

Political Language in Austria and Slovakia Under the Sign of Alternative Truths

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Abstract

A clear trend toward populist and nationalist parties is evident in many European countries. This development is part of a larger pattern of political polarization also observed in Austria and Slovakia. In these countries, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPA) and the Slovak National Party (SNP) have achieved considerable success in recent elections. This study examines the language and rhetoric of these two parties based on their official Facebook communications from 2021 to 2024. Particular attention is paid to statements based on so-called "alternative truths"—claims that appear factual but lack evidence or are manipulative due to oversimplification and selective presentation. Methodologically, the analysis combines corpus-based evaluations with sketch engine, qualitative coding, and discourse analysis methods. A total of 5,347 posts were analyzed, including text posts, text-image combinations, and shared posts by party representatives. Our study focuses on widespread posts about topics such as the Coronavirus pandemic, migration, national sovereignty, and international organizations. The study demonstrates how linguistic strategies such as emotionalization, polarization, and simplification reinforce certain narratives. Despite linguistic and cultural differences, the hypothesis is that similar rhetorical strategies occur in the populist discourse of both parties. These strategies serve to mobilize supporters, criticize elites, and construct binary patterns of interpretation. The goal is to reveal the mechanisms of linguistic manipulation in digital political communication.

Keywords: populist rhetoric, alternative truths, linguistic manipulation, Facebook communication, corpus analysis

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Introduction

The communicative strategy of persuasion is typical of political language, as political actors are concerned with convincing their audience of a certain opinion to gain popularity, win votes, and ultimately come to power. Persuasion can be achieved through arguments, appeals, and open, rational rhetoric, but it can also be achieved covertly through emotionalization, distortion, framing, and similar means, so that one can speak of linguistic manipulation. Manipulative linguistic strategies are characteristic of populist rhetoric, which has increased significantly in Europe after the financial crisis in 2008 and especially after the migration crisis in 2015. In our article, we analyze those communicative strategies that have a manipulative character and work specifically with disinformation, alternative facts, and conspiracy narratives. The analysis is based on the examples of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPA) and the Slovak National Party (SNP).

Both parties can be described as conservative, right-wing nationalists to right-wing populists. The period from 2021 to 2024 was chosen for the analysis. This period includes a series of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and inflation etc. Several studies point to a close link between crisis phenomena and the rise of populism, which means that the period is suitable for examining the language of populism. The period chosen also allows comparisons to be made between different phases (crisis, calm, new crises, election campaign). Both parties were in government opposition during the analyzed period, and their rhetoric intensified in the phases of election campaigns in 2023 (SNP) and 2024 (FPA). The SNP has been part of the Slovakian government since September 2023, and the FPA also recorded an election success in September 2024, which gave it the mandate to form a government in January 2025, even if it was subsequently unable to form a coalition. In order to be able to work based on comparable data, the years 2021 and 2022 are first used for both parties, and then the period from January to September of the respective election year is taken into account. In both countries, the elections took place in September. A total of 33 months is therefore examined for each party.

Since social media play an essential role in today's political communication, our study focuses on texts published by both parties on their official Facebook channels (Slovenská národná strana, n.d.; Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, n.d.). The text corpus consists of a total of 5347 Facebook posts, including 2677 posts by the Slovak National Party (2021: 906 posts, 2022: 914 posts, 2023: 857 posts and 2670 posts by the Freedom Party of Austria (2021: 882 posts, 2022: 900 posts, 2024: 888 posts). The analysis included all text posts and images with text; the content of video posts was not analyzed. Posts from direct party members and election candidates that were shared via the party's official Facebook page were also included in the analysis. For the SNP, these shared posts account for up to 43 percent of all posts, for the FPA, only 3.6 percent. All of the evidence included represents direct and official communication between the party and the public.

Our methodology includes computational analysis using Sketch Engine and combines a quantitative and qualitative approach. Our procedure for analyzing the created corpus consists of four steps. In the first step, Sketch Engine is used to identify the most frequent keywords; in the second step, thematic clusters are formed, and the thematic focuses are compared; in the third step, alternative facts and obvious disinformation are identified and compared.

