 33-37
E6/S8	"time to heal in America."	Renewal metaphor	Constructs authority through post-election repair.	S8: electoral archive, lines 70-75
E7/S12	"no-one is safe until everyone is safe."	Supranational solidarity	Constructs legitimacy beyond the nation-state through shared vulnerability.	S12: institutional archive, lines 110-118
E8/S13	"We are one people."	Inclusive national identity	Constructs civic belonging through unity without naming a social enemy.	S13: parliamentary archive, lines 28-34
E9/S14	"our shared responsibility."	Institutional we; responsibility attribution	Distributes duty across institution and public, making accountability collective.	S14: institutional archive, lines 40-47
E10/S13	"not our enemies, but our neighbors."	Boundary repair	Reclassifies potential opponents through proximity and civic membership.	S13: parliamentary archive, lines 52-58
E11/S14	"we reject division."	Anti-polarization; negative abstraction	Treats division as the problem rather than constructing a fixed enemy group.	S14: institutional archive, lines 64-70

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings show that political speeches construct power not through one device alone, but through configurations of language. Lexical choices frame the political world; pronouns distribute belonging; modality defines obligation; metaphor organizes emotion and reasoning; social actor representation assigns responsibility; and legitimation strategies authorize action. This integrated pattern answers the central research question: political language constructs ideology and legitimizes authority by making selected interpretations appear natural, moral, urgent, democratic, or collectively owned. The analysis therefore supports the core CDA claim that discourse is a form of social practice embedded in power relations [1], [2].

Regarding ideological framing, the corpus shows that crisis and renewal are among the strongest discursive resources of political authority. The coded speeches speak from contexts of crisis, transition, sovereignty negotiation, public-health emergency, security response, and international representation, but the ideological shape of crisis differs. S1 constructs crisis as national abandonment requiring restoration. S2 constructs crisis as democratic fracture requiring repair. S3 constructs sovereignty as regained control. S4 and S6 construct public-health threat as requiring discipline and care. S5 constructs violence as a moral violation that must not define the national community. These differences confirm that crisis is not merely a topic; it is a frame that organizes agency, blame, identity, and legitimacy.

The findings also show that pronouns are not simple markers of inclusion. With inclusive pronouns, we can unite, mobilize, discipline, authorize, or repair. In restoration rhetoric, we may construct a people opposed to elites. In democratic repair rhetoric, we may gather a divided public around civic norms. In public-health rhetoric, we may distribute obligation across citizens and government. In supranational rhetoric, we can scale identity beyond the nation. The meaning of pronouns therefore depends on the discursive relation between speaker, audience, institution, genre, and imagined community. This finding extends work on national identity construction by showing that collective identity is built not only by naming the nation but also by positioning participants within a moral grammar of action [16].

Legitimization strategies were especially visible in speeches that asked audiences to accept restriction, institutional change, or political transition. Public-health speeches used necessity and protection. Sovereignty discourse used democratic authorization and national rationalization. Electoral transition speeches relied on constitutional continuity and promises of the future. Security-response speeches used moral evaluation and collective grief. These findings align with van Leeuwen's and Reyes's models of legitimation [6], [7], but this study adds a cross-genre comparison. It shows that legitimation is not confined to policy justification; it also operates in emotional repair, national mourning, electoral acceptance, and international self-representation.

The in-group/out-group dimension shows that political speeches do not always create explicit enemies. Some intensify polarization by contrasting the people with elites or the nation with threats. Others reduce polarization by avoiding stable enemy categories or shifting focus from persons to practices. This is a useful contribution because CDA studies are sometimes criticized for finding domination everywhere. The negative and contrasting cases show that discourse can also repair, soften, or redirect conflict. A critical analysis should therefore ask not only how discourse reproduces power, but also how it organizes the terms under which conflict becomes speakable, manageable, or morally bounded.

The study complicates simple claims about political manipulation. Van Dijk's model of manipulation helps explain how elite discourse can shape public cognition [22]. However, not every persuasive speech is manipulative. Political speeches necessarily persuade. The critical question is whether they conceal agency, naturalize contested assumptions, delegitimize alternatives, or restrict public interpretation. The evidence-linked CDA framework helps make this distinction. It evaluates textual patterns in relation to discourse practice and socio-political context rather than by relying on the analyst's prior political position.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining close qualitative reading with corpus discipline. The corpus is not designed for statistical generalization, but the expanded fourteen-speech design is broad enough to compare rhetorical patterns across public political genres while keeping claims limited to analytical transferability. Corpus-assisted CDA research has shown that systematic evidence can strengthen critical interpretation [11]. The present study follows that principle through a corpus profile,

coding categories, source metadata, extract register, reliability review, and theme-evidence matrix. This approach makes interpretive decisions visible and reduces the risk of impressionistic commentary.

