

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF MELONI'S RHETORICAL STRATEGIES AND NARRATIVES IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

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Abstract:

This paper compares four speeches given by the Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni. Two of them were given in institutional settings with a mixed audience, while the other two were given in more informal settings before a conservative audience. The paper aims to analyse the differences and similarities. In this way, it will be possible to outline the fundamental elements of Meloni's political narrative and assess how flexible her communication is. This will be done within the framework of the works of Fairclough (2003) about political correctness and the relation between language, power, and culture, and Lakoff's (2016) study about political narratives in the American social scenario.

Key words: *political speech, Giorgia Meloni, political conservatism, ethos*

INTRODUCTION

The rise to power of Meloni is linked to her skilful use of rhetoric. Nonetheless, communication is highly context-dependent; therefore, an able politician must adapt his/her style to the setting, the audience, and the specific topic at hand. For this reason, it is necessary to analyse the same politician on several different occasions to find the core narrative that he/she wants to transmit to the audience, and to understand how versatile and adaptable he/she is. I will analyse the rhetoric and narrative of Meloni on four different occasions: the speech at Atreju conference¹ (15th December 2024), the intervention at CPAC 2025² (22nd February, 2025), the speech in the House of Commons³ ahead of the European Council meeting on June, 26th and 27th (23rd June, 2025), and the speech during the 80th UN General Assembly⁴ (9th September, 2025). This paper aims to describe Meloni's basic narrative and to show in which ways she adapted her speech in the different settings selected.

¹ Giorgia Meloni News, 2025, September 25th [online].

² Diario AS, 2025, February 22nd [online].

³ Palazzo Chigi, 2025, June 23rd [online].

⁴ United Nations, 2025 September 25th [online].

METHOD

The analysis will be conducted keeping in mind the five elements: the context, the audience, and the three Aristotelian (Aristotle, 1984) rhetorical units⁵, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

The **context** can be institutional (House of Commons, UN General Assembly) or informal (CPAC and Atreju conferences). The word “informal” shouldn’t be taken in its literal sense, but rather as the counterpart to the “institutional setting”. This is so because politicians, being public figures with a lot of power, are seldom recorded in actual informal settings. At the same time, not every stage is as institutional as the House of Commons or the UN General Assembly are. Often, they give speeches at a broad range of events. CPAC and Atreju conferences, being events dedicated to the conservative audience and with a limited reach outside their own echo chamber, can be considered informal events, as they are not properly institutionalised. Moreover, on each occasion, Meloni gives a speech before a different audience and within a specific context. This context includes the reason why Meloni is speaking. For example, she was the honour guest at Atreju and she was expected to give a self-aggrandising speech; she was the invited representative of Italy at CPAC, and she was expected to talk about the relationship between American and Italian conservatives; she was the Head of State at the UN Assembly and the House of Commons, and she was expected to comment on the United Nations’ state of being and the upcoming European Council meeting, respectively. These different contexts call for different discursive solutions.

The **audience** is divided into general and conservative, following the same divisions of institutional and informal settings. The General Assembly and the House of Commons are two places that gather a diverse range of political personalities, while the CPAC and Atreju conferences are organised for a conservative audience. Besides, the General Assembly and CPAC are international settings with international audiences, while the House of Commons and Atreju gather only Italian people.

The speeches were selected because they are the most recent ones that comply with the needs of differentiated audience and context, both Italian and international.

Logos refers to any argumentative topic focused on data, logic, and consequential reasoning. The basic unit is the enthymeme, which is a syllogistic argument incompletely stated that is based on a minor, suppressed premise⁶.

⁵ Aristotle, 1984.

⁶ Britannica.com, 2016, February 26th [online].

Ethos is the complex of rhetorical strategies used to either aggrandise the speaker's persona or diminish that of the opponent. Usually, it relies on specific fallacies, such as *ad hominem* (attacking the interlocutor rather than their thesis) and *strawman* (moving from the main topic to a minor one that is easier to attack).