Den Vorteil der Korpusanalyse in dem politischen Kontext verbinden wir mit dem Ansatz, den Ammalie Kutter (2017) folgend beschreibt:

Corpus analysis does not present texts according to their linear or intertextual composition. Instead, it highlights patterns of regular use of single words or word clusters as they appear in a large collection of texts. Whether showing these words in situ or quantified abstraction, this reading provides us with a bird eye view of the use of specific words across all the texts contained in a corpus. In addition, the display of word clusters reveals patterned semantic, syntactic, and so on, relationships between words. This provides us with an additional layer of interpretation, which cannot be gained otherwise. (p. 183)

With the term *alternative truths*, we are partly inspired by the term *alternative realities* used by Götz-Votteler and Hespers (2019, p. 12), who subsume under this term *fake news* (obvious false reports intended to damage political opponents), *alternative facts* (false statements by members of the public or representatives of institutions) as well as *conspiracy theories*.

Regarding the analysis of the discourse, we also rely on the work of van Dijk (2017) and his view that socio-political manipulation involves dominance and power abuse and is usually ideological and can be linked to ideological polarization (pp. 226–231).

Identification of Keywords in the Political Discourse of SNP and FPA

Two independent corpora were created in the Sketch Engine tool. The corpus of Facebook posts of the Slovak National Party comprises 448980 tokens, 376697 words, and 28703 sentences, while the corpus of texts of the Freedom Party of Austria consists of 172293 tokens, 147629 words, and 10485 sentences. Despite a comparable number of analyzed Facebook posts, an asymmetry in the size of the corpora can be observed, which results from the fact that the FPA works with significantly more video posts. As our analysis is strictly text-based, this type of post could not be analyzed, and only the text parts of these posts, if available, were included in the text corpus.

The first step was to identify the individual keywords. Sketch Engine uses the reference corpus German Web 2023 (deTenTen23) for the German language and Slovak Web 2023 (skTenTen23) for the Slovak language as a basis for comparison. The original results had to be filtered manually for our analysis. All words relating to the names of the authors of the Facebook posts and the names of their political representatives or their political party were filtered out of the list of keywords, as these are fundamentally of no significance and are irrelevant for the further thematic comparison. The repetitive keywords (e.g., identical words with different grammatical endings and forms) were also grouped together. The 50 most frequent keywords for both parties are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1*50 Most Frequent Single-Word Keywords in the SNP Corpus*

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 Sputnik	14 padnutý	27 lotéria	40 rozhádzaný
2 pronárodný	15 pitevný	28 Ódor	41 ambasáda
3 demisia	16 Čaputová	29 očkovací	42 servilnosť
4 zvrchovanosť	17 liberálny	30 nekompetentnosť	43 koalíčný
5 Heger	18 Kollár	31 Korčok	44 referendum
6 sorosovský	19 prozápadný	32 Matovič	45 Covid
7 prezidentka	20 Slavín	33 štvorkoalícia	46 OLANO
8 proslovenský	21 zdražovanie	34 sebestačnosť	47 proamerický
9 mimovládsky	22 vatra	35 očkovať	48 vulgárnosť
10 úradnícky	23 Sulík	36 koalícia	49 marasmus
11 liberálny	24 Nordstream	37 expremiér	50 dezoláti
12 dražoba	25 NRSR	38 Remišova	
13 nekompetentný	26 národníar	39 neočkovaný	

