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**The Representation of Class in British Political Discourse: A**

**Comparative Study of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

*We began only by His facilitation, we reached the end only through His guidance, and we achieved our goals only by His grace. All praise is due to Allah, who enabled me to accomplish this milestone in my academic journey.*

*I dedicate the fruits of my effort to my ambitious self, who never gave up on me, I dedicate this work to the soul of my beloved father who inspired me to love knowledge and persevere to pursue success. Though you are no longer with us, your spirit lives in my heart. This work is to the one whose prayers were the secret behind my success, my mother. Also, it is dedicated to my dear brothers: Younes, Abderahim, Mohammed Larouci, and all my friends and family. May Allah protect and reward you.*

***"Haifa Touati Tliba"***

*I dedicate this work*

*To my father, my first love, the noblest of men, my support and strength.*

*To my mother, the fountain of tenderness and the source of pure prayers that brought me to this position.*

*To my husband, for his endless patience and his unwavering support that encouraged me to keep going.*

*To the soulmates of my heart, my sisters Souria and Sounia.*

*To the great, my brother Nour El Hadi.*

*To the apples of my eyes, my children Rawane ,Abdel Rahman Yaman. I am proud of all of you, as you are witnesses of my success.*

***"Safa Ben Amar"***

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the representation of social class in British political discourse in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries through a qualitative analysis of several political speeches delivered by different political leaders. This study uses a modified version of Van Dijk's (2006) discourse theory. This work examines politicians' discourse to see how language and rhetorical devices are used to support or counter the idea of social class. It applies 11 rhetorical devices to analyze discourse, compares the approaches of Labour and Conservative leaders, and then compares the representation of social class between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The results reveal several recurring patterns, including the use of binary oppositions to construct class distinctions, the invocation of authority and legitimacy by some leaders to justify their policies based on past achievements, as well as strategies including blame-shifting, and victimization, where political opponents are held responsible for economic and social issues. Despite these similarities, significant differences emerge. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social class representation encompassed a broader range of groups, as the working and middle classes, and was primarily framed in terms of economic ideology. By contrast, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the discourse narrowed to focus on "deserving" and "undeserving" groups, with a shift toward moral and cultural concerns. Populist rhetoric also transitioned from economic discourse to cultural and moral conflicts. While 20<sup>th</sup> century politicians frequently employed historical references, blame attribution, and top-down communication, their 21<sup>st</sup>-century counterparts increasingly rely on emotional appeals, crisis exploitation, and social media to garner public support.

**Keywords:** British political discourse, Conservative Party, Labour Party, Rhetorical devices, Social class.

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Word/Phrase
CM	Chartist Movement
CP	Conservative Party
CS	Code-Switching
EE	Economic Equality
EU	European Union
FR	Formal Register
GL	Globalization
GS	General Strike
IR	Industrial Revolution
LP	Labour Party
NHS	National Health Service
NL	Neoliberalism
PD	Political Discourse
RP	Received Pronunciation
SM	Social Mobility
TUC	Trade Union Congress
VB	Voting Behavior
WS	Welfare State

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# **Introduction**

## **1. Background of the Study**

The representation of class in British political discourse plays a crucial role and has affected political, economic, and social life in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, classes were generally classified into three categories: upper class, middle class (upper middle class and lower middle class), and working class. In contemporary society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the traditional working class has begun to decline, mainly due to the rise of cognitive and artistic jobs. However, class boundaries have also become less clear, although they are still relevant, influenced by globalization, economic changes, and shifts in political ideology.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain witnessed a dramatic shift in class politics, profoundly affecting the original class structure in the United Kingdom. This resulted in the emergence of an entirely new class, born from the Industrial Revolution and the labor movement that began in the early 20th century. Aristocrats began to lose control of land and political office, while the middle class expanded due to educational progress. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Thatcher era introduced neoliberal policies that modernized traditional class structures and promoted individualism over class identities.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century in Britain has seen major changes in the class structure due to globalization and technological advances, which have reshaped class dynamics as the traditional working class has declined. Despite this decline, inequality between economic classes persists, especially in the distribution of wealth and income. Initiatives such as promoting social equality and reducing poverty have helped improve the conditions of some classes but have not completely eliminated classism.

British political discourse refers to the understanding, discussion, and communication of ideas, policies, and information related to political views in Britain. This is conveyed through speeches and meetings that can influence public opinion. During the twentieth century, British political discourse underwent significant changes in various fields, from local issues to global issues, from a unipolar system to a multipolar system, and from economic affairs to social affairs. The twenty-first century has witnessed significant and clear differences, characterized by several factors that contribute to this, including globalization, the technological revolution, and developments in various major events that the world has witnessed.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

This study seeks to investigate the depiction of social class in British political discourse by comparing and analyzing representations of social class in British political discourse in the 20th and 21st centuries. It will analyze significant political speeches to reveal how class is represented in these discourses, the ideological forces that underlie these portrayals, and how these representations respond to changing social situations.

## **4. Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do British political leaders from the Labour and Conservative parties represent social class in their speeches across the 20th and 21st centuries?
2. What rhetorical strategies are used by political leaders to reinforce social class distinctions?
3. How have these strategies evolved over time?

## **5. Aims of Study**

The current study aims to analyze the British political discourse on class representation, focusing on the most significant changes that occurred in social classes during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It also aims to explore the main rhetorical devices used in these discourses by British political leaders in both centuries to represent classes, while exploring the linguistic forms that contributed to shaping the class discourse. It then compares how the vision of social class representation has changed from the 20th to the 21st century.

## **6. Research Significance**

This study contributes to understanding the changing role of social class in British political discourse and provides insights into how language affects and shapes political identities and social structures. The findings may contribute to recent debates on social inequality and class representation in the United Kingdom, highlighting the relevance of political discourse to a more socially aware electorate.

## **7. Research Methodology**

### **7.1. Data Collection**

This study uses qualitative analysis to understand the complex relationship between social class and political discourse in Britain. Data were obtained through political speeches delivered by political leaders and actors to depict the evolution of political discourse across different historical periods in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the 20th century, four political figures were selected: from the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher (1975-1990) and Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) ; from the Labour Party, Tony Blair (1994-2007) and Clement Attlee (1935-1955). From the 21st century, three political figures were chosen, as David Cameron

heads the Conservative Party(2005-2016), and from the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn (2015-2020) and Ed Milliband (2010-2015).

## 7.2. Corpus

The following tables present a comprehensive list of the political speeches analyzed in this study, along with their publication dates and links to their speeches.

**Table 1. List of 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Political Speeches**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Date of Speech</b>	<b>Link</b>
Clement Attlee	labour	11/06/1946	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=156">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=156</a>
Harold Macmillan	conservative	1960	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=109">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=109</a>
Tony Blair	Labour	03/10/1995	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=201">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=201</a>
Tony Blair	Labour	29/09/1998	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=204">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=204</a>
Margaret Thatcher	conservative	12/10/1979	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=125">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=125</a>
Margaret Thatcher	conservative	10/10/1980	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=126">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=126</a>

**Table 2. List of 21<sup>st</sup> Century British Political Speeches**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Date of Speech</b>	<b>Link</b>
David Cameron	Conservative	06/10/2010	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=214">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=214</a>
Miliband, Ed	Labour	02/10/2012	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=323">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=323</a>
Miliband, Ed	Labour	23/09/2014	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=355">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=355</a>
David Cameron	Conservative	01/10/2014	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=356">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=356</a>
David Cameron	Conservative	07/10/2015	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=360">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=360</a>
Jeremy Corbyn	Labour	27/09/2017	<a href="http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=366">http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=366</a>

### **7.3. Data Analysis**

The current study relies on a qualitative data analysis approach, revealing subtle insights and patterns that contribute to a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. In this research, the researchers relied on a content analysis approach, where we read discourses that explicitly address social class, social mobility, and income inequality across British society to identify and categorize language patterns associated with social class in British political discourses about different social groups, such as the working class, the middle class, and the upper class, in both the 20th and 21st centuries. The data analysis is conducted through the content analysis. Content analysis of language is concerned with showing that language is sometimes used to clarify who is stronger and weaker in society. There are also attitudes and ideas that are implicitly mentioned but appear through the way the language is

used, as well as hidden social meanings. It analyzes the use of language as a means of organizing power relations within society.

Within the broader framework of class discourse analysis, this study uses Van Dijk's theory of class representation in British political discourse. Discourse plays a pivotal role in expressing ideas and interests through words, discussing the different classes and the characteristics of each class in British society. Van Dijk is considered as one of the most prominent researchers in the field of discourse analysis, having developed an approach that combines linguistic analysis and social studies to understand how discourse is used to influence and express ideas. Van Dijk views discourse as a mediator between the working, middle, and upper social classes, as well as everyday interactions between individuals, such as discussions via digital media, in meetings, or in news coverage.

This theory provides an explanation of the elements of social class analysis in British political discourse. It also seeks to highlight the changes that occurred between the 20th and 21st centuries in the discourse on social class in political discourse. Additionally, it seeks to clarify how individual or collective positions overlap with discourses by using analytical models to understand how politicians behave within this society, as well as linking major and minor structural divisions.

Van Dijk modified version (2006) identifies 11 rhetorical devices, each with specific function (s) in the production of ideological discourse and the analysis of political communication. These techniques represent tools for constructing persuasive narratives and lenses for analyzing the ideological frameworks underlying political discourse. It includes:

**1. Actor description:** Refers to the way in which individuals or groups are portrayed, which affects how others see them.

**2. Authority:** Establishing credibility through reasoned argumentation and expertise.

**3. Burden:** Imposing responsibility or obligation on certain entities or groups.

**4. Categorization:** Sorting entities or concepts into groups, shaping understanding and Association.

**5. Comparison:** Drawing parallels or contrasts to convey meaning or strengthen Arguments.

**6. Consensus:** Strategically building agreement or unity among disparate factions.

**7. Counterfactuals:** Using hypothetical scenarios to illustrate points or challenge Prevailing narratives.

**8. Irony :**Expressing ideas contrary to what is expected for rhetorical or satirical purposes.

**9.Polarization (US-Them categorization):** The discourse relies on the duality of "us" and "them" to reinforce identity and create conflict between them.

**10. Populism:** Appealing to the interests and sentiments of the general populace.

**11.Victimization:** Portraying the unjust disadvantage or persecution of oneself or one's group.

These techniques reveal the relationship between language, power, and ideology in shaping political discourse to influence public opinion.

## **8. Structure of Research**

This dissertation contains two chapters, one theoretical and one empirical. Each focuses on different aspects that have relation to the British political and Class discourse. The first chapter discusses the evolution of social classes in Britain over time, beginning with the Industrial Revolution, then the neoliberal period, and finally contemporary transformations. It also examines the relationship between social and political classes and analyzes how class divisions have shaped political thought. This chapter also discusses how political discourse has changed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It uses a rhetorical analytical approach and compares the discursive strategies of political expression used in the 20th and 21st centuries using Van Dijk's (2006) modified version, providing a detailed study of how these tools are employed to shape public perception and public discourse. This is to see how class is constructed in British political discourse and how these tools are used to achieve political goals.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

**Class and Political Discourse in Britain:**

**A Historical and Linguistic Perspective**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter explores the relationship between class structure and political discourse in Britain throughout ages. It has long been known that British society is characterized by classism. This is due to several factors that dominated it during this period extending into the twentieth century, which was known for its state influence and collective equality, especially after the war. However, this situation has not remained as it was. Economic and political transformations occurred in the twenty-first century that directly contributed to the hierarchical division of the social structure. This chapter also includes a case study on the form of elections, politics, and the end of traditional class concepts.

