

TRANSCRIPT

How politicians used to insult each other over Europe: a Rhetorical Political analysis of invective

Emma Clarence:

Welcome everyone. My name is Emma Clarence. I am a lecturer in politics and I also have the great privilege of being one of Chris's supervisors. So it's fallen to me today to chair the meeting.

Chris is going to be talking about a section of his PhD on how politicians used to insult each other. His PhD has been a very enjoyable one to supervise so far, mainly because we seem to spend an awful lot of time talking about how people insult one another in Parliament, which comes with a lot of humour, thankfully. So at this point I'm going to hand over to Chris.

Chris Smith:

Thank you very much, Emma, and thanks everybody for coming today. Really excited to be here to talk to you all. And yeah, it's my great privilege to be doing my PhD at the OU and to be supervised by Emma. She's been incredibly helpful and a lot of what you're going to hear today really has been shaped and informed by the conversations and guidance that Emma and my other supervisors have given.

So, yes, you can see hopefully the title there. So what I'm going to talk to you about today, as Emma mentioned, is kind of the latest research I've done, forming one chapter of my thesis. I'm going to talk to you obviously a little bit about what the project is, where it came from, and what I've actually been researching and I'll introduce some of my findings.

What I'm really being interested to hear from you about is what you think of my actual methods really and what I've been, how I've been reaching the conclusions I've reached. So I'm going to talk to you about political invective as a concept that is kind of the way I've been trying to analyse insults and the method of rhetorical political analysis I've used to come up with kind of both this concept of invective and what it is kind of mean by political insults and why certain things are and aren't political insults.

And finally, what I'm hoping my thesis will do is make some contribution to the wider debate out there about what I'm going to kind of refer to as discourse of doom, this idea that modern politics and modern politicians is all historically terrible, that everything is worse than in the past.

Politicians are just ruder and nastier and civility has kind of died. And there's a huge literature out there talking about the state that democratic politics is in. And I just want to make a small contribution to that through looking at a bit of continuity and change, you know, looking at things in the historical context, which is what today is going to be mainly talking about, about the debates in Parliament in the 1970s. And comparing them to the debates in Parliament over Brexit and trying to make some type of reasons, reasoned judgement about, well, are things today really as terrible as everyone thinks?

And I'm hopefully going to conclude that, well, no, actually, no, they're not. And convince you hopefully of that as well. So this to say the broader introduction to MRPSD, the PhD thesis came from, this quotation by Andrew Marr was really informative coming back in 2019 at the height of what was called the Brexit wars in Parliament.

So September 2019, I'm sure you all remember, was the period when Boris Johnson attempted to prorogue Parliament and the Supreme Court ruled that that was unconstitutional. So Parliament then had to return. And on the 25th September, there was a very heated session in Parliament in the House of Commons discussing Boris Johnson's proposed Brexit deal at the time, but also the issue of him attempting to probe Parliament. And Andrew Marr wrote this very good piece in the New Statesman where he posed this question, which I think invited some historical inquiry, because I think it's very easy, as I said, to look at politics today and think that everything is awful and it's worse than it's ever been before. But pretty much every generation thinks that. Every generation thinks that its own generation is the most debauched or the most awful. And if we go back through history, there will be some instances in the past where maybe we should be a bit more cheerful about our current situation is what I would say.

Now, I just want to talk a little bit about Brexit and 2016 and why that's so significant now before I kind of go on to my findings from the 70s, just because I think Brexit as an event, as a phenomena, really is at the heart of what a lot of people, I think, talk about when they say that modern politics is broken or political discourse is uniquely toxic. And I'm going to suggest that I can actually answer Andrew Marr's question about why does today's discourse feel so toxic? And my answer to that is about the nature of the invective that was in Parliament in this specific instance. But significantly, this also links to the phenomenon of populism.

And I think that's something that's worth defining now before I kind of get into invective and rhetoric a bit more. So populism is an imprecise term. It's got a lot of definitions, but one kind of common denominator definition of populism is the idea about seeking to create division between elite and between the people. The elite are always corrupt and nefarious or flawed in some way. The people are always virtuous. And that particular debate in Parliament that Marr wrote this article about featured a huge amount of references to betrayal of the people.