Pathos is an appeal to the audience's emotions, utilising rhetorical strategies. Negative and positive emotions can be called for depending on the situation and the topic. Any appeal to emotions (to anger, fear, nostalgia, pity, pride, etc.) is considered a fallacy per se. Usually, the speaker combines logical fallacies, like the *slippery slope* (a catastrophic prediction given certain premises), *polarising* arguments, the *golden era* argument (the idealisation of the past), *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (misattribution of cause and effect), *non causa pro causa* (general overlap between correlation and causation), and false data.

During the analysis, I will add worthy examples translated by me with the annotation of the time. The links to the videos are listed in the section "Online References". Moreover, the analysis will be integrated with the theoretical background that is more salient for the case study at hand, namely, Fairclough's study on the consequences of language use in the social world⁷, and Lakoff's study on narratives and their role in our understanding of the world⁸.

RESULTS

Atreju Conference

This conference is a yearly meeting of the right-wing supporters organised by the younger movement of Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) (Meloni's party) since 2014, although the first edition reaches back to 1998.

The context is that of a hub for all the conservative supporters and voters of Italy, where Meloni gives an annual speech. It is a symbolic event that became almost a right-wing tradition. There, speakers address moral, economic, and political issues with a conservative take on them, and the general spirit is festive and light-hearted.

The core audience is composed of FdI's supporters, although it is open to anyone. Voters of other right-wing parties, journalists, and conservative non-voters are the usual audience of this event.

The *logos* is characterised by data and statements about recent accomplishments. It is noticeable that data are always aggregated, namely,

⁷ Fairclough, N. 2003.

⁸ Lakoff, G. 2016

they lack any kind of internal specification. The main logical fallacy is to link directly the presence of her government to the growth of the country without providing any proof of successful policy. At the same time, she also appeals to authority, here the weekly magazine, *The Economist*:

[20:50 – 21:02] It went that in recent years Italy has grown more than the Eurozone average, and a few days ago The Economist ranked our country as having the fifth best economic performance in the world. It went that our businesses, despite the many difficulties they face, have started to run again and amaze us, and, for the first time in history, we have become the fourth largest exporting nation in the world.

[28:15 – 28:34] We took our oath at the Quirinale on 22 October 2022. Two years on from that day, there are 850,000 more people in employment in Italy, precarious work is on the decline, and if we consider only permanent contracts, there are almost a million more jobs in two years.

The main line of reasoning is a fallacious *non sequitur* because the conclusion does not follow from the argument. The comparison with the Eurozone is partial because it doesn't consider the starting point of Italy. It is easier for a country with a declining economy to grow more than average, while it is comparatively more difficult to do so for countries which have a stable growth for years. Moreover, the effect that the government had on employment cannot be determined by the sole presence of the government. The economic conjuncture is not determined by the party in power, but it is a complex set of complementary elements.

The attempt to legitimise the government and to instil feelings of responsibility towards citizens is the tool for building ethos. Supporters are part of a small elite of democrats who believe in freedom of thought and speech:

[13:36 – 14:27] For almost thirty years, we have been questioning the present and the future, doing so without prejudice, without fear, listening to anyone who has something to say, as strong identities that do not fear confrontation always do. [...] We succeeded because we are fundamentally free people and because there can be no thought without freedom.

This spirit is put against the cowardice and malignity of the Left, which would like to see FdI fail. In this way, Meloni shows herself as being on the side of all Italians, while left-wing parties are presented as factional to the detriment of the well-being of the citizens.

[12:05 – 12:27] And as we know, disappointing the left is our favourite sport. We are Italians first and foremost, it is for Italy that we cheer and work, we never put faction before the nation, and this is what our opponents have never understood about us, because they do the exact opposite.

The *ethos* is also built thanks to the creation of a golden era. The Roman Empire and the Church are constitutive parts of the meaning of “being Italians”. This creates a sense of family with the audience, which is called to be part of this historical legacy:

[18:15 – 19:55] Our entire history is like this. The greatness of the Empire and then the ruins of Rome, Christianity that shaped European civilisation and the destruction wrought by the barbarians. And then the Middle Ages, which many consider a dark age, but for us was the age of cathedrals, abbeys, and maritime republics, of cities that opened up new routes. Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, Venice. And then the Renaissance, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, and a whole world that stood in awe. [...] Every time we were given up for dead, we took our destiny into our own hands and left everyone speechless. We got back up a thousand times, and we will do it again; we are still doing it.

