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The Representation of Kamala Harris in Donald J. Trump's Posts on X

Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyze the representation of Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris as an adversary in the posts produced by former US president Donald J. Trump on X. Our corpus consists of twelve posts, ten of which are linguistic texts and two of which are visual texts. These posts are attached in the Annex section.

Our expectations as regards our leading question “In what way and through which resources does the text producer represent his opponent?” is that the texts will amount to a representation of Harris as an unfit candidate and of Trump as a worthy and competent one. Our motivation for choosing this topic is the increasing relevance of social media amidst the 2024 presidential elections in the United States as a non-traditional means employed in Trump's campaign to construct a negative image of a political adversary and, in turn, to construct a positive image of himself as a candidate. We will now trace this tendency and examine the means applied in texts produced by Donald J. Trump to achieve this overall representation.

Linguistic Forms: Noun Phrases and Semantic Field of Communism

We have found that several linguistic forms are exploited in order to produce a characterization of the discursive entity Kamala Harris as an incompetent authority who is incapable of ruling the country because she would jeopardize the United States' quintessential values: security, freedom, and democracy.

Firstly, the noun phrases “weakest presidential candidate in history on crime”; “the number one most liberal senator”; “the leader of banning fracking in the United States”; “an election-weaponizing marxist” and “the fraud” are referring expressions which all point to the same discursive entity: Kamala Harris. These complex noun phrases have a heavy semantic load and are employed to attribute certain qualities to Harris which, although not inherently negative, in this context are negatively connoted and aid the overarching representation. The qualities in question are being weak, unfit, liberal, anti-fracking, false, hypocritical, manipulative in order to serve covert purposes which go against American values and the American identity, and willing to change stances and opinions swiftly to advance her political career.

Secondly, we have noticed the use of elements belonging to the semantic field of communism, which are employed to construct a representation of the Democratic presidential candidate as closely tied to the communist ideology and to authoritarian attitudes which are cast in a negative light. The nickname “Comrade Kamala Harris” or simply “Comrade Kamala” is a fixed label that Trump uses consistently to refer to the democratic presidential candidate. This is another instance keeping with Trump’s larger tradition of coining nicknames for his opponents, which have the effect of reducing people to a single negative characteristic. They are memorable and have a punch, either because they echo common perceptions of the objects of the labels, or because they are highly humorous, or elicit the outrage of the subjects of his mockery or of their supporters. In this context, “Comrade” is employed ironically, characterizing the discursive entity as belonging to left-leaning or communist circles. This characterization is further complemented by other elements within the semantic field of communism such as “Soviet style” and “Marxist”, which are also presented as non-desirable attributes.

Rhetorical and Semiotic Resources

Furthermore, we have identified that these linguistic forms do not act on their own; some rhetorical and semiotic resources are used to reinforce the representation of Harris, such as metaphors, hyperbole and capitalization.

Firstly, in the metaphorical construction observed in “she’s allowed millions of people to pour through our borders,” the pronoun “she” points to the discursive entity Kamala Harris and functions as subject and agent (doer of the action “allow”), and there is presence of a symbolic representation of immigrants crossing the border without any control whatsoever into an America, which is equated with a “container” that will eventually reach its limit capacity and overflow. This metaphor goes hand in hand with Harris not prioritizing the future of the United States, creating an image of Harris as an antagonist to the nation.

Secondly, hyperbole is a pervasive resource throughout the texts. The hyperbolic expressions that we identified are realized by means of superlative adjectives (“weakest”, “most liberal senator”), quantifiers that denote extraordinary quantities (“she’s allowed millions of people to pour through...”, “100 times WORSE”, “Millions of Illegal Immigrants”), adverbial expressions (“never seen before”, “than Harris ever was”, “never be respected”, “America will never allow...”, “Bombs are dropping all over the place”, “This terror would have never happened if I were president”), evaluative verbs used for dramatic effect (“devastate”, “abolish”, “obliterate”), and noun phrases which are highly hyperbolic (“a threat to democracy”; “poverty, chaos and heartache”; “the leader of banning fracking”;

“nuclear world war 3”; “no future”). The effect of the recurrent use of hyperbole in this context is to highlight the seemingly negative attributes of presidential candidate Harris and to exaggerate the potential consequences of her winning the elections to drive home his message.