The surrender bill was a phrase Boris Johnson used a lot in reference to an amendment that had been passed by MPs, which prevented the government from leaving the European Union without a deal. And so Johnson calling it the surrender bill was a deliberate tactic to divide politicians from the people and through Brexit, through the fallout of Brexit and the various iterations of the discussions in Parliament, we saw a lot of this type of rhetoric, this type of populist appeal about dividing elites from the people.

We saw it with the Supreme Court judges being called enemies of the people on the front pages of the front page of the Daily Mail and say Brexit supporting politicians in Parliament repeatedly invoked the argument of the will of the people that those seeking to delay or frustrate Brexit or stop the government leaving without a deal and therefore slow things out. And we know that the Brexit process will arguably is still going on, as our relationship with the EU is not settled. This type of rhetoric really did appear quite significantly.

And from the research I've done into the debates in the seventies about the relationship with the then European Economic Community, this language wasn't really there. There wasn't this type of populist language of division of elites versus people. So straight away, that's kind of one takeaway from my talk. That's something I'm going to suggest. That's why if people feel

that modern rhetoric, modern political language is more toxic or divisive than the past, on that level, I'm going to argue that's the big change.

This rise of populism and this deliberate attempt from some politicians to cast their opponents, not as opponents actually, but as enemies. And this was a phrase that John Bercow, the Speaker of the House of Commons, used after this session in Parliament in September 2019, which Marr describes, where he openly besought MPs to regard each other as opponents. To be debated with and to be engaged with, not enemies. And the distinction there is that if you regard somebody as an enemy, you regard them as needing to be destroyed. You regard them as illegitimate. And for a democracy, that's very dangerous because it can lead to closing down a debate or all sorts of violent behaviours, which is undesirable, to say the least. So that's why, again, I'd suggest this is a significant area to concern ourselves with. And it's also why there's been such a huge amount, say, of literature out there pontificating on the issue of modern discourse and rhetoric being very terrible. So that's, again, just the significance of that Andrew Marr quote.

Everything I'm doing and while I think it was a very important moment reading that and what I've tried to do is not just answer that question, but try to kind of dig into this idea of why do we think today is so terrible and are we right to think that today is so terrible?

And just continuing on the Brexit theme for another moment, this next quotation here from the excellent book *Brexitland*, which is very well worth a read if you haven't read it, has been really influential to kind of my thinking about what invective is and why I found rhetorical analysis so useful. I'm going to talk about that in a moment as well. But the idea of leaver and remainer, these are just some classic, some great examples of what I mean by invective.

Those two terms have got a great significance today. I'm imagining most of you now just hearing the phrase leaver or remainer, you've got an idea of what it means. It doesn't just mean the side that somebody was on during the European Union debate. It is a bit of a shorthand for telling you all sorts of things about that person's character, their personality, their values. And since 2016 there seems to have been a bit of a rise of this type of political discourse, identity politics or culture wars, call it whatever you will.

This idea that people can be grouped together very conveniently and also dismissed very conveniently. And from a deliberative kind of democratic position that can be quite bad for democratic discourse. It means you don't have to really engage with an opponent's arguments, you just attack their identities and you dismiss them based upon their identity, perhaps, rather than their ideas or the merits of their ideas. And this is something which arguably since Brexit has been the dividing line in British politics, really, as that quotation points there, social identity, defining out groups, that's kind of how politics is coming to work now.

And in *Brexitland*, the authors make a very well-argued case that this has happened not just because of the importance of the issue of the EU, but because other forms of identity have broken down, people don't associate with political parties anywhere near as much or as strongly as they did in the past. Interestingly, obviously saying that on election day, local election day, where that might be confirmed even further if we have this kind of splintering of the electorate between five, six, seven political parties.

