

# ANNALES

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*Annali di Studi istriani e mediterranei*  
*Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies*  
*Series Historia et Sociologia, 36, 2026, 2*





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## CONFLICT, ANTAGONISTIC TONE, AND DELIBERATIVE QUALITY IN ONLINE MEMORY DEBATES: EUROPE DAY AND THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL ON TWITTER/X

Marjan HORVAT

Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment, Čentur 1f, 6273 Marezige, Slovenia  
e-mail: marjan.horvat@irris.eu

Jure KORAŽIJA

Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment, Čentur 1f, 6273 Marezige, Slovenia  
e-mail: jure.korazija@irris.eu

### ABSTRACT

*This article compares how Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall are discussed on Twitter/X in Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France. We treat these public events as commemorative cues that prompt users to interpret contemporary political conflicts through salient European historical references. Using an LLM-assisted three-step design, we identify whether posts are conflictual, whether conflict takes an antagonistic or non-antagonistic tone, and whether it contains DQI-style deliberative signals such as justification, reciprocity, constructiveness, and respect. Topic modelling identifies thematic hotspots where conflict, antagonistic tone, and lower deliberative quality concentrate. The findings show that antagonistic tone generally lowers deliberative quality, but does not automatically eliminate reason-giving or constructiveness.*

**Keywords:** cultural memory, commemorations, antagonism, deliberative quality, DQI, Twitter/X, large language models (LLMs), cross-country analysis

## CONFLITTO, TONO ANTAGONISTICO E QUALITÀ DELIBERATIVA NEI DIBATTITI ONLINE SULLA MEMORIA: LA GIORNATA DELL'EUROPA E LA CADUTA DEL MURO DI BERLINO SU TWITTER/X

### SINTESI

*L'articolo mette a confronto il modo in cui la Giornata dell'Europa e la caduta del Muro di Berlino vengono discusse su Twitter/X in Slovenia, Italia, Germania e Francia. Consideriamo questi eventi pubblici come spunti commemorativi che inducono gli utenti a interpretare i conflitti politici contemporanei attraverso riferimenti storici europei salienti. Utilizzando un approccio in tre fasi assistito da modelli di linguaggio di grandi dimensioni (LLM), identifichiamo se i post sono conflittuali, se il conflitto assume un tono antagonistico o non antagonistico e se contengono segnali deliberativi in stile DQI quali giustificazione, reciprocità, costruttività e rispetto. La modellizzazione degli argomenti identifica i punti caldi tematici in cui si concentrano conflitto, tono antagonistico e minore qualità deliberativa. I risultati mostrano che il tono antagonistico generalmente riduce la qualità deliberativa, ma non elimina automaticamente la motivazione o la costruttività.*

**Parole chiave:** memoria culturale, commemorazioni, antagonismo, qualità deliberativa, DQI, Twitter/X, modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni, analisi comparativa tra paesi

## INTRODUCTION

Commemorations are not merely symbolic reminders of the past.<sup>1</sup> They are recurring public occasions in which societies renegotiate legitimacy, identity, and political authority through historically grounded narratives (Meyer, 2008). Critical memory studies have long shown that commemorations are contested arenas in which interpretations of the past, collective identities, legitimacy claims, and political antagonisms are articulated and disputed (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995; Winter, 2008; Kuljić, 2012; Olick, 2007; Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Detiček & Pušnik, 2025). However, there are few studies which operationalise how different memory-regime repertoires relate to observable discursive modes across digital public spheres, and what these transformations of memory debate mean for democratic practice.

To advance this line of investigation, we apply a theory-driven framework developed elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), which shifts attention from memory regimes to discursive modes of engagement. The framework distinguishes between the substantive content of memory — what is remembered and to what normative end — and the communicative mode through which memory is enacted: antagonistically, agonistically, or in a more deliberation-compatible way. In the present article, this framework is operationalised through a three-step empirical design that distinguishes conflict presence, antagonistic tone, and deliberative signals.

We compare Europe Day (May 9) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9) across four countries: Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France. The selected anniversaries provide a productive contrast for examining how commemorations channel disagreement. Europe Day is more closely tied to institutional and legitimacy-oriented repertoires of European integration (Larat, 2005; Blokker, 2021; de Vries, 2022). By contrast, the fall of the Berlin Wall has greater mnemonic portability: its anniversaries function as iconic-historic commemorative events with transnational symbolic value and multi-layered narratives of collective memory and identity. As a result, the Berlin Wall is more easily mobilised as a historical reference in debates about post-communist transformation, East–West asymmetries, social inequality, freedom,

borders, the Cold War, and contemporary geopolitical divisions (Heller & Schmidt, 2024; Viol et al., 2024; Forrester et al., 2004; Krastev & Holmes, 2019).

The four countries were selected because they represent distinct positions within European memory politics and different relationships to the two commemorations. Germany is the primary mnemonic site of the Berlin Wall and reunification and is therefore expected to show more historically anchored forms of contestation around November 9 (Deodhar, 2021; Richardson-Little et al., 2022; Zehring & Domahidi, 2022). France represents a core Western European integration frame, where both Europe Day and the Berlin Wall can be interpreted through broader narratives of European unity, freedom, and liberal-democratic reconstruction (Chopin & Lequesne, 2010; Mussou, 2022; Boursier et al., 2021). Italy combines European integration with strong domestic anti-communist and post-fascist memory conflicts, including the institutionalisation of November 9 as *Giorno della libertà*, which makes the Berlin Wall commemoration more readily available for ideological contestation (Focardi, 2016; Bresciani, 2021; Cabrero & Sierp, 2025). Slovenia represents a post-socialist and post-Yugoslav case in which May 9 is entangled with memories of liberation, while November 9 has weaker institutional anchoring (Pušnik, 2019; Luthar & Uhl, 2019). The comparison among countries also reflects broader European memory divides. Western European democratic cultures have often been interpreted through the memory of 1945, Nazism, and liberal-democratic reconstruction, whereas Central and Eastern European memory cultures are more strongly shaped by communism, 1989, sovereignty, and post-socialist transformation (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Verovšek, 2021; Schmidtke, 2023; Zupančič et al., 2021; Pistan, 2020).