Thirdly, as regards semiotic resources, capitalization and punctuation are employed strategically to enhance the ideational content of the texts. The capitalization of initial letters and of entire words and phrases stands out as characteristic of the text producer’s style, as it is consistently employed in all texts analyzed. It serves the functions of providing emphasis or working together with other resources (such as hyperbole) to augment and exacerbate their effects (“meaning EVERY American will be taxed up to 80%...”, “if you want more CASH and less TAX”, “SOVIET Style Price Controls”, “leader of BANNING FRACKING IN THE UNITED STATES”, “America will never allow an Election WEAPONIZING MARXIST TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.”). Moreover, the recurrent use of exclamation marks is another case of a semiotic resource that contributes to the emphatic tone or to magnify the degree of severity or certainty with which statements ought to be interpreted. (“They will VOTE FOR TRUMP!”, “This is a Threat to Democracy!”, “She will never be respected by the Tyrants of the World!”, “Let’s not have World War III, because that’s where we’re heading!”, “America will be Strong Again, and that will make the world Safe and Secure!”) Additionally, a greater number of exclamation marks present in a row are indicative of added emphasis or increasing importance. In the case of “VOTE TRUMP!!!”, what is being highlighted is a call to action which lies at the core of Trump’s social media campaign.

Emotional Appeal: Fear

Moreover, there is an emotional appeal that underlies Trump’s propositions: fear is evoked in order to achieve a specific political goal, which is curtailing voters’ support for Harris. The combined effect of Trump’s choice of words and nicknames is the engagement in fearmongering and alarmist tactics to influence voting behavior. An example of this is his assumption that Harris has allowed “millions of people to pour into our Borders, many from prisons, mental institutions, and, indeed, terrorists”, which is deemed as a “Threat to Democracy.” Hence, her policies are presented as failing to provide US citizens safety. Also, the fear appeals Trump makes point not only to her current character as a presidential candidate, but also to predictions for a future America under her rule, such as “she will only bring us Poverty, Chaos, and Heartache!”, “she would devastate the Commonwealth”, “there will be no future under Comrade Kamala Harris”, “she will never be respected by the Tyrants of the World!”, “if you think things are expensive now, they will get 100 WORSE!” These

cases are represented as a consequence of the extreme liberal position that is attributed to Harris. Additionally, the instilling of fear acts not only on Harris' competence as a leader but also on her being presented as agent of even highly shocking and scandalous policies, which actually go against her current political platform and create a sense of uncertainty and distrust, such as "she will obliterate Social Security and Medicare", "she will take us to nuclear WWII", and "Kamala will implement SOVIET Style Price Controls." These predictions are mostly ungrounded and virtually apocalyptic.

Visual Texts

Finally, the linguistic texts complement the visual texts, which are in turn understood on the basis of the linguistic texts. In order to further construct an image of Kamala Harris as autocratic, Trump posted an AI-generated image that represents her as an authoritarian communist leader to exaggerate her political position and compare it to that of a dictatorship. In addition, another visual text that complements the representation of the Democratic candidate is another image picturing a criminal about to attack a civilian, onto which the text "no one is safe with Kamala's open border" has been added, alluding to the idea that Kamala Harris is not able to control the border, which poses a threat to the United States' security. In these cases, Trump acts on the capacities of principal and spokesperson, but not of originator or composer, as these are AI-generated images and we can infer the involvement of members of his campaign in the design of visual texts.

Conclusion and Assessment



In conclusion, we can say that Trump exploits both linguistic resources, such as noun phrases, lexical words of the semantic field of communism, rhetorical and semiotic resources, and complementary visual texts to represent Harris as an unfit candidate associated with communism and authoritarianism and, in turn, to construct an image of himself as competent and efficient, and a representation of reality in which his winning would be in the country's best interest.