Table 2*50 Most Frequent Single-Word Keywords in the FPA Corpus¹*

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 Nehammer	18 Impfpflicht	35 ÖVP-Nehammer
2 schwarz-grün	19 Asylwerber	36 rot-weiß-rot
3 Einheitspartei	20 Scheinopposition	37 Asylzahl
4 ÖVP	21 Corona-Politik	38 Bundespräsidentenwahl
5 Volkskanzler	22 FPÖ-Facebookseite	39 Massenmigration
6 Impfwang	23 U-Ausschuss	40 Volksbegehren
7 Corona-Wahnsinn	24 VdB	41 ungeimpft
8 türkis-grün	25 Asylpolitik	42 Kanzler
9 Nachschauen	26 Nationalratswahl	43 Systempartei
10 EU-Wahl	27 EU-Wahnsinn	44 Afghane
11 ÖVP-Innenminister	28 Neutralität	45 Grenzschutz
12 freiheitlich	29 ORF2	46 ORF
13 Österreicher	30 SPÖ	47 Kostenlawine
14 Ungeimpfte	31 Asylstopp	48 COFAG
15 ÖVP-Kanzler	32 Migrationspolitik	49 Teuerungswelle
16 Teuerung	33 Pressekonferenz	50 schwarz-rot-grün-pink
17 Russland-Sanktion	34 Massenzuwanderung	

¹ English translation of the keywords: 1. Nehammer, 2. black-green, 3. Unity Party, 4. ÖVP (political party), 5. People's Chancellor, 6. Compulsory vaccination, 7. Corona madness, 8. turquoise-green, 9. Look up, 10. EU election, 11. ÖVP Interior Minister, 12. liberal, 13. Austrians, 14. Unvaccinated, 15. ÖVP Chancellor, 16. Inflation, 17. Russia sanction, 18. Compulsory vaccination, 19. Asylum seekers, 20. Sham opposition, 21. Corona policy, 22. FPÖ Facebook page, 23. Investigation committee, 24. Van der Bellen, 25. Asylum policy, 26. National Council election, 27. EU madness, 28. Neutrality, 29. ORF2, 30. SPÖ (political party), 31. Asylum stop, 32. Migration policy, 33. Press conference, 34. Mass immigration, 35. ÖVP-Nehammer, 36. red-white-red, 37. Asylum number, 38. Federal presidential election, 39. Mass migration, 40. Referendum, 41. Unvaccinated, 42. Chancellor, 43. System party, 44. Afghans, 45. Border protection, 46. ORF, 47. Cost avalanche, 48. COFAG, 49. Wave of inflation, 50. black-red-green-pink.

The initial identification of the most prevalent keywords is the basis for the following parts of the analysis. This is followed by a comparison of Slovak and Austrian discourse from a thematic perspective, which is discussed in the following section.

Comparison of Thematic Clusters

To enable a thematic comparison, the individual keywords were sorted into thematic clusters, which then allowed a comparison of dominant topics between the respective national political discourses. The keywords of the SNP can be grouped into the following thematic clusters:

- national sovereignty (pro-national, pro-speech, sovereignty, nationalist, self-sufficiency, campfire, national monument, Slavin)
- critique of liberalism (liberal, liberals, pro-Western, Sorosian, anti-national, extra-governmental, vulgarity, disgust, desolates)
- criticism of the government and elites (resignation, Heger, president, Čaputová, incompetent, bureaucratic, fallen, Kollár, Sulík, NRSR, Ódor, incompetence, Korčok, Matovič, coalition, ex-prime minister, Remišová, coalition, referendum, OĽANO, quadruple coalition, divided)
- The economic and social crisis (inflation, rising prices, chaos)
- geopolitical narratives (Nordstream, embassy, servility, pro-American)
- COVID-19 and vaccination (Sputnik, vaccine, unvaccinated, COVID, lottery, autopsy, vaccinate)

By its very nature, the SNP emphasizes the protection of national identity, emphasizes traditions and history, celebrates the Slovak National Uprising during World War II, and emphasizes the national cultural institution called Matica slovenská. It sees the government itself and its representatives as a danger and a threat to sovereignty, criticizes their incompetence, the instability and division of the coalition, and calls for a referendum and the formation of a new national government. For this reason, the party calls for the unification of national forces and seeks a coalition of pro-national parties before the elections. It uses the current economic situation and inflation, the decline in the living standards of Slovaks, to criticize the government. It also exploits the migration crisis, warning against mass migration and opposing the acceptance of refugees. On the global geopolitical scale, it suspects the United States and the European Union of manipulating and oppressing Slovakia and uses anti-American and anti-Brussels rhetoric. Regarding the war in Ukraine, the SNP calls for an end to the war and argues against unilateral support for Ukraine. It speaks negatively about the handling of pandemics, criticizes the measures taken, questions the coronavirus itself and vaccination, or promotes the Russian Sputnik vaccine. SNP also combines various points of criticism with accusations of media bias and calls for “objective” reporting.

