

**ALL JUST EMPTY WORDS / LEERE WORTE /
ПРАЗНИ ПРИКАЗКИ / BOŞ LAF? A CROSS-LINGUISTIC
ANALYSIS OF THE NEW YEAR'S ADDRESSES OF
RUMEN RADEV, ALEXANDER VAN DER BELLEN
AND RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN**

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to analyze and compare the language used in the New Year's addresses of the presidents of Bulgaria, Austria and Türkiye and describe the major differences in terms of topics and expressions used. The cross-linguistic critical analysis attempts to reveal both how the political background of the presidents is reflected in their speeches and how the different scope of powers these presidents possess influences the choice of topics and their linguistic means of expression.*

The presidents of Bulgaria, Austria and Türkiye come from different political traditions, namely the socialist tradition, the environmental movement and the Islamic-conservative tradition. True to historically close relations with Russia, Radev avoids taking sides when talking about the Russia-Ukrainian war. A former speaker of the Austrian Green Party, van der Bellen is the only one of the three presidents who mentions the climate crisis as one of the major challenges of the future. And only AKP's leader Erdoğan resorts to constructing fears and referring to God's help he is hoping to receive. While Radev and van der Bellen position themselves as observers of political and social life, Erdoğan primarily focuses on the achievements of his party. In terms of field of action, the speeches of Radev and van der Bellen can be determined as belonging to 'Formation of public attitudes, opinions and will'. In Erdoğan's speech, we find elements from 'Formation of public attitudes, opinions and will', 'Political advertising' and 'Political executive and administration'.

Keywords: *political speeches, New Year's address, CDA, society, crises*

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Introduction

Born in the 1970s behind the Iron Curtain, I still cherish the memories of the most loved family celebration – the New Year’s Eve. Families cooked meals that otherwise rarely found their way to the table, and in the evening gathered together in front of the TV set in an eager expectation of the one and only TV channel’s special program. Shortly before midnight, this program ended and the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the country’s leader Todor Zhivkov appeared on the screen. When people saw him, they knew – in about ten minutes they would finally welcome the new year. People barely, if at all, listened to the man. It was rather, wait for his speech to be over because its end signals the start of the big celebration.

I have long grown up but the old habit to not (really) listen to the head of the state on occasions like New Year’s or for that matter Christmas remained. However, those speeches were all around me – from the President of the USA and the (late) Queen of the UK to the German Federal President and his counterparts in other countries I showed interest into. So, one day I asked myself: “Do people actually listen to those?”, “What would I hear if I did listen?”.

I decided to limit myself to New Year’s addresses of heads of state because speeches made on Christmas Eve (like those of the President of the USA Joe Biden, King Charles III, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier) inevitably focus on the meaning of this Christian holiday and may not reveal as much as I hoped to discover. The countries and/or the languages which I chose to look at are closely related to both my linguistic biography and my personal and professional life, which is an important prerequisite in order to be able to detect the nuances of meaning, the allusions and the messages behind the said and the unsaid. Moreover, Bulgaria, Türkiye[□] and Austria as actors in the international arena are often partners and/or allies – Bulgaria and Austria as members of the EU and Türkiye as a member candidate (although the accession talks were suspended in 2019), Bulgaria and Türkiye as members of NATO with Austria being neutral but working in cooperation with the NATO member states. Geographically, these three countries are in a relative proximity to (the war in) Ukraine and have had or still have close relations with Russia.

Theoretical background

Defining political discourse is not an easy task. Definitions differ greatly as to what should be included under this term. Joseph (2006, p. 17) believes that all language is inherently political, so it follows that practically any language can be regarded as political discourse. Van Dijk (1997, p. 23) also shares the opinion that “practically all text and talk indirectly has socio-political conditions and consequences” and therefore suggests adopting “an arbitrary set of criteria according to which discourse may be categorized as (mainly) political, viz.,

when it has a direct functional role as a form of political action in the political process". In the narrow sense, political discourse often refers to the text and talk produced by politicians and the language of professional politicians and political institutions has been analyzed in a "vast bulk of studies" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 12). However, as van Dijk (1997, pp. 12-13) points out, the politicians are not the only actors in political discourse and "various recipients in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, citizens, the 'masses', and other groups or categories" should be included as well.

Political discourse exists in the form of different genres. Fairclough (2006, pp. 33-34) categorizes political genres into 1) genres associated with the political system (parliamentary debates, political manifestos and programs, parliamentary or party conference speeches by political leaders, policy documents; 2) mediatized political genres (political news reports, political interviews, political 'chat' shows, party political broadcasts, political advertising in the press and on billboards); and 3) the political public sphere (public meetings, campaign literature of social movements, political forums, and focus groups) but emphasizes the fact that this list is by no means exhaustive.

