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Supremacist Narratives and the Rhetoric of Power in President Donald Trump's Second Inaugural Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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This study analyses President Donald Trump's second inaugural speech delivered on January 20, 2025, to unearth the latent and manifest rhetorical tropes that amplify his supremacist narratives and power rhetoric. Anchored in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the researchers analysed how Trump's narrative and language in the speech construct, sustain, and legitimise power relations, supremacy, and hegemonic dominance. The data were extracted from the official transcript and video of the speech, and analysed using CDA's textual, discursive, and socio-political dimensions. Results reveal Trump's employment of Aristotelian logos, ethos, and pathos to evoke logic, credibility, and emotion, thereby reinforcing his supremacist, power-driven, populist, and nativist/nationalist persona. Messiah complex and solipsism, American nativism, Christian nationalism, power binarism, cultural exclusivism, and supremacist expansionism were the six thematic strands of supremacist narratives and

Este estudio analiza el segundo discurso de toma de posesión del presidente Donald Trump, pronunciado el 20 de enero de 2025, con el objetivo de identificar los recursos retóricos latentes y manifiestos que amplifican sus narrativas supremacistas y su retórica del poder. Basándose en el marco del Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD), los investigadores analizaron cómo la narrativa y el lenguaje de Trump en el discurso construyen, sostienen y legitiman las relaciones de poder, la supremacía y el dominio hegemónico. Los datos se extrajeron de la transcripción oficial y del vídeo del discurso, y se analizaron utilizando las dimensiones textuales, discursivas y sociopolíticas del ACD. Los resultados revelan el uso que hace Trump del logos, *el* ethos *y el* pathos *aristotélicos para evocar la lógica, la credibilidad y la emoción, reforzando así su imagen supremacista, centrada en el poder, populista y nativista/nacionalista. El complejo mesiánico y el solipsismo, el nativismo estadounidense, el nacionalismo cristiano, la dicotomía del poder, el exclusivismo cultural y el expan-*

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power rhetoric identified in the speech. In a collective sense, these thematic strands embedded in Trump's speech position him as a divinely appointed restorer of America's greatness while maligning opponents and marginal groups/institutions. The study argues that Trump's non-conventional rhetoric consolidates his ideological support base, valorises conservatism against progressivism, and redefines conventional U.S. presidential speech through confrontation, radicalism, and diminished political correctness. Ultimately, the study highlights how discursive strategies employed in Trump's speech demonstrate the role of language and narrative as instruments of supremacy, dominance, power relations, and socio-political polarisation in contemporary democratic milieux/contexts.

Keywords: *power rhetoric, supremacist narratives, Donald Trump, second inaugural speech, critical discourse analysis.*

sionismo supremacista fueron las seis líneas temáticas de las narrativas supremacistas y la retórica del poder identificadas en el discurso. En conjunto, estas líneas temáticas, integradas en el discurso de Trump, lo posicionan como un restaurador de la grandeza estadounidense designado por la divinidad, al tiempo que difaman a sus oponentes y a los grupos e instituciones marginados. El estudio sostiene que la retórica poco convencional de Trump consolida su base de apoyo ideológico, promueve el conservadurismo frente al progresismo y redefine el discurso presidencial estadounidense convencional a través de la confrontación, el radicalismo y una reducción de la corrección política. En última instancia, el estudio destaca cómo las estrategias discursivas empleadas en el discurso de Trump demuestran el papel del lenguaje y la narrativa como instrumentos de supremacía, dominación, relaciones de poder y polarización sociopolítica en entornos y contextos democráticos contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: *retórica del poder, narrativas supremacistas, Donald Trump, segundo discurso inaugural, análisis crítico del discurso.*

Studies have shown that in recent times, world leaders have displayed their notoriety in rhetoric (Fairclough, 1989; Alo, 2012). Not only are they notorious for their 'forced', 'insincere' or 'conspicuous' rhetoric on global peace, security, stability, and sustainability, but more so in the rhetoric that amplifies their notions of global tension, war/conflict, control, dominance, supremacy, and power (Nartey, 2019; Fareh *et al*., 2025). Such rhetoric supposedly positions them at the nucleus of power dominance and supremacy in inter-/intra-national politics, enabling them to wield influence through persuasive and manipulative narratives.

However, one of those leaders whose political rhetoric in the global marketplace of politics attracts global attention and scrutiny is POTUS, Donald J. Trump. Trump's rhetoric has attracted global attention and scrutiny for a lot of reasons (Kellner, 2016; Venizelos, 2023). Notable among all those reasons are the

position of the United States (U.S.) in the global political affairs and its critical roles in the United Nations (UN) (Whineray, 2020), which has created a default spotlight for scrutinising any of its presidents/presidential candidates, especially their foreign/domestic policy directions and how such would affect the dynamics of inter-/intra-national political affairs.

Also, Trump's political communication style, as evidenced in his first term in office as the 45th president of the U.S. and during his 2024 electioneering, provided yet another avenue for global attention and criticism. Perhaps Trump's conscious, consistent, and characteristic usage of vitriol, mockery, and demeaning language (Nacos *et al*., 2020; Krasner, 2023), couched in plain talk and a confrontational approach that transgressed presidential decorum (Kennedy, 2021; Krall, 2022) in attacking and insulting opponents, journalists, and critics, makes his rhetoric a global spectacle.

Again, the pre-electioneering political intrigues that unfolded in the US, and in part, the global stage, against the backdrop of Trump's domineering personality traits, political philosophies, and psychological dispositions, have been the subjects of critics' attention, culminating in intense debates about his supremacist and power rhetoric in confronting them. Arguments abound as to whether or not Trump's ambitious, competitive, dominating, controlling, extroverted, self-assured, impulsive, non-conforming, and disruptive persona (Griebie, 2021) often finds expression in his self-styled political rhetoric, which critics consider as deviations from established canonical logics and boundaries in rhetoric. The foregoing positions have added layers of justification for why his brand of political rhetoric has been the mainstay of global media discourse (Boczkowski and Papacharissi, 2018) and the subject for scholarly analysis.

Indeed, Trump's inclination to non-conventional political rhetoric, widely recognised for its populist, nationalistic, supremacist, controversial, aggressive, domineering, and confrontational narratives (Bonikowski, 2019; Giroux, 2019; Guo *et al*., 2020), which predominated his 2024 electioneering, built a strong political core that culminated in his electoral victory. Therefore, it is pertinent to critically analyse the discourse in his second inaugural speech of 2025 to ascertain whether such narratives and rhetoric were sustained after electoral victory or whether they were just electioneering rhetorical antics or strategies. In essence, what rhetorical appeals were employed in President Trump's second inaugural speech? What were the supremacist narratives and power rhetoric in Trump's second inaugural speech? How did Trump's second inaugural speech embolden or weaken prevailing sociopolitical patterns in the United States of America and other contemporary democracies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhetoric of Power: Canons, Techniques, and Contexts

One of how power, dominance, and supremacist hegemony are expressed and entrenched within the political context is through rhetoric. Such domineering,

hegemonic, power-laden, and supremacist rhetoric has been referred to as the rhetoric of power. The rhetoric of power suggests the strategic and intentional employment of specific language, communication techniques, and symbols specifically designed to establish, maintain, legitimise, or challenge a hierarchy of authority and exert control over predetermined targets within a political context (Charteris-Black, 2005; Dijk, 2012; Deetz and Mumby, 2012; David, 2014).