But what people did, at least during Brexit and afterwards identify around, were these two big identity labels of leave and remain. And leave and remain encompassed other identities within it and cut across social and class lines in ways that we haven't really seen in Britain before.

And so that really brought the issue of identity and character and values to the forefront in kind of defining politics and defining the way that people discuss politics and discuss each other. And that's very important kind of to my kind of method really around invective. So I'm going to talk to you a little bit about that first and then get into what I've found out about the seventies and how I think it compares to the more modern debates and what that tells us. So rhetorical political analysis, as I said, is the method I've used to analyse the Hansard transcripts, which have formed the main basis of all the evidence from a PhD. And I want to talk to you today about what I've found politicians saying in Parliament and Hansard is an excellent resource.

So the reason I've chosen rhetorical analysis is really because of this quotation here, I think it's very convincing, is that rhetoric isn't just a body of knowledge. It's not just knowing what people have said. Rhetoric provides a framework for analysing what people say itself. And for me, carrying out a PhD, into a very huge area of study. Political discourse is a huge area. This rhetorical approach provided a very granular kind of way in, a way of looking at the building blocks of what people say and analysing them to pick apart why they've got the meaning that they have.

And rhetorical analysis relies upon three identifying three main rhetorical devices, which Aristotle defined back in ancient Greece. And they are these three which you can hopefully see, ethos, pathos and logos. So logos up at the top is appeals or arguments based upon logic and reason. I'm not too concerned about that, as you might suspect, as I'm looking at insults and more emotive forms of rhetoric. So pathos and ethos are the two devices I'm going to really be concerned about today. And indeed, I'm in the thesis.

And so what I've been looking for when I've been looking at political speech is looking at incidences of these two devices, looking at how politics use appeals to ethos and appeals to pathos. Ethos is probably the most significant for what I'm looking at. As it says there, ethos is a speaker either using their own positive character or their opponent's negative character to persuade the audience that the speaker is worth listening to and their opponents aren't worth listening to. And the argument of those who think that modern political discourse and political practice is terrible often resides, although they might not use these rhetorical kind of phrasings, it often comes down to the point that, well, politicians today just insult each other and they just throw mud at each other. They don't discuss the big issues. They're just there of a petty point scoring.

And so ethos provides, again, a tool for picking that part in rhetorical language and seeing, well, what instances are there of politicians basing everything they've said on appeals to ethos and pathos? And then the idea of invective comes in, in the middle between the two. So invective is some blending of ethos and pathos.

A phrase that I use, or a phrase that I will use is populist pathos, just thinking about what we just spoke about, about populism and a kind of a modern phenomena of populist pathos, that's those populist appeals to emotion, those populist appeals dividing an elite from the people.

Those things are, I think, a significant change to in the past, but it's not an entirely new phenomena. Indeed, none of these things are entirely new phenomena. As I said, this rhetorical analysis dates back to Aristotle and political rhetors in ancient Greece and ancient Rome were very versed in insulting each other for political gain. So I'm very much of the view that there is very little new in human experience.

There are just changes of scale and degree. And I would suggest that that's the same modern political rhetoric. It's not as terrible as we might think, although there are some new quirks to it that are worthy of exploration. And so with that, I just want to introduce you to my definition of political invective and where it came from. So if you read journalistic works talking about political discourse or even academic works talking about political discourse and even rhetoric, they'll often use all of these types of terms interchangeably to describe what is being said and why it's problematic.

And so my first task as a researcher is I needed something to kind of pull all these things together. It started out with some type of umbrella, really, just to pull these different types of attack underneath. And then, as I say, it's developed into a bit more of a concept, which I'm trying to test. And my PhD thesis actually is becoming basically a test bed for this concept of invective. perhaps more than anything else. But here's the definition I've been working on and it works again on those lines of ethos and pathos. So it's a remark that is deliberately undermining the ethos of the political opponent by presenting it as problematic in some way. And it will be that blending of emotional appeals and attacking an opponent's identity, their character, their behaviour, their values, all of these things that make up the ethos in rhetorical terms. And a phrase I find myself using a lot in the analysis is the idea about presenting features of an opponent as both proof and product of a problematic ethos.