When we turn our attention to political speeches only, we again find different classifications based on different criteria for categorizing them. Küçükali (2015, pp. 57-58), citing Reisigl (2008) points out that the concept of *political* can be divided into three components: *polity*, *policy* and *politics*. According to Küçükali's definition,

Polity relates to the normative, legal and institutional manifestations of a political actor which frame the basic principles. Their aim is to establish political order and form the values of the political in-group. The overall political system, political norms and values are the main concern of such speeches.

Policy is the content-related dimension of political action. It has the function of the determination and formulation of political tasks, aims and programmes in different fields of policymaking.

Politics deals with the question of how and with whose help politics is performed. It includes the formulation of political interests and the positioning of political actors against their opponents to make implementation of the aforementioned policy preferences possible. (ibid.)

Küçükali (ibid.) mentions funeral oration, necrology and laudatory speeches of chancellors and presidents as examples within *polity* whereas speeches in parliamentary debates and party-group speeches are representatives of *policy*.

Reisigl and Wodak (2016, p. 29) identify eight "fields of political action", each of which includes different political (sub)genres and different kinds of speeches.

Table 1 illustrates the different fields of political action and gives some examples of what kinds of speeches can be found within each field (ibid.).

Table 1. Fields of political action with possible kinds of speeches (adapted from Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 29)

Field of action	Speeches
Lawmaking procedure	Parliamentary speech Ministerial speech State of the union address
Formation of public attitudes, opinions and will	President speech Speech by an MP Opening speech Radio or TV speech Chancellor's speech Ministerial speech Commemorative speech State of the union address Election speech
Party-internal formation of attitudes, opinions and will	Party jubilee speech Speech at a party convention Speech in a party meeting
Inter-party formation of attitudes, opinions and will	Commemorative speech Inaugural speech Speech in an inter-party meeting
Organization of international / interstate relations	Inaugural address War speech Speech in summits of supranational organizations Speech on the occasion of a state visit Commemorative speech
Political advertising	Election speech Speech of an MP State of the union address Commemorative speech
Political executive and administration	Chancellor's speech Ministerial speech Speech of resignation Farewell speech Speech of appointment State of the union address
Political control	Speech of an MP Speech of protest Election speech Commemorative speech

It can be noticed that certain kinds of speeches, for example a state of the union address or a speech of an MP, are found in more than one field of action. Indeed, political speeches often have more than one function. As Wodak (2009, p. 40) points out:

A discourse about a specific topic (un/employment) can find its starting point within one field of action and proceed through another one. Discourses and discourse topics spread to different fields and discourses. They cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other or are in some other way socio-functionally linked with each other.

Special occasions like national holidays, big religious holidays and the New Year's Eve are traditionally used by heads of states and governments to address the people, to review what has happened and/or has been done up to that day and to share plans, hopes and expectations for the future. It will be interesting to find out whether such speeches, normally regarded as standard, stay within the same field of action or whether just like any other piece of discourse they may serve multiple functions and proceed from one field to another.

Methodology

The main method of analysis used in this paper is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

CDA aims to bridge social and linguistic theory. As Fairclough (2012, p. 1) explains:

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) brings the critical tradition in social analysis into language studies, and contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse, and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth).

For Wodak (1996, p. 15) discourse is “socially constituted, as well as socially conditioned”. Discourse as a form of social practice “implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them” (ibid.). CDA is interdisciplinary, problem-oriented and aiming at deconstructing ideologies and power (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 4). When analyzing language, CDA profits greatly from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, in which language is not seen as a formal system but as a means of communication where, depending on context, different but interrelated linguistic choices (systems) are available for the expression of meaning (Flowerdew, 2013, p. 18).

For the purposes of the investigation, this article adopts a contrastive approach. Contrastive linguistics (CL) is understood as the systematic comparison of two or more languages with or without a socio-cultural link. As Gomez-Gonzalez and Doval-Suarez (2005, p. 19) explain, contrastive investigations aim to

compare (or contrast) linguistic and socio-cultural data across different languages (cross-linguistic/cultural perspective) or within individual languages (intra-linguistic/cultural perspective) in order to establish language-specific, typological and/or universal patterns, categories and features.

Once considered the Cinderella of linguistics enjoying little respect among linguists (Krzyszowski, 1990, p. 15) developments like globalization and the resulting multilingualism and multiculturalism as well as the creation of large corpora and computer search tools “have turned CL into a reactivated and at present expanding field” (Gomez-Gonzalez & Doval-Suarez, 2005, p. 22).