The analytical challenge is therefore not simply to show that memory debates are conflictual, but to distinguish how memory conflict is discursively organised. The main gap addressed by this article is that comparative studies of online memory debates rarely examine how conflict and deliberative quality relate to one another. To address this gap, we analyse commemorative discourse through a three-step measurement design that operationalises the distinction between memory regimes and discursive modes

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developed in the theoretical article (Horvat, 2026). Recent advances in large language models make it possible to implement this discursive-mode perspective as a scalable measurement strategy on large social media corpora. In our case, Large language model (LLM) assisted annotation facilitates context-sensitive coding of conflict, antagonistic tone via incivility, and Discourse quality index (DQI) style deliberative indicators across multiple languages and countries, making cross-national comparisons of commemorative debate feasible at scale.

First, we measure whether posts are conflictual (A: Conflict). Second, within conflict, we distinguish conflict expressed with an antagonistic tone from non-antagonistic disagreement by using an incivility proxy (B: Incivility). Third, distinguishing antagonistic from non-antagonistic tone, we evaluate deliberative quality using DQI-style indicators, capturing features such as respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (C: Discourse Quality). This stepwise structure prevents us from conflating low-conflict ceremonial talk with “high-quality” discourse: deliberative quality is assessed where disagreement is actually present. Building on this logic, we also track the prevalence of deliberation-compatible conflict, that is, conflictual posts that reach high deliberative quality, regardless of whether they are expressed in an antagonistic or non-antagonistic tone.

The article’s central claim is that the democratic significance of online memory conflict lies not in the presence of conflict itself, but in the way conflict is articulated. By distinguishing conflict activation, antagonistic tone, and deliberative signals, we show that commemorations differ not only in how much conflict they generate, but in how conflict is channelled across topics, how often it takes an antagonistic tone, and whether it remains compatible with justification, constructiveness, reciprocity, and respect.

Empirically, this framework enables direct cross-country comparisons of whether commemorations activate contestation and of how national contexts condition the tone and deliberative quality of conflict. We complement these comparisons with topic modelling as a diagnostic tool to map the thematic space activated by each commemoration and to locate topic-specific hotspots where antagonistic conflict and low deliberative quality concentrate. Against this background, we set four research questions:

**RQ1:** How do Europe Day (May 9) and the Berlin Wall commemoration (November 9) differ in the prevalence of conflict across Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France?

**RQ2:** Conditional on conflict, how do countries differ in (a) the mode of conflict—antagonistic tone (incivility proxy) versus non-antagonistic disagreement—and (b) deliberative quality?

**RQ3:** How does deliberative quality within conflict differ between non-antagonistic and antagonistic discourse modes across topics within each commemoration?

**RQ4:** Which topics show pockets of comparable or even higher deliberative quality under antagonistic conflict, and what characterises these cases?

The article proceeds as follows. We first situate the empirical analysis within a theory-driven framework of memory regimes and discursive modes, deriving expectations about (A) conflict activation, (B) antagonistic tone within conflict, and (C) deliberation-compatible conflict. We also explain how these relationships are conditioned by cross-national differences in memory regimes and by the different mnemonic portability of Europe Day and the Berlin Wall commemoration. We then describe the datasets and the LLM-assisted coding design, including the three-step procedure that identifies conflict, distinguishes antagonistic from non-antagonistic tone as an incivility proxy, and assesses deliberative quality using DQI-inspired indicators and a composite quality score. The results section presents cross-event and cross-country comparisons for each step of the design and then moves to topic-level analyses that identify hotspots of conflict and examine deliberative profiles within selected clusters. We conclude by summarising the main empirical patterns, discussing their implications for the democratic quality of online memory conflict, and outlining limitations and directions for future research.

## RELATED WORK

This study connects three research strands that are often treated separately: (1) commemorations and memory politics as sites where societies negotiate legitimacy and collective identity; (2) scholarship on conflict, including incivility and antagonistic styles; and (3) work on deliberative quality and discourse-quality indicators in digital publics. We build on critical memory studies, where remembrance and commemoration are already understood as contested fields of interpretation, legitimacy, and identity formation. Scholarship has mapped memory regimes and their normative repertoires, including nation-centred, human-rights-based, cosmopolitan and transnational forms (Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Assmann, 2014; Olick et al., 2023), and has also examined agonistic forms of memory contestation (Bull & Hansen, 2016; Maddison, 2016; Nienass, 2023). The contribution of this article is not to show that commemoration is conflictual as such, but to operationalise how online memory conflict is articulated through conflict activation, antagonism and deliberative signals.

Existing research on political communication and digital memory has also shown that social media intensifies mnemonic participation (van Dijck, 2007; Rutten et al., 2013; Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023) and can amplify polarisation through platform affordances (Pariser, 2011; Törnberg, 2018). At the same time, memory studies have already established that commemorative discourse is not neutral or merely ceremonial, but often structured by competing interpretations, identity claims, and struggles over legitimacy (Meyer, 2008; Damčević, 2025). Empirical studies often focus on what people talk about rather than on what characterises disagreement in terms of discourse quality. The analytical gap addressed here is therefore the limited operationalisation of how memory-regime repertoires become observable as different discursive modes in digital public spheres.

Bringing these literatures together, we analyse commemorations as commemorative cues that shape not only what becomes salient in public debate, but also how contestation unfolds on social media. In particular, comparative work on collective memories rarely systematically examines (i) whether conflict is present at all, (ii) whether it is enacted in an antagonistic tone, and (iii) whether conflictual posts nonetheless display markers of deliberative engagement, such as justification, reciprocity, constructiveness, and respectful interaction.