### **1.1 The Evolution of Class in British Society**

It is necessary to define key concepts from the American perspective to comprehensively locate the impact of the American policies on Human rights.

#### **1.1.1 Historical Development of Class Structure**

Human rights are the main rights inherent in every individual by virtue of their humanity. They have been subject to various interpretations across different contexts and perspectives. In American discourse, the understanding of human rights has evolved, reflecting the nation's historical, legal, and social framework. This chapter will explore the diverse definitions of human rights from the American perspective, focusing on the main differences.

##### **1.1.1.1 Industrial Revolution and Class Stratification**

In May 1948, the U.S. signed the first major international document on human rights, the American Declaration of the Rights (Robert, 2009). This declaration reflects the theory of natural law and emphasizes that a person's human rights do not arise solely from their citizenship but

rather from the characteristics of their human personality. International protection of these rights should be guiding principles in evolving American law and strengthened as conditions become appropriate. The document outlines civil, political, as well as economic and social principles.

In American political thought, Harvey (2005) posits that the natural rights perspective emphasizes that human rights are inherent and universal, bestowed by nature or a higher authority. John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, Enlightenment philosophers, affirmed that people have a necessary right to life, liberty, and property. All human beings have their individual rights given by their Creator according to Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

According to this viewpoint, Gewirth (1996) argues that human rights already exist and do not need to be recognized by the government. They form the foundation of the American spirit of freedom and individualism. Researchers like Alan Gewirth believe that natural rights provide a moral principle for legal and political systems, guiding the development of regulations and institutions to preserve human dignity and independence.

#### **1.1.1.2 The Impact of Economic and Political Shifts on Class Divisions**

In the U.S., legal instruments and the Constitution are activated to protect human rights. The Bill of Rights, which includes the first ten amendments to the Constitution, serves as the basis for protecting individual rights and guiding legal mechanisms to ensure protection and legal procedures for all citizens (Bill of Rights Institute, 1791).

The practical civil rights tradition also includes international human rights standards reflected in treaties ratified by the government. While the Constitution primarily addresses civil rights, laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act provide protections against discrimination, promote anti-discrimination measures, and advocate for

equality before the law (United Nations, Human Rights, The Core International Human Rights Treaties).

### **1.1.2 Class and Political Influence**

Social equity sees human rights as including not as it were gracious and political freedoms, but moreover financial, social, and social rights that are significant for human nobility and well-being. Advocates contend that disparities in riches, instruction, healthcare, and lodging abuse fundamental rights to balance and social security. People such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Eleanor Roosevelt emphasized the interconnectedness of rights and the necessity for collective action to combat systemic injustice.

Movements like Black Lives Matter and human rights initiatives, as a contemporary discourse, underscore the intersectional nature of human rights, question systemic discrimination, and request for equitable policies. Scholars like Martha Nussbaum clarify the basic capabilities needed for human development and social justice (McKibbin, 1999).

In conclusion, American views on human rights encompass interpretations reflecting philosophical, legal, and social dimensions. While the natural rights perspective emphasizes inherent freedoms and individual independence, the legal perspective emphasizes the role of regulations and institutions in preserving rights. The social perspective expands the concept of human rights to address structural inequalities and collective well-being. Understanding these different perspectives enriches our discourse on human rights and strengthens efforts to promote dignity, equality, and justice for all individuals.

### **1.1.2.1 Class as a Determinant of Political Ideology**

The Widespread Affirmation of Human Rights is still imperative indeed in spite of the fact that it was embraced by the Joined together Countries Common Gathering (UNGA) in 1948. The Affirmation drafters' vision and assurance brought about in an unusual report that passed on the balance of rights and opportunities of all human creatures.

The Declaration of Human Rights has been translated the most globally. Its universality is highlighted due to its availability in more than 360 languages. It serves as a standard by which we measure right and wrong and has provided people worldwide with a powerful tool in the struggle against oppression, impunity from punishment, and insults (Seymour, 2017).

### **1.1.2.2 The Relationship between Class and Voting Behavior**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social class was a determining influence on voting behavior in Britain. Working-class voters voted for parties that were representative of their interests and aimed to improve public services, while upper- and middle-class voters voted for the Conservative Party, which was more aligned with the capitalist interests (Heath et al., 1985). This has been reversed in the twenty-first century. Other factors—such as personal preference, age, local concerns, and cultural identity—have increased their influence in determining voting patterns (Evans & Tilley, 2017). A great example of this shift was the vote to leave the European Union (Brexit), which highlighted deep divisions within British society. The vote elicited immense differences in view based on education levels: highly educated were more likely to favor remaining within the EU, and those who were less educated were more likely to vote to exit (Goodwin & Heath, 2016).

### **1.1.2.3 Evolution of Class-Based Political Movements**

Driven by the efforts of the working-class to gain representation in the British parliament, the political movements, especially class-inclined, began to emerge. A key example of this can be seen in the birth of British Labour Party in 1900, which aimed to advance the advance of the working class by advocating for improved living standards, fair wages, better labour conditions, and representation for the disadvantaged.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, explosion of neoliberalism, market oriented reforms that aimed at decreasing the state economic intervention, liberalization of market, and privatization, became a major driver for significant political and economic transformation. The decline of the traditional economies, along with the growing interest in economic stability as well as becoming employed, shifted the focus of many voters. This transformation created opportunities for parties like the Labour Party to become more powerful and increase the possibility to win elections (Driver and Martill, 1998). The re-emergence of left-wing politics, particularly through trade unions advocating for the working-class interests and championed by some figures like Jeremy Corbyn who helped to underscore of the enduring significance of the class-based issues. Corbyn's popularity among the working class voters and young people demonstrated the persistence of class concerns, albeit if dynamics of political support have become more complex in recent years (Seymour, 2017).

## **1.2. Political Discourse and Class in the 20th Century**

In the late twentieth century, class divisions were highly pronounced. However, by the end of the century, with the emergence of neoliberal policies, especially those adopted by Margaret

Thatcher began to reshape political discourse. These policies contributed to the changes in the language used in political discourse, reflecting modifications in the language that relates people and the government.

### **1.2.1 Early 20th-Century Political Rhetoric on Class**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed many class conflicts in Britain that played a central role in shaping the political discourse. The working class demanded equality, while the wealthy attempted to save their economic advantages.

#### **1.2.1.1 Political Discourse in Pre-World War II Britain**

Prior to World War II, British politics was deeply rooted in class divisions — society primarily structured around an economic division as workers and capitalists elite (Makibin, 1990). The Labour Party was instrumental in championing workers' rights, while the Conservative Party represented the interests of business and property owners such as large capitalists, factory owners and renters (Pearce, 1997). Trade unions advocated for workers' rights, particularly in relation to wages, while the increasing influence of socialist ideologies brought the class dimension further depth in political debates. An example is the 1918 constitution of the British Labour Party that includes provisions for collective ownership of means of production in order to redress the gap between classes (Tanner, 1990).

#### **1.2.1.2 Class-Based Narratives in Political Campaigns and Policy Debates**

Political campaigns have commonly used rhetoric to appeal to class divisions, therefore shaping public opinion. Thus, Labour Party, in particular, employed strong rhetoric to reduce inequality between classes by enhancing social services, helping low paid workers and supporting social justice. By contrast, the Conservative Party paid lip service to maintaining the

status quo, with policies that remained largely unchanged (Tanner, 1990). An example of a classed-based rhetoric is the 1926 General Strike organized by the General Council of Trades Union Congress in protest against British government imposed wage reductions. The strike showed the widespread worker dissatisfaction and their demand for change. Furthermore, it highlighted the major role of political rhetoric in framing public perceptions of class conflict (Marwick, 2003).

### **1.2.2 Post-War Period and the Welfare State**

The post-war period witnessed significant transformations in British political discourse, with reliance on providing basic social services such as free education, health care, and unemployment insurance to improve citizens' standard of living. This shift was largely driven by the collective wartime experience, which fostered a sense of solidarity and a shared commitment to rebuilding a more equitable society.

#### **1.2.2.1 Class Representation in Post-War Political Discourse**

The election of the Labour government in 1945 marked a major shift in social class representation, with egalitarian principles being officially integrated into governmental policy. A redistributive policy that sought to mitigate socioeconomic disparities by transferring wealth from wealthy individuals to poor individuals was at the forefront of these reforms. One of the most significant developments of this era was the launching of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948, which brought in an extensive system of free-at-the-point-of-use healthcare that was available to all, regardless of their social class. The overall structure of the welfare state aimed to reduce structural inequalities, more so in relation to access to healthcare, in addition to offering a wide range of social security benefits that included government pensions, child allowances, and unemployment benefits (Addison, 1975).

The political rhetoric of the time had a deep commitment to the reciprocal responsibilities of government and society in ensuring an adequate standard of living for every citizen. Labour Party Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who was in office from 1945 to 1951, was always articulating this vision through rhetoric that focused on solidarity and social justice. He constantly called for the necessity to "fight the battles of bread for all" and to confront the "five giants" of poverty, illness, ignorance, misery, and idleness. In his first speeches as Prime Minister from 1945 to 1947, he forcefully campaigned the elimination of poverty and the rebuilding of post-war Britain (Bevan, 1952).

#### **1.2.2.2 The Rise of the Welfare State and Its Effect on Class Rhetoric**

The welfare state redefined the discourse of class, through its promotion of the idea of a "classless society," which was characterized by reduced inequality and provision of basic services to all sections of society, independent of class biases. The ideal was never fully enacted and the discourse on it was criticized because new divisions arose, along with classism (Marwick 2003). The 1950s and 1960s in the UK for example, the Conservatives were advocating an individual responsibility ethos and opposed to want-needs of community statute (McKibbin 1999) such, but fairly laissez-faire.

#### **1.2.2.3 The Language of Economic Equality and Redistribution**

By the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century political debate was strongly focused around economic equality amongst all strata of society to guarantee equal access to education, housing, and work for all as advocated by state redistribution of wealth and social welfare programs protecting the poor (Addison, 1975). For example, the British Labour Party had many of its leaders emphasizing solidarity and cooperation among all sections of society; famous orators in history such as most influential Prime Minister British political leader Clement Attlee (Pearce, 1997). They targeted

the serious issues of British life, as Attlee 1952 called “the giant evils”, poverty, disease, ignorance, illness and war. Attlee, in Clement Attlee’s speeches helped to win public support to create a welfare state and pass legislation concerning it.

### **1.2.3 Neoliberalism and Class Discourse in the Late 20th Century**

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, political discourse underwent profound changes due to the rise of neoliberalism and the declining emphasis on social classes. The focus shifted toward the individual, highlighting personal success and achievement instead.

#### **1.2.3.1 The Impact of Thatcherism on Class Representation**

Government (1979-1990) of Margaret Thatcher: Social class discourse was significantly disrupted under Thatcher’s government, which championed a mantra of self-reliance over dependence on the state. Her policies promoted the development of private enterprises, reduced public intervention in the economy and cut government spending on education, healthcare and housing. Thatcher was skilfully shaped her rhetoric to render social classes in a way. She often characterised the working class as overly reliant on state entitlement, framing the middle class as self-made—achieving affluence through hard work rather than state support (Hall, 1988). For example, her infamous quote “There is no such thing as society” was reflective of this huge shift in political values that placed an emphasis on self-reliance and self-employment rather than state welfare (Thatcher, 1988).