Classic contrastive research stays within the limits of microlinguistics and concentrates on language structure. According to Ke (2019, p. 9), “the goal of micro-contrastive linguistics is to compare the universal as well as particular structural properties of human languages”. Therefore, phonological, lexical and syntactic contrastive studies are typical for this kind of analysis. On the macrolinguistic level, on the other hand, the focus is on language use and “the goal of macro-contrastive linguistics is to compare and understand how people use different languages to communicate with each other” (ibid.). Here we find textual and pragmatic contrastive studies. As Gomez-Gonzalez and Doval-Suarez (2005, p. 24) explain,

Contrastive Discourse Analysis and Contrastive Pragmatics are two partially overlapping labels referring to contrastive research that goes beyond the clause/sentence level to explore the (textual features of) language in use under the assumption that the relations between texts and contexts are mutually reflexive – texts not only reflect but also shape their contexts.

Analysis

The President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev, a former general in the Bulgarian air forces, was first elected president in the presidential elections in 2016 with the support of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and is currently serving his second term in office. The Federal President of Austria Alexander Van der Bellen, a former professor of economics and spokesman of the Austrian Green Party, won the presidential elections for the first time in 2016 and again in the autumn of 2022. The president of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, after having served as prime minister of Türkiye from 2003 to 2014, has been in office since 2014 winning a second term in 2018. At the beginning of their presidency all three leaders were presidents of parliamentary republics. However, after initiating a constitutional change in 2017, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan abolished the office of the prime minister and made Türkiye a presidential republic. Unlike Radev and Van der Bellen, whose presidency will finish with the end of their second term in office, Erdoğan is hoping to be reelected in the upcoming elections in May 2023.

The President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev addressed the people in a New Year's Eve speech which was four minutes long, his Austrian counterpart Alexander Van der Bellen spoke to his people for five and a half minutes and the President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's address to the nation lasted for seven and a half minutes.

In terms of lexis, several differences in the speeches of the three presidents can be observed. The forms of salutation vary considerably revealing certain realities and developments in the respective societies. Differences can also be spotted in the way people are addressed as well as in the level and form of their presence in the speeches. The visibility of religion changes from country to country, too.

The salutation Radev used was “Скъпи сънародници” (‘dear fellow countrymen’), Van der Bellen preferred “Liebe Österreicherinnen und Österreicher und alle, die in Österreich leben” (‘dear Austrians, female and male, as well as all who live in Austria’) and Erdoğan turned to the people with “Aziz milletim”. According to the Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary, the adjective *aziz* means 1) dear, beloved; 2) saintly, holy, sacred; and 3) saint. As for *millet* (without the possessive suffix *-im* which means ‘my’), its first meaning is ‘nation’ but it also has the historical meaning “the adherents of a particular religious creed/ denomination/ sect within the Ottoman Empire”.

Comparing the word choices of three presidents, one immediately notices the conscious attempt of Van der Bellen to address not only the holders of Austrian passports, born in Austria to Austrian parents, but also the more than a million people living in the country but having a different nationality. Although such

people live in Bulgaria and Türkiye as well – mostly refugees from war regions like Ukraine and Syria – and their number in Türkiye is estimated at over three million, such a special attention and a recognition of their presence in missing in the salutations of Radev and Erdoğan.

Another difference that can be spotted is the conscious use of separate forms for female and male citizens of Austria, which reflects the current linguistic trend in the German language based on emancipatory developments in society. Even though the discussion “to gender or not to gender”¹ is still going on, *gender* is already widely accepted as a necessary linguistic change reflecting the desire to be in line with the trends and needs of society, and as such has been adopted as the official form of communication by businesses and many administrations on local and federal level alike. Although linguistically such a distinction is possible in Bulgarian as well, there is at present hardly any need in society to use “Скъпи сънароднички и сънародници” (‘dear fellow countrywomen and countrymen’). On the contrary, such an unusual linguistic choice can easily backfire if it is suspected to be a result of “gender politics”. As a result of Orthodox-Christian, conservative and nationalistic political currents, the English word *gender* has gained quite a negative connotation both in Bulgarian politics and in the Bulgarian media. In the minds of the people, it is closely connected with the Istanbul Convention as well, which in Bulgaria was not interpreted as an attempt to prevent and combat violence against women, but as an attempt by some unidentified “Euro-bureaucrats” and “international neoliberal circles” to impose a foreign culture on Bulgarians forcing them to give equal rights to LGBTIQ people against their strong belief in the duality of the sexes. It should not come as a surprise that Bulgaria is one of a very few countries in Europe which have signed but not ratified the convention, the others being the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania.