### Commemorative cues in public discourse

We treat public events as commemorative cues because they provide structured occasions in which societies publicly (re)negotiate legitimacy, identity, and authority through references to the past. In Erik Meyer's (2008) terms, commemorative moments belong to the realm of *Geschichtspolitik* ("politics of history"): symbolic struggles that are less about settling factual disputes than about establishing the normative coordinates that link past, present, and future. In this symbolic arena, cultural memory functions as a reference code, a map of values and expectations that actors draw on to justify positions, assign responsibility, and articulate visions of the community. As commemorative cues, commemorations do more than "activate memory". They make specific interpretive templates, historical analogies, position-taking opportunities, and discursive modes more available in online debate.

As we argued elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), commemorations are empirically consequential for public discourse: each commemorative occasion can reactivate basic schemas of value-orientation and legitimising narratives that can be reused in current debates on domestic or geopolitical conflicts. Commemorations supply readily available interpretive templates - condensed storylines, moral binaries or pluralising frames, and authority cues about who and how we speak for "democracy," "solidarity", "victims",

"freedom" or geopolitical tensions. Precisely because these templates are embedded in nation-specific political culture, they tend to generate contestation over meaning, responsibility, and entitlement to interpret the past. Importantly, treating commemorations as commemorative cues does not imply that commemorative discourse is uniformly polarising or uniformly deliberative. Rather, the same commemorative cue may lead to markedly different interactional outcomes and levels of contestation, depending on national memory regimes, the contemporary political context, platform dynamics, and the topics that become salient in a given moment.

### National memory regimes and expected conflict styles

We formulate expectations in terms of our three-step measurement design: (A) conflict activation, (B) antagonistic tone within conflict, and (C) post-level deliberative signals within conflict. We summarise deliberative quality as deliberation-compatible conflict (HQ), defined as conflictual posts with a quality score  $\geq 2$ . We then compare HQ separately within non-antagonistic conflict (HQ<sub>non</sub>) and antagonistic conflict (HQ<sub>ant</sub>). Additionally, drawing from the background historical analysis of Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall commemoration (cf. Horvat et al., 2025), we set the following expectations:

**E1 (A: Conflict activation, cross-country):** Across all four countries, we expect higher conflict activation on **November 9** than on **May 9**. The rationale is that 1989 has been widely institutionalised as a symbolic rupture and a reusable interpretive template for contemporary conflicts, whereas Europe Day discourse is expected to be more ceremonial.

**E2 (B: Antagonistic tone within conflict, cross-country):** Within conflict, we expect the share of antagonistic tone (incivility proxy) to be higher on **November 9** than on **May 9** in most countries, reflecting the greater potential of the Berlin Wall commemoration to connect to present-day contestation.

**E3 (Country-conditioned patterns across A–C):** While E1–E2 capture cross-event differences, we expect national memory regimes to condition the level of activation (A), conflict tone within conflict (B), and the share of deliberation-compatible conflict (C).

**Germany (B, C).** Within conflict, we expect lower antagonistic tone and comparatively higher shares of high-quality conflict (HQ) than in the other countries, consistent with contestation anchored in competing memory claims rather than personal denigration.

**Italy (B, C).** Within conflict, we expect higher antagonistic tone and lower HQ shares on **November 9** (relative to **May 9**), reflecting the politicised mobilisation of the memory of the fall of the Berlin Wall into domestic ideological cleavages in a context shaped by the institutionalisation of **November 9** as *Giorno della libertà* (Focardi, 2016).

**Slovenia (B, C).** Given the absence of an official November 9 commemorative anchor and the stronger local salience of May 9 through liberation-memory frames, we expect weaker event-specific anchoring of discourse on November 9. Because the Slovenian subsample of X is relatively small, we treat this expectation descriptively.

**France (B, C).** We expect high conflict activation on November 9, consistent with the Berlin Wall as a transnationalised commemorative reference point in a European narrative of freedom and unity, but also topic-specific contestation around post-communist memory politics and broader debates about EU contradictions (Chopin & Lequesne, 2010).

#### E4 (C: Cross-cutting expectation)

We do not expect conflict to imply low-quality discourse automatically. Instead, the prevalence of antagonistic versus non-antagonistic tone and the share of conflict that remains compatible with deliberative engagement should vary by commemorative context and by topic, even when conflict takes an antagonistic tone. This aligns with our broader claim that the democratic significance of memory conflict depends not only on whether conflict is present, but on how it is articulated.

#### From commemorative cues to measurement: a three-step operationalisation

The concept of commemorative cues is used here in an operational sense. It translates the theory-driven framework of memory regimes and discursive modes developed elsewhere (Horvat, 2026) into a measurable design for online discourse analysis. In that framework, the key analytical distinction is between what mnemonic repertoires invoke and how they are discursively enacted in public debate. The present article operationalises this distinction by examining whether commemorative cues generate conflict, whether conflict is expressed antagonistically, and whether it retains deliberative signals.

The Methodology (cf. below) therefore translates the framework into a conditional three-step operationalisation: (A) whether posts contain conflict at all (Conflict), (B) within conflict, whether disagreement takes an antagonistic tone (Incivility proxy), and (C) within conflict, whether posts retain deliberative signals (DQI-style indicators and a summary score). Methodologically, this

approach draws on established deliberative-democracy indicators (Steenbergen et al., 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2009; Fournier-Tombs & MacKenzie, 2021; Behrendt et al., 2024), recent work on modelling online conflict dimensions (Canute et al., 2023), and CLAPTON-based measurement of online political talk (Jaidka, 2022a; Jaidka, 2022b). We adapt these indicators to the specificities of commemorative discourse on X and to the A/B/C structure.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data and corpora

Our empirical material consists of 101,740 unique Twitter/X texts. After removing duplicate texts during data cleaning (e.g., repeated captures of identical posts across collection steps), the final corpus used for event assignment comprises  $N = 98,966$  posts. Importantly, the corpus does not provide full conversation threads (i.e., it does not systematically reconstruct reply chains or complete discussions). We therefore treat the unit of analysis as the individual post and measure post-level deliberative signals that indicate whether conflictual posts remain compatible with deliberative norms.

Because the corpus is multilingual (German, French, Italian, and Slovenian), we machine-translated all posts into English prior to annotation to ensure a common language input for both human coding and LLM-assisted coding. We used madlad-400-7b-mt to translate the corpus into English.<sup>2</sup> The classification results reported in this article, except for topic modelling (cf. below), are based on measurements performed on translated texts, while original-country metadata remain unchanged.