So political invective and political insult is a circular argument. It's not, again, it's not logical. It's not deliberative and reasoned. It is emotional. So it can be that kind of circular argument that the and the remain and leave labels are the really good example of this. If you're saying somebody is a remainer, as an insult for the sake of argument, what you're saying is their ethos is problematic and flawed. There's something wrong with their personality, something wrong with them. And that's why they are a remainer. So they are the proof that there's a problem with them is because they support staying in the EU, because that's a bad thing to do. Only a flawed person would support being in the EU. But equally, that person gets to that conclusion of supporting the EU because there's something wrong with them. As I say, this type of circular argument about the nature of opponents' ethos and invective is the way that politicians seek to undermine it for political gain. And say throughout my thesis, I've worked on the assumption that whenever politicians speak publicly, they do so to advantage themselves and disadvantage their opponents and political invective is a, in that sense, a rhetorical strategy to do that. And not necessarily an illegitimate one.

It is a political tool. It's a rhetorical tool to persuade the audience, like all others, if we find that we're in a rhetorical culture or a society in which the only way to appeal to our supporters or to appeal to people is through insult. Then we are obviously in a problematic state of affairs. But I'd argue we're not quite there yet, as politicians make arguments in all sorts of ways, not just insulting ones. But I suppose it's important just to talk about again, why politicians use invective and the outcomes of it. And again, why this is kind of worthy of study is the idea that, well, first of all, you discredit the opponent.

You don't have to engage with the arguments. You don't have to engage with the merits of joining the European Union or not. You instead seek to seek to betray all of those who support it or don't support it as somehow problematic and not worthy of trusting or engaging.

So that can be a problem, as I say, if it can. If it perpetuates over time, because it can lead to this position of denying opponents political legitimacy. So it can other people in the kind of the phraseology, you seek to other your opponent from respectable society and delegitimise them. And that then obviously can, in the extremes, become problematic, because again, we're into that populist territory. You're denouncing people. You're seeking to ostracise them.

You're not engaging again with reason, debate of ideas, and you're not regarding people as political opponents. You can come to regard them as enemies. And again, I suppose the important thing is that words have consequences, and that's why this is worthy of study and why rhetoric is an important thing to study, because words do have consequences and how politicians speak is arguably the largest contribution they make to society.

And so they should be careful with how they do it. And equally, we should make efforts to understand what it is they're doing and why they're doing it. But again, just want to stress this. This isn't new. This is something that Aristotle spoke about himself. That quotation at the bottom says it's monstrous to trust the man's statements when you can't trust the man himself. And I think that goes to the root of what political invective is all about. It's about undermining political positions or political ideas by undermining the people that are seeking to champion them. And so my thesis is trying to work out, well, just how much do politicians do that? And do they do it in any kind of significantly different form to how people in the past did it?

And so that then brings us on to kind of the debates about the difference between them and now, the continuity and change. So for my PhD, I've looked at Prime Minister's Question Time as well as a constant going through Parliament. And that these debates obviously stood out as quite straightforward case studies, as I've kind of already laid out. There's a wide perception that Brexit did a lot of damage to Britain's politics. Whether that's right or wrong is another matter, but it's clear that perception that it was a significant phenomenon. And after Brexit, things have changed. Back in the seventies, we had debate over entering the European community. So it seemed like a straightforward heads-up case study comparison.

So in the Brexit debates of 2017, 2019, it's kind of already covered populism is regarded as a significant emergent force. The Brexit debate, as we've already said, has been regarded as historically toxic character. Now, I'd argue that that's not entirely the case, because there are instances of populist rhetoric in the past. It's something that has always been with us, although it's a change of scale and degree of how important that rhetoric has become in modern times. And if we look back to the EEC debates in the 70s, which I'm going to show you some examples of in a few moments, in the popular memory, and definitely during the Brexit debates themselves, the EEC debates were presented as a kind of dull, boring, technocratic debate over entering a trading arrangement. And that was it. It was often said by anti-Brexiters that in the seventies, people voted to join a trading bloc.