What the Bulgarian and the Austrian salutation have in common is the use of plural forms to address the people identifying them as single and separate members of the community; the Turkish salutation, on the other hand, addresses the people as a whole, as one single body which by default is supposed to move in a coordinated manner and in the same direction. What can also be said about the word choice of the Turkish president is that although both *aziz* as well as *millet* have readily available alternatives (e.g., ‘aziz’ – ‘sevgili’ /dear, beloved/, ‘saygıdeğer’ /estimable/, ‘sayın’ /dear/, ‘değerli’ /valuable/, ‘millet’ – ‘halk’ /people, nation/, ‘vatandaşlar’ /citizens, fellow citizens/, ‘yurttaşlar’ /citizens, fellow citizens/), he has chosen those two which in certain contexts bear a clear religious and/or historical connotation. Even though often considered full synonyms, the word *halk* (‘people’) rather refers to all those living at a certain

1. ‘Gendern’ in German is used to express the deliberate marking for gender of personal nouns instead of using the masculine form for all.

time at a certain territory, whereas *millet* is a more abstract notion relating to the identification of the people with a certain nation, their origin, past, present and future. However, it must be pointed out that by beginning his speech with “Aziz milletim”, Erdoğan actually follows a long-established tradition which can be traced back to the time of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. For the last one hundred years the presidents of Türkiye, regardless of their political background, have stuck to this salutation choosing to preserve the nationalistic flavour it bears.

Apart from addressing the people using a plural form, the Bulgarian and the Austrian presidents further on explicitly name some concrete groups of citizens. Radev thanks all those who fought for a better Bulgaria during the past year (“всички, които през изминалата година се бореха за една по-добра България”). He also expresses his gratitude and encourages the people to do the same towards relatives and friends for their love and support (“близки и приятели за обичта и подкрепата”) and those who are at their workplace or on duty in the festive night (“онези, които в празничната нощ са на работното си място и на своя пост”) before wishing a happy new year also to all fellow countrymen all over the world (“нашите сънародници по всички краища на света”). Van der Bellen goes into much more detail and underlines the fact that all should feel optimistic that Austria’s new year will be successful as long as each and every person continues to approach their everyday duties and responsibilities willingly and in a positive manner. Van der Bellen presents the success of the society as the sum of the work and the efforts of: single mothers, healthcare and social workers, teachers, students, volunteers and civil society, politically active people, journalists, those working in industry and commerce, entrepreneurs, the middle class, engineers, agricultural workers, those working in tourism, workers in the administration, the executive branch and the military, the retired, grandfathers and grandmothers, mothers and fathers.

Türkiye’s president, on the other hand, does not explicitly mention any concrete groups of citizens, at least not in such context. Workers in general are mentioned once but only as receivers of high percentage compensations provided by the ruling party in an attempt to compensate the rising cost of living (“Çalışanların refah kayıplarını yüksek oranlı artışlarla telafi etmeye çalıştık.”). The young generation is also mentioned once as those who will hopefully inherit a country shaped according to ‘our’² aims, dreams, civilization and historical heritage so that they can successfully achieve the ‘Century of Türkiye’ (“Amacımız, [...] gençlerimize Türkiye Yüzyılı’nı, hedeflerimize, hayallerimize, medeniyet ve tarih mirasımıza uygun şekilde başarıya ulaştırabilecekleri bir ülke bırakmaktır.”). Finally, Erdoğan sends his New Year’s wishes to “milletimizin her ferdi” (‘each individual in our nation’) and to “tüm insanlık” (‘the whole of humanity’). It can be concluded that while for Radev and Van der Bellen the

2. The meaning of ‘our’ will be elaborated upon further on in this paper

citizens of Bulgaria and Austria, be it relatives, engineers or civil servants, are active doers who shape their own life and future, the citizens of Türkiye are seen as a receiving mass which is being cared for by the ruling party.

Another difference in the word choices of the three presidents is related to the visibility of religion. Christianity is the dominant religion in Bulgaria and Austria and Islam in Türkiye. However, all three countries are secular and state and religion are strictly separated. Throughout their speeches, the heads of state of Bulgaria and Austria do not use any words or expressions with a religious meaning or connotation. New Year's Eve is not a religious holiday; moreover, approximately one third of the population in these countries either belongs to a different religion than Christianity or to no confession whatsoever. In the case of Türkiye, we have a much higher domination of Islam and a ruling party with an Islamic-conservative agenda which has faced two closure trials in its history (in 2002 and 2008) on charges of violating the separation of religion and state. Erdoğan, founder and leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or AKP) uses words with religious meaning or connotation on several occasions during his speech. He starts with the already mentioned "Aziz" ('holy', 'saintly') and finishes his speech with "Allah'a emanet olun!" (God bless you!). Apart from that Erdoğan uses *hamdolsun* ('God be praised!', 'Glory to God'), *inşallah* ('God willing') on two occasions and *besmele* (an abbreviated form of *bismillahirrahmanirrahim* meaning 'In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful') as a synonym of 'beginning' but implying the hope in God that it will be a successful one.

