

CONFÉRENCE

Saïday: The British Conservative Party at a crossroads?

→ From Brexit to the 'culture wars' (Alma-Pierre Bonnet)

Towards an autonomy of populist discourse within the British Conservative Party

Populist Discourse: set of populist π narrative, plot mind promising change. 'The latest populist trope' → ideological campaign. Populist message, Tory populism, communication and style rather than ideas. π communication.

Stories of opposition: the villains @ the genuine people. Truth tellers, twaddic dimension, outgroup is threat.

Annual conference keynote of the leader. How populism has permeated

- storyline

- arguments

- MCNA: multimodal Critical plurivocal Analysis + body language

Type of elite: Labour is portrayed as the establishment. Internal elite is the one who opposes Brexit, with

Teresa May. 2005-2015: the emergence of soft populism? Almost nothing with Cameron until 2010,

Tory giving back the power to the people. 'scrap the HRA' → warning. T. May: herself, personally

understood the problem of the social justice. Since May, waggling a war: anti Brexit elite is the threat

that Johnson, Trump and Sunak: pragmatic and theatrical moves, shows empathy with the people

Kami Bakhoch: leadership race in 2024, leader as truth-teller. Benevolent whistleblower. 'I have seen the system from the inside. [...] The system is broken.'

→ Conspiracy theory in contemporary conservative π in the UK: Dr. Rod Docombe (King's College)

- emergent literature - little work done on how it applies on the UK - Discourse analysis of Tory/Reform conference speeches

- Conspiracy theories: a way of interpreting the political world and events. Truth doesn't matter. Barkun's definition (2003): ① public issues seen as a Manichean battles between good and evil ②

③

Complex phenomena → simple causes. Invisitable action. No coincidences. Everything is connected. Most people don't know the truth.

'Outsider status' against the establishment. Mobilize voters, growing literature.

① Do right-wing parties in the UK adopt conspiracist rhetoric?

② Are conspiracist beliefs prevalent amongst their voters?

Emerging empirical findings. Analysis of conspiracist theory content in party conference. Nationally survey.

Contrast between Reform and Tory between 2023-2025:

- Reform: 2023 = 29 conspiracist content; 2024 = 32; 2025 = 15 (dull down base closer to gov.)

- Conservatives: 2023 = 4 " ; 2024 = 5; 2025 = 12 $\Rightarrow \nearrow$

- Great Replacement theory
- Cultural Marxism (~elazi)
- Climate and Jet Zero.

General picture: more organised and serious proposition = less conspiracist discourses.

Terrible strategy of an electorate in the UK: fruitless rhetoric? + Social media - 4% of conspiracist content.

Reform $\rightarrow$ Tory (center-right) // Tory $\rightarrow$ Reform (far-right). Basis of communication: mobilise, sceptical.

$\rightarrow$ Brexit as fact of fiction? The Conservative Party and Declining support of Gen-Z (Nicholas Staiti)

The Conservative Party after Brexit, Tim Bale. 15% of Britons think that Tory is ready to form a gov. Afshami (former MP 2023): 'people are meant to become conservatives as they age.'

The Conservative Party at the Ballot Box and Gen Z: an overview. 8% of 18-24 y.o. voted Conservative, compared to 24% in general. Eco exclusion of Gen-Z, less power. $\neq$ Hist. management of the Eco, Thatcher era. Great number of PM = anxiety. Emotional responses, confusion. Migration. Politics of the memory.

40% Green vote @ Conservative. Distrust?

$\rightarrow$ Rishi Sunak's 'war on woke'

- Elitism
 - Use of symbols
 - Dramatic effects
 - Verbal attacks
- 'cancel our history, our values, and our women'
- $\hookrightarrow$ cancel culture $\hookrightarrow$ threat $\hookrightarrow$ gender activism

Wokeism $\rightarrow$ lack of definition: 'political correctness'.

Transgender right: biological sex.

Feb. 2024: Labour broken policies. @ Wokeism. 'lefty' socialism.

Metanarrative of Tory and Sunak.
Lack of strategy.

$\rightarrow$ Post-racial n & the 'brown Tory' (Dr. Rima Saini)

Rishi Sunak = ethnic diversity. Incongruous, paradoxical? Kemi Badenoch, Nigerian identity.

Colonial antecedents of ethnic minority conservatism. @ Modi and Rishi Sunak. Ethnic diversity and the 'nasty' party. Leadership race in 2022: party future under diverse leadership.

Hinduness of Rishi Sunak: family, hard work, etc. Britishness or Englishness.