Obviously, *ethos* and *pathos* are strictly related, since the former is often built on appeals to emotions, specifically the anger towards left-wing parties and supporters, and the pride for conservatives. These are also portrayed as morally superior.

[56:36 – 55:56] We have demonstrated with facts what the left has always denied, namely that it is possible to gain respect and consideration, and indeed that perhaps one gains even more respect and consideration if one manages not to sell out one's ideas or one's national dignity.

The general narrative proposed by Meloni in this speech revolves around the moral superiority of conservatives to left-wingers and the stability of the government. This stability is given by the strong identity shared by all conservatives and their strict morality, stemming from a history of greatness and genius. This has enabled the country to grow over the last two years and provided it with the right direction to follow. This integrity translates into the strength to make the right decision against any type of oppression and criminality, especially mafia and illegal immigration, which is called “mafia of the sea”. The whole speech is an antagonism to the general Left. Everything

done and thought by conservatives is in direct contrast with the left-wing parties, which are morally weak and soft towards criminality and European institutions.

CPAC 2025

The setting is informal, while the audience is mostly American. In this case, we can expect Meloni to resort to a strong and complex narrative to aggrandise the *ethos* of conservatives and appeal to their emotions. Although she is not campaigning actively, this is nonetheless an occasion to show her persona in an international context. There might be some communicative barriers, both verbal and nonverbal, but Meloni adapts to the audience, smiling much more than usual, using shorter sentences, gesticulating less, and taking longer pauses.

The *logos* is barely present because Meloni focuses on *ethos* and *pathos*. This might be due to the limited time she is given on stage. In fourteen minutes, it is more efficient to focus on the emotive side of the audience, rather than developing complex lines of reasoning. Indeed, her line of thought is rather simplistic:

[1:53 – 2:42] The mainstream propaganda machine predicted that a conservative government would have isolated Italy, deleting it from the map of the world, driving away investors and suppressing fundamental freedoms. [...] Their storytelling was fake. The reality is that Italy is thriving, employment is at a record high our economy is growing, our fiscal policy is back on track, and the flow of illegal migration has decreased by 60% in the last year, and most importantly, we're expanding freedom in every aspect of Italians' lives.

This is her standard logical line in this speech, and it is another *non sequitur*. She fights contrasting opinions, calling them fake, and juxtaposing her own narrative. There is no internal coherence between the expansion of freedom in Italians' lives with the economic growth and the decrease of illegal immigration. She picks single elements that prove her narrative and avoids counterarguments, falling into the fallacy of cherry picking. As understandable as it is, given the context, it is a fallacy, nonetheless.

As stated before, *ethos* is the most important element of this speech. Italy is portrayed as a developing nation which is reclaiming its role on the international stage.

[1:19 – 1:48] To this incredible nation, Italy, I dedicate my full energy. Our government is tirelessly working to restore Italy's rightful place on the international stage. We are reforming,

modernising, and reclaiming our role as a global leader. We aim to build an Italy that once again amazes the world.

Americans and Italians are put in parallel as Western civilisations. They share the common values of freedom, individualism, and the rule of law.

[4:01 – 5:06] CPAC understood before many others that the political and cultural battle for conservative values is not just an American battle; it is a Western battle. [...] when we say West, we define a way of understanding the world where the individual is central, life is sacred, all men are born equal and free, the law applies equally to all, sovereignty belongs to people, and freedom comes before everything else.

These are not only personal values, but rather they identify a specific credence with ancient roots:

[4:17 – 4:35] My friends, I still believe in the West not just as a geographical space, but as a civilisation. A civilisation born from the fusion of Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Christian values.

Pathos is clearly focused on appealing to pride, specifically to pride for the conservative identity. This is put in sharp contrast with “globalist elites” who want to control people because they fear them.

The general narrative is coherent with the one shown in other speeches, but it is adapted to the American setting. She makes few references to the “Left”, rather she prefers to talk about “elites”; she refers to wokeism, and makes references to “common sense” and that conservatives “do what they say”:

[2:46 – 2:49] Because we conservatives do what we say.