In terms of the topics present in the speeches of the three presidents, we find both similarities and differences. Topics like inflation, the energy crisis and the war in Ukraine are present in all three speeches, however their presentation and interpretation sometimes vary. There are also other topics, e.g. the enemies of the state and climate change which are only found in some of the speeches.

Radev mentions natural disasters like the forest fires and the floods which hit Bulgaria again in 2022 relatively early on but without naming any possible causes ("И тази година не ни подминаха природните бедствия..."). There is no reference to any possible connection with global warming and no mention of the need for more environmental protection. In Van der Bellen's speech, on the other hand, the matter is presented in reversed order: it is the climate crisis with its effects which we feel more and more from year to year that we cannot afford to ignore ("Wir können auch die Klimakrise und ihre Auswirkungen nicht ignorieren, die Jahr für Jahr stärker spürbar werden."). The choice of synonym itself is important here. Even though 'climate change', 'global warming', 'global heating', 'climate breakdown' and 'climate crisis' are often used interchangeably, they reflect to a different extent the responsibility of mankind for this negative development with only 'climate crisis' implying a clear human participation.

In Erdoğan's speech there are no references to either natural disasters or other environmental issues.

When it comes to how united each of the societies under investigation is, both Radev and Van der Bellen recognize the fact that there exist different opinions and disagreements within society, that not all prefer to invest their energy for the common good but instead pursue personal interests, or are simply disappointed with the politicians and have lost their trust in the system and/or their faith in the better future.

Radev mentions the apathy and the division in society which should be overcome (“Да надмогнем апатията и разделението”), points out that salvation is not at the bottom of the drinking glasses (“спасението не е на дъното на чашите”) and stresses the fact that there are no unreachable goals provided the energy of the citizens is not spent in order to assure their individual wellbeing but in the name of the prosperity of the whole nation (“Няма непостижими цели там, където гражданската енергия е вложена не за спасение поединично, а за възхода на цялата нация.”).

Van der Bellen recognizes the fact that many are afraid that the new year will be more difficult than the old one (“...viele von uns, [...], befürchten auch, dass das kommende Jahr härter wird als das vergangene”), and talks about the existing doubts about the integrity of (Austrian) politics (“Zweifel an der Integrität der Politik”). He is aware that some will find his optimism naïve or are simply sick and tired of hearing from him for the 100th time ‘We’ll manage that’ (“Ich weiß schon, manche finden das naiv. Und manche können es auch nicht mehr hören, wenn ich zum gefühlt 100. Mal ‘Wir kriegen das schon hin’ sage.”).

While the presidents of Bulgaria and Austria recognize the differences within society and make a call for more understanding and collaboration among citizens, the president of Türkiye depicts the nation together with its leaders as a united whole sharing the same needs, goals and expectations. Throughout his whole speech Erdoğan uses first person deixis; ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ are present in 30 out of 37 sentences in total. Of the remaining 7 sentences 2 feature ‘Türkiye’ and 1 ‘this country’ (“bu ülke”) which is indirectly again a reference to ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’. As for the question of who the pronoun ‘we’ represents, it is not always easy to determine this for sure. There is a conscious attempt to disguise exclusive first-person deixis as inclusive. This is a desired effect in order to strengthen the feeling of total unity of the nation – unity within as well as unity between the citizens and the ruling party. The following three sentences illustrate the different degrees of clarity as to who ‘us’ represents:

Cumhuriyetimizin kuruluşunun 100’üncü yılının sevincini inşallah 29 Ekim 2023’te hayal ettiğimiz şekilde coşkuyla yaşayabileceğiz. (‘We will

hopefully be able to experience the happiness of celebrating the 100th anniversary of our republic the way we have been dreaming of”.)

Whereas one can be relatively sure that most, if not all Turkish citizens see the republic as ‘their’ republic and will be happy to celebrate its anniversary, it is not clear whose dreams the sentence refers to. It can be speculated here that the dreams of the ruling party and its supporters greatly differ from those of the opposition and its followers, it can also be taken as reference to Erdoğan’s personal vision of a reshaped Türkiye which he presented before the general elections in 2011 as “hedef 2023” (‘aim 2023’) and turned into a government program in the following years.

Bir başka ifadeyle, biz milletimizi hayat pahalılığı karşısında yalnız bırakmadık, kendi kaderine terk etmedik. (‘In other words, we didn’t leave our nation to face the high cost of living alone, we didn’t leave it to its own destiny.’)