In a political milieu/context (whether global or local), the rhetoric of power is often used either subtly or overtly by a perceived "super" power as a manipulative tool or soft power in diplomatic relations (Mattern, 2005; Rothman, 2011), especially in its articulation, enforcement, or entrenchment of perceived dominance or supremacy. Even though most rhetoric of power is often presented in plain talk, lavish with diplomatic gestures and decorum, the latent meanings embedded in such rhetoric convey notions of brute force, supremacy, and oppressive tendencies. This kind of rhetoric is not devoid of intentional expression of power and dominance conveyed using militaristic, confrontational, aggressive, ballistic, and threatening innuendos.

Moreover, rhetoric with narratives of power often aims to portray the targets as the subdued by seeking to instil/entrench the domineering ideology of the rhetor over them. This is achieved within the context where the rhetor's narratives are conceived as portraying political willpower, strength, and decisiveness in exercising authority, dominance, or supremacy over the targets (Mumby and Stohl, 1991; Gleasure *et al*., 2019). Rhetoric of power entails the rhetorical agencies and tropes that suggest how the dynamics of power are communicated, shaped, perceived, and sustained through discourse in political speeches (Farfán and Holzscheiter, 2011; Oyewole and Olufemi, 2023; Khan, 2024). Perhaps, in expressing notions of power relations through discourse, the rhetoric of power suggests the conscious and critical selection of particular arguments, imagery, tropes, and delivery mechanisms to achieve a predetermined goal of reinforcing or establishing political authority, justifying political actions, and mobilising political support. Hence, the primary purpose of power rhetoric is to influence the thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and actions of targets, often leading to a form of political control (Blackledge, 2005; Lemke, 2005; Bitzer, 2020; Oyewole and Olufemi, 2023). In essence, the rhetoric of power suggests that speech, public debate, and representation are functions of power and agency for exerting political dominance.

To achieve its desired effect and appeal to targets, rhetors of power frequently utilise the classic Aristotelian rhetorical canons of appeal, such as the ethos, pathos, and logos. The use of ethos in power rhetoric is to convey the credibility and character of the rhetor, which is to help establish and position him/her/them as authoritative, trustworthy, and knowledgeable to legitimise his/her/their power (Hyde, 2004; Danisch, 2016). Pathos, which alludes to emotional layers of the rhetoric, is used to appeal or arouse the target's emotional state of fear, patriotism, hope, anger, or anxiety to bypass purely rational consideration and sway public opinion (Clark, 1971; Taylor, 2001). Whereas logos, alluding to logic and reason, is used to present logical arguments, statistics, or evidence to rationalise the exercise of power, even if the underlying logic is skewed, flawed, or selective (Ijsseling, 1976; Fontana, 2017).

In the rhetoric of power, certain rhetorical techniques such as symbolism, repetition, framing, and ideology/hegemony are used to achieve a desired outcome. For instance, the technique of symbolism may be used to represent ideas and notions of authority (Wilentz, 1999), and the repetition technique can be used to repeat and re-emphasise key messages to ensure retention and embed the ideas amplified in the target's consciousness (Kyllesdal, 2012). Through the framing technique, the ideas amplified in the rhetoric are defined in a specific way that promotes the powerful agent's perspectives (Kuypers, 2010; Johnson and Foster, 2024), while the ideology/hegemony technique is then used to curate propagandist/manipulative narratives to promote a set of beliefs, values, and ideas that justify the existing political order (Mumby, 2004; Finlayson, 2013).

However, with the aforementioned techniques notwithstanding, the rhetoric of power can still fail to achieve its desired outcome when taken out of particular contexts to which its appeal and effect can be substantiated. Hence, the success and failure of the rhetoric of power are context-dependent (Sillince, 2000). To wit, without definitive contexts, the rhetoric of power is without power.

Therefore, contexts in rhetoric of power provide the ambience and definitive circumstances, situations, and environments that enclose, encompass, and shape the notions accentuating how power is asserted, maintained, or resisted through language and expressive communication. The foregoing alludes that power assertion is not independent of definitive context, but it is rather a derivative of context. So, the exercise or assertion of power through rhetoric is dependent on the definitive situation that surrounds it. Gaining insights into the rhetorical context helps in the analysis of the reason (why) a message is persuasive and controlling, who is being influenced, and how the dynamics and relations of power are being reinforced or challenged (Dijk, 2009).

However, contexts in rhetoric of power can be appraised from the socio-cultural, historical, situational, institutional, and political perspectives. From a socio-cultural context, the rhetoric of power aims to formalise or question existing and dominant hegemonies, ideologies, patterns, beliefs, systems, and worldviews that are weighed as the core manifestation and representation of power in society. Hence, the socio-cultural context encompasses the broad schema of paradigms, practices, traditions, mores, values, beliefs, norms, hegemonies, and worldviews with the social and cultural spheres that tend to shape the rhetoric of power (Loveday, 1983). From this perspective, the rhetoric of power is anchored on what is culturally substantiated and deemed culturally sensitive, authentic, accurate, compelling, persuasive, and significant, which resonate with, exploit or distort the aforementioned deeply-rooted cultural representations with a given cultural milieu.

From a historical context, the rhetoric of power must align with the historical context that necessitates it. This alludes to the particular temporal setting, that is, the time period or historical moments (Grant Davie, 1997), which may be marked by events, developments, situations, circumstances, occurrences, trends, or conditions that have taken place recently, whose debates or arguments can be explored or exploited for desired rhetorical effect. Within this context, it is assumed that a powerful message is highly effective when it is delivered at the *kairos* (the "opportune moment") (Wilhoit, 1994; Sullivan, 2023).

Moreover, the situational context (the rhetorical situation) in power rhetoric is the immediate set of conditions that directly motivate the rhetoric (Consigny, 1974). This takes the exigence (the problem), audience, and the constraints into consideration. The exigence, being the particular problem or matter of concern to which the rhetoric of power responds (Simons, 1999), is often considered as an existential or perceived national threat, policy issue, political impasse, economic situation, or social misnomer explored by power rhetors as anchors to accentuate, justify, and amplify their power narrative. The particular targets to which the power rhetoric aims with its appeals, allures, and tropes are the audience, and power rhetoric cannot succeed with them. This justifies that power rhetoric is audience-dependent, suggesting rhetors to streamline their rhetorical tropes to overlap with their audience's emotions, sentiments, biases, or worldviews to wield influence and power in the rhetorical encounter (Clayton, 2004). Constraints are the limitations and opportunities imposed on the power rhetor (Rutledge *et al.*, 2000). They range from tangible/physical (time, place, medium), psychological (audience beliefs, biases, sentiments), legal (laws), to political (institutions). Power itself also constitutes a massive constraint in power rhetoric (Olsson, 1991) as it dictates what can be said, by whom, and in what manner, as well as what messages should be ignored or suppressed.

The institutional and political contexts encompass the structures of power within which the rhetoric of power operates or gravitates (Mayr, 2008). They take into consideration the governing bodies, power relations, and medium/channel that mediated the narrative of power. Concerning governing bodies, whether the rhetoric is taking place in a legislature, a courtroom, a corporation, or a family, the rules and hierarchy of that institution determine the stakes and the effectiveness of the communication (Widhiastuti, 2012). Power relations allude to the pre-existing relationship between the power rhetor and the audience (Mailloux, 1989). In this instance, a president's speech has the power of office (ethos of authority) compared to a speech by grassroots activists, which must rely on moral or collective ethos of resistance. The medium/channel specifies the way the message is distributed. The medium/channel itself exerts power on discourse (Fairclough, 2013; Jorayeva, 2021) in the sense that a message disseminated through a state-owned and controlled media outlet has a different contextual power than the one shared in a private and personalised platform.