Some shifts in preferred topics can be observed in the individual years analyzed. In 2021, the theme of pandemics and vaccination, criticism of vaccination policy, and the chaos in the measures taken dominated. There are hints of conspiracies about the origin of COVID and warnings against compulsory vaccination. There is also strong anti-government rhetoric directed, for example, against political representatives such as Matovič, Sulík, or Čaputová. There is also a strong appeal to national sovereignty. In 2022, the focus is on the war in Ukraine, criticizing the Western view of this conflict and seeking a friendly relationship with Russia. More prominent are also economic themes - in particular inflation and rising energy prices, and deteriorating living standards, expensive medicines, etc. By the end of 2022, a narrative of uniting national forces and forming a common bloc of political parties begins to emerge. The dominant tone of 2023 is one of electoral mobilization, with a growing attack on

progressive and liberal parties, as well as elites and the media. The rhetoric against the opposing candidates, such as the political parties Hlas, KDH, Progressive Slovakia, etc., is escalating. Opponents are often labelled as traitors to the nation.

The keywords of the FPA can be grouped into the following thematic clusters:

- COVID-19 / vaccinations (compulsory vaccination, corona madness, unvaccinated, corona policy, unvaccinated),
- National identity and protection (Austria's national chancellor, Austrians, red-white-red, neutrality),
- Migration and asylum policy (Asylum seekers, asylum policy, asylum stop, migration policy, mass immigration, mass migration, border protection, Afghans, asylum numbers),
- Government criticism and system parties (black-green, turquoise green, ÖVP, SPÖ, system party, unity party, ÖVP-Nehammer, ÖVP-Chancellor, ÖVP-Interior Minister),
- Inflation and economic crisis (Inflation, Russia sanctions, EU madness),
- Media criticism (ORF2, FPÖ Facebook page, FPÖ TV),
- Election campaign and mobilization (EU election, National Council election, federal presidential election, referendum, press conference).

The topics addressed by the FPA included criticism of coronavirus measures, lockdowns, and compulsory vaccination. Corona is portrayed as a fraud, a lie, or a staging, and the WHO pandemic treaty is seen as a threat to national freedom. The emphasis on national unity draws attention to illegal immigration, calls for a halt to asylum, and propagates a strong anti-migration policy. Austrian identity, the values of Western culture, Christian values, and love of one's homeland are emphasized. Similar to the SNP, the government is criticized, and the FPA is stylized as the only opposition force against an aloof political system. A great deal of scepticism is expressed towards the EU, and national sovereignty and independence are opposed to EU centralization. In the context of the crisis and inflation, social criticism in particular is voiced. The FPA presents itself as a protective force for hard-working people. Public media are repeatedly attacked as propaganda machines in the posts. In 2024, strong campaigns are run for Herbert Kickl, with the narrative “everyone against Kickl.”

From a chronological perspective, topics such as Covid policy, accusations against the coalition government and its failures, migration, and economic concerns dominated in 2021. The first hints of conspiracy theories in connection with the WHO and the elites also emerge. In 2022, it was COVID-19 and compulsory vaccination, incidents involving migrants, a wave of inflation, and anti-EU rhetoric. In 2024, massive confusion narratives spread about a secret global health dictatorship plan. Extreme focus on inflation, energy prices, and fears of social decline. Mobilization themes emerge as part of the election campaign - these include migration and crime, economic existential fears, and the culture war. The contributions are characterized by apocalyptic language (*total loss, Austria's downfall*) and scandalization of the other parties.

Analysis of the Use of Alternative Truths

In the presentation of most of the topics mentioned, Facebook posts regularly appear in which the facts presented do not always correspond to the real facts. Both parties also integrate so-called alternative facts and disinformation into their narratives, which they use to create alternative truths that are also manipulative in nature.