[10:32 – 11:08] So we must say loudly and clearly to those attacking the West from the outside and those sabotaging [mistake in the original] it from within with the virus of cancel culture and woke ideology, we must say to them that we will never be ashamed of who we are. We affirm our identity. We affirm our identity and work to strengthen it because, without a deep-rooted identity, we cannot be great again.

The core of her speech is the conservative identity, its pride, its morality, its righteousness and the long-lasting bond between all Western people, stemming from Ancient Greece and developing through Medieval Christianity.

“Security” is another buzzword linked with freedom:

[16:15 – 16:46] So, border security, energy security, economic security, food security, defense and national security, for a simple reason. If you are not secure, you are not free. And when freedom is at risk, the only thing you can do is to put it in the wisest hands. That is why conservatives keep on growing and are becoming more and more influential in European politics.

This is also another example of poor *logos*. This is another example of *non sequitur*. Freedom and security are interrelated concepts because freedom comes from independence, and this can be achieved through security. Nonetheless, the presence of security does not imply the development of independence. On the contrary, an excess of security without a growth in independence can lead to authoritarian control over the population and isolation, which are the opposite of freedom.

The persona of the antagonists is diminished through *ethos* and *pathos*, representing them in a stereotypical fashion, and appealing to the audience’s hate:

[17:04 – 17:29] When Bill Clinton and Tony Blair created a global leftist liberal network in the '90s, they were called statesmen. Today, when Trump, Meloni, Milei, maybe Modi talk, they are called a threat to democracy. This is the left double standard, but we are used to it.

[17:55 – 18:06] We preserve businesses and citizens from the green leftist insanity. We defend family and life. We fight against wokeism.

Left-wing parties and supporters are depicted as opposing any form of freedom, insane, and apt to apply double standards. Basically, they are dishonest, morally deviant, and greedy. They are the exact opposite of anything related to the wisdom of the Ancient Greeks, the rule of law of Ancient Rome, and the righteousness of Christianity.

One noticeable example of Meloni’s adaptation to the American context is the closure:

[19:13 – 19:18] Thank you all. Thank you all. God bless you and God bless the free nations of the world.

SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The setting is institutional, and the audience is composed of fellow politicians. The House of Commons is reunited ahead of the meeting of the European Council, and Meloni is communicating her priorities for it. The meeting is not the right context in which to present strong logical arguments. Rather, it is an opportunity to present the plans that the government is going to present at the European Council. One of the few instances of logical reasoning is the following:

[16:53 - 17:24] No organisation of States can be fully independent and sovereign if it entrusts its defence, its security, to others. And this has repercussions that go far beyond the question of defence itself because it involves the dynamics of economics and trade, in short, the very possibility of fully defending one's national interests.

This is a repetition of one of the core elements of Meloni's narrative, the tight relationship between security and freedom that also appeared during her CPAC speech. As sound as her statement could be if contextualised, this sentence falls prey to *non sequitur* and to the *slippery slope* fallacy. The former because the link between domestic security and the defence of national interests is not direct and univocal. The latter, because the catastrophic outcome that she presents does not logically follow the premise.

Generally speaking, Meloni only gives data about recent compliance with European standards and the allocation of money. The core of her discourse is the building of *ethos*. Thanks to the excuse of showing the government's achievements, she builds the *ethos* while being coherent with the setting and the audience. The parliamentary session is recorded, and this means that the general audience will be able to see it. This context is particularly telling because it is not open to any kind of easy propaganda, which is usually present in more informal speeches. This means that the ideological elements present here are probably part of the very core of Meloni's narrative and view of the world, and not something said only to appeal to the audience.

The core of the speech focuses on the measures, interventions, and requests to activate within the frame of Europe's international stage, its role in the war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the one between Israel and Palestine, the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration, the role of EU in guiding new members from the Western Balkans, and the role of Italy in Europe. This last point is underlined several times:

[9:58 – 10:19] And just recently, the government has committed to allocating further aid to the WHO and UNICEF for medical

equipment and assistance to women and children. And most recently, Italy coordinated the evacuation of 70 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, including little Adam and his mother, Dr. Ala Alnajar, the only survivors of a family of 12.