In a recently paper published in the Harvard Kennedy School's Misinformation Review, researchers studied whether posts that include "disputed" tags, which are usually featured in Trump's tweets about election fraud to warn readers about the truthfulness of the content of his posts, influence readers' views and interpretation on the issue at stake or not. As reported by [The Guardian](#), researchers found that "Trump voters who were initially skeptical about claims of widespread fraud were more likely to rate lies as true when a 'disputed' label appeared next to Trump's tweets" and that "knowledgeable Trump voters

surveyed were so resistant to corrections that the fact-checking labels actually reinforced their belief in misinformation.”

All the same, it is our contention that this representation of Kamala Harris is not quite convincing when fully assessed, since the ideational content of his posts is seemingly not persuasive enough, as there is a lack of evidence to support his claims, which accounts for the recurrent and profuse use of complementary resources. These recurrent resources make Trump's disadvantaged position all the more evident. The need to influence voters through all means available may also mean that Kamala Harris is, in fact, a fit and competent candidate; otherwise, Trump would not need to constantly reassert the allegedly negative aspects of his adversary.



Annex:

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

Kamala Harris is the Weakest Presidential Candidate in History on Crime. She's allowed millions of people to pour through our Borders, many from prisons, mental institutions and, indeed, terrorists, coming in at levels never seen before. What gives her the right to run for President? She got no votes to Biden's 14 Million. She failed in her previous attempt, was the first one out of 22 people to quit, never made it to Iowa, and now she's a Presidential Candidate? This is a Threat to Democracy!

7:57 AM · Aug 31, 2024 · **25.3M** Views



<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1829835836268929277>

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

Kamala Harris was the leader of **BANNING FRACKING IN THE UNITED STATES**, and fought especially hard for No Fracking in Pennsylvania. The people of Pennsylvania are smart. She would devastate the Commonwealth, and they know it. They will **VOTE FOR TRUMP!**

9:03 PM · Aug 25, 2024 · **9.5M** Views



<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1827859473735827683>

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

Comrade Kamala will obliterate Social Security and Medicare by giving it away to the Millions of Illegal Immigrants who are infiltrating our Country!

4:08 PM · Aug 25, 2024 · **9.3M** Views



<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1827785056498171950>

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

Think of it, America, Pocahontas, sometimes referred to as Elizabeth Warren, is considered far more Conservative in the U.S. Senate than Comrade Kamala Harris ever was. Is this really what we want to be President of the United States? She will only bring us Poverty, Chaos, and Heartache! Kamala is rated, by far, the Number One Most Liberal Senator.

7:52 AM · Aug 31, 2024 · **14.1M** Views

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1829834705325170977>

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

If you think things are expensive now, they will get 100 times **WORSE** if Kamala gets four years as President. Under her plan, Kamala will implement **SOVIET Style Price Controls**. She will abolish private health care, and make California's ridiculous tax policies the law of the land, meaning **EVERY American** will be taxed up to **80%** of their income! If you want more **CASH** and less **TAX**, **VOTE TRUMP!!!**

4:51 PM · Aug 25, 2024 · **12.6M** Views

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1827796042760560764>

 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump Follow ...

There will be no future under Comrade Kamala Harris, because she will take us into a Nuclear World War III! She will never be respected by the Tyrants of the World!

4:06 PM · Aug 25, 2024 · **13.1M** Views

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1827784751312142496>

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

I want to thank the families of our Great Warriors who have been lost to us for the way they came together as one, and thanked me for attending, at their request, the Celebration of their wonderful family members who, because of the Incompetence of Kamala Harris and Joe Biden, are no longer with us. Thank you for saying you will stand with you at Arlington National Ceremony, and take pictures, that it was your request, not mine, but it was my Great Honor to do so. **I WILL NEVER FORGET!** Lightweight V.P. Kamala Harris tried turning it around, because they weren't there, have never spoken to the families, and have no intention to do so. In Afghanistan, you don't take the Soldiers out first, you take the Soldiers out last. This would be Military 101, the most basic, and the "leaders" of that Disaster should be immediately fired. We have FOOLS in the White House, and now, they are trying to solve the Hostage Crisis in Israel. Guess how that's going to turn out?