#### **1.2.3.2 The Shift from Collectivist to Individualist Discourse**

Neoliberalism introduced a radical shift in political discourse, especially in its emphasis on the image of the individual, which transformed the broader social narrative. The shift took attention away from society in general and from the role of the state in providing basic social

services. Instead, it emphasized more the individual, who was now held to be solely responsible for his or her own success and well-being. This new thinking was given expression in policies like privatization—the privatisation of public institutions to the private sector—and deregulation by government of private enterprise. Labor unions, once strong institutions safeguarding workers' rights, began to decline. As a result, the working class could no longer resist deteriorating labor conditions (Harvey, 2005). During the 1980s, traditional industries such as iron, steel, and coal shed jobs on a massive scale, and labor unions collapsed, losing millions of members. They were no longer able to enforce workers' rights effectively. Here, politicians increasingly emphasized self-reliance and competition as coping strategies, rather than solidarity (Marquand, 1988).

### **1.2.3.3 The Decline of Transformation Traditional Class-Based**

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Labour's traditional political language of class conflict declined in importance and visibility, as Tony Blair's "Third Way" sought to appeal to broad electorate on the grounds that this strategy would secure the largest possible vote base (Giddens, 1998). Simultaneously, alongside this shift emerged a decline in class consciousness and the emergence of identity politics. It was at this juncture class affiliation counted for much less and class talks become rarer. The political focus shifted toward the rights of racial minorities and other identity-based groups, such as women, rather than emphasizing class-based identities. For example, Blair's rhetoric focused on lifting people through their own efforts, regardless of class and into different rungs on the ladder rather than arguing that classes should stand together or lobby society for their rights (Driver and Martill, 1998).

### **1.3. The Transformation of Class Discourse in the 21st Century**

Although we are in the 21st century, a time when equality is widely advocated, the class system still shapes the lives of people in the United Kingdom. However, the way social classes are discussed in major political debates has changed, which led to social changes, such as the financial crisis in 2008, caused by sudden disruptions in the economy. This led to the collapse of some economic institutions and the expansion of digital media, along with the economic and cultural opening of the people of the world to each other. These gave birth to attributing importance to the subject of social classes in British critical discourse.

#### **1.3.1 Changing Class Language in Political Communication**

The vocabulary used to discuss social class throughout political discourse has altered radically over time. Politicians more and more eschew direct reference to class and instead employ words like "opportunity" or "hardworking families." Coded language reduces salience on structural disadvantage and promotes responsibility. Class is therefore there in language but in ways that depoliticize and demote its impact.

##### **1.3.1.1 From 'Working Class' to 'Hardworking People'**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes occurred in the political discourse related to class, particularly regarding the term "working class," which is defined as a social group consisting of people who earn little money, often being paid only for the hours or days they work, and who usually perform physical labor. The term "working class" was changed to "ordinary families" to become more inclusive and align with social understanding. This amendment aims to make the language more comprehensive rather than being directed at a specific segment of society. For instance, Tony Blair emphasized in his Labour speeches many times that the "hardworking family" was a way to attract voters from the hard-working middle class, families who struggle to earn a living,

and traditional working-class voters who, in turn, depended on skills and crafts for their livelihood (Fairclough, 2000).

The policies of the "Third Way" emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and refer to a new political program or concept of social justice. This path was associated with the New Labour Party administration, headed by Tony Blair. Third Way policies aim to support private sector projects rather than relying on the state. The use of these terms is a feature of political discourse, as class is often defined in economic terms such as income and employment. According to Gunner (2011), focusing on individual efforts causes politicians to overlook the factors that create disparities among individuals in society, and thus, solutions to class issues are not actively pursued.

### **1.3.1.2 The Rebranding of Social Mobility in Political Speeches**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the theme of social and economic mobility is part of political debates, where politicians extol the virtues of creating a “meritocracy” that allows people to rise above the barriers set by their social or economic background through access to education and hard work. For example, during David Cameron’s time as Conservative leader, a key program was the “Great Society,” where social and economic progress would be achieved through community and personal initiative (Cameron, 2010).

In contrast, some critics, such as Savage et al., (2015), Reay (2017), and Jones (2011), focus on social mobility, which refers to the movement of an individual or group from one social status or class to another. Social mobility can be upward, ascending to a higher level; for example, education enables individuals to advance to better, higher-paying jobs, or downward, declining one level depending on the transition. Social mobility is often considered a justification

for social inequality. As Savage et al. (2015) note, the discourse of social mobility has highlighted factors that hinder individuals from improving their social status and moving from one class to another, such as economic policies and educational systems.

### **1.3.2 Influence of Globalization and Economic Policies**

Globalization has a significant impact on political discourse and social classes in Britain, changing their position and role in society. Politicians have begun to talk about it in ways that are different from what they used to do before, due to some changes in the economic system, such as the transition from industrialization to a free market economy.

#### **1.3.2.1 The Impact of Globalization on Class Narratives**

The issue of class in British political discourse was influenced by the reality of economic interdependence among the citizens of the world. For example, industrial changes led to the elimination of handicrafts that made up a large percentage of the working class. The traditional working class has lost its status due to the loss of manufacturing jobs, leading to the shift in the labor market, with the majority of workers employed on temporary contracts (Standing, 2011). This has caused politicians to adjust their speeches to accommodate the interests and needs of the public.

The British believed that the European Union (EU) was hurting their economy and was responsible for their problems. The vote was 52% to 48% to leave the EU. One of the reasons behind the United Kingdom decision to leave the EU was the crisis of refugees, which burdened Britain, along with the imposition of charges on member states—placed at 55 billion pounds—and acts of terrorism in some European countries. These factors triggered fear among the British public and contributed to the decision to vote in favor of Brexit (Goodwin & Heath, 2016).

### **1.3.2.2. Economic Crises and Shifts in Political Rhetoric**

Economic crises greatly impact class discussion when the economic power of a country declines suddenly from a financial crisis, such as the 2008 financial crisis, which was triggered by bank failures. This, along with the austerity policy of the later part of the 21st century, also impacted class debate. Austerity policies were initiated by the British government to curb state spending and increase taxes. These measures aggravated the condition of the poor and the middle class by restricting public services and social welfare, leading to widespread criticism of the government (Taylor-Jube, 2012).

The politicians wished to alter their discourse on economic and social issues in order to address class inequality. For example, Theresa May, the former Prime Minister of Britain, attempted to create a "state that works for everyone" in order to attract working-class voters who were negatively affected by austerity and globalization policies (May, 2016). The British Labour Party, with Jeremy Corbyn as its leader, also prioritized the need to address economic injustice through renationalization—restoring specific sectors, such as railways and water companies, under state ownership—combined with increased public spending (Corbyn, 2017).

### **1.3.3 Digital Media and the Transformation of Class Discourse**

Digital media has brought about a clear change in the class discourse and made it easier for everyone to participate in political discussions. However, it has also opened up a space for classism because not everyone can access it.

#### **1.3.3.1 The Role of Social Media in Shaping Class-Based Discussions**

How class is discussed in British political discourse has changed due to the development of online media. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have provided oppressed people

with a platform to speak about their views on social class in society. For instance, they use hashtags such as #WeAreThe99 to refer to economically marginalized people who constitute 99%, while the remaining 1% possess most of the wealth. This hashtag is used to articulate their needs and call for acknowledgment of their situation. The hashtag #JezWeCan is another example. It was used by Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters in the course of electioneering to mobilize public support for some issues and to pursue Corbyn's vision of social and economic justice in Britain (Gerbaudo, 2017).

### **1.3.3.2 How Political Leaders Use Digital Platforms to Address Class Issues**

The usage of websites and social media has become so prominent that political activism is also a part of it, serving as a useful instrument for politicians to express their viewpoint regarding social class. Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, went online in 2020 and utilized social media to receive popular support and become a favorite for the seat after Theresa May. He got more than a million likes, which made his impact on the public more powerful. Johnson employed Facebook and Twitter, uploading videos and tweets to convince people that he would improve the standard of living, reduce classism that strikes the poor, and improve public services (Johnson, 2020).

Similarly, the Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer, has also utilized the internet and social media to speak with the people, highlighting the growing importance of online campaigns in politics. They have been discussing key economic and social concerns such as low wages, unaffordable housing, and no health insurance using online media. They have also discussed the situation of those with technical know-how, such as software coders, whose pay checks do not necessarily trim to essential incurred costs like housing and medical care—issues that need to be reassessed (Starmer, 2021).

Whereas social media allows for free speech, communication, and the exchange of ideas, it also presents issues of accessibility. Those with the ability to use these platforms tend to do so because they are able to afford the internet and voice their opinions (Couldry, 2012). Such disparity in access to digital media all amounts to class-based discrimination as not everyone has access to the internet or digital devices. The digital divide puts individuals who are capable of utilizing technology at arm's length from others who cannot due to numerous factors, such as not having a computer (Van Dijk, 2020). The lack, which is mainly brought about by poverty, keeps many from being in a position to voice their opinions and ideas and hence the perpetuation of social and economic stratification in society.

#### **1.4. Linguistic Perspectives on Class-Based Political Discourse**

In linguistics, political discourse related to class opens new avenues for studying this type of discourse and understanding class differences through it. Language also reflects social reality, as it is used to express distinctions between different social classes. Therefore, this study explores how various linguistic features are employed to convey political sentiments, such as dialects that reflect an individual's geographical affiliation, which are sometimes used in speeches to engage the audience. Additionally, specialized terminology used by specific groups plays a role in shaping political discourse. Furthermore, the selection of vocabulary is a crucial tool in influencing public opinion. Above all, numerous linguistic strategies can shape the perspectives and attitudes of the audience. Therefore, this chapter focuses on analyzing how linguistic features in political discourse enhance and contribute to the construction of the identity of the group engaged in political communication.

### **1.4.1 Register, Dialect, and Accent in Political Speech**

The adoption of language variation by political leaders in political discourse is a powerful indicator of their membership within society. By using various forms of language that appeal to various social or cultural constituencies, they manage to present themselves as familiar and known individuals. This strategic use of language generates a sense of closeness between political leaders and ordinary people, thus enhancing perceptions of authenticity. It has become ever easier for politicians to construct and earn the trust of various publics.

#### **1.4.1.1 Received Pronunciation (RP) vs. Regional Accents**

The Received pronunciation in British political language is a way of pronouncing British English and is widely used as a standard in the education of English as a foreign language (EFL). It is abbreviated as RP. This accent has held social status since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is usually referred to as the Queen's or the King's accent. Received Pronunciation that has been utilized is associated with the upper class because its utilization marks the higher level of status that individuals who use it possess. Politicians used it deliberately as a way to show themselves to be individuals strong enough to hold the country (Crystal, 2004).