#### Step 1: Assigning tweets to commemorations

Because the broader collection includes multiple commemorative cues (4), we first linked tweets to specific commemorations. We retrospectively used a combination of keyword-based identification,<sup>3</sup> link-based identification, and propagation through retweet/quote networks, we were able to assign ~90% of all texts to one of the two main commemorations analysed in this article: Europe Day (May 9) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9).<sup>4</sup> These are the final event assignment results: Berlin Wall: 77,322; Europe Day: 10,130;

<sup>2</sup> <https://huggingface.co/google/madlad400-7b-mt>

<sup>3</sup> The following keywords were used to collect the dataset on 4 commemorations: **Slovenian query:** „(,Dan Evrope' OR ,mir in enotnost v Evropi' OR Schuman OR ,Schumanova deklaracija' OR ,padec Berlinskega zidu' OR ,Berlin Wall' OR ,Berlinski zid' OR ,Dan upora proti okupatorju' OR ,Dan upora' OR ,dan državnosti' OR samostojnost)“; **French query:** „(,Journée de l'Europe' OR ,Déclaration Schuman' OR Europe Day OR europe Day OR ,mur de Berlin' OR ,Rideau de fer)“; **German query:** „(Europatag OR ,Schuman-Erklärung' OR ,Schuman Erklärung' OR Europe Day OR europe Day OR ,Berliner Mauer' OR Mauerfall OR ,Eiserner Vorhang)“; **Italian query:** „(,Giornata dell'Europa' OR ,Dichiarazione Schuman' OR ,Muro di Berlino' OR ,Cortina di ferro)“.

<sup>4</sup> Event assignment proceeded in three stages: Keyword matching (~80%): We identified tweets referencing the commemorations via multilingual keyword queries tailored to each country/language. Link-based identification (~5%): We assigned tweets to an event when they contained links strongly indicative of a given commemoration (e.g., URLs to event-related articles, institutional pages, or commemorative media content). Network propagation via retweet/quote IDs (~5%): We clustered tweets by shared quote\_id and retweet\_id, and assigned tweets within a cluster to the event label of a “parent” tweet that had already been identified via keywords.

Both commemorations (ambiguous): 28; Unclassified: 11,486. The unclassified tweets are cases where we could not reliably identify a “parent” post containing event-specific keywords, and where links/metadata were insufficient to infer the commemoration.

### Step 2: Topic modelling corpus

Topic modelling was run on the full dataset spanning all four commemorative cues (Europe Day, Berlin Wall, Statehood Day, Day of Resistance). Prior to modelling, we pre-processed tweets by removing URLs, line breaks, and reply markers (e.g., “@username”). After preprocessing, the corpus contains 97,994 non-empty tweets.

### Step 3: Merging Event Assignment and Topic Labels

For the analysis, we integrate the outputs of Step 1 (event assignment) and Step 2 (topic labelling). Specifically, we restrict the main corpus to posts assigned to either Europe Day or the fall of the Berlin Wall (Step 1), and we use the topic model as a diagnostic layer to identify and compare thematic clusters within these two commemorative contexts (Step 2). For the analyses, we additionally exclude non-informative or analytically problematic clusters—most importantly the HDBSCAN outliers and the outlier/spam bucket. For the analyses the effective dataset differs because we draw directly on the topic-modelling output and exclude clusters associated with the two non-focal commemorations contained in the full corpus (e.g., the Slovenia-specific commemorations). The final distribution of X posts is shown in Table 1. The full annotated dataset is available on Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20289789).

### Measures: three-step coding design

All posts were coded using a multi-label scheme in which each indicator is evaluated independently as a binary variable. Our measurement strategy follows the three-step (A/B/C) logic of commemorative cues as operational entry points into online memory conflict and aligns directly with RQ1–RQ4.

**A. Conflict activation.** We first code whether a post contains disagreement, critique, blame, or opposition that constitutes conflict (Conflict=1), versus ceremonial/neutral or informational content (Conflict=0). This indicator captures whether a commemoration activates contestation at all.

**B. Mode of conflict: antagonistic tone vs. non-antagonistic tone.** Among posts with Conflict (1), we measure whether disagreement is expressed with incivility (antagonistic tone) or without it (non-antagonistic tone). Importantly, this measure captures not only direct insults or threats but also inflammatory rhetorical style (including exaggeration/hyperbole), and should therefore be interpreted as a broader proxy for antagonistic framing rather than a narrow measure of abuse-based incivility.

**C. Deliberative quality within conflict.** We evaluate the deliberative profile of disagreement by distinguishing non-antagonistic (Incivility = 0) conflict from antagonistic conflict (Incivility = 1), and then assessing deliberative signals within each of these conflict modes. For this, we compute a discourse quality score as the additive sum of the DQI-style indicators: Reciprocity, Constructiveness, Justification–Reason, Justification–Experience, and Positive/Respectful tone. This yields a quality scale that we group into three ordered categories: Low quality (0–1 indicators present), Medium quality (2–3), and High quality (4–5). This approach allows us to compare whether antagonistic and non-antagonistic conflict differ systematically in the extent to which they exhibit deliberative moves.

We used GPT-5.2 via the API for LLM-assisted annotation. We set the temperature to 0. This ensured deterministic outputs, i.e., the same input produces the same label decisions, which in turn makes the annotation procedure replicable. We began with prompts that closely mirrored the human codebooks, then followed an iterative prompt-tuning process: we tested candidate prompts on our adjudicated ground-truth sample (N=200), quantified agreement between GPT and the expert ground truth, and refined definitions and decision

**Table 1: Distribution of X posts by country and commemoration after clustering.**

Country	N (Europe Day)	N (Berlin Wall)
France	3,369	16,138
Germany	2,790	15,414
Slovenia	281	168
Italy	895	7,145
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,335</b>	<b>38,865</b>

rules until performance stabilised at an acceptable level across indicators. To specifically improve performance on our weakest indicators (Constructiveness and Respectfulness), we added a small set of few-shot examples targeting typical edge cases. These examples were drawn from six additional comments from our dataset, which were independently annotated by two coders and then finalised through adjudication with a third expert annotator. (The full prompt is provided in Appendix A.) All posts were machine-translated prior to annotation to provide a uniform input language across countries. The LLM therefore codes translated texts, and our indicators should be interpreted as measuring conflict/tone/quality as expressed in the translation output rather than as original-language performance.