Trump's Rhetoric of Power

Donald Trump's rhetoric of power is widely recognised as a highly distinctive, non-traditional, and populist narrative paradigm (Bhatia and Ross, 2019) designed to establish an intense personal connection with his support base, exert dominance or supremacy over opponents, and challenge institutional norms. His rhetoric of power serves as a powerful tool for defining his political reality and maintaining control over the narrative (Ulkhasanah, 2021). Trump's rhetoric of power excels by his conscious and consistent use of divisive language, identification of enemies, emotional appeal, populist/nativist persona, crisis framing, and the willingness to confront/challenge facts and create duelling,

conflicting or controversial narratives (Lacatus and Meibauer, 2023; Ouessal and Asya, 2023).

In most of his rhetoric, he establishes himself as an outsider fighting against a corrupt and incompetent establishment that he frames as the "swamp" or "elites". In such rhetoric, his narratives centre on framing the current state of affairs as a state of national decline, loss, and crisis (Homolar and Scholz, 2019), which creates a sense of ontological insecurity that demands immediate and radical action, which only he can fix. Thus, positioning him as the unique, strong, decisive, and nationalist leader (Pinto, 2018) who will restore the country's past greatness, evoking emotions of patriotism, national pride and security.

In his delivery of rhetoric resonating with power dynamics, he uses metaphoric descriptions that create a clear binary worldview (Linkevičiūtė, 2019), which he exploits as powerful themes and mechanisms in building in-group loyalty and exerting power over the out-group. He uses highly charged and demeaning innuendos and epithets to personally brand and delegitimise political opponents, the media, and other perceived institutional threats (Demaske, 2022).

Trump's confrontational approach to politics, using rhetoric, has underlying notions of power in expressive form. He uses such a rhetorical approach in attacking his perceived enemies, thereby cultivating allegiance, rallying, and swelling his support base. Trump's confrontational rhetoric, accompanied by his critical use of hyperbolic, repetitive, sloganeering, vitriolic, and acerbic language couched in an oversimplistic tone and direct delivery style (Abbas, 2019), suggests how deviated and contrasting his rhetorical approach is to formal, traditional, and popular rhetorical conventions used in American political discourse. The simplicity of his rhetoric, accompanied by simple and familiar words, also deviates from the complex-language speech format and convention in the field. Thus, making his supremacist, populist, nativist, and power narratives highly comprehensible, relatable, accessible, memorable, and easily recallable among a diverse audience. The social media agency used in propagating his uncensored political sentiments directly to his support base gives an impression of his kind of rhetoric, leveraging an unfiltered authenticity (Svehla and Lyons, 2024). By consistently making assertions that contradict verified information, Trump rhetorically challenges the authority of traditional sources of knowledge and information such as the media, government agencies, and experts (Salek and Cole, 2019). These attributes add credence to his rhetoric of power and encourage his audience to rely solely on his narrative "truths".

Contexts in Trump's Rhetoric of Power

The characteristic nature of Donald Trump's rhetoric of power stems from his strategic exploitation of tripartite interconnected contexts. These contexts are the specific historical moment and political environment; the socio-economic and cultural context of nationalistic grievance; and the media landscape in which he operates.

The specific historical moment and political environment besetting Trump's rhetoric of power are marked by political polarisation and institutional

distrust (Ouessal and Asya, 2023). His rhetoric, addressing a moment in America's history where the nation is deeply divided and citizens have low faith in traditional institutions, rose to prominence and retains organic power. He confrontationally addresses such moments with his anti-establishment narratives (Merkouraki and Tzioti, 2024), bordering on how America's decades of economic anxiety, cultural change, and military conflicts around the world have led to a massive loss of trust in political elites, media, and social institutions, suggesting the need for a change in the status quo. By so doing, he presented/positioned himself rhetorically in a nativist/nationalist toga as an outsider of the corrupt and broken system, poised to fix the anomalies and restore America to its glorious past. By framing every policy issue and political opponents as a manifestation of a failed system, which consistently creates and fuels a narrative of a nation in existential decline, he cast his unconventional behaviour as a virtue and the necessary antidote to systemic correctness. Thus, giving his power rhetoric its urgency and making his extreme, undiplomatic, and unconventional solutions seem necessary for national rebirth.

The socio-economic and cultural context of nationalistic grievance: Trump's rhetoric leverages the deep-seated resentments and anxieties of specific demographics of the U.S. population by whipping sentiments around the "left behind", identity, and cultural resentment narratives (Kristoff, 2023). Weaving narratives around the "left behind" metaphor, for instance, Trump whips deep-seated sentiments, aligning with the perceived cultural neglect of the rural population and economic disenfranchisement of the U.S. working-class amidst a wave of globalisation orchestrated by progressive globalists and urban political cum economic elites (Homolar and Löfflmann, 2023). This kind of rhetoric amplifies cultural tensions and anxieties shrouding the need for change in demography, immigration policies, and outright progressive socio-economic cum cultural movements. In creating a strong binary sense of in-group identity and belonging for his political support base, Trump uses populist tropes, appeals, and innuendos to accentuate his socio-economic and cultural zeal and zest in crusading for economic and cultural inclusion of those he metaphorised as the "deprived" and "forgotten" population against the "globalist" or "coastal elites". He also uses stark binary language to divide the world into clear enemies and allies (Linkevičiūtė, 2019), and by attacking minority racial groups or political opponents with inflammatory metaphors (Linkevičiūtė, 2019), activating an emotional response of righteous indignation and cultural solidarity among the in-group in his political base.

The media landscape: Trump's rhetoric, with its perceived unfiltered authority and authenticity, leverages the affordances of social and interactive media (Banu *et al*., 2025), which are perfectly suited to the immediate, emotional, inflammatory, and fragmented nature of his discourse. Social and interactive media platforms like Twitter (X) or Truth Social allowed Trump to speak directly to his audience (Polak, 2024), bypassing the traditional media gatekeeping and fact-checking mechanisms. The fast, viral, digitised, unrestricted, and globalised nature of social and interactive media favours his uncensored rhetorical style (Gaufman and Ganesh, 2024). This direct-to-base channel amplifies a sense of intimacy and authenticity (Akram *et al*., 2025), reinforcing his message that he

is the only trustworthy voice and others, "enemy of the people" and "fake news channels".

Inaugural Address as a Political-Institutional Event

One way to see inaugural speeches is as moments where politics and institutions meet. These events do more than mark transitions as they help confirm who holds power, bring people together, and leave impressions about future plans. For example, Lee Sigelman (1996) labels them tools for running government, also calling them rites that signal change within democracy's structure. Though different in context, Alimsiwen Ayaawan and Gabriel Opoku (2020) stress how inaugural speeches amplify hegemony tied to governance, power, and control by the state. From another angle, research highlights how these addresses serve political communication goals, aiming to reinforce legitimacy in democracy, shape trust in political systems, foster national unity, and strengthen shared political identity among the citizenry (Biria and Mohammadi, 2012; Mensah *et al*., 2023).