[16:01 – 16:12] On 10th and 11th July, we will host the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome, where we will reiterate our commitment to ensuring a future of peace and prosperity for the Ukrainian people. The Ukraine Recovery Conference will be a major international event, bringing together leaders from around the world to discuss the future of Ukraine.

[17:48 – 18:18] In 2014, the member states of the Atlantic Alliance were committed to providing the forces and capabilities required by NATO's defence plans, equivalent to the achievement in 10 years of defence spending of 2 per cent of gross domestic product. Since then, all Italian governments have confirmed that commitment without ever achieving it, without exception of political colour. It is a goal we have achieved, thus respecting the word that Italy had given internationally.

[28:56 – 29:07] The Mattei plan, in short, is no longer just an Italian strategy. As you know, in the last two years, at the instigation of Italy, there has been a decisive change of pace in Brussels with regard to migration.

This builds the government's *ethos* because it shows its strength and the respect it has earned in the European context. At the same time, it implicitly appeals to pride. This is probably done more for the audience watching the record than for the fellow politicians.

As long as the general narrative is concerned, Meloni mentions again the "mafia of the human trafficking" and names Falcone and Borsellino:

[27:46 – 28:23] I am very proud of the work done on this matter also at G7 level where it is not by chance that Italy is entrusted with the task of coordinating the thematic table on immigration and the global fight against human trafficking, a format that follows up on the work of the Italian G7 presidency last year. [...] a relentless fight against organised crime that runs human trafficking, especially following the principle "follow the money" that we learnt from Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino.

This excerpt is another example of *ethos* building because it underlines the intrinsic value of Italy as coordinator of the thematic table on immigration and human trafficking. The link between the actual mafia and illegal immigration is consistent in different speeches and appears often. Another recurring element is Christianity. The setting and the audience are not consistent with a long digression on the Christian values, but a mention of religion is present anyway:

[12:20 – 12:35] And this context probably includes the terrible attack that struck the church of Saint Elias in Damascus yesterday, causing dozens of casualties among the faithful. To the Christian and Syrian communities, we wish to express our deepest condolences.

The very core of Meloni's ideology is the link between strength, morality, and freedom. This is often present, and it always follows the same line of thought, namely:

[17:24 – 17:29] If you can't defend, you can't decide. If you do not decide, you cannot consider yourself fully free.

Moreover, this is another instance of *non sequitur* and *slippery slope* fallacy for the same reasons described above. The closure of the speech is particularly telling. This section is usually used as a very generic summary of the speech's main point. Meloni positions her party on the citizens' and Italy's side, highlighting the major role that the country supposedly reached thanks to her governance. Values like fairness, frankness, strong ideas, and lack of fear are mentioned. This builds the *ethos* of the government once more, appealing to pride again. Noticeably, frankness and truthfulness to oneself are directly linked to an idea of rectitude and moral strictness, which directly stems from the Christian tradition:

[39:14 – 40:02] The course for this government is clear. An Italy protagonist at all tables, bridge builder, capable of dialogue with all partners, clear in its Euro-Atlantic and Mediterranean positioning, steadfast in its leadership thanks to a government that has finally put the national interest at the centre, pursues it every day on every issue, and strong in our positions, in the credibility we have earned through fairness and frankness, in the vision that unites a solid majority and the Italian people we represent, who are still capable of astonishing the world. We will continue to work unsparingly, without conditioning, without fear, as always, only and exclusively in the interest of Italy.

80th UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On this occasion, Meloni is speaking to the General Assembly of the United Nations. The main focus of her speech is the warfare situations concerning Ukraine and Palestine. From the very beginning, she declares the failures of the UN, quoting Pope Francis:

[0:47 – 2:00] According to the Global Peace Index 2024, there are 56 armed conflicts in the world, the highest number since World War II. [...] The question we must ask ourselves, eighty years later, and looking around, is: Did we succeed? You all know the answer, because it is in the news, and it is merciless. Peace, dialogue, diplomacy seem no longer able to convince and win. The use of force prevails on too many occasions. And the scenario we face is what Pope Francis described with rare effectiveness: a 'third world war' fought 'in pieces'.