Here there is a clear reference to the ruling party and even more to its leader as a caring father figure never deserting the people in need.

Teror örgütlerinin şehirlerimizi hedef alan eylemlerinin ülkemize yönelik şantaj aracı haline getirildiği günlerden, sınırımızın onlarca, bazen yüzlerce kilometre ötesinde operasyonlar yürütebildiğimiz bir seviyeye geldik. (‘We have come a long way from the days when the attacks of the terrorist organizations aiming at our cities were used as a means of blackmailing our country, now we are able to execute operations tens and sometimes even hundreds of kilometres beyond our border.’)

This sentence illustrates very well how ‘we’ can at the same time mean 1) we, the people of this country; 2) we, the decision makers 3) we, the armed forces.

Throughout Erdoğan’s speech there is not even the slightest hint that there might be people in the country who disagree with the pursued policies. Those who belong to the nation have clearly stated their support at numerous elections in the past 20 years. This is the message that can be picked up from words like “son 20 yılımız” (‘our past 20 years’) and “...2023 hedeflerimizi milletimizin takdirine sunup onayını aldığımız 2011 seçimlerden beri” (‘since the 2011 elections when we presented our aims 2023 to our nation and received its approval’). It is worth mentioning here that in the 2011 elections, Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party received 49,8% of the votes, which means the approval he is talking about was granted by only half of the voters.

And while there seem to be no divergent opinions as to in which direction Türkiye should be moving, there are numerous enemies on the periphery and the outside who deliberately try to harm the nation and the country. Erdoğan is the only president who not just explicitly talks about the enemies of the people

but also goes into much detail while doing so. Erdoğan refers to them as “çok güç odağı” (‘various concentrations of power’) or “müzmin hasımlar” (‘chronic enemies’) and talks about their “sayısız saldırı” (‘countless attacks’). His concrete examples include not only the PKK (The Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and DEAŞ (Islamic State) but also the organizers of the attempted coup d’état from 15.07.2016, the international sabotage aiming at our economy in 2018 (“2018’de ekonomimizi hedef alan uluslararası sabotaj”) and the participants in the 2013 Gezi Movement, which was actually a civil movement for more democratic rights. According to Wodak (2015, p. 1) right-wing populist parties often resort to constructing fears and proposing scapegoats in the case of ‘various real or imagined dangers’. In other words,

all right-wing populist parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic/religious/ linguistic/ political minority as a *scapegoat* for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and a threat ‘to us’, to ‘our nation’; this phenomenon manifests itself as a ‘politics of fear’. (Wodak, 2015, p. 2)

In his speech the Turkish president clearly states that all these enemies have been or are being dealt with using expressive verbs like *ürkütme* (‘to scare somebody’), *açtıkları çukurlara gömmek* (‘to bury somebody in the pits they have dugged themselves’), *başını ezmek* (‘to smash one’s head’), *hüsrana uğratmak* (‘to disappoint’).

When we look at the use of first person deixis in the speeches of Radev and Van der Bellen, apart from the much more limited use of ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’, we notice the deliberate choice of the two presidents to refer to themselves as ordinary citizens, as equals to the rest of the people, while at the same time, they do not neglect their responsibility to alert and warn the political parties in the country in cases of misconduct. This is also connected with the limited powers and the functions of the presidential institutions in Bulgaria and Austria. Here are some examples of the use of first person deixis by Radev and Van der Bellen:

Минути ни делят от края на година, наситена с кризи и предизвикателства. (‘We are minutes apart from the end of a year full of crises and challenges.’)

Бъдещето е в задружните ни усилия, в отговорната позиция на всеки от нас при всеки житейски и политически избор. (‘The future is in our joint efforts, in the responsible stance of each one of us when making a life or a political choice.’)

Да я [новата година] посрещнем с вяра в себе си и надежда за бъдещето. (‘Let us meet it [the new year] with faith in ourselves and hopes for the future.’)

Aber insgeheim haben wir alle Erwartungen. ('But secretly we all have expectations.')

Und in Ihrem Kopf die Möglichkeit offen zu halten, dass wir alle gemeinsam positiv überrascht werden vom kommenden Jahr. ('And in your head[s] to keep open the possibility that we all may be positively surprised by the coming new year.')

Weil wir einander so am besten helfen. ('Because that is how we [can] best help each other.')

As for the critical words of the two presidents towards the political parties in their countries, we find:

Година, която постави на изпитание не само икономическата и социална стабилност, но и способността на политиците ни да постигат съгласие и да бъдат редом с гражданите в общия ни път напред. ('A year which put not only the economic and the social stability to the test, but also the ability of our politicians to reach an agreement and to stand alongside the citizens in our common way forward.')