On the flip side, some researchers resist narrowing presidential inaugurations to mere political-institutional events and exercises in state procedure. Instead, they emphasise elements such as the rhetorical, stylistic, and symbolic aspects of the inaugural speech. Tammy Vigil (2013), for instance, frames inaugural speeches as belonging mainly to a tradition of public rhetoric, where their genre conventions and patterns of effects extend beyond organised political assemblages or settings. Samuel Akinwotu (2018) shifts attention toward how language bends and innovates during such moments, overshadowing concerns about bureaucratic role. From this view, inaugural speeches gain momentum less through legal weight and more through performative avenues, agencies, and influence. Blending these perspectives leads to seeing inaugural speeches as layered happenings: anchored in protocol due to timing within leadership transitions, still powered by imagery, narrative shaping, persuasion, and crowd engagement and/or mobilisation. Lee Sigelman (1996) sees these kinds of speeches as simultaneously enacting authority, building legitimacy, and serving as ceremonial communication.

Presidential Inauguration Ceremony: Rhetorical, Symbolic, Historical, and Communicative Functions

Though often considered as formal traditions, presidential swearing-in events act as key moments where elected leaders use speech to gain trust, outline goals, and later on winning public support. Lee Sigelman (1996) notes that inaugural addresses have metamorphosed from what used to be ceremonial speeches to strategic mechanisms for political control, governance, and social engineering. This implies that it is no longer considered just rhetorical rituals but rather agency for setting the political directions of presidente-elect and influencing public expectations. In similar perspective, Reza Biria and Azadeh Mohammadi (2012) suggest that presidential inauguration rituals strengthen perceived control

while encouraging agreement. Emrich *et al*. (2001) emphasise that charismatic leadership, confidence, and optimism are projected through inaugural speeches during presidential inauguration, which mark their significance in establishing moral authority. One after another, findings from Emrich *et al*. (2001), Biria and Mohammadi (2012), and Sigelman (1996) show that presidential inaugurations do more than mark political transition but also consolidate legitimate power and foist national integration.

A critical look at presidential inaugurations suggests that they are not merely speech events but more as staged moments where power shows its roots in law, people, and history. Though often seen as routine, presidential inaugurations act like yearly markers and what Finkelstein (1981) calls "calendrical rites", where governance is put on display through orderly handovers of control, where rhetoric itself plays a role. According to Ruth Wodak (1990), the words spoken help shape the leader not just as an official but as someone who stands for unity, subtly repeating key beliefs held across society. With each raised hand during oaths, military parade, moment of prayer, or flag raising, Oksana Zakharova (2020) and Alexander Somek and Michael Wilkinson (2020) see meaning built into motion where the nation's collective sovereignty and constitutional order are foisted beyond administrative formalities. However, such events and accompanying acts do more than follow tradition, but become symbolic events where notions of patriotism, legality, and social cohesion are reinforced (Finkelstein, 1981; Wodak, 1990; Zakharova, 2020).

Presidential inauguration events matter deeply because they tie current leaders to long-standing national stories, democratic practices, and shared history. Rather than simply marking power shifts, these moments often draw on memories of earlier struggles and milestones to anchor incoming governments in larger political arcs. Lee Sigelman (1996) points out how such events regularly echo foundational values while referencing key turning points across time. Instead of focusing only on policy, leaders frame their rise through legacy-laden narratives rooted in collective experience. These ceremonies represent profound societal change. For instance, MarÃa MartÃnez Lirola (2017) notes that Mandela's first public address after the election was not merely a personal milestone but a symbolic transition which moved discourse from decades of racial separation toward inclusive governance. Because of this, swearing-in events keep long-standing rules alive by repeating key actions, yet also give leaders space to reshape shared memories in directions that support unity and recovery after hardship. For these reasons, researchers see such moments as acts rooted deeply in history, linking earlier governance ideals with hopes for what the nation might become (Sigelman, 1996; Lirola, 2017).

Appraised from a political communication standpoint, presidential inauguration ceremonies often serve as mediated moments where leaders present their worldview, plans, and ideas of nationhood to local and foreign observers. Notably, Biria and Mohammadi (2012) suggest such speeches build short-term unity by using language that brings people together around common beliefs. In contrast, Oksana Zakharova (2020) sees today's ceremonies as bridges between cultures since televised coverage sends messages about democracy, state credibility,

and national character worldwide. Meanwhile, Alimsiwen Ayaawan and Gabriel Opoku (2020) emphasise how these events carry ideological assumptions about leadership, power relations, citizenship, and diplomacy, influencing public understanding of politics and civic involvement. Altogether, scholarly opinion treats inaugurations less as rituals and more as calculated acts of communication aimed at securing trust, advancing ideology, and supporting political standing across borders (Ayaawan and Opoku, 2020; Biria and Mohammadi, 2012; Zakharova, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. This multi-disciplinary framework seeks to explicate the culmination between language and text and how they constitute a form of social practice. The primary goal of CDA is not solely to describe discourse, but rather to critically analyse how power relations, dominance, and social inequality are established, maintained or challenged through diverse forms of communication, including rhetoric (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Dijk, 2015).

In achieving its primary goal, CDA provides the framework for the examination of text (in this context, Trump's textual and audio-visual speech) and how it is structured to embody and promote subtle but specific ideologies, narratives, notions, and worldviews of the rhetor (Henderson, 2005; Shojaei *et al.*, 2013; Fairclough, 2017). Four-layered fundamental assumptions guide CDA. The first layer of assumption is that discourse embodies society and culture. In this layer of assumption, language and social practice are considered as actively constructive and mutually shaping/reflecting of the social world (Irimiea, 2017). The second layer of assumption alludes to the fact that power relations are discursive. In this layer of assumption, power is treated as the core of discourse, suggesting that it is enacted and reproduced through it (Farfán and Holzscheiter, 2011). The third layer of assumption alludes to the idea that discourse is ideologically laden. This assumes that discourse is deeply rooted and grounded in hegemony, beliefs, idiosyncrasies, values, assumptions, and worldviews that shape people's understanding of the world (Howarth, 2000). The last layer of assumption bordered on the idea that CDA is epistemic and socially relevant, suggesting its issue-based, needs-driven, analytical, and interventionist approach to tackling social problems and galvanising social change (Krzyżanowski, 2011).

Moreover, to appreciate a text in all its ramifications, unmasking and mapping its context is paramount. In doing so, CDA prioritises leveraging three independent but interconnected approaches. These approaches, according to Norman Fairclough (1992; 2013), constitute the text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The text constitutes the linguistic properties that aim to enhance discourse, which include but are not limited to rhetorical tropes, grammar, innuendos, vocabulary, diction, tone, frame, and rhetorical narrative (Fairclough, 2013). The discourse practice encompasses the whole process of text production and consumption, which seeks to address issues concerning those who create the text, the targets the text is created for, and how it is disseminated

(Fairclough, 2013). The sociocultural practice entails the broader social, political, and historical context that necessitated the text and the potential social consequences of its discourse (Fairclough, 2013). These interconnected levels of CDA are categorised into the descriptive (textual analysis), interpretive (discourse practice), and explanatory (sociocultural) paradigms (Fairclough, 1985; 1992; 2013).

The CDA framework is highly suitable and relevant to this study because it specifically focuses on explications of how language and narratives are used in Trump's rhetoric of power to construct, maintain, and challenge power relations and ideologies in political contexts. The framework provides the critical and analytical lenses through which Trump's subtle power dynamics can be uncovered, his rhetoric of division and populism can be analysed, as well as offers the paradigms for linking the linguistic features inherent in his power rhetoric to existing social and political contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the manifestations of supremacist narratives and power rhetoric in President Donald Trump's second inaugural speech, delivered at the US Capitol Rotunda, Washington, DC, United States, on January 20, 2025. The address was selected because inaugural speeches are not perfunctory ceremonial texts; they are socio-political performances through which leaders symbolically define national unity, ideological priorities, authorities, idiosyncrasies, memory, and governance foci.