In order to identify particular alternative truths, we need to look at how they are produced and subsequently instrumentalized in a particular political discourse. Let's take a look at one example from the SNP:

The Slovak National Party calls on the government of Eduard Heger to resume negotiations on the supply of Sputnik. We have experienced the disgrace of Slovakia returning Sputnik. Fortunately, the Russian Federation has left us without penalties and sanctions. In the summer months, the Chairman of the Slovak National Party held talks with Industry Minister Manturov, who assured him that the Russian Federation was capable of supplying Sputnik again at any time if it was of interest to the Slovaks. Sputnik can help to increase vaccination rates. The patient should be able to get the medicine regardless of whether the medicine is from the West or the East. The policy should not apply to medicines. If a medicine is effective and has the confidence of the patient, it does not matter what latitude it comes from. The Slovak National Party is using the example of Hungary to show that Sputnik is effective and helps people. We emphasise that vaccination must be voluntary and that, before vaccination, a Slovak citizen should have a blood test to measure antibodies and, above all, outpatient treatment should be strengthened. It is also important to raise the salaries of healthcare workers, just as the SNP has raised the salaries of teachers. If the Czechs have managed to raise the salaries of healthcare workers by 27% in one year, the Slovak Republic must do the same. (Slovenská národná strana, 2021)

In this post from December 4, 2021, the Slovak National Party criticizes the Slovak government's handling of the Sputnik vaccine and advocates for renewed negotiations with Russia to secure its supply. Emphasizing the vaccine's potential to boost vaccination rates, SNP argues that medical treatments should be judged by effectiveness rather than geopolitical origin. The party promotes voluntary vaccination, antibody testing, and improved outpatient care, while also highlighting the need for increased healthcare worker salaries in line with regional examples. The text constructs several alternative truths:

- a) We have experienced the disgrace of Slovakia returning Sputnik. Fortunately, the Russian Federation has left us without penalties and sanctions.

The fact is: Slovakia did not violate the treaty with the Russian Federation; therefore, there was no reason to apply sanctions. The claim gives the impression that Russia “generously forgave” the fine, thereby positively framing Russia and at the same time stigmatising the government's decision not to use the Sputnik V vaccine, which was not approved by the EMA (European Medicines Agency). It serves to mobilise emotionally against “Western” policies and to give the impression that Slovakia has made a “mistake.”

- b) Sputnik can help to increase vaccination rates.

This is a speculative claim with no evidence. There are no known studies from Slovakia showing that the Sputnik V vaccine significantly increased public interest in vaccination at a time when distrust of vaccination was generally high. The statement is suggestive - it presents a hypothesis as fact.

- c) The policy should not apply to medicines. If a medicine is effective and has the confidence of the patient, it does not matter what latitude it comes from.

In this case, it is a simplification of the problem and an alternative truth. In reality, drugs and vaccines have to pass scientific and regulatory scrutiny - it is not just about “patient trust.” The statement denigrates the role of the European Medicines Agency and the Slovak State Institute for Drug Control and other professional authorities and misleads the public into thinking that “trust” is enough when choosing a vaccine. The policy on medicines is not a question of origin, but of safety, efficacy, and approval by the relevant authorities.

- d) The Slovak National Party is using the example of Hungary to show that Sputnik is effective and helps people.

In this case, the deployment is based on the selection of selective data. Hungary did use Sputnik, but did not have publicly available, transparent data on its effectiveness compared to other vaccines. This statement ignores the wider context: Sputnik has not been approved by the European Medicines Agency and has not been widely used in EU countries. Typical of disinformation narratives: choosing a “friendly” country (Hungary) as a model while ignoring opposing views.

- e) a Slovak citizen should have a blood test to measure antibodies.

This is an unscientific recommendation. Such testing is not standardly recommended by any professional authorities, as the antibody value does not guarantee immune protection. It is a misleading recommendation that may discourage people from getting vaccinated, as they will think that they “no longer need” the vaccine. This is a common strategy of disinformation actors who use “scientific-sounding” suggestions without any basis in reality.