Winston Churchill utilized approach when World War erupted in order to present himself as a firm and capable leader, fit to run the country. The British Received Pronunciation has pushed the local and regional dialects out of political debate in Britain, and this has been faulted on the basis that it does not bring equality among members of society, and thus continues to fuel classism. The marginalized groups are unable to understand this pronunciation. However, now politicians have begun using regional dialects, i.e., the dialect used in a specific region and are based on a simple and general form of language of the people so that it is easier for the people to understand these speeches. It is for this reason that Jeremy Corbyn used the use of the London

dialect in political addresses to come closer to the public, especially the working-class population, and make them find it easier to understand his addresses (Mueller, Whittle, & Gadelshina , 2019)

The use of regional dialects also indicates the importance of using them because individuals use them in their day-to-day life, thus making them more responsive to politicians' addresses. Some of the politicians who have utilized regional dialects in their speeches include Andy Burnham and Sadiq Khan (Higgins, 2013).

#### **1.4.1.2 Code-Switching and Its Political Implications**

One of the inherent features of the British political rhetoric is stylistic diversity. The speaker uses diverse styles within the address to enable better understanding of the address by the audience. The diversity is used to adjust to the situation at hand. The speaker uses formal, informal, or even overseas languages. He further uses formal language to the formal public and simple and general language in public addresses. For example, there has been a shift from formal speaking, which is characterized by the use of formal language on matters relating to politics and diplomacy to informal speaking to reach the public in a more personal manner and boost comprehension through the use of a simple tone in addition to local languages. The goal of doing all this is to have the highest number of people under its influence. The ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair is among those politicians who are famously known for the fact that they can speak through the language or the dialect most suited for the occasion as well as for the listener. Code-switching. Other more precise, formal, functional, and most utilized methods in political speeches while communicating with the audience are parliamentary debates and the conversation style in public speeches, i.e., speech exchange with the audience. It has one of its features being

sensational language, so that the audience will support them in election campaigns (Fairclough, 2000).

Code-switching helps politicians adjust to their environment and makes it easier for the public to interact with politicians during their speeches. It raises questions about the authenticity of political discourse. Are politicians actually being communicatively flexible by employing more than one mode of expression, or is this simply a rhetorical strategy for gaining public acceptance and managing impression? This ambiguity challenges the boundary between strategic communication and political deception.

#### **1.4.2.1 Lexical and Syntactic Choices in Political Communication**

Politicians deliberately choose certain terms to express ideas related to social class to show that they are close to a certain class and gain the support of members of that class without excluding other groups. This reflects who has power in society and who does not.

##### **1.4.2.1.1 Formal vs. Informal Registers in Class-Based Discourse**

Political discourse involves choosing between formal and informal registers in the use of language. Formal registers are not personal or colloquial and are applied primarily in scholarly writing. They are also used to give strong opinions in an objective manner. Formal language is defined by complex and formal terms that relate to politics, economy, and power. This is to make serious issues more serious (Harris, 2001). Informal registers are often utilized by reporters. When an informal tone is used, the relationship between the writer, his audience, and the object of inquiry is close. The use of formal registers in major political speeches has never been given importance by the general public because they are not acquainted with it. Besides, it does not solve their concerns, interests, and issues (Wodak, 2015). Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage

employ their personal styles and simple language in common speeches to gain the support of the people, to make the people understand important issues concerning them, and to show that lower classes only grasp politics in simple ways.

#### **1.4.2.1.2 Persuasive Methods Used by Politicians**

Politicians use various tactics while making a speech to the masses in order to convince, motivate, and win their support. They use words that cover all sections of society, i.e., "all of us," and use emotional words to relate to the feelings of the masses instead of relating to logic only. They also use repetition to make a topic sound more important and forceful and metaphors to clarify ideas and express emotions with greater force. Jeremy Corbyn's use of the phrase "for the many, not the few" is in relation to the policies of Corbyn and his party. The phrase appeals to the majority of the public. These tactics are utilized to make people feel included in the political movements provided by politicians (Corbyn, 2017).

The former British Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, also used the term "hardworking families" to denote working families who work for their own gains. The term is also used to denote middle-class individuals who work and rely on themselves to take care of themselves (Cameron, 2010). These linguistic tools have a significant role in conveying messages to the audience that influence the audience in political speeches that are significant to people's perception of political issues.

#### **1.4.3 Media Representation and Framing of Class in Political Discourse**

The media has a great influence in portraying concepts of social classes by highlighting certain scenes or issues to influence people and their understanding, and sometimes it supports or opposes the authority by exposing the injustice inflicted on the poor.

### **1.4.3.1 The Role of Newspapers, Television, and Digital Media**

The media also plays an influential role in how the public is made to understand different social classes. Media utilizes language and pictures that strengthen class divisions, with the poor seen to be guilty of their own plight. The rich are considered worthy of their destiny. The way in which working class issues are portrayed is typically transferred, with working class issues being portrayed negatively as idle and state-dependent and not working for themselves regardless of the underlying causes such as poverty, low wages, rising cost of living, and lack of employment (Jones, 2011).

On the other hand, some newspapers take a more in-depth and informative approach to writing about social classes, noting the causes of gaps between classes. New media and television play an important role in shaping political discussion of social classes by bringing to the forefront some of the issues surrounding class. Interviews and political debates have a tendency to reveal the cultural and linguistic divides between politicians and their people, thereby making social classes more obvious. Local dialects used in political interviews give the false impression of the credibility of the speaker, to the extent that varieties of dialect are connected dissimilarly in ways that claim to make them close to citizens and aligned with their concerns even when they are not (Higgins, 2013).

### **1.4.3.2 Class Stereotypes in Political Messaging**

Stereotypes of social class are most often imposed by political messages relayed through the media, old (television and newspapers) or new (social media). Working-class voters, for example, are stereotyped in political media as "backward" (i.e. ignorant) or "disenfranchised" (i.e. victims of economic and social circumstance) rather than as capable of influencing politics and society. In comparison, middle-class voters are described as "ambitious" and "hardworking"

(i.e., as pillars of society and most productive in society) (Savage et al, 2015). These tropes are used as a vehicle to justify austerity or social mobility (i.e., the possibility of transferring statements from one class to another). However, it is possible to overlook the real intricacies of people's identities, creating unjust and inaccurate political decisions.

## **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of this chapter, which explores the complex relationship between social structure and political discourse in Britain, we conclude that the Industrial Revolution played a significant role in shaping class divisions, while political discourse reformulated linguistic concepts that were influenced by political and economic transformations during the twentieth century. The features of class discourse have undergone a radical change with the emergence of modern concepts and the advent of digital media, in addition to the transformations brought about by globalization in the twenty-first century, which led to the end of the traditional class division. However, the power of class to influence British political discourse has not diminished, as revealed by linguistic and media analysis to understand this changing interconnectedness between political communication and its impact on British society.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Class and Rhetoric in British Political Discourse**

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## **Introduction**

The theoretical framework developed by Van Dijk (2006) is used in a modified version in this chapter, with a particular focus on the tools he developed for discourse analysis, highlighting the importance of text, social perception, and social context in understanding ideological discourse. This chapter explores 11 rhetorical devices, highlighting how politicians have used these devices in their speeches to gain public support. It analyzes several examples from various British political discourses, and how these devices shape perceptions and convey messages about the representation of social classes in British political discourses.

### **2.1. The Representation of Class in Political Discourse in 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

#### **2.1.1. Actor Description in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Actor description is one of the elements that characterize the analysis of discourse because of its salient role in understanding the ways in which people or groups are represented and how these representations are influenced by ideological considerations. As van Dijk (2006) explains, the actor description is instrumental in the analysis of ideological discourse because it participates in the construction of biased representations of actors defined according to classifications as either insider or outsider. This strategy derives its strength from political rhetoric, where speakers employ it to portray themselves positively in contrast to a negative image of their opponents. This idea is further expanded upon by van Leeuwen (2008), who suggests three main axes for analysis: social actors, actions, and circumstances, which are essential in understanding actor representations in much discourse.

In the political discourse in UK, actor description has historically been used to define social classes and establish appeal to target groups. Political parties create narratives that target

the public to mobilize the support of these groups. The representational discourse of social class is a point of contention clearly demarcated between the Labour and Conservative Parties. For instance, in the speech of Margaret Thatcher, there was a rhetoric that inverted the relationship between government and society and stood for a notion of government that was strong and confident. It was presented as one that imposed order: "We have undertaken a heavy load of legislation... to sweep aside a formidable barricade of obstacles" (Thatcher, 1980). In the meantime, she condemned the Labour Party for the economic tribulations haunting the nation, rendering them "our ancestors"; this carried the double connotation of denying their legitimacy as well as their economic competence e.g., "debt which had been run up by our predecessors" (Thatcher, 1980). Furthermore, she postured that the Conservative Party was the only hope for Britain, complimenting it on its financial discipline and passage as the liberator of the industrial sector from encumbering state intervention: "our great enterprises are now free to seek opportunities overseas" (Thatcher, 1980).

Tony Blair, in contrast, had the image of the Labour Party constructed as a progressive, dynamic force striving for positive social change. He emphasized the solidarity of the hard-working middle and working classes and called for collective action. For example, "A new, confident Labour Party that, with the support of the British people, will sweep away forever the most discredited, dishonourable government in living memory" (Blair, 1995). The rhetoric of Blair cast the Conservative Party as incapable and self-centered: "It is no good waving the fabric of our flag when you have spent 16 years tearing apart the fabric of the nation; tearing apart the bonds that tie communities together and make us a United Kingdom" (Blair, 1995).

Therefore, according to Harold Macmillan, Labour was indeed an opposite party as he presented a positive and heroic image of the Conservative Party in the most of his speeches.

Macmillan held up eminent Conservative figures as heroes of the nation and builders of prosperity: “Churchill, Eden, Woolton. These were the architects of victory” (Macmillan, 1960). This enabled him to project the image of a party in control, capable, and with a mission to serve the interests of Britain. The idealization was meant to enhance confidence in the Conservative Party while the Labour Party was depicted as incapable and inefficient, thus strengthening the perception of ineptitude.

The rhetorical representation was not limited to political parties; it also included the British people, especially the youth. They were often described as ambitious and willing to force change upon themselves and, therefore, to contribute to the narratives being fed by both parties as to what was to become of the nation’s future and social fabric.

### **2.1.2 Authority in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

In discourse analysis, the term ‘authority’ connotes sources and references that lend credibility and influence opinions. Van Dijk (2005) stated that authority is a rhetorical instrument for the legitimation of actions or statements and the persuasion of audiences into supporting the cause. This is usually achieved through the citation of experts, official documents, or well-respected institutions to support arguments or claims. Fairclough (1995) incorporates authority within intertextuality, affirming another way to use texts to invoke authoritative texts for the sake of their credibility and to furnish discourse.

The relation between political power and social classes is, thus, pivotal for the understanding of how political parties strategically pursue certain segments of society with carefully constructed rhetorical strategies. The very policies or speeches of political leaders are sometimes a very telling reflection of the techniques they employed to reach out to the people.

Each leader constructs his discourse to fit the aspirations and priorities of the social groups they are aiming to gain as supporters. For instance, Thatcher's authority established on both cognitive and political grounds, based on intellectual precedents and historical experiences. She referred to the recovery of post-war in Europe as evidence for her policies. For instance, "control of the money supply... was an essential condition for the recovery of much of continental Europe" (Thatcher, 1980). The context in which Thatcher portrayed austerity as a necessity rooted in practical experience, rather than as an ideological option, was the rejection of economic advisers at the shiny conferences of the time in favour of red-bricked popular wisdom and common sense: "prosperity comes not from grand conferences of economists". Thus, she strengthened the public's perception of her policies as realistic, tried-and-tested, rather than theoretical or idealistic.