The data corpus consisted of two official renditions of the speech: the transcribed speech script retrieved from the White House website (https://www.whitehouse.gov//remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address) and the 30.14-minute recorded video retrieved from the United States Department of State (https://www.state.gov//president-trump's-inaugural-address). The transcribed text served as the primary material, while the video was used to check delivery features, sequences, pauses, tonalities, emphatic stresses, and the exact time locations of the extracts.

The full text of the address was not reproduced in the report because of space constraints and because the study was not designed as a general rhetorical review of the entire speech act. It rather focused on specific segments of the speech that were most analytically germane to the study's objectives. Excerpts were purposively selected according to clearly defined inclusion criteria: explicit or implied constructions of national superiority; binary oppositions; representations of threat, decline, corruption or rescue; claims of exceptional destiny; affirmations of exceptional power, control, restoration and dominance; lexical choices that elevated one identity over others; rhetorical patterns that normalised hierarchy, exclusion; or other items with strong discursive density or relevant to the research questions. Some aspects of the speech were excluded where they were predominantly routine, ceremonial, protocolary, repetitive, transitional or not thematically relevant to the studies central categories. The

sampling logic was therefore largely purposive but systematic, rather that statistical. The selected excerpts were numbered, italicised and time-coded to enhance transparency, traceability and analytical accountability.

The study examined the speech using the analytical paradigms of Norman Fairclough's (1985; 1992; 2013) CDA, which were employed to describe, interpret, and explain the manifest contents of the speech within the textual, discursive and sociopolitical contexts of the communicative event. The essence is to unmask patterned mechanisms in Trump's second inaugural address that build up constructive discourse in which supremacist narratives and rhetoric of power are projected, in which contradictory ideologies coexist (Tenorio, 2011; Obong *et al*., 2023). Using the CDA, the language used in Trump's rhetoric was examined as a social practice in relation to power (Fairclough, 1985; 1992; 2013), considering that its isolated examination without reference to its political context of utterance and the ensuing power relations would have been inadequate (Emeka-Nwobia, 2015).

The CDA of Trump's second inaugural rhetoric consists of description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 1985; Fairclough, 1992; Janks, 1997; Fairclough, 2013; Obong, 2023). While Hilary Janks (1997) refers to the three interrelated CDA processes as text analysis, processing analysis, and social analysis, Mohamed Hmouma (2025) approaches them from a textual practice, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice; and the current study adopted a slight modification: textual analysis, discursive analysis, and sociopolitical analysis. Therefore, the selected excerpts from the speech were analysed using the textual analysis, discursive analysis, and sociopolitical analysis approaches to provide qualitative answers to each of the research questions.

Finally, it must be admitted that the researchers played an interpretative role in the analytical process, as expected of standard qualitative CDA. The researchers' task was to identify, interpret, and explain the ideological work performed by the speech and the speech act. However, to reduce the arbitrary proclivities of interpretation, the analysis was grounded in verbatim extracts, time-coded evidence, established CDA processes, and repeated cross-checking between transcribed text and recorded video. The interpretation was also guided by the study's research questions. The focus on one inaugural address also has limiting propensities. But this afforded the study the temporal advantage of methodologically evaluating the lexical, rhetorical, and discursive performance of President Donald Trump in relations to supremacism and power rhetoric, only as manifested in his second inaugural address. The design was not to compare Trump's speeches across seasons and the study does not claim to represent the entirety of Trump's political rhetoric or American presidential discourse.

ANALYSIS

In line with Norman Fairclough's (1985; 1992; 2013) three-dimensional model of CDA, the textual analysis involves a description of the rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, and pathos); the discursive analysis involves an interpretation of

the discursive elements (supremacist narratives and power rhetoric) employed in the speech; while the sociopolitical analysis involves an explanation of the objects of discourse within the broader sociopolitical veracities of the United States of America and other contemporary democracies. The data for this study were systematically labelled and presented in three tables, representing three data categories, each addressing each of the research questions.

Table 1. Data for Textual Analysis

Data Categories: Rhetorical Appeals	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**References/ Appeal Elements**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Logos (Rhetorical appeal based on facts, logical proofs and reasonable arguments)	*"Our country can no longer deliver basic services in times of emergency, as recently shown by the wonderful people of North Carolina —who have been treated so badly— (applause) —and other states who are still suffering from a hurricane that took place many months ago…"*	(Factual situations in North Carolina, other states)	(3:40-4:01)
	"…or, more recently, Los Angeles, where we are watching fires still tragically burn from weeks ago without even a token of defense. They're raging through the houses and communities, even affecting some of the wealthiest and most powerful individuals in our country —some of whom are sitting here right now."	(Leveraging on a real fire disaster in Los Angeles)	(4:02-4:22)
	"The journey to reclaim our republic has not been an easy one —that, I can tell you. Those who wish to stop our cause have tried to take my freedom and, indeed, to take my life."	(Reference to a real occurrence – assassination attempt)	(6:12-6:28)
	"Today, I will sign a series of historic executive orders. With these actions, we will begin the complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense."	(Appeal to the fact of fulfilling campaign promises)	(10:16-10:28)
	"With my actions today, we will end the Green New Deal, and we will revoke the electric vehicle mandate, saving our auto industry and keeping my sacred pledge to our great American autoworkers."	(Logical campaign argument – end Green New Deal)	(14:34-14:59)

Data Categories: Rhetorical Appeals	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**References/ Appeal Elements**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Ethos (Rhetorical appeal based on the proofs of credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker or the forces behind the speaker)	*"But I felt then and believe even more so now that my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again."*	(Appeal to credibility as the President sponsored by God)	(6:28-7:05)
	"As our victory showed, the entire nation is rapidly unifying behind our agenda with dramatic increases in support from virtually every element of our society: young and old, men and women, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, urban, suburban, rural. And very importantly, we had a powerful win in all seven swing states —(applause)— and the popular vote, we won by millions of people." (Applause)	(Appeal to credibility as one supported by all segments of America, including minorities)	(8:08-8:41)
	"Today is Martin Luther King Day. And his honour —this will be a great honour. But in his honour, we will strive together to make his dream a reality. We will make his dream come true." (Applause)	(Appeal to credibility for a follower of Martin Luther King)	(9:03-9:28)
	"Like in 2017, we will again build the strongest military the world has ever seen. We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end —and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into." (Applause)	(Claim of credibility based on past performance)	(19:51-20:29)
	"Many people thought it was impossible for me to stage such a historic political comeback. But as you see today, here I am. The American people have spoken." (Applause)	(Credibility on account of majority votes)	(25:52-26:22)

Data Categories: Rhetorical Appeals	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**References/ Appeal Elements**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Pathos (Rhetorical appeal based on force of emotions or the vulnerability of human feelings like fear, faith or religion, hate, race, pride, optimism, security, safety, etc.)	*"… and my fellow citizens, the golden age of America begins right now."* (Applause)	(Optimism)	(0:32- 0:46)
	"Our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced. The vicious, violent, and unfair weaponisation of the Justice Department and our government will end." (Applause)	(Appeal to fear, restoration of safety)	(1:18-1:42)
	"For American citizens, January 20th, 2025, is Liberation Day." (Applause)	(Hope, optimism, liberty)	(7:42-7:58)
	"We will not forget our country, we will not forget our Constitution, and we will not forget our God. Can't do that." (Applause)	(Appeal to nationalism, faith and religion)	(9:54-10-14)
	"America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration of the entire world."	(National pride)	(21:10-21:21)