Силно се надявам, че през новата година приоритетите на българския парламент ще съвпадат с тези на гражданите, а политическите партии ще поемат своята отговорност за дългосрочното устойчиво развитие на България. ('I really hope that in the new year the priorities of the Bulgarian parliament will coincide with those of the citizens and that the political parties will assume their responsibility for Bulgaria's sustainable development in the long-term.')

Und innenpolitisch, (...), sehen wir uns nach wie vor mit diesem, wie ich es genannt habe, „Wasserschaden“ konfrontiert: Dem Zweifel an der Integrität der Politik. Und auch da sind entsprechende Schritte noch immer nicht gesetzt. Die Generalsanierung hat noch immer nicht begonnen. ('And [looking at our] domestic politics, (...), we find ourselves still confronted with this, as I called it, 'water damage': the doubt about the integrity of politics. And here too the necessary steps have not been taken yet. The general renovation has not started yet.')

Considered within the respective political context, these sentences become even more meaningful. Having held parliamentary elections in April 2021, July 2021 and November 2021, and being unable to form a regular government after the latest elections in October 2022, Bulgaria is at present ruled by a caretaker government preparing the country for new general elections in April 2023. In the last four years Austria has first had to go through the so-called 'Ibiza-Affair', a corruption scandal in the center of which was the Vice Chancellor

Heinz-Christian Strache and then to witness the fall of Chancellor Sebastian Kurz after a corruption investigation was opened against him.

In the case of the Turkish president, even though the word ‘elections’ is mentioned once, there are absolutely no references to any political parties. The wording of Erdoğan’s speech is chosen in such a way that it, on the one hand, disguises the existence of any political opposition in Türkiye, and, on the other hand, presents the changes and developments in the country as having nothing to do with the political agenda of one single party but as an expression of the will of the whole nation.

All three presidents mention the high inflation and the energy crisis as some of the major challenges in 2022. Radev and Van der Bellen admit that these problems will continue to dominate 2023 as well and express their hopes that politicians and citizens alike will do their best to cope with the difficulties:

До сформирането на редовно правителство, служебният кабинет ще продължи да изпълнява своя дълг за овладяване на енергийната криза и инфлацията... (‘Until a regular government has been formed, the caretaker government will continue to fulfil its duties for keeping under control the energy crisis and the inflation...’)

Die wirtschaftliche Situation mit Inflation und hohen Energiepreisen (...) ist eine Herausforderung für unsere Gesellschaft. (‘The economic situation with inflation and high energy prices (...) is a challenge for our society.’)

The Turkish president also mentions “ekonomik sıkıntılar” (‘economic distress’), “ekonomik sarsıntı” (‘economic quake’) and “hayat pahalılığı” (‘high cost of living’) but according to Erdoğan, in Türkiye’s case these have been turned into advantages and the country has actually profited from them:

...dünyadaki olumsuz gelişmeler, ister istemez bizi de etkilemiştir. Ancak bu süreçte Türkiye’yi, gelişmiş ülkeler başta olmaz üzere dünyadan ayıran en önemli özellik istihdamdan ve üretimde taviz vermeyen ekonomi modeli olmuştur. Evet, bu ülkede bir hayat pahalılığı yaşanmıştır ama vicdan sahibi herkes kabul edecektir ki aynı zamanda bu ülke tarihinin en yüksek istihdam oranına, en yüksek üretim gücüne, en yüksek ihracat rakamına da aynı dönemde ulaşmıştır. (‘...the negative developments in the world have inevitably affected us as well. However, the most important characteristic which distinguishes Türkiye from the rest of the world and especially from the developed countries is its economic model which makes no compromises when it comes to employment and production. Yes, there has been a rise in the cost of living in this country but anyone who has a conscience will admit that at the same time this country has reached the highest employment level, the highest productivity and the highest export levels in its whole history.’)

In the inflation statistics published by the Turkish Central Bank we find the following: on an yearly basis the November and December 2022 inflation in Türkiye was 84,39% and 64,27% respectively. According to the Bulgarian National Statistics Institute, in the same period inflation in Bulgaria on a yearly basis was 16,9%. The numbers for Austria, published by the Austrian statistics institute, are 10,6% and 10,2% respectively. As for the unemployment rates, according to the Strategy and Budget Direction of the President of the Republic of Türkiye, the unemployment rate for the month of November 2022 is calculated at 10,2% which compared to the same period in the previous year is indeed 1% lower, but still relatively high compared to the numbers for Bulgaria and Austria. For the same month the Bulgarian Employment Agency measures 4,4% and the Austrian Ministry of Labor and Economy 6,2% unemployment rate.