An assertion also was made by the Labour Party of the legitimacy of its socialist government by referring to concrete achievements in Parliament, citing statistics as a proof for its effectiveness: "73 Bills have been introduced. 55 have already received the Royal Assent. There are a lot of fish in the basket, and they are not just minnows" (Clement, 1946). This metaphor "fish in the basket" (Clement, 1946) conveyed the successes of the government in a very concrete sense. According to Van Dijk (2006), the clever use of figures and facts, by itself, is an important tool in the construction of the speaker's authority and the development of public trust.

Tony Blair also sought to strengthen the Labour Party's authority by associating New Labour with its historical legacy of reform, especially with respect to the creation of the National Health Service. He also called for the authority of scientific expertise, including the reforms of Professor Robert Winston, to add credibility to his agenda: "We have transformed our party...

our constitution rewritten, our relations with the trade unions changed and better defined for today's world." In the same vein, Harold Macmillan added to the credibility of the Conservative Party through tangible instances: "Since 1951 we have provided nearly 2,500,000 new school places and... 57,000 extra teachers". By mentioning these particulars, Macmillan portrayed the government with a careful-planning image normally associated with qualified experts working on effective, evidence-based solutions, distancing it from the pull of the ideological dogma.

### **2.1.3. Burden in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Through political discourse, class representation operates as a strategic tool where leaders frame certain groups as either contributors to national progress or societal problems. Van Dijk (2005) describes this as a rhetorical device used to shift blame onto marginalized groups while ignoring structural causes. Margaret Thatcher exemplified this by blaming the Labour Party and trade unions for Britain's economic troubles, accusing them of "lavish spending" (Thatcher, 1979) and strikes that would harm vulnerable groups: "The poor, and the pensioners, and the young home-buyers will all suffer [if inflation persists]" (Macmillan, 1960). This positioned labor action as harmful to society. This rhetoric aligned with neoliberal ideals of individual responsibility, as reflected by Harold Macmillan: "the world does not owe us a living. We have to earn it." It suggested that class mobility depended solely on personal effort, justifying reduced public services.

Tony Blair, representing New Labour, echoed this by limiting the state's role in welfare: "We cannot cure pensioner poverty simply through the state pension...with increasing numbers of pensioners having second and third pensions" (Blair, 1995). This signalled a move toward market-based solutions while distancing from traditional socialist ideals. In contrast, Clement Attlee framed post-war reconstruction as a collective duty, advocating government

responsibility: "Demobilisation is an enormous problem.... housing... cannot be solved quickly" (Clement, 1946). His rhetoric promoted socialism as the moral and practical solution.

According to Van Dijk (2006), invoking responsibility enhances political authority. While both Attlee and Blair assumed responsibility, their ideological foundations differed — one favored state-led welfare, the other a partnership with private enterprise.

In sum, British political discourse on class is ideologically charged, using narratives of burden and responsibility to justify policies and appeal to specific constituencies.

#### **2.1.4 Categorization in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Categorization is thereby inevitably placing individuals into classes according to their acts and belief systems and making judgments relating to them. Van Dijk (2006) explains how the labels attached to these categories would tend to be pejorative or positive. In political discourse, leaders often use binary oppositional structures to define their own party in positive lights and marginalise their opponents.

The Labour Party defined for itself a constituency: "One nation, one community, each playing our part" (Blair, 1998) and it showed the Conservatives as divisive as in "The enemies of the Union are the advocates of the status quo and the separatists alike" (Blair, 1998). Progressive New Britain was contrasted with "the new robber barons of Tory Britain, the privatised utilities." (Blair, 1995), then Labour would be framed as socially just, and the Conservative self-serving.

Margaret Thatcher made similar use of moral and symbolic categories with the Labour Party. Labour was threatened as the repressive, totalitarian power: "Let Labour's Orwellian nightmare of the Left be the spur... to rebuild the fortunes of this free nation." (Thatcher, 1980),

while the Conservatives were freedom-associated: "The Polish people should work out their future without outside interference" (Thatcher, 1980).

Even Harold Macmillan said Labour was an advocate of heavy state control over industry and services, whereas Conservatives see private initiative as the solution: "They do not want nationalisation or rigid State control of industry. They prefer the Conservative policy of encouraging industry to get on with its own job" (Macmillan, 1960).

### **2.1.5 Comparison in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

To exhibit differences among groups, often indicating one as superior to the other, political discourse discovers the comparative method. Van Dijk (2006) explains how comparisons among groups are used by politicians to portray law-abiding groups positively while marginalizing others. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) noted that most comparisons tend to indirectly side-line rival groups.

Comparisons serve to damage the reputation of adversaries, while enhancing the image of those making them as defenders of the public interest. "Socialists said we could never build them," Macmillan claimed, contrasting unfulfilled promises by the Labour Party with Conservative achievements: "We have built the houses and ... schools, too." Margaret Thatcher also made a comparison to quell public anxiety: "2 million unemployed today does not mean what it meant in the 1930s ... the percentage is much less now" (Thatcher, 1980), drawing a contrast between the contemporary situation and the 1930s, effectively appropriating the narrative from critics of government policy.

"1945 was new labor... 1964 was new labor...[both] had the courage to take the values of the Labour Party and use them for the world as they wanted it to be," Tony Blair stated when

comparing Labour's post-World War II reform ambitions with those today to indicate that they had an enduring commitment to progress. He also compared Conservative policies to 'Planet Portillo', implying that they are out of touch and a threat to Britain's future.

### **2.1.6 Consensus in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Consensus in political conversation is intended for the unification of people, especially in times of crisis or threat from outside forces, as a means to foster community. Dewes (1995), however, has criticized this notion of “prior consensus” as unattainably idealistic in favor of ethics of questioning and recognition of conflict and antagonism within democracy.

Labour and the Conservatives emphasize bridging the gap between social classes. The Labour Party sustains class harmony between the government and the people as an idea of socialism directed for the public: “We rejoice in the co-operation of the people with the Government... the surge of individual enthusiasm” (Clement, 1946).

Harold Macmillan says it is an out-dated idea of class fighting, and speaks that his party, the Conservatives, has equality as the objectives: “We aim to harmonise different and conflicting interests, not to set them against each other with the strident accents of the class war” (Macmillan, 1960). He intends to say that the people of the nation are unified, and social differences are thrown away.

Tony Blair is also interested in “One Britain”, about fairness and collective identity: “We are not simply people set in isolation from one another, face to face with eternity, but members of the same family, same community, same human race” and “the people united by shared value” (Blair, 1995). Van Dijk (2006, p.154) criticizes this as covering up inequality under "abstract

solidarity." Blair's term "working families" fuses the working and the middle classes, thus forging blurry lines of social status.

It would be brought to the attention of Margaret Thatcher that the Conservative Party is meant to forge a unity. "We are a party united in purpose, strategy, and resolve. And we actually like one another." (Thatcher, 1980) It was enough for her to categorize Labour as a "strange grouping" and portray her party as more cohesive and dependable.

### **2.1.7 Counterfactuals in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Counterfactuals are speculations or surmises of occurrences that did not eventually take place and usually are introduced by the phrase "What if...?" According to Van Dijk (2006), counterfactuals are used in political discourse to refute the opponent's claims or reinforce argumentative extensions using public sympathy. Ferguson (1999) adds that counterfactuals allow one to imagine what the counterfactuals would mean as alternative histories.

Counterfactual statements help in reducing complex issues politicians want to simplify for their interests. For instance, in British political speeches, the Labour Party uses counterfactuals to warn voters against the Conservatives; for example, "Imagine... a Tory fifth term Britain. Would there be a National Health Service? ('No!')" (Blair, 1995). This kind of rhetoric encourages citizens to conclude that Labour is the only party that could save society from privatization and inequality.

According to Van Dijk (2006, p. 212), fear-based rhetoric "exploit[s] cognitive schemas of threat to consolidate in-group loyalty," or binds voters to party identity through anxiety about poverty, insecurity, or social decline. Margaret Thatcher uses a counterfactual: "If I could press a button... solve unemployment, do you think I would not?" (Thatcher, 1980). It implies that

unemployment is a problem for everyone and is not solvable in the political domain, even if it is undesired.

### **2.1.8 Irony in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Irony means to talk in a way and mean something entirely different, generally for critique or humor. According to Van Dijk (2006), it is a good indirect means for accusations in political discourses. Booth (1974) distinguishes fixed and variable kinds of irony and points out the audience problem on getting intended meaning.

Irony has always been one of the most important weapons in the hands of political leaders in Britain for reorienting public perception regarding class interests. Thatcher mocked labor unions as “the unions can exist only in a free society. Those who seek freedom for their own purposes should not deny that same freedom to others,” bringing to light the contradiction of their actions: demanding freedom for oneself while at the same time restricting it for others by strikes and shop closures (Thatcher, 1979). She mocked the capitalistic death claims during her economic reforms, stating, “If this is the death of capitalism, I must say it is quite a way to go,” presenting herself as a confident leader deflecting criticism with wit (Thatcher, 1970).

Set lucidity, that is a rare art and an unrelenting strength to create fools. Now, the last of Italianism would be: sarcasm and irony to denounce the nationalistic chest beating of the Conservatives: "It is no good waving the fabric of our flag when you have spent 16 years tearing apart the fabric of the nation." (Blair, 1995). The old tactic of irony to deliver the message to Labour was also utilized by Harold Macmillan as in: “I observe that the Labour Party's [pension] scheme has now been scrapped. It was found... to be too complicated to attract the electors.”

(Macmillan, 1960), implying the impracticality of Labour and failure to appeal to the very working class base from which it takes much pride.

To consider irony involves deliberate opposition between what is said and meant about critique or with humor. In Van Dijk (2006), irony plays a crucial role in the indirect accusation in political discourse. Booth (1974) found an audience problem in appropriating the intended meaning and classified irony into fixed and variable forms.

This sarcasm is the irony the political leaders use in Britain to make people think differently about class interests. Thatcher derided labor unions and said, "The unions can exist only in a free society. Those who seek freedom for their own purposes should not deny that same freedom to others," by introducing the paradoxes within their actions: demanding freedom for oneself, while at the same time restricting it for others through strikes and shop closures: "The unions can exist only in a free society. Those who seek freedom for their own purposes should not deny that same freedom to others" (Thatcher, 1979). Mocking the death claims of capitalism during her economic reforms, Thatcher stated, "If this is the death of capitalism, I must say it is quite a way to go," presenting herself as a confident leader who would rather deflect criticism with humor (Thatcher, 1970).

This is among the best ways to pretend lucidity, that rare art and unyielding strength in making fools. The last of Italianism would be: sarcasm and irony to denounce the nationalistic chest beating of the conservatives: "It is no good waving the fabric of our flag when you have spent 16 years tearing apart the fabric of the nation." (Blair, 1995). Harold Macmillan also resorted to irony against Labour by mocking its pension scheme: "I observe that the Labour Party's [pension] scheme has now been scrapped. It was found... to be too complicated to attract

the electors." (Macmillan, 1960). This implies impracticality on Labour's part and inability to draw its pride from failure to cater to its working-class base.