They didn't vote to join this political union. I'm going to suggest that that's flatly not true. If you look at the Hansard Record, it's there. Ted Heath, the Prime Minister, opens the debates by saying this is about the European ideal. This is about something that will one day become a federal Europe. This is about one day joining a single currency.

This is about a huge project that Britain can be a leader for, and regardless of what we think are the rights or wrongs or that, Heath and other politicians at the time as well, not just conservatives, were passionate Europeans, and they made very passionate speeches about why we should join the European Union. There was a lot of pathos in those debates. They weren't just dull debates about trade figures, although that was significant.

And then therefore, there is a kind of, I think, a bit of a reassessment to be made about this idea, just again, about political debate now is uniquely more personalised than in the past. It isn't necessarily that straightforward. So, moving on then to what we're all here for, the actual political insults. So what I've done, I've divided them up into four sections, really, just the four most common broadly recipients of insult. And number one is Harold Wilson. Harold Wilson

was the leader of the opposition during the 1971-1972 period of the great debate over the EEC that I'm looking at. Harold Wilson had been the Prime Minister in the 1960s and he had pursued entry into the EEC himself whilst Prime Minister. But then when he was relegated to the opposition benches, he suddenly reversed that position and was opposed to entry to the EEC.

Now, so therefore, the vast majority of the invective that I've noted down from this seventies debate is aimed at Harold Wilson basically calling him a liar, calling him dishonest for reversing his position somehow, which I accept is probably hardly a revelatory observation that politicians call other politicians liars. But I think it is quite significant to consider that over an issue as large as the EEC, the issue of the EEC actually didn't really appear that much itself. It was all it was about Wilson's ethos and Wilson just being a liar and being untrustworthy.

For Wilson's part, he always maintained he opposed what he called the Tory terms of entry. He was a pragmatist. He said he wasn't either for or against the EEC. He was for the best deal for Britain. But that argument didn't really convince many people at the time who were convinced that Wilson was just an unprincipled liar. And that therefore then extended to the effective against him, which tried to other him from his own MPs, but also all kind of respectable society.

The accusation being, you know, Wilson, as the leader of the Labour Party, was actually making other honourable MPs be liars as well by doing things that they wouldn't normally do. In this case, vote against the government's deal to enter the EEC. And so just show you an example here. One of the very first ones, this is one of the very first remarks actually made in the debates on the EC, Reginald Maudling, prominent Conservative front bencher, saying about Wilson that he's changed his mind. We all change our minds, but it's a bit curious that you've changed your mind based on where you sit in the House of Commons.

Now, just want to explain a little bit about this remark, about why I consider it invective, because it does seem like very tame language and I'll agree, but that we've got to remember that in the context of the House of Commons, you can't call an opponent a liar. You've got to be quite careful with your language around dishonesty and lying in the House of Commons or else you're regarded as out of order by the speaker and told to retract it, which is one of the most interesting things I've found. I've been particularly sensitive, therefore, to anything that is basically impugning the honesty of an opponent, because MPs know the rules. They know that if they overstep the mark, that we call it out of bounds. So MPs have to deploy a certain level of creativity, shall we say, in calling other people liars, which I think Maudling does here quite effectively, basically impugning Wilson's honesty. Or this second remark is a bit more colourful from Jill Knight, conservative backbench MP referring to Wilson as a ringmaster, referring to Labour MPs as dogs, performing acrobatics with their tongues, so some type of deceptive language going on from them. The three line whip reference at the bottom.

If the three-line whip does not get them, the threat to remove their dog licenses, again, perhaps a bit dehumanising, referring to them as dogs, that the threat to remove their dog licences will. So the three line whip in Parliament, if it's applied by a political party, if you don't go along with it, you can be kicked out of your party. And Wilson did use a three-line whip. At times to ensure party loyalty during the debates on and the argument is that this was fundamentally an unprincipled thing to do because these Labour MPs, this Labour leader that were now opposing the EEC entry under Heath had opposed it themselves a few short years earlier.