### Ground-truth and evaluation

To build a reference set for evaluation and prompt development (“ground truth”), we used a stratified random sample from our X dataset, which includes

posts published around two commemorations—the fall of the Berlin Wall and Europe Day—in Germany, France, Italy, and Slovenia. We sampled 25 posts from each commemoration–country combination, yielding  $N=200$  posts in total. Each post was independently coded by two expert annotators. Annotators coded the machine-translated versions of posts (the same input used for the LLM), so the reported agreement and reliability statistics evaluate the translation–coding pipeline rather than original-language coding. While translation improves cross-country comparability and feasibility, it may also weaken or shift language-specific cues (e.g., idioms, sarcasm, or insult morphology), which is a potential source of measurement error.

Agreement in this initial, independent round was mixed: some labels were coded very consistently (especially Justification-Experience and Reciprocity), while others proved more challenging and showed lower consistency (most notably Respectfulness and Constructiveness). Because several indicators are rare in our sample (i.e., most items are coded 0

**Table 2: Inter-coder agreement statistics for the initial independent human annotation.**

Dimension	Absolute agreement	Cohen’s $\kappa$	AC1
Conflict	82.4%	0.653	0.650
Constructiveness	75.1%	0.232	0.637
Justification–Experience	97.9%	0.490	0.978
Justification–Reason	79.6%	0.517	0.650
Positive/Respectful	60.1%	0.220	0.252
Reciprocity	93.9%	0.468	0.931
Uncivil	87.9%	0.436	0.846

**Table 3: GPT vs adjudicated ground truth agreement statistics for X posts (N=200).**

Dimension	Absolute agreement	Cohen’s $\kappa$	AC1
Conflict	84.0%	0.686	0.680
Constructiveness	79.5%	0.497	0.658
Justification–Experience	99.0%	0.745	0.990
Justification–Reason	84.5%	0.626	0.735
Positive/Respectful	85.5%	0.544	0.788
Reciprocity	95.0%	0.557	0.944
Uncivil	86.5%	0.532	0.811

and only a small fraction 1), we report Gwet's AC1 alongside Cohen's  $\kappa$ . Cohen's  $\kappa$  can exhibit the kappa paradox, where absolute agreement is high but  $\kappa$  is low, under skewed base rates (Zec et al., 2017); we therefore also report Gwet's AC1, which is commonly presented as more robust to imbalance-driven deflation of  $\kappa$  (Gwet, 2014).

Across the indicators used in our analysis, absolute agreement ranged from 60.1% to 97.9%, Cohen's  $\kappa$  ranged from 0.22 to 0.65, and Gwet's AC1 ranged from 0.25 to 0.98 (Table 2). We then adjudicated all disagreements, bringing in a third expert annotator to help resolve contested cases and ensure a final consensus label set for every post and indicator.

Overall, GPT aligned closely with the expert ground truth, with absolute agreement ranging from 79,5% to 99,0% across indicators. Chance-corrected reliability was also solid: Cohen's  $\kappa$  ranged from 0.497 to 0.745, and Gwet's AC1 ranged from 0.658 to 0.990 (Table 3). The strongest performance was observed for Justification-Experience and Reciprocity, while Constructiveness remained the most challenging indicator.

#### Topic modelling and hotspot identification

Topic modelling was performed on the original multilingual corpus using multilingual sentence embeddings (paraphrase-multilingual-MiniLM-L12-v2) and the BERTopic pipeline. Topic assignments are linked to indicator outcomes via tweet IDs; the BERTopic embedding and clustering step itself does not rely on translation. Topic modelling was run on the original texts to avoid translation artefacts, since multilingual embeddings enable cross-lingual clustering without requiring a single translated language. We pre-process the original-language corpus by removing URLs, line breaks, and reply markers (e.g., "@username"). We then embed documents using paraphrase-multilingual-MiniLM-L12-v2 and apply UMAP dimensionality reduction to five dimensions followed by HDBSCAN clustering (min cluster\_size=200), which

helps ensure sufficiently robust clusters for cross-topic comparisons. The initial set of clusters (64) is manually reviewed and merged into a final set of topics (41) by examining representative posts from each cluster and combining semantically similar clusters.

## RESULTS

### Conflict activation across Commemorations and countries

In this section, we report the results concerning RQ1 (conflict activation), summarised in Table 4. The results show that the contrast between the two commemorations is stark across all four countries: **Europe Day (May 9)** is largely non-conflictual (overall only 22.8% of posts are conflictual), while the **Berlin Wall (November 9)** commemoration systematically activates conflict (overall 64.9% conflictual). On Europe Day, conflict is lowest in France (18.9%) and highest in Slovenia (35.6%); on November 9, conflict rates are high everywhere (from 62.1% in Germany to 72.0% in Slovenia). The event gap is substantial in every country (about +36 to +47 percentage points), consistent with our expectation that November 9 functions as a much stronger commemorative cue for disagreement than May 9.