### **2.1.9 Polarization (Us-them Categorization) in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Polarization is the defining rhetoric that divides society into opposing categories of “us” and “them.” Van Dijk (2006) describes this mechanism as being central to nationalist and populist discourses, whereas Wodak (2015) identifies its often-evoked haunting as far right discourses that elevate fear and deepen divisions within society. Political discourse polarization marks class and political conflicts as Britain's important tools.

It has also been used historically by the Labour Party itself as a party for the working class, whereas the opposition has been presented as elite and self-serving. Joan Attlee's rhetoric at the end of the war is quintessentially this, where "us" refers to "The people," "Socialist," "youngest and ablest," and "them" to "Opponents," "capitalist," and "lunatic fringe." (Clement, 1946). This duality reinforces the image of Labour as defending the rights of the categories.

Tony Blair has continued this legacy in the 1990s, by building up the image of Labour as representing the majority will to justice and fairness as opposed to the Tories, which he represented as an exclusive minority: "The Tories stand only for the privileged few... We stand for the many." (Blair, 1995). His discourse constructs class conflict as a moral fight between the working majority and privileged elite.

Margaret Thatcher adopted polarizing rhetoric that equated external threats such as Soviet communism with the Labour Party: "Soviet Marxism is ideologically, politically, and morally bankrupt" (Thatcher, 1980). Her framing placed the Conservative party as the custodian of national freedom and security against both internal and external enemies.

Like-wise, divisive, within Britain and out, was Harold Macmillan, as he held Conservatives as so many defenders of stability and socially dangerous agents of radical change. In truth, internationally, from then on, he cast Britain into the West against communism: "Britain stands with the west... They are not spiritually uncommitted, even when they are so militarily." (Macmillan, 1960).

### **2.1.10 Populism in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Populism is a term for political strategies and ideas that claim to represent the will of the common people as opposed to political elites and established institutions. According to Van Dijk (2006), populism is a tool for leaders to represent the people but also to emotionally exploit them with this representation; populist rhetoric appeals to collective emotions of injustice and frustration, irrespective of the degree of accuracy contained in such arguments. Politicians, thus, construct populist messages that are emotionally charged and widely inclusive in an attempt to unite people for a common cause.

In response to British political discourse, populism mainly appears in speeches about social classes. Tony Blair, for example, employed populist rhetoric to engage the Labour Party with ordinary citizens by arguing for a fair distribution of profits from 'the people's lottery – they should get more out of it' (Blair, 1995). This metaphor aimed to draw on public feelings of economic inequality and exclusion.

Margaret Thatcher also harnessed populist rhetoric to draw in working-class voters by promising them the right to purchase council homes owned by the government. This policy was seen as an avenue to home ownership and upward mobility: "Michael Heseltine has given millions of council tenants the right to buy their own homes" (Thatcher 1980). She promoted a

Conservative Party that positioned itself as listening to the needs and aspirations of just such working-class people.

Harold Macmillan also drew on the populist rhetoric linking Conservative policies to the day-to-day yearnings of citizens: “They want to earn more and to keep more of what they earn. That is Conservative policy.” (Macmillan, 1960). In those speeches, he spoke in the simplest terms with a direct address to “ordinary” people; it was a discourse that portrayed society as essentially equal and downplayed existing class divisions. These populist strategies facilitated the construction of a political discourse blending the practicalities of day-to-day existence with a mobilizing emotional resonance among different social groups.

### **2.1.11 Victimization in the Speeches of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Similar things happen with the fact that when there is a group which suffers from injustice or is threatened from outside, it becomes easy to justify defensive, or may also aggressive, actions in the name of such suffering group. Van Dijk (2006) elaborates that it has become common for politicians to dramatize issues quoting “our values are under threat” to stimulate fear and importance. Fairclough (1995), on the other hand, argues that victimization is socially and politically constructed and influences public understanding and evokes political action.

In British political discourse, it has often been the way to produce class representation in the conflicts being framed against injustice. Blair constructs particular groups like single parents or old people into poor victims of Conservative policy harm. “The poorest and vulnerable most of all, it is the duty of government to protect them” (Blair, 1995), as he said. In order to claim that position of defender, Labour puts suffering groups against the wall.

Clement Attlee depicted the Labour Party itself with the narrative of political victim, attacking "the left and the right, the front and the back" (Attlee, 1946), which was adequate for criticising the Conservative Party while still pointing to the social groups that it could not save.

On the other side, Margaret Thatcher framed the ordinary citizen as a victim of socialist policies and had victimized union power when she said, "Millions of British workers go in fear of union power... They look to us to help them" (Thatcher, 1979). Another elaboration of her point was how inflation was seen as a real threat to personal savings: "Inflation is the unseen robber of those who have saved" (Thatcher, 1980). Labor was said to mismanage the fiscal policies.

Another good example is the one of Harold Macmillan, who described Britain after the war as a victim of external hardship: "The Second War knocked us about a good bit... But over the last few years, our reputation is... stronger" (Macmillan, 1960). National muscles are put forward in the face of prevailing economic decline.

## **2.2 The Representation of Class in Political Discourse in 21st Century**

### **2.2.1 Actor Description in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The speeches given by David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn were very contrasting in their approach to social classes, reflecting the different party views on the role and place of classes in society. According to Cameron, his description of social actors presents a picture that privileges one group while marginalizing others. This is clearly evident in his speech when he blamed the Labour Party for the economic crisis affecting Britain, describing it as an ineffective group: "massive debts... pension funds destroyed" (Cameron, 2010). While he presented an ideal image

of the Conservative Party as being effective and capable of leading Britain out of this crisis such as in: “radicals now... breaking apart the old system” (Cameron, 2010).

A dividing line is drawn within the social class, dividing it into two categories: the first is “deserving,” which is appreciated and admired because it represents individuals who are considered as wealth creators: “the man who cleans the windows... the woman who stays up to pay her employees” (Cameron, 2010), because they are self-reliant and hardworking, such as NHS nurses. The second category is undeserving. This term is given to individuals who depend on benefits and are viewed as lazy and a burden on society: “if you can work but refuse... live off the hard work of others” (Cameron, 2010). This division of the working class obscures structural barriers that may be a direct cause of the inability to work, such as illness, low wages, or lack of job opportunities. Rather, it portrays poverty and unemployment as individual moral failings rather than as problems requiring a radical solution.

Corbyn attempts to highlight the important role of the Labour Party in protecting the interests of the working class and taking responsibility. He made the pioneering activist Margaret Bondfield, who risked her life to defend workers’ rights, as an example. He linked the party’s message between the past and the present with her story, which began modestly and then rose to the highest positions: “Brighton drapery to Downing Street.” These are the same goals and values that the early activists held, and this is what gives the party credibility to influence people: “The longest fall in people’s pay since records began... Over 4 million children now in poverty” (Corbyn, 2017).

Corbyn uses alarming figures on poverty to place the blame on the Conservative Party, which supports the wealthy and powerful, and holds them responsible for the consequences of austerity. In contrast, he presents a positive image of Labour’s policies, emphasizing their aim to

protect the marginalized class from the harshness of Conservative policies that have caused people's suffering.

### **2.2.2 Authority in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party use different methods to enhance their standing and maintain political support. Each party represents a specific social class through the policies they propose, which reflects the different principles on which each party is based.

In the analysis of British political speeches, the Labour Party attempts to present a positive image by presenting a credible program that focuses on rational solutions and cites clear figures that will bolster support for its policies, such as “raising the minimum wage by £1.50 an hour... hiring 20,000 additional nurses” (Miliband, 2014), and citing stories relevant to people's experiences, thus demonstrating that it is a responsible party that deserves the trust and confidence to lead Britain. In contrast, the Conservative Party seeks to highlight itself through media “photo opportunities” rather than offering solutions to the problems facing society.

Cameron seeks to consolidate his influence by building on the Conservative Party's rich history, which he considers a proud legacy. He has praised the achievements of his predecessors, such as Margaret Thatcher: “the greatest peacetime prime minister” (Cameron, 2010) and William Hague: “brought us back to normal” (Cameron, 2010). With his considerable experience in economic and financial affairs, Cameron is trying to gain the confidence of those concerned with public finances: “£43 billion on debt interest... the inherited defense budget mess” (Cameron, 2010), and in this way makes himself appear as a leader capable of handling the country's affairs. To strengthen Cameron's power, the political alliance between Cameron and Nick Clegg is being used on the basis of understanding and cooperation, far from any self-

interest, to increase the confidence of voters. In return, it seeks to diminish the importance of the Labour Party, which it describes as irresponsible.

Corbyn supports the Labour Party's authority with powerful arguments that expose the negative consequences of austerity policies: "a 20,000-fold reduction in police officers" and "a doubling of homelessness" (Corbyn, 2017). He cited the Financial Times after 2008 in his speech, attempting to demonstrate that Labour does not just care about people's concerns, but also has a deep understanding of economic issues and their problems, offering solutions based on well-thought-out principles. The Labour Party's program is presented as stemming from the collective contribution of the working class: "ideas of our members and trade unionists" (Corbyn, 2017), in contrast to the Brexit negotiations advocated by the Conservatives, which Corbyn sees as evidence of their incompetence.

Cameron launches a bunch of policies and changes to gain people's confidence. First, he created job opportunities, "citing economic achievements like job creation and deficit reduction" (Cameron, 2014). He showed expertise to seem trustworthy through authority. Moreover, he supported same-sex marriage and donated money to poor countries. Thus, he shows "moral legitimacy" to look like a fair and considerate leader. The Conservative Party mentioned past policies that made concrete changes in British society, like "national living wage and historical Conservative reform" (Cameron, 2014), for example, helping more children get adopted and giving more money to the NHS. This presents his party as successful in solving problems. The Prime Minister says that it is about acting fast and making quick decisions: "it is not to debate; it is to decide through anecdotes" (Cameron, 2014), like ordering drone strikes. Unlike the Labour Party, which can not make decisions, the Conservatives are decisive.

### **2.2.3 Burden in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The Labour Party shows that there is a difference between how the Conservatives and Labour deal with the issue of social classes, as each has a different way of talking about and representing classes. The Prime Minister Cameron says it is the government's duty to finish the job and fix the economic downfalls. He blames the Labour Party for the poverty and extremism they suffer from due to its "passive tolerance" (Cameron, 2014) during their reign. He blames the Labour Party for poverty, saying that it is because of "the welfare dependency" (Cameron, 2014), which made the poor fully rely on government financial aid, and the failure of schools. He also says that all citizens should protect "the British values by integrating minorities and rejecting extremism" (Cameron, 2014) to keep the country together and live in peace.

Corbyn used the Grenfell Tower tragedy as evidence against the Conservative Party and leveled moral accusations against them due to the party's flawed deregulation policy. He presented the Labour Party as a strong moral force capable of redressing losses and avoiding such tragedies through his pledges to "rebuild the NHS" and "transfer facilities to public ownership" (Corbyn, 2017) in order to convince the largest possible number of voters.

Cameron, through his speech, directs the blame and accusations entirely at the Labour Party, describing it as irresponsible and the cause of the economic crises ("they left us a legacy of spinning... pension funds destroyed") (Cameron, 2010), thus absolving himself of any other external causes (e.g., the 2008 financial crash) and ignoring all the criticism directed at the Conservative Party itself. At the same time, it reduces the state's responsibility to find solutions to the problems of its citizens. Rather, it addresses the citizens in a language of enthusiasm and encouragement to find solutions themselves through their work and diligence: "your country needs you... step up and own it" (Cameron, 2010).