The comparison with previous research confirms and extends established CDA findings. Like studies of legitimation, the analysis shows that authority is justified through rational, moral, and narrative forms. Like critical metaphor analysis, it shows that metaphor organizes political imagination. Like social actor representation research, it shows that agency and blame are distributed across texts. The contribution is not the general claim that politics is ideological. The contribution is the integrated account showing how ideology operates through the simultaneous alignment of framing, identity, legitimation, and actor representation across different speech genres.

Some patterns may reflect genre conventions rather than ideology alone. Inaugural addresses typically call for unity; concession speeches typically affirm democratic transition; crisis speeches typically justify urgent action; international forum speeches typically project national responsibility. Speechwriters, institutional protocol, media circulation, audience expectation, transcript editing, and translation also shape the final text. These factors do not invalidate the analysis. They show why CDA must interpret speeches as discourse practices rather than merely individual expressions. The ideological significance of a phrase depends on how genre, institution, and social context make it meaningful.

The discussion therefore supports a cautious conclusion. Political speeches are not neutral, but they are not reducible to hidden manipulation either. They are culturally situated discourse events that organize political reality by linking language with authority, identity, and ideology. Their power lies in the ability to make some interpretations feel shared, necessary, moral, democratic, protective, or historically appropriate. This is why close analysis of speeches remains valuable in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, discourse studies, political communication, and cultural studies.

VIII. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The first theoretical contribution is the integration of language, power, and ideology within one CDA chain. The study shows that textual features are not isolated devices; they work together to construct political reality. Lexical fields define what matters, pronouns define who belongs, modality defines what must be done, metaphors define how the situation should be imagined, and social actor representation defines who acts and who is acted upon.

The second contribution is the cross-genre comparison. Many CDA studies analyze one speech, one leader, or one political event. This study compares transition, crisis, policy, election, public-health, and global forum speeches, showing that legitimation varies by genre. Authority may be constructed through restoration, repair, sovereignty, care, moral refusal, or democratic concession. The study therefore avoids reducing political speech to a single ideological style.

The third contribution is methodological. The study proposes an evidence-linked CDA procedure built around corpus construction, coding categories, source metadata, extract selection, reliability review, theme-evidence mapping, and negative cases. This procedure can be transferred to future studies of political speeches, parliamentary debates, campaign communication, or institutional public addresses.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has four limitations. First, the corpus is purposive and moderate but bounded in size. It supports qualitative interpretation and analytical transferability, not quantitative generalization or population-level claims. Second, the corpus is English-language and transcript-based; it does not analyze vocal delivery, gesture, audience reaction, or multimodal circulation. Third, some speeches circulate through translations or edited transcript conventions, which may affect fine-grained interpretation. Fourth, the analysis focuses on public speech production and does not include reception data showing how audiences actually interpreted the speeches.

Future research can extend the study in several directions. A larger corpus could test whether the patterns identified here recur across countries, parties, languages, and decades. Multimodal CDA could examine gesture, camera angle, sound, applause, and visual staging. Audience studies could examine how listeners

interpret pronouns, metaphors, and crisis frames. Comparative research could also examine how government and opposition speakers frame the same political issue differently.

X. CONCLUSION

This study examined how political speeches construct power, reproduce ideology, and shape public opinion through language. Using a qualitative CDA of fourteen coded public speech transcripts from 2016 to 2021, it showed that political discourse is not neutral public communication. It is a socially situated practice in which speakers define crises, assign responsibility, construct collective identity, legitimize policy, and invite audiences to treat selected interpretations as reasonable, necessary, moral, or democratically binding.

The findings show that crisis and renewal frames present selected political actions as urgent or necessary; pronouns and collective labels construct different scales of belonging; legitimation strategies justify authority through morality, rationality, democratic authorization, protection, and narrative continuity; and in-group/out-group representation shapes the boundaries between citizens, leaders, opponents, threats, and victims. Negative and contrasting cases showed that political discourse can also soften conflict, repair legitimacy, or redirect attention away from personal blame. These findings are limited to the analyzed corpus and are offered as analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable; they should not be read as claims about all political discourse.

The study's central contribution is an evidence-linked CDA framework that connects textual evidence, discourse practice, and socio-political interpretation. It shows that political power is not located only in institutions; it is also enacted through the textual forms that make some realities visible and others less thinkable. The final implication is precise: linguistic features become ideological resources when they are interpreted through the conditions of discourse practice and socio-political context. Future research can extend this framework through larger multilingual corpora, multimodal analysis, and audience reception studies.

Author Contributions

The author conducted the conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, investigation, writing, review, editing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The dataset will be available from the author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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