- f) just as the SNP has raised the salaries of teachers

This narrative is repeated in a number of other posts, yet it is a twisting of the merits, as the salary increases were the result of a number of actions by the coalition government, not just the SNP.

Similarly, different alternative truths can also be identified in the posts of the FPA:

The fact that large numbers of people feel compelled to get vaccinated to avoid testing harassment, to avoid losing their jobs, to avoid being excluded from social life, to avoid being the victim of bullying, to be allowed to move around freely, etc., is a disgrace and, in my view, should have legal repercussions for those responsible for this. I see the government's announcement of the introduction of a general coronavirus vaccination requirement from the beginning of February 2022 as a major deception and the last possible threat. We know this from leaked government information. It sounds like an ultimatum with the message: get vaccinated now, otherwise we'll force you to anyway. Resistance is pointless. But the government is just playing poker. Because it knows a few things very well: the more people who are not impressed by this threat, the harder it will be for them to implement the vaccination obligation. [...] The government knows the problem of the avalanches of objections that will arise, right up to the highest courts. It is fully aware of the problems under EU law in connection with the definition of ‘compulsory vaccination’. It would have to run the risk of entire areas of the working world being paralyzed by protests and resistance actions. There would be an international outcry if

people were imprisoned in Austria for exercising their right to physical integrity. (Kickl, 2021)

The following aspects have a conspiratorial character or can be described as alternative truths:

- a) We know this from leaked government information.

There is no publicly verifiable evidence of such “leaked” policy papers or ultimatums on mandatory vaccination to support this claim. Invoking secret sources without evidence is speculative and typically used in conspiracy theory rhetoric.

- b) I see the government's announcement of the introduction of a general coronavirus vaccination [...] as a major deception and the last possible threat

The introduction of compulsory vaccination in Austria was decided politically, but later suspended and repealed. There is no evidence that the announcement was merely a threat; the allegation of deliberate deception is unfounded.

- c) There would be an international outcry if people were imprisoned in Austria for exercising their right to physical integrity.

The imprisonment of vaccination refusers has never been a law or political reality in Austria; the idea that citizens are sent to prison because of this is an unfounded exaggeration and fear rhetoric.

In the context of vaccination, this next example also reveals further inconsistencies:

A few days ago, the Health Committee held a hearing with experts on the referendum on ‘vaccine freedom.’ Our Member of the National Council, Gerald Hauser, confronted the President of the Medical Association, Szekeres, who acted in a more than simply PURPOSEFUL manner in the committee anyway, with the statement of the WHO Director for Europe that ‘vaccination does not end the pandemic! (FPÖ, 2021)’

- a) Hans Kluge's statement is presented as if even the WHO had admitted that vaccination is useless or ineffective, which is not the case. This is a classic disinformation strategy of abbreviation. The original quote says: “We also need to be conscious of the fact that vaccines alone will not end the pandemic” (Kluge, 2021). What is meant is that although vaccination is a key means of controlling the pandemic, it is not the only one.
- b) The text also defames experts. Instead of arguing on the merits, the president of the Medical Association is discredited across the board, even though he was one of the advocates of evidence-based measures during the pandemic.
- c) In addition, a suggestive presentation of the referendum is sought. The term *vaccination freedom* suggests that such freedom did not previously exist, although vaccinations were never made mandatory for the entire population in Austria. There can therefore be no question of withdrawing the freedom to vaccinate.

These examples alone demonstrate that alternative truths are closely linked to linguistic manipulation. Tables 3 and 4 show the most typical foci of manipulation in our analyzed corpus.