Before we conclude the analysis of the New Year's addresses of the presidents of Bulgaria, Austria and Türkiye, we consider it necessary to investigate how the war in Ukraine has been presented and talked about in the three speeches. After all, in the international arena this is by far the topic with the farthest-reaching consequences both for the world's economic stability and the future of the international relations. In the speech of the Turkish president, we find the war mentioned in a single subordinate clause: "Küresel salgını ve arkasından başlayan Rusya-Ukrayna savaşının yol açtığı..." ('As a result of the global pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war which started after it...'). This brief mention of the war without explicitly expressing any support for one of the sides corresponds to Türkiye's attempt to present itself as an intermediary between the conflicting sides. It can also be interpreted as a sign that the main focus of attention of the audience should be kept within Türkiye's borders because this audience is the one going to vote in the upcoming elections.

Having in mind the long tradition of close relations between Bulgaria and Russia and the fact that the political background of the Bulgarian president is in the Bulgarian Socialist Party, known to be in favor of friendly relations with Russia, it does not come as a surprise that Radev too prefers a neutral expression which does not indicate any responsibility or guilt of any of the conflicting parties:

Близо до нас избухна опустошителна за Европа война, която продължава да се разгаря и ожесточава. ('A devastating for Europe war has broken out near us, a war which continues to grow and get more and more violent.');

Институции и граждани си подадоха ръка, за да приютят търсещите спасение от войната в Украйна... ('Institutions and citizens worked hand in hand in order to provide shelter for those looking for rescue from the war in Ukraine.')

Only the Austrian president clearly takes a side in this conflict and thus reflects the common stance of the European Union and, without being a member, of NATO:

...als Folge des Angriffskrieges in der Ukraine... ('...as a result of the war of aggression in Ukraine...'); Ganz abgesehen von dem menschlichen Leid, das durch die systematischen Angriffe Russlands auf zivile Einrichtungen entsteht. ('Not to mention the human suffering resulting from the systematic Russian attacks on public facilities.').

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which appears as "Russia's war of aggression" in official EU documents, the EU and its member states have condemned Russia's actions on numerous occasions and imposed a total of 10 packages of sanctions within a year. In regularly published statements, both the EU and NATO emphasize the brutality of the war as well as the fact that it was unprovoked, and clearly commit themselves to continuous support for Ukraine.

Conclusion

The analysis of the three speeches under investigation has revealed some major differences. Politically, the presidents of Bulgaria, Austria and Türkiye come from different political traditions, namely the socialist tradition (in this case a continuation of the communist movement and the respective form of government until 1989), the environmental movement and the Islamic-conservative tradition. This is clearly reflected in their choice of topics and linguistic expressions. True to the historically close relations with Russia, Radev avoids taking sides when talking about the Russia-Ukrainian war. A former speaker of the Austrian Green Party, Van der Bellen is the only one of the three presidents who mentions the climate crisis as one of the major challenges of the future. And only AKP's leader Erdoğan resorts to constructing fears and referring to God's help he is hoping to receive.

The scope of political powers and the eligibility in future elections also affect the choice of topics and their verbal presentation. While Radev and Van der Bellen position themselves as observers of political and social life, and see it as their duty both to encourage different groups within society to cooperate with one another and to warn in case of political misconduct or failure, Erdoğan primarily focuses on the achievements of his party. That is why we find different social actors mentioned by Radev, Van der Bellen and Erdoğan, and only in the speech of the Turkish president the problems related to high inflation and the energy crisis are presented as having been successfully dealt with and solved to an important extent.

In terms of field of action (see Table 1), judging from the contents and the respective political context, the speeches of Radev and Van der Bellen can be determined as belonging to 'Formation of public attitudes, opinions and will'. After all, these two presidents not only cannot run for a third term, but they also have limited powers and the executive powers are concentrated in the hands

of the prime ministers of the two countries. In Erdoğan's speech, on the other hand, we find elements from 'Formation of public attitudes, opinions and will', 'Political advertising' and 'Political executive and administration'. This can be explained with the fact that after changing Türkiye's political system from a parliamentary to presidential republic Erdoğan has practically adopted the functions and duties of both president and prime minister, while, at the same time, retaining the leadership of the ruling party as well. Moreover, he is hoping for one more term in office in the upcoming elections in mid-May so he is obliged to adopt election speech rhetoric and purposefully address his potential voters above all.

Looking one last time at the scripts of the three speeches and what I have found in them, I realize that I need to admit the following: I spent four decades not listening. This time I listened. Carefully. I am going to continue listening.

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