This constitutes the conceptual background that will bring her to state the need for more security and more freedom for single Countries multiple times throughout her speech. Instances of this narrative are the following:

[7:06 – 7:29] And multilateralism, dialogue and diplomacy, without institutions that work as they should, are just empty words. We must recognise our limits. We must recognise that a profound reform of the United Nations is urgently needed. A reform that is not ideological, but pragmatic and realistic. One that respects the sovereignty of nations and opens up to shared solutions.

[8:29 – 9:08] Because we are facing a change of epoch, and this calls for a profound revision of all the instruments we have to regulate relations between nations and defend people's rights, including international conventions. I am thinking, for example, of the conventions governing migration and asylum. These are rules sanctioned at a time when mass irregular migration did not exist, and human traffickers did not exist. Conventions that are no longer relevant in this context, which, when interpreted in an ideological and unidirectional way by politicised judiciaries, end up trampling on the law instead of affirming it.

Meloni's suggestions are rather abstract and vague. Nonetheless, they point toward the reduction of bureaucracy inside the UN and the reinforcement of regulations about immigration and national security. She opposes the present ideology and pragmatic solutions in a *false dichotomy* fallacy. This suggests

that the current ideology prevents solutions, while in reality UN could maintain its ideological background and find pragmatic solutions to problems, as well. This is rather an attack on the institutional culture.

The second excerpt is based on a *non sequitur*, according to which we have to change all our instruments to face the change. The conclusion doesn't follow the premise. Moreover, to say that the regulations were formulated when there was no human trafficking is a lie, although it might be arguable that at that time there was not the type of human trafficking that we are experiencing these days. Another point is the use of abstract and vague words like "ideological", "unidirectional", and "politicised". It seems she wants to express her disappointment in loose regulations that defend immigrants' rights against citizens' ones, but these same words can be bent to mean almost anything, even the opposite of what she wants to say. The general lack of specificity is a rhetorical strategy to keep a way out open in case of contestation and request for contextualisation. As for the other speeches, her logical thought is characterised by *non sequitur* and by a general lack of consequentiality between premises and conclusions. Something similar is present in the second mention of Christianity:

[9:37 – 10:20] The international community must unite in combating the phenomenon of human trafficking. The United Nations [...] cannot turn away or end up protecting criminals in the name of alleged civil rights. Likewise, the United Nations cannot hypocritically consider some human rights less worthy of protection than others. I am thinking, among others, of the denied value of religious freedom and of the tens of millions of people around the world - mostly Christians - persecuted and massacred in the name of their faith.

The disrespect of religious freedom in some countries does not imply that the UN nations should restrain their recognition of civil rights to any extent. This is a mix of *non causa pro causa* and *non sequitur*.

As far as *ethos* is concerned, she portrays Italy as a country which puts a lot of effort in the international scenario to be a leading and binding force with other nations, especially with developing ones:

[10:36 – 11:26] Over the past three years, we have launched our Africa Cooperation Plan and extended its reach to fourteen countries. [...] This complementarity has given us the honour, last July, of co-organising the Third United Nations Summit on Food Systems with Ethiopia, the responsibility of being an active participant in the massive Lobito Corridor infrastructure project

between Angola and Zambia, and the opportunity to build public-private partnerships that attract investment and ensure concrete results.

At the same time, Italian politicians' personae are portrayed as morally superior to the average, and guided by a true spirit of solidarity, which are significant elements of the Christian doctrine. This is not stated and confirmed by proof, but it is supposed that other States behave otherwise:

[11:58 – 12:23] We, unlike other players, have no ulterior motive in Africa. We are not interested in exploiting the African continent for the rich raw materials it possesses. We are interested, instead, in Africa prospering by processing its resources, giving employment and a perspective to its best energies, having stable governments, dynamic and secure societies.

Obviously, this is also an appeal to emotion, therefore an example of rhetorical use of *pathos*, because Meloni appeals to pride. Something similar can be said for the following excerpt:

[12:46 - 13:10] The entire operation [the conversion of the debt of developing countries], over 10 years, will allow us to convert more than 235 million euros of debt into development projects, to be implemented locally. It is an initiative that the Italian government - in the year of the Jubilee - is particularly keen on, and we hope it can be an example for other nations as well, because it is not just an economic issue, but a question of justice, of dignity, of the future.