Table 3

Focal Points With Disinformation and Alternative Facts by SNP

Topic	Typical manipulation
Covid-19 / vaccinations	Trivialization of Covid, scare tactics against vaccinations
Migration	Migrants stylized as a threat
Western institutions	USA/EU portrayed as secret oppressors
Ukraine war	Ukraine as the culprit, Russia as the victim
Elites and media	Media and politics demonized across the board

Table 4

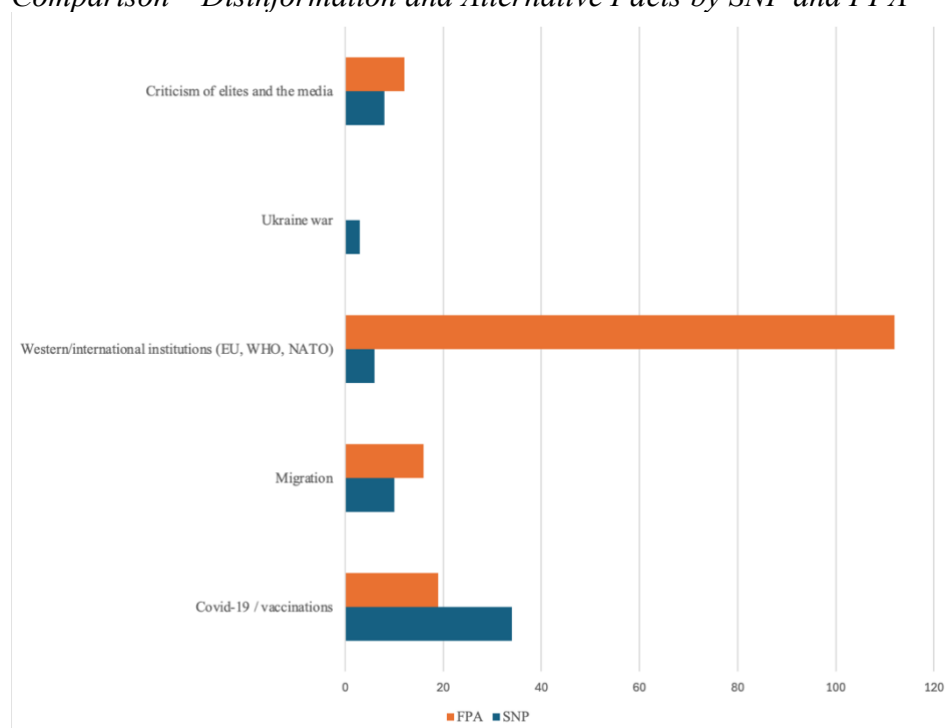
Focal Points With Disinformation and Alternative Facts by FPA

Topic	Typical manipulation
Covid-19 / vaccinations	Anti-vaccination rhetoric, trivialization of pandemic
Migration	Population substitution narrative
International institutions	EU/WHO as conspiracy actors
Elites and system	System Party and elite conspiracy

Table 3 shows the most typical focal points of manipulation in the texts by the SNP. We find disinformation about vaccinations, which are allegedly unsafe and dangerous, and even weaken natural immunity. Governments and elites allegedly use the pandemic to oppress the population (they use terms such as *vaccine mafia* or *pandemic fraud*). When it comes to migration, migrants are portrayed as a threat to security and national identity, and migration is described as a planned and organized invasion. The narrative that the EU and the USA are systematically controlling or colonizing Slovakia and that NATO and the EU are acting against national interests borders on a conspiracy narrative. In the Slovakian context, the war in Ukraine is also addressed, with Ukraine being portrayed as the main culprit of the war and Russia being positioned as the guarantor of peace and victim of the West. In the final focus, the media are interpreted as tools of foreign powers, and politicians and experts are described as traitors and manipulators.