So again, those are to lead off with two rather creative, I would say, ways in which politicians in the seventies called Harold Wilson at least a liar. And as I say, I know hardly a huge revelatory discovery that MPs called other people liars.

But I think the significance of that is that the issue of the EEC itself isn't really mentioned in those remarks and is actually secondary to the idea that Wilson was just a liar and they were insulting Wilson as a liar. And Wilson was insulted, was called a liar pretty much his entire career. His famous quote of a week is a long time in politics often held up as proof that he was unprincipled and shifty. A little bit unfairly, I would argue, but that is there. So for me, studying invective, that's important just because this shows a clear distinction really with how the EEC was discussed. It was almost discussed as it was just another issue and it was just business as normal, attacking the honesty of Harold Wilson, whereas Brexit definitely was not just discussed as other issues were discussed.

But staying in the seventies, the second significant target of the invective, almost receiving as many insults as Harold Wilson was Ted Heath, the Prime Minister himself. So again, that's perhaps not unsurprising. He's the Prime Minister. He's going to be on the receiving end of most insults. And that is pretty much similar to today. And it should be said that, yeah, MPs are quite discerning in their insults. They don't just use them indiscriminately. They are often used for the most significant people or issues of the day. And so the Prime Minister is always going to always does receive more invective, more insult and abuse than anyone else.

And again, interestingly, Heath, was insulted over his honesty. It wasn't the issue of the EEC necessarily, although it was used to attack Heath because Heath was obviously a passionate supporter of entering Europe. But the issue for Heath was he'd lied. The Conservatives had campaigned in 1970 on a manifesto that said that they would seek to negotiate terms of entry. And Heath had also given a speech in which he said that we seek a mandate to negotiate, no more, no less. And then after having concluded the negotiation and achieved terms that the government felt were acceptable, they sought to enter the EEC through passing legislation in Parliament. And Heath received regular attack for that being deceptive and dishonest. He had not said he was going to do that. And Michael Foot is the example I'm going to give here of taking Heath to task at that where he calls it a lie. No, he doesn't call Heath a liar. He calls the behaviour a lie.

This is a lie, poisoning Parliament, poisoning our democratic traditions. The government's leading legal authorities are not assisting the House, but they're deceiving it. So again, this sensitivity to words that can mean liar or being deceptive. Just going to include one other example, which for Heath, which stands out and I've included here just because it's quite exceptional.

And it's exceptional for how personal it is, where you can hopefully see there in the blue box. If he's deceived every woman in the way he's deceived housewives, it's no wonder he's a male virgin. Now, Ted Heath was a bachelor, which was very unusual to be a leading Conservative politician in the seventies and not be married. That's led to a lot of speculation around his personal life, shall we say. But that kind of appeal to emotion there, that pathos by saying that one, he's not just deceived women, but also his support for the EEC is perhaps putting people off sleeping with him is a particularly personalised type of insult, which actually even during the Brexit debates, we don't see anything of. So just perhaps one small piece of evidence for how MPs in the seventies could be particularly vicious if they wanted to be.

And the reference to the housewives is important because a large part of the debate around the EEC was actually around the effect it would have on food prices. And of course, being the

1970s, it was the housewife who would do the food shopping and so would be affected. And so it's a very overly emotional way of saying that, well, Ted Heath has lied to the housewife about the price of her shopping.

But I'm going to throw in a little vibe at his perceived, perceived bachelorhood just for good measure. So moving on, there's two more quick groups of insults. I'm going to wrap-up because I know time's pushing on. But similar to the Brexit debate of leave and remain in the seventies, you could divide the two camps again between anti and pro marketers, which are virtually the same. So those were pro market in favour of the EEC. Now, it was often suggested that their support for the EEC was the proof and the product of a poor ethos. So they were un-British or unpatriotic in some way. And there are some echoes with that of the kind of populist pathos of elites versus the people from Brexit, which is again why I'd say there is a fair level of continuity actually, and Brexit isn't uniquely awful.