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2. Data for Discursive Analysis

Data Categories: Discursive Themes and Narratives	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**Theme or Narrative Categories**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Messiah Complex and Solipsism	*"… But I felt then and believe even more so now that my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again."* (Applause)	(Supremacist, nativist, and power rhetoric)	(6:36-7:06)
	"My recent election is a mandate to completely and totally reverse a terrible betrayal and all of these many betrayals that have taken place and to give the people back their faith, their wealth, their democracy, and indeed, their freedom. From this moment on, America's decline is over." (Applause)	(Supremacist narrative/power rhetoric)	(5:13-5:48)

Data Categories: Discursive Themes and Narratives	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**Theme or Narrative Categories**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Power Binarism	*"Our sovereignty will be reclaimed. Our safety will be restored. The scales of justice will be rebalanced. The vicious, violent, and unfair weaponisation of the Justice Department and our government will end. (Applause.) And our top priority will be to create a nation that is proud, prosperous, and free."* (Applause)	(Power rhetoric)	(1:18-1:55)
	"As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female." (Applause)	(Power rhetoric/ supremacist narrative)	(18:13-18:40)
American Nativism	*"First, I will declare a national emergency at our southern border."* (Applause) *"All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came. We will reinstate my Remain in Mexico policy."* (Applause)	(Supremacist and nativist narrative)	(0:32-0:46)
	"…Under the orders I sign today, we will also be designating the cartels as foreign terrorist organizations." (Applause) *"And by invoking the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, I will direct our government to use the full and immense power of federal and state law enforcement to eliminate the presence of all foreign gangs and criminal networks bringing devastating crime to U.S. soil, including our cities and inner cities."* (Applause) *"As commander in chief, I have no higher responsibility than to defend our country from threats and invasions, and that is exactly what I am going to do. We will do it at a level that nobody has ever seen before."*	(power rhetoric, supremacist and nativist narrative)	(11:47-12:58)

Data Categories: Discursive Themes and Narratives	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**Theme or Narrative Categories**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Christian Nationalism	"*National unity is now returning to America, and confidence and pride is soaring like never before. In everything we do, my administration will be inspired by a strong pursuit of excellence and unrelenting success. We will not forget our country, we will not forget our Constitution, and we will not forget our God. Can't do that."* (Applause)	(Supremacist and nativist narrative)	(9:36-10:15)
	"We are one people, one family, and one glorious nation under God. So, to every parent who dreams for their child and every child who dreams for their future, I am with you, I will fight for you, and I will win for you. We're going to win like never before." (Applause)	(Power rhetoric and supremacist/ nativist narrative)	(27:50-28:16)
Cultural Exclusivism	*"As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female."* (Applause)	(Supremacist narrative – Gender exclusivism)	(18:13-18:40)
	"…and we will not forget our God."	(Supremacist narrative – Religious exclusivism)	(9:59-10:15)
Supremacist Expansionism	*"America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration of the entire world."*	(Supremacist narrative and power rhetoric)	(21:10-21:21)
	"The United States will once again consider itself a growing nation — one that increases our wealth, expands our territory, builds our cities, raises our expectations, and carries our flag into new and beautiful horizons. And we will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars." (Applause) *"Ambition is the lifeblood of a great nation, and, right now, our nation is more ambitious than any other. There's no nation like our nation."*	(Power rhetoric, supremacist/ nativist narrative)	(23:46-24:44)

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3. Data for Sociopolitical Context Analysis

Data Categories: Sociopolitical Contexts	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**Theme or Narrative Categories**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Power Relations Context: Us vs. Them	*"… we are at the start of a thrilling new era of national success. A tide of change is sweeping the country, sunlight is pouring over the entire world, and America has the chance to seize this opportunity like never before."*	(Power rhetoric and supremacist narrative)	(2:12-2:28)
	"As we gather today, our government confronts a crisis of trust. For many years, a radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens while the pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete disrepair."	(nativist narrative)	(2:42-2:59)
Ideological Context: Conservatism vs. Progressivism	*"As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female."* (Applause)	(power rhetoric and nativist narrative)	(18:13-18:40)
	"…We will drill, baby, drill." (Applause) *"America will be a manufacturing nation once again, and we have something that no other manufacturing nation will ever have —the largest amount of oil and gas of any country on earth— and we are going to use it. We'll use it."* (Applause) *"…We will be a rich nation again, and it is that liquid gold under our feet that will help to do it."*	(power rhetoric, supremacist and nativist narrative)	(13:29-14:10)

Data Categories: Sociopolitical Contexts	**Rhetorical Excerpts**	**Theme or Narrative Categories**	**Time-matches (30.14 minutes)**
Communication Context: Radicalism vs. Political Correctness	*"First, I will declare a national emergency at our southern border."* (Applause) *"All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came. We will reinstate my Remain in Mexico policy."* (Applause)	(nativist and supremacist narrative)	(10:33-11:27)
	"A short time from now, we are going to be changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America…" (Applause) *"… including the Panama Canal, which has foolishly been given to the country of Panama… And above all, China is operating the Panama Canal. And we didn't give it to China. We gave it to Panama, and we're taking it back."* (Applause)	(power rhetoric, supremacist and nativist narrative)	(21:22-23:17)

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION

What rhetorical appeals were deployed in President Trump's second inaugural speech?

As presented in Table 1, the rhetorical appeals deployed in President Trump's second inaugural speech generally came under the conventional rhetorical proofs of logos, ethos, and pathos. As corroborated by Benedetto Fontana (2017), while logos refers to rhetorical appeal based on facts, logical proofs, and reasonable arguments; ethos refers to rhetorical appeal based on the proofs of credibility or/and trustworthiness of the speaker or the identifiable forces behind them (Hyde, 2004; Danisch, 2016); pathos refers to rhetorical appeal based on the force of emotion or the vulnerability of human feelings like fear, faith, hate, religion, race, pride, optimism, security, safety, etc. (Taylor, 2001). These fundamentals agree with Švobaitė,'s (2018) assertion that, it was Aristotle who first argued that persuasive influence is the most notable function of rhetoric and further discovered that persuasion is principally made of three rhetorical appeals that may affect the audience: authority of the orator (ethos), emotions and feelings of the audience (pathos) and logical reasoning in the argument (logos).

Trump's references to the alleged inability of the preceding Government to deliver basic services during the emergency times in North Carolina or the raging fire disaster in Los Angeles were intended to stimulate appeal by factual

evidence. Trump's reference to the real occurrence of an assassination attempt on him was partly an appeal to logos. He appealed to the fact of beginning to fulfil his campaign promises when he noted that "*Today, I will sign a series of historic executive orders. With these actions, we will begin the complete restoration of America and the revolution of common sense*" (see Table 1). He declared an end to the Green New Deal, in fulfilment of his logical campaign argument that the deal was doing America more harm than good. His promise to tackle real-life inflation by increasing oil production and his establishment of the Department of Government Efficiency were also intended to stimulate the acceptance of his audience as a leader capable of fixing America's problems. The language deployed seems designed to establish, maintain, legitimise or challenge a hierarchy of power and qualifies as rhetoric of power, as prescribed by Jonathan Charteris-Black (2005), Stanley Deetz and Dennis Mumby (2012), and Maya David (2014).