Today, Gold Star Families who lost their loved ones in the Harris-Biden Administration's botched withdrawal from Afghanistan released the following joint statement and heartfelt video messages in a direct response to Kamala Harris' false, hypocritical, and disrespectful statement attacking President Trump:

"We, the families of the brave service members who were tragically killed in the Abbey Gate bombing, are appalled by Vice President Kamala Harris' recent attempts to politicize President Trump's visit to Arlington National Cemetery. President Trump was invited by us, the Gold Star families, to attend the solemn ceremonies commemorating the three-year anniversary of our children's deaths. He was there to honor their sacrifice, yet Vice President Harris has disgracefully twisted this sacred moment into a political ploy.

Vice President Harris bears responsibility for the deaths of our sons and daughters. Her administration's catastrophic mishandling of the Afghanistan withdrawal directly led to the murder of 13 service members, including our children. Despite our multiple requests for a meeting to discuss the loss of our loved ones, Vice President Harris has repeatedly ignored us, showing a complete lack of empathy and accountability. This refusal to face the consequences of her administration's decisions is a deep betrayal to us as Gold Star families.

President Trump, on the other hand, has been the only Commander-in-Chief to consistently recognize the heroism of our children. His attendance at Arlington was not for political gain but to stand with us, to grieve with us, and to honor the legacy of those who gave everything for this nation. His leadership during his time in office was strong, and we have no doubt that if he were still Commander-in-Chief, our children would be alive today.

President Harris has proven herself unfit to serve as Commander-in-Chief. Her actions, both in the failure of the Afghanistan withdrawal and her disgraceful politicization of this anniversary, have shown a lack of judgment, compassion, and leadership required for the position. We will continue to hold her accountable for the role she played in the deaths of our children, and we will not stand by as she disrespects their memory. America deserves better. Our children deserved better.

Fucco, Sister of Sgt. Nicole L. Gee
Juels, Aunt of Sgt. Nicole L. Gee
Shamblin, Mother-in-law of Sgt. Nicole L. Gee

Schmitz, Father of Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz
Schmitz, Stepmother of Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz

San Lopez, Father of Cpl. Hunter Lopez

McCullum, Father of Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McCullum

Nikouli, Father of Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikouli

Doolittle, Mother of Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez

Hoover, Father of Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover
Barnett, Mother of Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover

4:58 PM · Sep 1, 2024 · **9.3M** Views

<https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1830334491920937235?s=46&t=PeysHAPmcybFGPKTHxnvEw>

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Who is negotiating for us in the Middle East? Bombs are dropping all over the place! Sleepy Joe is sleeping on a Beach in California, viciously Exiled by the Democrats, and Comrade Kamala is doing a campaign bus tour with Tampon Tim, her really bad V.P. Pick. Let's not have World War III, because that's where we're heading!

Traducir post

12:57 p. m. · 25 ago. 2024 · **31.5M** Reproducciones

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1827737056186954201>

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

I look so forward to Debating Comrade Kamala Harris and exposing her for the fraud she is. Harris has changed every one of her long held positions, on everything. America will never allow an Election WEAPONIZING MARXIST TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.

Traducir post

1:58 a. m. · 31 ago. 2024 · **23M** Reproducciones

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1829745502440587304>

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

We grieve the senseless death of the Israeli Hostages, horrifically including a wonderful American Citizen, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, murdered by Hamas due to a complete lack of American Strength and Leadership. Make no mistake — This happened because Comrade Kamala Harris and Crooked Joe Biden are poor Leaders. Americans are getting slaughtered overseas, while Kamala is disparaging and making up lies about Gold Star families, and Biden is sleeping on the beach on this 16th consecutive day of vacation. They have blood on their hands! Sadly, this is the total lack of "Leadership" that Kamala and Biden represent — One that allows terrorists to take American lives, because they only care about Weaponizing the Department of Justice against their Political Opponent. Just like the Debacle of the Afghanistan Withdrawal that claimed 13 American lives, Kamala and Biden's judgment has not only put lives at risk, but is directly responsible for unnecessary deaths that should have never happened.

Our Country and our amazing people are not safe under Joe Biden, and will be less safe under Kamala Harris. This terror would have never happened if I were President, and it will stop the day I am back in the Oval Office. America will be Strong Again, and that will make the World Safe and Secure!

5:00 PM · Sep 1, 2024 · **24.5M** Views

<https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1830335021187490133>



<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1825138139502878806>



<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1830302655832338707/photo/1>