And so this very long result here, or sorry, long incident here, from Alastair Morgan, a very nice historical reference referring to the British, the post-English Civil War period and the Parliament that replaced its king violently. But the phrase at the end about, he quotes the speaker in the past, the speaker had stood up for the rights of Parliament against the king.

And he refers, and here he's referring rather dismissively of the current Parliament. He's in by saying that once we've passed this bill, once we've entered the EEC, this Parliament will have neither tongues to speak, save directed by their masters on the other side of the channel, to whom they've surrendered the interests of the British people. So again, that use of surrender, that reference to the EEC as some foreign threat is not dissimilar to what we see in the Brexit period, although I say this example here is quite exceptional for the seventies because it was very rare. Whereas in the Brexit debates, these types of comments were far more common. And then if we quickly skip ahead, conscious of time. And the fourth target, of course, are the anti-marketers. So people that were opposed to entry. And as we've already seen, most of the anti-marketers were Labour MPs. So they were taken to task for, again, like Wilson being dishonest. And quite a nice quote here from Jeremy Thorpe, the leader of the Liberal Party, very colourful politician, saying they've basically done a deal with the devil.

They haven't got any principles. They'll do anything just to stop the government's bill. And he refers to that. The member for Stepney, who he refers to, Peter Shaw, was a left-wing Eurosceptic because he would have been called at the time, who spoke in quite uncompromising terms about the EEC. Peter Shaw actually referred to the EEC as a cancer and pro-Europeans like Thorpe did take issue with that and they've dismissed those types of comments as just performative politics, saying that actually the real issue here is you people can't be trusted and all you want to do is use it to bring down the government. It's not about the EEC at all, ironically.

And skip ahead of this one because we're very short on time. So the conclusions overall, and hopefully kind of tried to make clear, is that this political invective, this idea about blending pathos and ethos to attack opponents has always been with us in some degree. It's just the nature of the scale and degree what's changed. And that the changes reflect the issues and the personalities of the day.

Insults aren't just chucked out randomly by MPs, they're used for a purpose. And so as the issues and the personalities change, the insults will change as well. And as we've kind of covered the seventies, most of the inventors were directed at Harold Wilson and Ted Heath, because they were the leading characters. Now that is different to the modern day in a way, and this kind of one final argument I want to try and make is that the Brexit debate was

characterised by this populist pathos, as I've talked about, directed at group identities over individuals. So in the seventies, there were remarks saying that EEC is evil, and if you support it, you're evil as well, basically. But in Brexit, it was far more common to find that again, those leave and remain labels used as pejoratives, framing an opponent's ethos as entirely problematic, as an entirely flawed because of their support for either leaving or remaining in the European Union. It was the proof and the product that the opponent is a problem.

What they thought of the EU. And as I say again, the EEC debates were passionate. It's not a case that back in the past, everyone was totally dispassionate and stayed. They were passionate, but they spoke about things in a different way. Whereas one final parallel to be drawn, I think is significant, but is a bit of a side note, is the debate around sovereignty. The debate in the seventies debated sovereignty in a very complex way, I would argue. And there were debates around pooled sovereignty and different understandings of sovereignty. And that's why we didn't have the arguments in the seventies about you were either for or against this thing. And if you're for and against the EEC, you are an enemy. Whereas the debates around sovereignty in the Brexit period were far more simplistic and far more zero sums.

And that is important because that's why we had so much of the kind of name calling around surrender and traitor and betrayal, because you've got a zero-sum debate and that's all there is. There are either enemies or friends. And ironically, my final thought on this is that the Brexit debate, I'll say, was actually more personalised in the ethos and personality was more prominent.

Despite the fact that invective was being levelled at groups such as remain and leave, because we now seem to be in a bit of an era of identity politics where big group identities are highly significant and individuals do take a lot of their identity from those collective groups. And that is leading to a large number of the insults that we do see in here today, I would argue. So thank you very much for listening.

Emma Clarence:

Thanks very much Chris.