Meloni shows the effort put by Italy in the operation, mentions the Jubilee (a Christian event), and underlines the hope for her country to be an international example. This builds her *ethos* and diminishes the others' while doing something generally considered positive, namely, hoping. More so, her point is moral because it goes beyond the economy; it is a matter of justice, dignity, and the future. In this way, her previous hope to be an example is expanded from the economic field to the moral one. Italians should be proud because they are morally superior to others.

As it often is, the closure is particularly telling:

[15:51 – 16:10] Because, as St Francis, the most Italian of saints, who gave his name to the city where this organisation was born, said: 'Tough fights are reserved only for those with exemplary

courage'. I believe the time has come to demonstrate that courage. Thank you.

She quotes another Christian figure, underlining his Italian origins and the close link to the organisation. This has little actual meaning, but it creates an implicit rhetorical bond among the quote, Meloni, St. Francis, and the UN. Moreover, the quote is another *non sequitur*, although it can be considered a sort of encouragement to face the dark times coming. As a final point, the quote comes from a Christian background, but it is uttered in an institutional and secular setting. This can create an overlap between the Catholic tenets and the UN political actions.

From the quotations above, it is possible to understand that the general narrative is largely the same. Christian values are her moral compass. She equates illegal immigration with human trafficking, overlapping the two phenomena. This cuts out from the picture people moving to Europe illegally, but not being trafficked. Italy is presented as a strong nation, capable of brokering important international relationships, while being morally superior to others. There is no mention of the mafia and ancient Rome or Greece; nonetheless, she stresses the need for reforms to build stronger borders to safeguard citizens' rights. The protection of rights through tougher security provides true freedom. While Christianity is the basis for her morality, it seems that the equation between security and freedom is the foundation of her political creed.

DISCUSSION

The analysis shows several common elements and striking differences among the speeches. The main differences are linked to the context and the audience.

When in an institutional setting, Meloni tends to focus on the activities that Italy has taken part in recently, and on the upcoming events in which the country is going to have an important role. She prefers to omit narrative elements and underlines the important role of her party within the country and the role of Italy in the international scenario. In this setting, the audience is composed of fellow politicians from both the right and the left wing. This is probably another reason why she tends to downplay her narrative. The colleagues should be aware of her rhetorical strategies, and she must keep institutional credibility.

When the context is more informal, she is more revealing of her narrative, and her tone of voice is way more emphatic. She mentions recent achievements, but they are not the focus of the speech. Rather, she builds a precise narrative, which is distinguishable in institutional settings, also, although dimmed. The audience in this context is composed of conservative

supporters. This allows her to speak more freely. It is true that any intervention is recorded and can be viewed by the public at large later; nonetheless, most of the delayed listeners and viewers will likely be conservative due to the very nature of the event. Indeed, it is unlikely that someone with a left-wing orientation and who is not a political analyst will watch the recording of CPAC. Moreover, this argument can also be applied to institutional settings. Potentially, the delayed audience might want to hear Meloni's narrative, but it is also true that only people interested in the House of Commons' speeches and the UN General Assembly will watch the recording. For this reason, Meloni strongly adapts her communicative style to the setting and the audience. Although she potentially is always speaking to her supporters, it is improbable that her supporters follow every public intervention she makes.

As far as the shared elements are concerned, she often refers to Christianity and the Church, the mafia with an explicit link to illegal immigration and human trafficking, the concepts of security and freedom, and the effort of her party to care and act on behalf and in the interest of all Italian citizens. This creates a coherent narrative, which will be explored in the next paragraph.