Similarly, there were lots of narratives intended to elevate the credibility rating of Trump in the eyes of his audience. In Table 1, the data presented indicate how he sought to elevate his credibility by presenting himself as a President sponsored and so spared (from assassination attempt) by God: "*…But I felt then and believe even more so now that my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again*". He appealed to credibility as one supported by all segments of America, including minority groups. He appealed to credibility by associating himself with Martin Luther King, "*We will make his dream come true*". He also made claims to his credibility on account of his previous performance as the 45th President of the United States. This aligns with the positions of Adrian Blackledge (2005), Loyd Bitzer (2020), and Julius Oyewole and Abiola Olufemi (2023), that the primary purpose of power rhetoric is to influence the thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, opinions and actions of targets, often leading to a form of political control.

Trump did a great job of stirring emotions and appealing to the vulnerability of human feelings as he made his address. He started nicely by fanning the embers of American optimism, with the phrase, "*…my fellow citizens, the golden age of America begins right now*" (see Table 1). In this excerpt, he appealed to hope, optimism, and liberty when he ecstatically declared, "*For American citizens, January 20th, 2025, is Liberation Day*". He appealed a lot to the feeling of fear when he alluded to threats and crises caused by the outgoing administration and offered himself as the "merchant of restoration". These emotional appeals, as discussed in Mohamed Hmouma (2025), allow Trump to not only promote his perspectives as a powerful agent (Kuypers, 2010; Johnson and Foster, 2024) but also to direct them towards his vision for the country.

What were the supremacist narratives and power rhetoric in Trump's second inaugural speech?

The six supremacist narratives and/or power rhetoric embedded in Donald Trump's second inaugural address, as identified in this study, were:

- **Messiah Complex and Solipsism:** One clear manifestation of supremacism is the consistent assumption and projection of one's overrated sense of self-

importance. This agrees with observation of Aditi Bhatia and Andrew Ross (2019) that Donald Trump's rhetoric of power is widely recognised as highly distinctive, non-traditional and of the populist narrative paradigm designed to exert dominance or supremacy over opponents and challenge institutional norms. President Trump did not fail to use one of the biggest moments of his life to epitomise these inherent proclivities. Trump's statements: "*But I felt then and believe even more so now that my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again*" (see Table 2) came as intending to project him to Americans and the larger world as one who is not ordinary but extraordinary, not mundane but extramundane, and not natural but supernatural, as one whose presidency is not perfunctorily an outcome of democratic procedures but that of divine orchestration for purposes even higher than human decipherability. Such utterances amplified the supremacist narrative and power rhetoric. Trump spent a substantial part of his talking time denigrating the wins and exaggerating the losses of the President Biden-led government, to paint a gory picture of gloom, but conversely presented himself as the messiah mandated by divinity to champion America's restoration. In Table 2, he remarked, "*My recent election is a mandate to completely and totally reverse a terrible betrayal… From this moment on, America's decline is over*".

- **Power Binarism:** This is one prominent power rhetoric in Trump's address. This view is predicated on the assumption that life is black and white with no in-betweens. "*As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female.*" Trump seems to believe in the concept of a 'stable opposition' that would never like him, no matter what he does, and so their perspectives do not matter to him. He seemed to knock down his predecessor's government as utterly evil while presenting himself as the force for good and redemption of the evil days. This aligns with the findings of Corina Lacatus and Gustav Meibauer (2023) and Karbeche Ouessal and Tarfa Asya (2023), that Trump's rhetoric of power excels by his conscious and consistent use of divisive language, identification of enemies and the willingness to confront facts and create duels. It also corroborates Vilma Linkevičiūtė's (2019) observation that in his delivery of rhetoric of power, Donald Trump uses metaphoric descriptions that create a clear binary worldview.
- **American Nativism:** This is another major supremacist narrative eloquently fostered by President Trump in his address. Trump seemed to imply that some of those whom the previous government had accepted as Americans were not as American as the rest of his kind and must, as a matter of national emergency, be shown the way out. "*First, I will declare a national emergency at our southern borders. All illegal entry will immediately be halted, and we will begin the process of returning millions and millions of criminal aliens back to the places from which they came. We will reinstate my Remain in Mexico policy.*" Through the agency of rhetoric, certain set of beliefs, values and ideas can be promoted (Finlayson, 2013). For President Trump, American nativism was one of such.

  Trump even warned of how extreme his government would go to push the ideal of American nativism, including reliance on an ancient legislation,

the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, *"…under the orders I sign today, we will also be designating the cartels as foreign terrorist organization. And by invoking the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, I will direct… I have no higher responsibility than to defend our country from threats and invasions, and that is exactly what I am going to do. We will do it at a level that nobody has never ever seen before*".

- **Christian Nationalism:** Trump is a Christian who unrepentantly esteems the Christian faith as superior to other faiths. He, like many other Americans, mostly of Republican inclination, vehemently propagates the notion that America is intrinsically a Christian nation. This is in opposition to the viewpoint of many other Americans, mostly of Democratic inclination, that America is fundamentally a liberal nation, with possibilities for all faiths, creeds, and dogmas. Multiple narratives within the speech present Trump as making a clarion call for national unity, but one that is inspired by the God of Christianity. "*National unity is now returning to America…We will not forget our country, we will not forget our Constitution, we will not forget* (At another point within the speech lifecycle, he remarked,) *our God…" "We are one people, one family, and one glorious nation under God…"* The primary purpose of power rhetoric, according to Jay Lemke (2005) and Lloyd Bitzer (2020), is to influence the thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and actions of targets, often leading to a form of political control. Christian nationalism is one of such thoughts, beliefs and ideologies perpetuated by President Trump though the agency of rhetoric.
- **Cultural Exclusivism:** Another theme that illustrates the supremacist proclivities of President Trump, as emblematised in his second inaugural address, is his 'you don't belong to us if you don't behave like us' insinuation. When he declared, "*…they are only two genders: male and female*" in 21st-century America, it was a proclamation of gender exclusivism. When he stated, *"… and we will not forget our God*", it was a proclamation of religious exclusivism. This is so because the statements either ignored the contemporary reality that there were many Americans who do not identify themselves by either gender or Christianity. Such persons, from Trump's worldview, are either ignored or considered non-Americans, if not non-existent. This depicts rash intolerance but remains consistent with Trump's paradigm of rhetoric, as explained in Aditi Bhatia and Andrew Ross (2019).
- **Supremacist Expansionism:** Trump's second inaugural rhetoric did not shy away from proclaiming the supremacy of the 'American race' over any other 'race', the word 'race' lightly used here to mean 'people'. In Table 2, he bragged, "*America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration of the entire world*". From the mountaintops of chauvinism, he prognosticated expansionism for America, thereby sustaining Pinto's (2018) positioning of him as the unique, strong, decisive and nationalist leader. "*The United States will once again consider itself a growing nation —one that increases our wealth, expands our territory, builds our cities, raises our expectations, and carries our flag into new and beautiful horizon. And will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars… There's no nation like our nation.*"

How did Trump's second inaugural speech embolden or weaken prevailing sociopolitical patterns in the United States of America and other contemporary democracies?