### Mode within conflict (antagonistic vs. non-antagonistic tone)

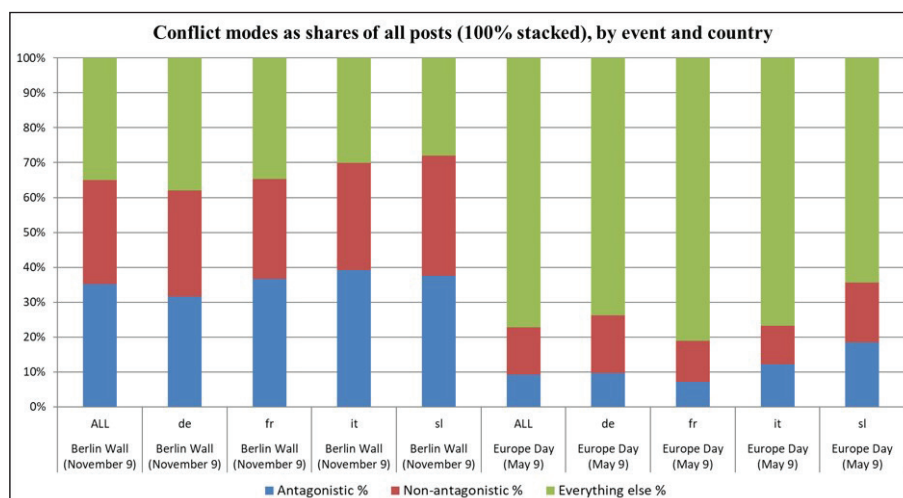
In this subsection we examine how posts are distributed across three categories: antagonistic tone of conflict, non-antagonistic tone of conflict, and "everything else" (all non-conflict content). Table 5 reports the corresponding percentages by event and country, and Figure 1 visualises the same distributions as stacked bars, making it easy to compare (i) the overall share of conflict versus non-conflict and (ii) how conflict splits into antagonistic vs non-antagonistic tone within each national case.

**Table 4: Difference in conflict activation: Berlin Wall – Europe Day (percentage points; with N). Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.**

Country	N (Europe Day)	Conflict % (Europe Day)	N (Berlin Wall)	Conflict % (Berlin Wall)	Difference (pp)
France	3,369	18.9	16,138	65.4	46.5
Germany	2,790	26.2	15,414	62.1	35.9
Slovenia	281	35.6	168	72.0	36.4
Italy	895	23.2	7,145	69.9	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,335</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>38,865</b>	<b>64.9</b>	<b>42.1</b>

**Table 5: Distribution of discourse modes by commemoration and country (Antagonistic conflict %, Non-antagonistic conflict %, Everything else %; with N shares).**

Berlin Wall / Country	N (total)	Antagonistic conflict %	Non-antagonistic conflict %	Everything else %
<b>ALL</b>	<b>38865</b>	<b>35.13</b>	<b>29.81</b>	<b>35.06</b>
Germany	15414	31.55	30.54	37.91
France	16138	36.74	28.63	34.63
Italy	7145	39.17	30.76	30.06
Slovenia	168	37.50	34.52	27.98
Europe Day / Country	N (total)	Antagonistic conflict %	Non-antagonistic conflict %	Everything else %
<b>ALL</b>	<b>7335</b>	<b>9.16</b>	<b>13.67</b>	<b>77.16</b>
Germany	2790	9.68	16.52	73.80
France	3369	7.15	11.72	81.12
Italy	895	12.18	11.06	76.76
Slovenia	281	18.51	17.08	64.41



**Figure 1: Conflict modes as shares of all posts (100% stacked) by commemoration and country: antagonistic conflict (incivility proxy), non-antagonistic conflict, and everything else. Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.**

The dominant pattern is the event-level gap, but there is also meaningful cross-national variation. For the **Berlin Wall** commemoration, conflict is high in all countries, yet the balance between antagonistic and non-antagonistic tone differs: Germany shows the lowest antagonistic share (31.55%) and a nearly equal non-antagonistic share (30.54%), whereas France and Italy display higher antagonistic conflict (36.74% and 39.17%, respectively)

and slightly lower non-antagonistic conflict. Slovenia follows the general Berlin Wall pattern, though its much smaller N should be interpreted cautiously.

For **Europe Day**, non-conflictual content clearly dominates, but the conflict share and its tone vary: Germany and France have relatively low antagonistic conflict (9.68% and 7.15%) with somewhat higher non-antagonistic conflict (16.52% and 11.72%),

Italy shows a slightly more antagonistic profile (12.18% antagonistic vs 11.06% non-antagonistic), and Slovenia stands out with the highest antagonistic conflict share (18.51%) alongside a similarly high non-antagonistic share (17.08%). These country-level differences are visible in Figure 1 as shifts in the relative sizes of the antagonistic and non-antagonistic segments, but they remain secondary to the overarching contrast between a conflict-intensive Berlin Wall discourse and a largely ceremonial, non-conflictual Europe Day discourse.

### Discourse quality within antagonistic and non-antagonistic mode

In this subsection, we compare discourse-quality profiles within conflict across commemorations (Europe Day vs. Berlin Wall) and countries, separately for antagonistic and non-antagonistic conflict (Figure 2). We aggregate five deliberative indicators into an additive score (0–5 “YES” signals) and collapse this into a binary distinction: low-quality conflict (LQ = 0–1 YES) versus high-quality / deliberation-compatible conflict (HQ = 2–5 YES), where HQ merges the Medium (2–3 YES) and High (4–5 YES) profiles. The analysis here operates with LQ vs. HQ, while the full indicator-level distributions and the Low/Medium/High calculations are documented in *Appendices B, C and D and E*.

Across both commemorations, the comparative pattern is stable: HQ is generally more prevalent in non-antagonistic conflict than in antagonistic conflict, indicating that conflict expressed without incivility is more likely to co-occur with deliberative cues. At the same time, the **Berlin Wall** commemoration displays a higher overall baseline of HQ than Europe Day across countries and in both conflict modes, suggesting that the conflict activated on November 9 more often contains at least a minimum bundle of deliberative signals. Country differences are visible in the magnitude of this “tone–quality” gap: Germany and Italy show the clearest improvement in HQ when moving from antagonistic to non-antagonistic conflict on November 9, while France follows the same direction with a smaller shift.

**Europe Day** shows the same directional relationship but with more modest differences, consistent with lower overall conflict and the near-absence of HQ profiles. Slovenia constitutes an instructive exception in the Berlin Wall commemoration: in the Slovenian subsample, HQ appears comparatively more pronounced under an antagonistic tone than under non-antagonistic conflict. This exception becomes substantively interpretable only once the indicator composition is inspected—reported in the appendices—where it is linked to the co-occurrence of justification and constructiveness even in posts classified as antagonistic by the incivility proxy.