Overall, it is possible to say that most of the differences regard her communicative style, while the narrative that she creates is coherent in time, although the level of explicitness is adapted to the context. Some elements are always present, but the number and the strength of her statements change. Her *logos* often falls into fallacies, mainly the *non sequitur* and the *non causa pro causa*. *Ethos* and *pathos* are intertwined, with focus on the former. She depicts herself and her supporters as morally superior to others because they have faith in the Christian religion and follow its precepts. These moral obligations push her to condemn human trafficking, which becomes visible in the phenomenon of illegal immigration. The difference between trafficked immigrants and illegal immigrants is always suppressed to emphasise only her side of the narrative. Her Christian identity blends with her conservative identity, which is based on national pride. She strongly believes in the need to provide security to counter any form of oppression coming from outside, be it economic, political, or criminal (with a direct link to the "sea mafia"). At the same time, her conservative creed makes her believe in freedom of thought, speech, and action within the limits of the law. She links security and freedom without explaining the causal link explicitly. At the same time, she works for all Italian citizens, even the ones who do not support her. This element of sacrifice is a bridge between her Christian values that recommend sacrifice in life as a path of purification and her conservative identity, which prescribes national pride and condemns factious preferences. As inconsistent as it might appear when taken at face value, this narrative must be contextualised with her point of view to be understood fully.

To do this, it is useful to remember what Fairclough put out about political correctness and linguistic control. According to him, having control over the language has political consequences because the language is the main tool to reach cultural hegemony within a nation⁹. At the same time, Lakoff traced the lines of liberal and conservative narratives in the United States¹⁰. Although American conservatives' narrative is not perfectly overlapping with Meloni's because of the different cultural and historical backgrounds, the author put special focus on how a coherent narrative can generate a view of the world that is then adopted by the party's supporters¹¹. A coherent narrative must have a moral system that interrelates with the party's understanding of how the world works. The fundamental morality prescribes the functioning of the rest of the world. While Lakoff identifies family life as the basis for American political narratives¹², Meloni's basis may be Christianity. As a matter of fact, family is the basis of the Christian life, so, probably, Meloni's view of family life is deeply influenced by her religious faith.

To step further into her narrative, we have already seen how sacrifice is a common element of her personal faith and her public belief (conservatism). At the same time, being moral means being strong and following the rules. The authoritarian perspective about society, economics, politics, and immigration is linked directly to her moral strength (or strictness). Freedom is fundamental, but it comes from strength, and strength towards external sources of threat is reached thanks to security.

One important point is her concept of "external" and how this relates to her feeling of working for all Italian citizens. As a matter of fact, she limited the possibility of protesting in the country through the *Decreto Sicurezza* (Security Decree). Apparently, dissenting voices within Italy are perceived as an external threat. If we consider her words about working for all Italian citizens to be genuine and not an empty rhetorical means, which can be the case, we must conclude that her in-group is composed of people with different political views, but not with different moral values. Protesting is a threat to security, so it must be limited. The demarcation line is not citizenship, but rather complying with security measures and laws. This means that the cornerstone of her narrative and consequent actions is not political nor social, but moral and religious. From that religiosity comes her belief in conservatism as the natural political outcome of strictness, compliance with rules, and the conviction that observing morality brings to fair and just decisions.

⁹ Fairclough, N., 2003: 24-25.

¹⁰ Lakoff, G., 2016, 11-12.

¹¹ Ibid., 24-37.

¹² Ibid., 14-17.

Importantly, I took Christianity and security as founding elements of her narrative because they are present in all her speeches. Given the great adaptability that she shows in her speeches, recursive items gain relevance. Their presence is not incidental, but rather well-thought-out and intentional. This suggests that they are particularly important elements of her narrative and political worldview.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I analysed four different discourses of Meloni. Two of them were given in an institutional setting with a general audience (House of Commons and 80th UN General Assembly), while the other two were given in an informal setting before a conservative audience (Atreju 2024 and CPAC 2025). I analysed the use of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* through excerpts from these speeches. Moreover, I presented the general narrative of each speech.

After that, the general use of said rhetorical categories and a general narrative have been outlined. The general importance of language and narratives in politics has been presented through the theoretical lenses provided by Fairclough (Fairclough, 2003) and Lakoff (Lakoff, 2016), and Meloni's narrative has been explored starting from the only two elements which are recurring in every speech in the sample, namely Christianity and security.

This paper aimed to shed light on Meloni's rhetorical devices and narrative. A lot of questions remain open for future research. For example, is her narrative still coherent if a larger sample is considered? Is her narrative coherent with her actions once their speeches are fact-checked? Is her narrative a personal one, or is it shared by a larger group of right-wing personalities and/or parties? Is it possible to outline a general right-wing narrative for a multifaceted political arena such as Italy's?

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