This section offers a discussion on the prevailing sociopolitical conditions, patterns, and contexts in the US and in other contemporary democracies that influenced the speech act of which the supremacist narratives and rhetoric of power aim to challenge or enhance. This is possible because the authors anchored the study on the theoretical framework of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which explicates the culmination between language and text and how they constitute a form of social practice (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Dijk, 2015). CDA, as explained in Robyn Henderson (2005), Shojaei *et al*. (2013), and Norman Fairclough (2017), is both a theory and a method. Discussing relevant excerpts from the speech within the sociopolitical context of the communicative events, findings of the study highlighted three broad contexts which affected or were affected by the speech.

- **Power Relations Context:** Us versus Them: Within the context of power relations, Trump's second inaugural speech gave him away as one who understands power and how to wield it, sometimes excessively. He knows how to excite his supporters (**Us**) and also knows how to trample on his opponents (**Them**), with the power at his disposal. Trump's inaugural speech seemed somewhat too rash and harsh on his election opponents. In an audience that had the immediate past President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, newly inaugurated Trump spared no moment to vilify the Biden-led government and presented his inauguration as "*the start of a thrilling new era of national success*". He grabbed the moment to accentuate the sharp contrast between his administration and his predecessor's. "*As we gather today, our government confronts a crisis of trust. For many years, a radical and corrupt establishment has extracted power and wealth from our citizens while the pillars of our society lay broken and seemingly in complete despair.*" The foregoing corroborates Karbeche Ouessal and Tarfa Asya (2023), who emphatically noted that Trump's rhetoric of power was marked by political polarisation and institutional distrust and came at a time when the nation was deeply divided, with citizens having low faith in traditional institutions. It is at such time that President Trump rose to the occasion, positioning himself as siding with the people (we) against the corrupt and inefficient forces of the establishment (them), and forcefully insisting on change of the status quo.
- **Ideological Context: Conservatism versus Progressivism:** From the standpoint of political ideology, there has always been a divide between fundamental views of the Republicans and the Democrats. The Republicans are more conservative than the Democrats on issues like race, religion, migration, abortion, healthcare, gender rights, etc. Trump's speech eloquently manifested his ideological conservatism, albeit with a dint of radicalism. His comment on state recognition of only two genders and his "*drill, baby drill*"

line were crucial items of political ideology. As a President elected into office on the platform of the Republican Party, Trump's preference for conservatism, in a sense, traditionalism, in place of progressivism, in a sense, modernism, is expectedly part of the sociopolitical culture. The temporal setting of Trump's rhetoric of power makes it possible for his ideologies to easily resonate with majority of the people, because as Debra Wilhoit (1994) and Robert Sullivan (2023) have stated, a powerful message is highly effective when it is delivered at the *kairos* (the opportune moment). However, his rather too confrontational disposition in promotion of his ideologies raises some concerns even for lovers of ideology-driven democracy in America and across the globe.

- **Communication Context:** Radicalism versus Political Correctness: President Trump, through his various communications and speech acts, has demystified the office of the President of the United States of America. He cares little about political correctness, quite unlike most U.S. Presidents before him. He says things that politicians would generally not dare say. He attacks whosoever he deems attackable, without the social and diplomatic protocols of saying so nicely. In one speech, he so brutally hit on Mexico, proclaimed his "Remain in Mexico policy", and changed by presidential fiat the historic "Gulf of Mexico" to "Gulf of America". In one speech, he bellowed at Panama and at China and stated that the Panama Canal, "*which has foolishly been given to the country of Panama",* must be reclaimed. He added, "*And above all, China is operating the Panama Canal. And we didn't give it to China. We gave it to Panama, and we're taking it back*". While some celebrate Trump for his boldness and frankness in communicating his thoughts, others fear that his rhetoric of power, especially on controversial subjects, is not self-censored and appears somewhat boorish, uncivilised and belligerent to his global audience. This aligns with the submissions of Corina Lacatus and Gustav Meibauer (2023) and Karbeche Ouessal and Tarfa Asya (2023) that Trump's rhetoric of power excels by his conscious and consistent use of divisive language, identification of enemies, emotional appeal, populist persona, crisis framing, and the willingness to confront facts. Radicalism, zero political correctness and what Xu and Rees (2021) call 'Trump doctrine' have long been associated with President Trump, with resultant colossal damages on common interests, mutual relationships and social order across the Global community.

CONCLUSION

President Trump's employment of rhetorical appeals in his second inaugural address appeared strategic, purposeful, effective, and consistent with his speech idiosyncrasies. His inaugural rhetoric of 2025 resonates with the doctrine of the Aristotelian triad and aligns with the core strategies of persuasion analysed in this study. He appealed to logic using proof of facts and factual arguments; claimed credibility based on divine endorsement, previous performance, and support of the American majority; and stirred his audience's emotional vulnerability to fear, threat, hope, liberty, optimism, religion, restoration, and the American pride.

Aligning with the findings of previous studies on Trump's power rhetoric, this study confirms President Trump's consistent 'them versus us' framing, his power-binarism worldview, and his repeated appeals to populism. But this study uniquely contributes to the extant body of knowledge on the subject, as it reveals Trump's second inaugural address' fusion of soliphism, nativism, exclusivism, expansionism, American chauvinism, and Christian nationalism, all as tropes of supremacism within the mechanism of power rhetoric. His power rhetoric, hinged on emotive dogmatism and moral binaries, has long-term implications for deliberative democracy in America and beyond: it threatens healthy competitions, substitutes inclusive debate with adversarial politicking, widens socio-political division, erodes norms of public discourse, and diminishes trust in institutions. Also, President Trump's messianic-leader imagery and American-exceptionalism claims succeeded in partially legitimising his exclusionary 'chosen people' narrative, further reinforcing his supremacist narrative. The referenced speech conveyed with utmost profundity, power-justifying myths, which, if left unchallenged, may sponsor deeper dichotomies and enduring challenges for contemporary democracies across the globe.

However, it must be admitted, one limitation to the ambitious generalisation of the results of this study lies in its analysis of a single piece of discourse, without the benefit of a comparative analysis. But the preoccupation of the study was not to superficially establish patterns in President Trump's speeches and speech acts. The intention was also not to perform a general evaluation of the rhetoric of Donald Trump. A few previous studies had achieved those objectives. The focus of the current study was to undertake a vigorous, methodologically transparent, and empirically reliable analysis of the supremacist and power rhetoric tropes in President Donald Trump's second inaugural address of 2025. The strength of the study lies in its empiricity and temporal specificity. The text transcript of the speech was thoroughly evaluated, but juxtaposed, time-matched, and tested against the recorded video of the speech, for tonality, pauses, applauses, emphatic stresses, speech mannerisms, and other paralinguistic or non-verbal indicators.

Donald Trump is one of the most enigmatic, yet polarising personae in contemporary global politics. Ahead of his election and subsequent inauguration for a second term as President of the United States, there was a deluge of anxieties and uncertainties about what to expect in a post-Joe-Biden presidency. Most especially, considering his hardline positions on divergent intra and international political issues during his electioneering period, making his second inaugural ceremony a political-institutional event to ascertain whether those positions were campaign gimmicks or the policy thrust of his second coming. Such anxieties and uncertainties were ubiquitous, felt across nations. A scientific study on the rhetorical appeals, speech proclivities, thematic issues, and socio-political contexts of his 2025 inaugural speech is a major contribution to scholarship, as none existed hitherto. The quality and integrity of the microanalytical data harvested in this study would not have been possible if the researchers had prioritised breadth over depth or quantity over quality.

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