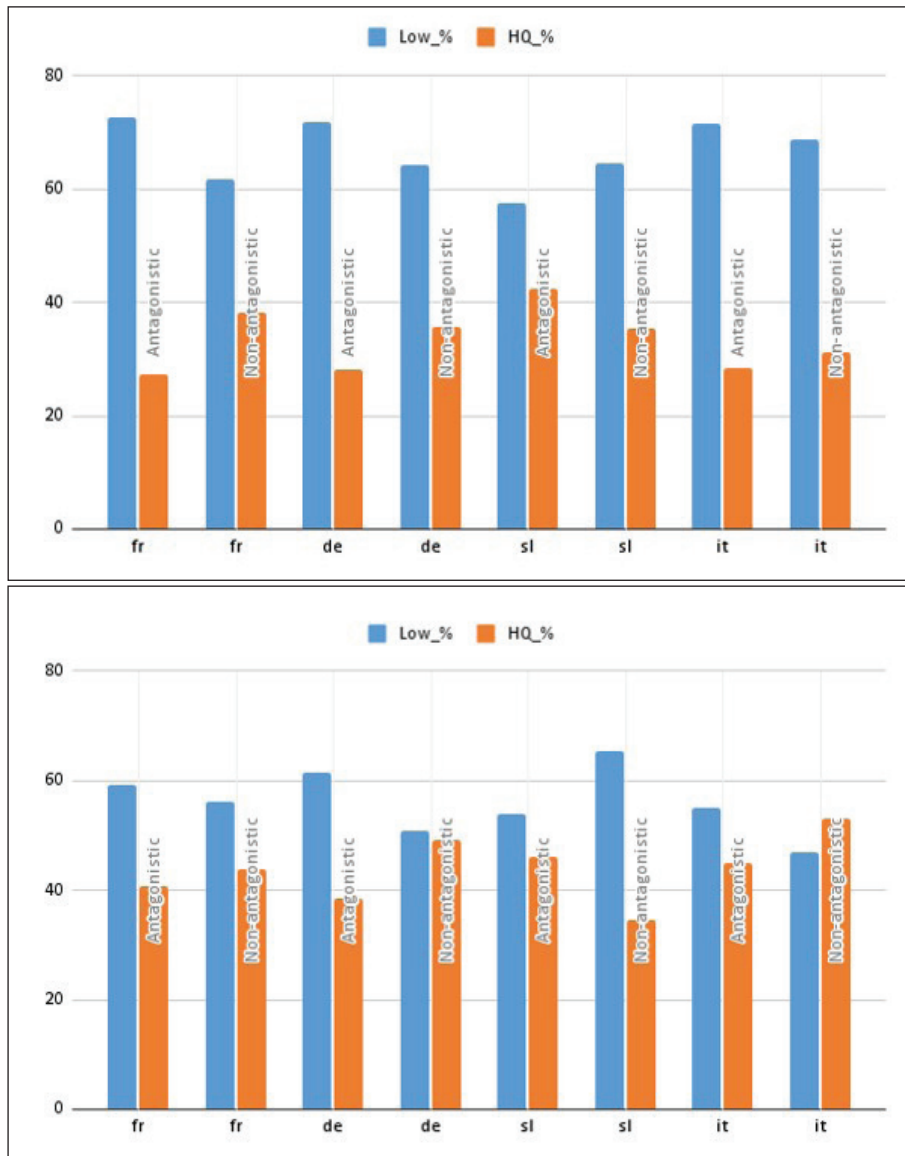
### Deliberative quality within conflict across topics

In this section, we use the topic-modelling layer to map where conflict and contestation concentrate. The first subsection summarises the thematic structure of the dataset across countries, and the next subsection uses the resulting topic clusters to identify thematic “hotspots” with particularly high levels of conflict and/or antagonistic tone. The following subsection then turns from topics to deliberative outcomes within conflict, reporting DQI-style indicators (Respectfulness, Reciprocity, Constructiveness, and Justification) and summarising them as the share of high-quality conflict. This allows us to distinguish how conflict is marked by deliberative quality—whether topic-specific disagreement is predominantly antagonistic and low-quality, or conflictual yet still characterised by justification and constructive engagement. Finally, the last subsection directly compares high-quality conflict between non-antagonistic and antagonistic discourse within each topic, highlighting the dominant pattern and the small set of topic-level exceptions where antagonistic conflict sustains comparable or higher deliberative quality.

### Results of topic modelling

We ran BERTopic on the full dataset (spanning multiple commemorative cues). For the analyses reported here, we restrict attention to posts assigned to the two focal commemorations (Europe Day and the Berlin Wall) and we additionally remove event-specific noise clusters, as well as topics tied to other commemorations (Slovenian Statehood Day and the Day of Resistance against the Occupiers). The final analytical corpus comprises 38 clusters (cf. Appendix F).

Substantively, the extracted topics are strongly shaped by the Berlin Wall commemoration: the majority of clusters revolve around this event and closely related themes (e.g., deaths and escape attempts, the fall and its memories, the East/West divide, reconstruction or iconic political figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev). Alongside these commemoration-centered themes, the model also yields broader political and geopolitical topics that frequently co-occur with commemoration talk—most prominently the Cold War, communism, Russia and contemporary geopolitics, Israel/Palestine, NATO, migration, and high-salience political actors (e.g., Donald Trump), as well region-linked clusters (e.g., references to the Maghreb or predominantly Muslim-majority countries). A smaller set of clusters reflects media and popular-culture spillovers (e.g., documentaries, YouTube), as well as occasional cross-domain associations such as sports, referencing the “Berlin wall” as a metaphor. In contrast, Europe Day content is more concentrated. It is largely captured in a single topic rather than a broad family of subtopics.