#### 2.2.4 Categorization in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Political leaders often use categories as rhetorical tools to define how classes are viewed within society. For instance, the Prime Minister Cameron divides British society into two groups: us and them. The first, “us,” are the good members of society — “the decent, sensible, reasonable Britons, Conservatives” (Cameron, 2014). This category includes Britons who are hardworking and follow the rules. On the other hand, “them” refers to the bad members of British society, including “Labour, security-threatening terrorist sympathizers, EU bureaucrats, too bossy, extremists, and diseased ideology” (Cameron, 2014). Thus, Cameron presents the Conservatives as intelligent, kind, and hardworking, while he presents the Labour Party as foolish, dangerous, and incapable of taking responsibility.

Corbyn divides society into two opposing classes: the many versus the few, with the aim of highlighting the class struggle through his talk about the housing issue: “Homes should be homes for the many, not speculative investments for the few” (Corbyn, 2017). The latter seems like a battle between them, as the Conservative Party is concerned with the interests of the elite — the few — who hold influence and power, as they evade paying taxes and other obligations. According to Corbyn, they benefit from “tax havens” and “hedge funds” (Corbyn, 2017).

This ignores the rights of the many, who have a priority for housing. These people are defended by the Labour Party, which is considered the voice of this marginalized group, as it seeks to improve people’s lives and protect public property.

Cameron categorizes society into two groups, making this division seem natural and fair. The first category includes the deserving — highly valued and important members of society — such as businessmen, public sector employees, and retirees. “Brave armed forces... NHS protected” (Cameron, 2010) are considered the engines of the economy. In contrast, the second

category includes those he belittles in his speech, who “live off social welfare,” implicitly describing them as lazy, without considering the structural reasons that might have led to their situation: “living a life on benefits” (Cameron, 2010).

### **2.2.5 Comparison in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The use of comparison is very common in British political speeches, where it illustrates the differences between the Conservative and Labour parties. Prime Minister David Cameron presents his party as a success by providing better job opportunities and economic progress, while portraying the Labour party as a failure due to its "deficit denial" and its embrace of "political grievance." The speech shows how Labour blames the Conservatives without offering concrete solutions to the problems, but instead complains about the unfairness. The Prime Minister states that the country performs better after the election of the Conservatives. He further claims that issues would be a "hypothetical dystopia" (Cameron, 2014) if the Labour Party had won the election. He also mentions the European Union, stating that "it is contrasted as both a single market and a bossy institution, justifying negotiating" (Cameron, 2014) for a new deal.

Corbyn used contrastive rhetoric to compare the Labour Party with the Tories, criticizing the Conservatives' vision, which failed to focus on society as a whole, instead of just the elites. He criticized the Tories for their shambolic Brexit, which he argued would drive down standards, while the Labour Party's Brexit focuses on putting jobs first. According to Corbyn, the first focuses on the rich and elites, while the second focuses on ordinary people and their needs. This demonstrates that the Labour Party is considerate and caring, unlike the Tories, who are reckless and elitist. Here, Corbyn uses Van Dijk's ideological square, which highlights the negative and weak aspects of the Tories while emphasizing the strengths and moral intentions of the Labour Party, ignoring both the strengths of the Tories and the weaknesses of the Labour Party.

The comparison between the Labour Party and the Conservatives in David Cameron's speech led to strong moral contradictions between the two parties. This distorted the image of the Labour Party, and its policies were described as restricting individual freedoms and wasting public money by allowing the state to control all aspects of people's lives (statism). Meanwhile, he promoted freedom and self-reliance, a principle sought by the Conservative elite under the slogan of "Big Society" and "people power... activism" (Cameron, 2010).

The use of language and comparison to support political discourse was Cameron's strategy of gaining popular support, using fear-mongering tactics of potential catastrophic scenarios, such as "the nightmare... seen in Greece" (Cameron, 2010).

#### **2.2.6 Consensus in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

From this tool's analysis of some politicians' speeches, Corbyn, in his speech, celebrated the gathering and consensus of the almost 600,000 members from all backgrounds and ages who share common beliefs and values that people should be treated fairly regardless of their status, and "bringing generations together" (Corbyn, 2017). This large number is proof of the popularity and success of the Labour Party and a real 'democratic movement.' He united them all with the same goals and the same 'common sense' to have better jobs, fairness, and good public services, unlike the Tories, who introduced 'Austerity' policies, which affected ordinary people as illustrated in "We are now the political mainstream. Our policies are popular because they reflect what most people want" (Corbyn, 2017). Corbyn portrays the Labour Party as one that unites people because it reflects the needs of society, while the Tories are portrayed as the party that divides them.

David Cameron presents the idea of one nation, ignoring any class or economic differences in society: "We are one nation and I will defend our Union with everything I have got... British values: freedom, democracy, equality" (Cameron, 2015). This statement presents an idea that attempts to cover up all the contradictions present in society. By focusing on the collective unity under the slogan "Great Britain," he conceals all aspects of inequality and racial discrimination between the working class and the wealthy. This concealment leads to a disregard for the causes that led to this contradiction and a lack of interest in radically addressing them. In this speech, David Cameron presents the idea of one nation, ignoring any class or economic differences in society.

The Prime Minister seeks to rally support for the party's policy, which is centered on strengthening national belonging and a sense of pride by uniting people under the slogan "Britain, a country that everyone is proud of" (Miliband, 2012). He pointed to important historical events from Britain's history to encourage them to emulate the success stories of "war veterans" (Miliband, 2012). He also used the language of his speech as a powerful weapon to instill fear and unite them to confront any external threat, such as ISIS, and to defend the freedom of their country.

### **2.2.7 Counterfactuals in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In analyzing the speeches that discuss class representation in Britain, it is found that, David Cameron, in his speech, instills public fear and anxiety about the negative consequences of voting for other candidates. He warns that the policies of the Labour Party and its leader, Ed Miliband, pose a threat to the country's stability, saying, "If you vote for UKIP, which is in effect a vote for Labour... Wake up with Ed Miliband." (Cameron, 2014) Here, a positive image of the

Conservatives is presented, based on the fact that they are the only source of security and political, economic, and social stability.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn attempts to imagine a negative scenario, criticizing the policies of his rival party by demonstrating its inability and incompetence to guarantee citizens' rights, especially after Britain's exit from the European Union. In order to enhance the credibility of Corbyn's party's policies and gain support from voters, he presented himself as a moral force and an alternative party capable of taking power, saying, "If you don't [guarantee EU citizens' rights], we will." (Corbyn, 2017) By presenting this scenario, the party's intention to address the problems and lead the government is highlighted.

Miliband uses hypothetical scenarios to support, convince, and help audiences visualize his thoughts and points of view on what may happen, highlighting the consequences of a certain policy or political decision. For example, Scotland leaving the UK is not only political disunion and departure but also the downfall of national identity: "Scotland could leave the United Kingdom... But I believe we would be far worse off as a result." (Miliband, 2012) Similarly, imagining NHS funds redirected to nurses instead of Tory reforms, critiquing misplaced priorities, could have been better. Thus, these imagined scenarios reinforce Miliband's arguments.

### **2.2.8 Irony in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The political discourse of David Cameron and Miliband embodies a struggle over who represents the working class and who represents the middle class, as shown the an analysis of their political speeches. Conservative Party leader David Cameron mocks the Labour Party with his phrase, "We in this party are a trade union too... the trade union for hardworking parents"

(Cameron, 2014). Here, he hints that the Conservative Party also cares about workers, but in the form of hardworking parents, in order to distort the image of the Labour Party by claiming that the Conservatives also care about the same group.

Miliband mocks Prime Minister David Cameron and the Conservative Party, or the Tories, for breaking their promises to protect the NHS. After David Cameron won the election, he privatized this sector by selling parts of it to private companies, which made situations worse for ordinary people. Miliband believes that Cameron damaged the NHS by its privatization and turning it into a business rather than making it free for everyone. In addition, he made fun of the Tories' incompetence by saying that Lord Hill was too useless to resign properly: "The party that implemented Lloyd George's People's Budget of 1909 is supporting the millionaire's budget of 2012" (Miliband, 2012).

In order to support his party, Cameron used irony as a political weapon against the Labour Party, making it an argument to belittle it and its political program, which calls for reducing austerity and increasing social spending—an idea that Cameron finds unacceptable and ridiculous. In his speech, he provided a clear example of his use of sarcasm to show the weakness of the ideas of the Labour elite when he said, "His book is actually called 'The Joy of Tax.' I've read it. It's got 64 positions – and they're all wrong" (Cameron, 2015), with the aim of distorting the image of what the party's policy calls for.

### **2.2.9 Polarization (Us-them Categorization) in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

From the analyzed speeches, this device was identified in several examples. Miliband judges the Tories for their policies and ideology. He believes that they caused clear tensions, inequalities, and divisions—polarization—between the elites and ordinary people, as well as

between the north and the south. The Tories are stereotyped as materialistic, not caring about ordinary people, whereas the Labour Party is portrayed as fair, caring about the middle class, the average person, and public services like the NHS. The Tories are heavily criticized for only serving the elites of British society and neglecting ordinary people by "rebating for the top, rip off for everyone else." This creates an opposition between groups in terms of financial status (rich vs. middle class) and geography (north vs. south). "Great Britain. And I'll tell you what, with Armed Forces like this, we can be even greater still" (Miliband, 2012).

The use of polarization in this discourse divided British society into "us," meaning patriots and supporters, and "them," critics and opponents who pose a threat to the "one nation" idea. This includes the Labour Party or others who oppose the party's policies, portraying them as enemies of the nation. This tactic aims to divert attention away from the real causes of the economic and social problems that society suffers from. Instead, it entrenches the notion that supporting one's party's policy is patriotism, while anything else is hatred.

In another speech, society was divided into two main opposing groups: us and them. The first group includes ordinary, hardworking British nationalists who fight fascism and terrorist groups, such as ISIS. He emphasized this by saying, "British soldiers... fighting fascism, helping to liberate that city... ISIS, evil, plain and simple" (Cameron, 2014). The second group includes those considered outsiders—marginalized working-class people who confront wealthy foreigners and vested interests. This polarization has caused tensions and problems within British society, leading them to blame foreigners instead of focusing on finding solutions to real problems.

### **2.2.9 Populism in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

These speeches show how politicians have used populism to reinforce class divisions. David Cameron's rhetoric conceals a malicious intent, which appears in his praise of the British people and his description of them with high qualities, unlike another "civilized" elite present on the Twitter platform, saying, "Britain and Twitter are not the same thing. The British people are decent, sensible, reasonable" (Cameron, 2015). Here, Cameron uses the "populist" method to gain the support and approval of working-class people, creating a sense of security when he places them in confrontation with the educated elites who criticize the situation in Britain. In this way, Cameron attempts to conceal his support for the capitalist class and portrays austerity as a moral act against any special interests. He tries to absorb the people's anger and criticism of the class system and divert their attention toward the elites, whom he portrays in this speech as a threat and danger that must be avoided.