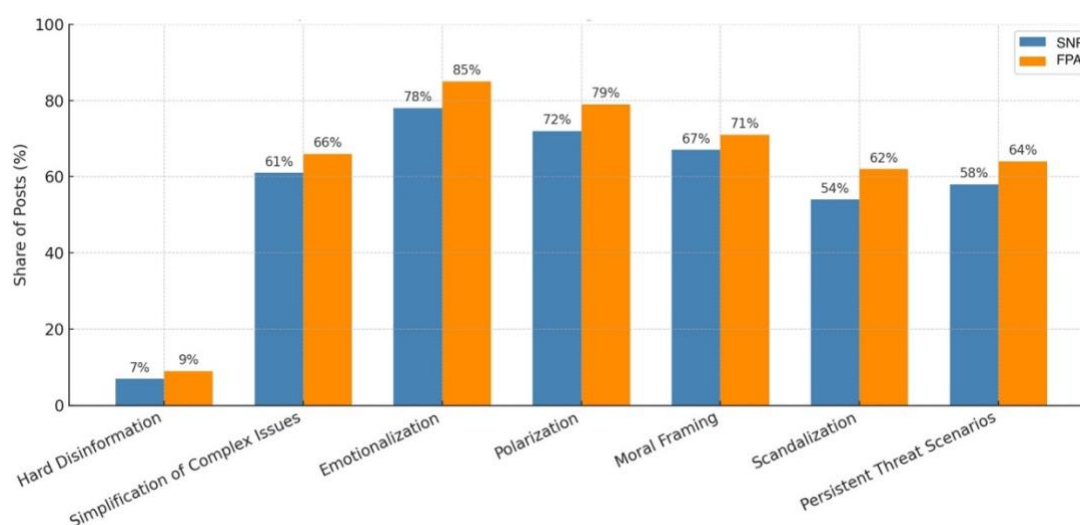
The FPA (see Table 4) is also spreading disinformation about vaccinations, which are portrayed as ineffective, dangerous, and part of a higher plan, while state measures in the context of the pandemic are presented as a deliberate deprivation of liberty. Migration is mainly described as mass immigration and a flood of asylum seekers. It is assumed that this is a plan to replace the native population. These statements show characteristics of conspiracy theories. The same applies to criticism of international institutions such as the EU, WHO, or NATO, which threaten national sovereignty and are allegedly involved in secret plans for global control. It is claimed that coordinated attacks on the population are taking place without any concrete evidence.

In general, fear and uncertainty are spread, complex political contexts are simplified, and national identity is defined by supposed external threats. FPA uses targeted conspiracy narratives even more systematically than SNP. On both sides, the contributions work with strongly emotional terms and use simplistic depictions and blame. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the instrumentalization of disinformation and alternative facts by SNP and FPA.

Figure 1*Comparison – Disinformation and Alternative Facts by SNP and FPA*

Over 55% of SNP posts are related to Covid-19 and vaccinations, with migration and criticism of the elite being secondary. The war in Ukraine is also discussed to a lesser extent. Over 70% of FPA posts deal with international institutions. COVID and migration make up a significantly smaller proportion than in SNP.

Explicit disinformation was identified in only 7 to 9% of the posts. In contrast, rhetorical features predominate, using polarization and exaggeration in particular, but also other rhetorical devices. These comprise around 60 to 80% of the posts. The most common manipulative strategies of both parties in comparison can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2*Comparison of Manipulative Rhetorical Strategies of SNP and FPA*

Conclusion

This analysis revealed that both the SNP and the FPA frequently use alternative truths in their digital communications on Facebook. These truths are often closely linked to manipulative language strategies based on emotionalization, moralization, simplification, polarization, and scandalization. Analysis of thematic clusters shows that both parties target specific topics, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, migration, national identity, and criticism of the elite. Subsequent analysis of disinformation reveals that SNP contributions are dominated by content related to the Coronavirus and anti-Western narratives, while the FPA systematically relies more on conspiracy theories and anti-EU statements. Further analysis indicates that emotional and manipulative rhetoric is present in over 60% of posts. Direct disinformation was detected in only 7-9% of the posts; however, rhetorical techniques of populist linguistic manipulation, such as constructing enemy images, black-and-white thinking, appeals to authority, frame shifting, generalization, stigmatization, and othering, are central elements of both parties' communications. Thus, the analysis confirms the initial hypothesis that, despite linguistic and cultural differences, both parties use comparable persuasive patterns. These patterns are strongly contextualized but structurally similar. Future studies should investigate semantic prosodies and discursive networks to more precisely capture the strategic use of political language in the digital space. Following these analyses, it would be useful to examine the contexts and concordances of keywords in the context of disseminating alternative truths, a topic we would like to address in future studies.

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