Miliband speaks for the rights of ordinary people and supports them. He believes that they, the silent majority, are marginalized and ignored by the government and society's elites. He blames the rich and politicians like "Murdoch and the Banks," powerful interests, for all the problems. He promises to hold them accountable by saying, "I have a duty to hold to account the powerful interests—from Rupert Murdoch to the banks" (Miliband, 2012). Miliband's speech praises ordinary people, the producers, over the rich, whom he refers to as predators. He demonstrates people's anger and uses it to call for changes and reforms. Thus, his speech connects with ordinary people who feel that globalization has made their lives harder.

In Corbyn's speech, society is divided into two categories: the majority and the minority, through the Labour Party's presentation of a political program aimed at reducing rent and raising taxes for companies. This is in favor of the majority, representing the working class exploited by

the minority, which is adopted by the rival party, exploiting resources and wealth for the interests of the elite. This unfair distribution is an issue the Labour Party's policy seeks to address, as evident in Corbyn's statement: "Labour is ready to build a new settlement between work and leisure... for the many, not the few" (Corbyn, 2017).

### **2.2.10 Victimization in the Speeches of 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Politicians use what is known as victimization to portray themselves or certain social groups or classes as victims to gain the support of the people. For instance, the discourse of Cameron portrays and reveals the intention of some conservative groups to play the role of victim of domestic extremism and state control, which restricts their freedom by, for example, closing down institutions. They play this role to justify party policies that ignore the real problems facing society, allowing them to impose strict policies to defend their interests and protect against any threat to stability. This diverts attention away from the class problems that society suffers from, and portrays all social dissolutions as a cultural threat, which has led to instilling fear of dealing with them. This is evident in his statement, "In some madrassas we've got children being taught that they shouldn't mix with people of other religions... their heads filled with poison" (Cameron, 2015). Therefore, they must be isolated.

Miliband narrates how ordinary people are being victims of the Tory policies. He presents narratives of young citizens seeking jobs and small businesses being treated unfairly, as well as the privatization of the NHS. He supports his explanation of the disappointment that resulted by saying: "A young woman... sent her CV to 137 employers and didn't get a single reply. Think how that crushes the hopes of a generation" (Miliband, 2012). He narrates his family's suffering and struggle with survivor's guilt, and universalizes it to show how the system is unfair and bad, not because of individual inadequacy.

Corbyn exploited the Grenfell Tower tragedy to portray it as a symbol of the injustice and grief suffered by the victims of this painful incident and the losses it caused, blaming the austerity policy pursued by the elite party and the authorities' neglect of this affected group. “The Grenfell Action Group firmly believes that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude of the landlord” (Corbyn, 2017). At the same time, he expressed the feelings of the victims, whom he considered heroes deserving of appreciation, especially public sector workers such as the firefighters who intervened to help: “firefighters who ran into Grenfell” (Corbyn, 2017), taking the opportunity to highlight the failure of elite politics to contain the victims of the accident and to bolster support for the Labour Party's policy of equality.

### **2.3. Comparative Analysis**

British political discourse has greatly evolved in the representation of social classes across the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as a result of shifts in British society, including economic configurations, political ideologies, and political leaders' modes of engagement with the masses. The development of rhetorical strategies signals that there exist some trends which have persisted and been used through time, accompanied by changes in the manner political leaders engage the classes.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, politicians used positions that created intellectual conflicts between liberalism and socialism. For example, Thatcher and Blair used a contrasting style of representing social groups to illustrate their political positions toward those they represented and those they opposed. Thatcher portrayed the Conservative Party leader as a proponent of free market economics, while viewing the Labour Party as incompetent in managing money and the economy. In contrast, Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party, presented his party as defending

people's rights and accused the Conservative Party of representing only the wealthy class and not caring about community solidarity.

Politicians presented their policies through real-life examples, demonstrations, and comparisons, not just as practical matters. Thatcher cited the fiscal discipline of some European countries to prove that austerity led to prosperity. Blair cited his party's past achievements, such as the establishment of the NHS, to confirm that the party remained strong. When politicians talk about who bears the brunt of problems, they promote the idea of who is bad and who is good in society. Thatcher believed that the unemployment and inflation problems that Britain suffered were caused by the Labour Party and the trade unions, who were demanding higher wages, which hindered the economy. Clement Attlee, meanwhile, emphasized the importance of everyone's cooperation to rebuild society and achieve social justice. Blair utilized his party's past record of successes, such as establishing the NHS, to assure that the party remained strong.

Politicians, when they talk of who bears the brunt of problems, perpetuate the idea of who is evil and who is good in society. Thatcher believed that Britain's inflation and unemployment were caused by the Labour Party and the trade unions, who were demanding higher wages, which was stifling the economy. Clement Attlee; however, emphasized the necessity for everyone's cooperation to rebuild society and achieve social justice.

While in the 21st century, political discourse began to focus on moral issues and class affiliation rather than politics and economics, which led to increased divisions between political parties, some politicians began addressing the people against the authorities. David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn adopted a binary approach of "us" versus "them." Despite this, they made moral judgments about certain people, such as the hard-working poor who deserve support, and the undeserving who do not work and wait for support from the state. Corbyn presented politics as a

struggle between the common people and the elite, using contemporary crises such as the Grenfell Tower fire to show that the government was unable to protect the people from this fire and the conflict was over who had power. Cameron sought to show that his government provided stability, while Corbyn used popular language to convince people of the need for collective action. During this century, the use of counterfactuals and satire has increased as tools for shaping public opinion. Cameron used satire to express his rejection of the taxes proposed by the Labour Party, while Corbyn used emotional rhetoric to show how austerity policies negatively affected the poor.

It is worth noting that in the 21st century, political discourses have become more diverse and intertwined. A single discourse can combine a focus on national identity, class, and moral principles. Populism has also become more widespread. Cameron addressed the people as rational people to make them feel discriminated against, while Corbyn defended ordinary people against the elite. People have become more aware of injustice, linked to the Grenfell fire and the financial crisis of 2008, while political division has become more inclusive of divisions based on cultural and national identity.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the application of Van Dijk's (2006) modified framework is used to analyze how social classes have been represented in British political discourses in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This is accomplished by examining 11 rhetorical devices to see how politicians have used these devices to represent the Conservative and Labour Party visions of social classes, such as those used by leaders such as Cameron, Corbyn, and Blair.

## General Conclusion

The current study aimed to analyze how the classes were reflected in British political discourse during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, focusing on the most significant events that occurred with the classes in the two centuries. In addition, it studied the most prominent rhetorical devices used in studying this type of discourse. This study relied on qualitative analysis and used a modified version of Van Dijk (2006) to compare speeches from two different time periods and centuries by analyzing the language in terms of its rhetorical and ideological structure using 11 rhetorical devices according to Van Dijk.

The study focused on social class in British political rhetoric during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It aimed to answer three main questions: First, how do British political leaders from the Labour and Conservative parties represent social class in their speeches across the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries? Second, what rhetorical strategies are used by political leaders to reinforce social class distinctions? Third, how have these strategies evolved over time? Qualitative content analysis was used, and deep analysis of texts and speeches delivered by influential political figures in Britain, such as Margaret Thatcher, David Cameron, Jeremy Corbyn, and Tony Blair, was carried out. For the analysis of these speeches, we have identified common rhetorical devices used by politicians to depict social class, describe the actor, and popularize power.

The results showed that the way social classes are portrayed has not remained constant, as there is continuity in some aspects, while some differences appeared in how they are represented in political discourse. The study identified distinct linguistic patterns for each period, focusing on how the language used in political discourse changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, politicians relied on direct terms expressing class, such as “working class” and “bourgeoisie.” There was also a clear conflict and different ideas, as Thatcher used a neoliberal

discourse based on the individual, while Blair changed this style and began using general terms such as “working families” without focusing on class conflict. The 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed a decline in direct class terms, and people began to be evaluated based on merit rather than class. Furthermore, speaking in the name of the “common people” against the elites began, and the use of some rhetorical devices remained, including Irony, polarization, and victimization

Globalization, neoliberalism, and new media have had significant impacts on discourse social class. The decline of the old industries has seen the working class lose as its identity, and neoliberalism has begun stigmatizing the poor and turning them into the lazy and weak to blame for their own poverty, rather than recognizing that poverty is an effect of economic and social problems. Digital media has contributed to everyone’s political participation, but at the same time, it does not show all content fairly, and some leaders have exploited it in a way that serves their interests.

The findings reveal several similarities, including the use of binary opposites to define social classes; the use of power and legitimacy by some leaders to justify their policies based on past achievements, such as the creation of the National Health Service by the Labour Party, which they then cite as their own; and the politics of blame-shifting and victimization, holding their opponents responsible for economic and social problems. In addition to several differences, the representation of social classes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century included many groups, including the working and middle classes, and the main focus was on economic ideology. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this number has decreased to deserving and undeserving groups, and their focus has shifted to moral and cultural issues. Populism has also shifted from economic debates to moral and cultural conflicts. It has also used historical examples, blaming specific groups, and top-down communication in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while it has relied on emotional rhetoric, crisis exploitation,

and social media to gain support in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, the use of counterfactuals and irony has increased from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations were made for further research. Future studies should expand the scope of analysis to understand the intersection of social class with various other aspects of political discourse, while conducting ongoing research to understand the role of digital platforms and their impact on shaping opinions across different classes. Possibility of changing the methodology and analyzing speeches of other political leaders

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## المُلخَص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة تمثيلَ الطبقة الاجتماعية في الخطاب السياسي البريطاني خلال القرنين العشرين والحادي والعشرين من خلال تحليلٍ كفي لخطاباتٍ سياسية ألقاها زعماء مختلفون، مستندةً إلى إطار نظري معدّل مستمد من منهج "فان دايك" (2006). فقد حلّل البحث خطاب الساسة لبيان كيفية توظيف اللغة والأدوات البلاغية لدعم فكرة الطبقة أو تفنيدها، معتمداً على أحد عشر أسلوباً بلاغياً وضعها "فان دايك" لتحليل الخطاب، ثم قارن بين منهج زعماء حزب "العمال" و"المحافظين"، كما قارن تصوير الطبقة بين العصرين. وكشفت النتائج عن وجوه تشابه عديدة، منها استخدام الثنائيات المتضادة لرسم حدود الطبقة، وتمسك بعض الزعماء بسلطتهم وشرعيتهم لتبرير سياساتهم مستندين إلى إنجازات سابقة، وإلقاء اللوم وادعاء الضحية حيث يحمل السياسيون خصومهم مسؤولية الأزمات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية. كما برزت فروق جوهرية بين العصرين؛ ففي القرن العشرين شمل تصوير الطبقة فئات متعددة كالعاملة والوسطى مع تركيز على الجانب الاقتصادي، بينما تقلص التصنيف في القرن الحادي والعشرين إلى فئتي "المستحقين" و"غير المستحقين" مع تحول التركيز نحو القيم الأخلاقية والثقافية، كما تحولت الشعبية من نقاشات الاقتصاد إلى صراعات الهوية. واختلفت أدوات الخطاب بين العصرين؛ ففي القرن العشرين اعتمد الزعماء على سرد الوقائع التاريخية وتوجيه الاتهامات وأسلوب التوجيه من أعلى، بينما مالوا في القرن الحادي والعشرين إلى الخطابات العاطفية واستغلال الأزمات ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لاستمالة الرأي العام.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الخطاب السياسي البريطاني، حزب المحافظين، حزب العمال، الأساليب

البلاغية، الطبقة الاجتماعية.