**Figure 2: Low-quality (LQ) versus high-quality conflict (HQ) shares within conflict, by commemoration, country, and conflict mode (antagonistic vs. non-antagonistic; incivility proxy). The upper panel presents Europe Day, and the lower panel presents the fall of the Berlin Wall. Percentages sum to 100 within each country–mode bar. Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.**

**Share of antagonistic and non-antagonistic tone within identified topics**

Building directly on the preceding conflict identification in posts, we examine how disagreement is distributed across the identified clusters and how it is expressed when it occurs. We focus first on conflict tone, distinguishing antagonistic from non-antagonistic conflict using incivility as a proxy indicator within conflict. Figure 3 reports, for each topic, the share of posts that fall into (i) antagonistic conflict

(Conflict=1 & Incivility=1), (ii) non-antagonistic conflict (Conflict=1 & Incivility=0), and (iii) everything else (Conflict=0). This allows us to assess both how strongly a topic activates conflict overall and—within conflict—whether disagreement tends to escalate into antagonism or remains closer to a non-antagonistic mode. Cf. Appendix G for the full data.

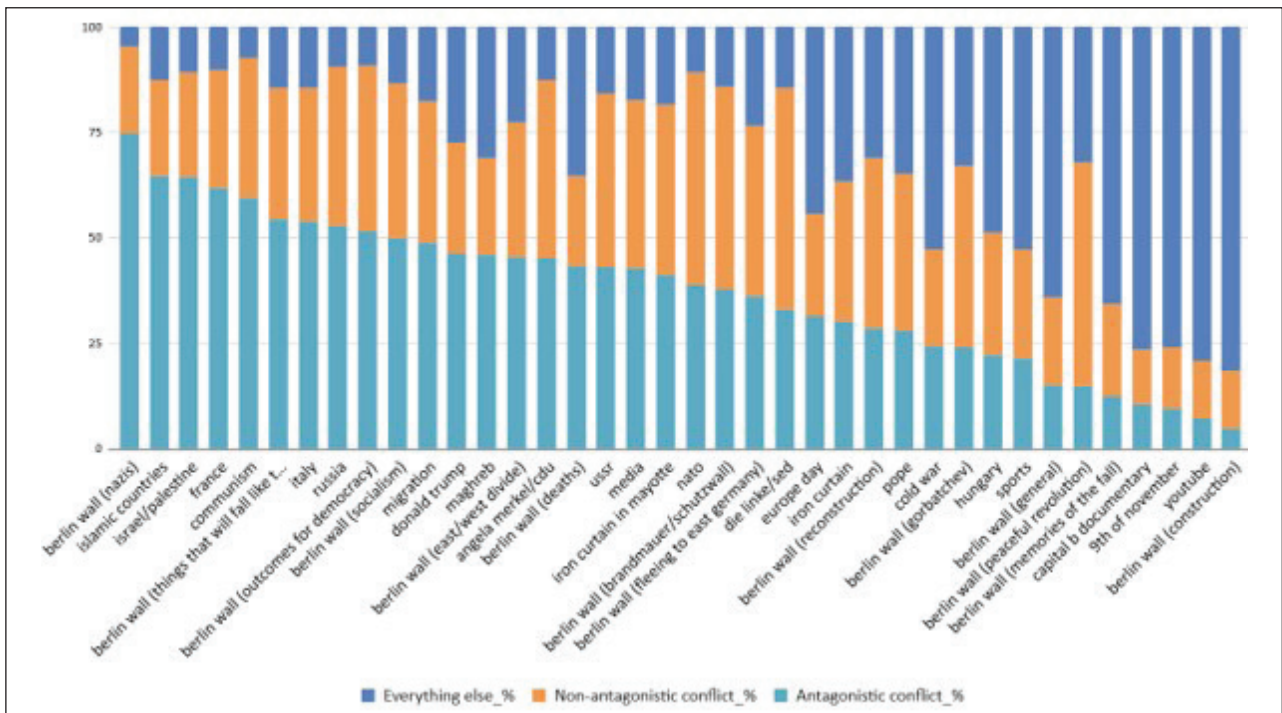
The topic-level distribution (Figure 3) shows that antagonistic tone is highly uneven across topics. The highest shares of antagonistic conflict concentrate in clusters that translate commemorative cues into

contemporary identity struggles, geopolitical disputes, or delegitimising labels—for example ‘Berlin Wall (Nazis)’ (74.8% antagonistic conflict), ‘Islamic countries’ (64.7%), ‘Israel/Palestine’ (64.5%), and ‘Communism’ (59.3%). These clusters point to thematic configurations in which commemoration is mobilised as a resource for present-day contestation. At the other end of the distribution, several topics are dominated by less antagonistic content. Debates on ‘Europe Day’ (31.5% antagonistic) and ‘Iron Curtain’ (30.2%) show markedly lower antagonistic shares, while ‘Cold War’ drops to 24.2% antagonistic and a majority of posts are non-conflictual. Several Berlin Wall narrative clusters are even less conflictual (e.g., ‘Berlin Wall (construction)’ 4.9% antagonistic; ‘memories of the fall’ 12.4%; ‘peaceful revolution’ 14.9%; ‘Berlin Wall (general)’ 15.1%). Importantly, some topics contain sizeable shares of non-antagonistic conflict—most notably ‘NATO’ (50.5% non-antagonistic conflict) and ‘Die Linke/SED’ (52.5%)—indicating disagreement that is more argument-driven and less likely to involve an antagonistic tone. These patterns suggest that commemorative discourse is not monolithic: some topics systematically amplify antagonistic exchanges, whereas others host disagreement that remains closer to a deliberation-compatible mode.

**Deliberative profiles of conflict within topics**

Building on the topic-level mapping of where antagonistic versus non-antagonistic conflict concentrates, we now ask what happens to deliberative quality once disagreement occurs within each topic cluster. Concretely, we restrict the analysis to conflict posts (Conflict=1) and compare deliberative cues in non-antagonistic versus antagonistic conflict, using incivility as a proxy indicator of antagonistic tone (Incivility=0/1). We rely on the indicator-level YES shares for respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based and experience-based). Full topic-level distributions and indicator rates by discourse mode are reported in *Appendices D–G*, while Figures 4–5 summarise the key topic patterns. Across both modes, the most HQ-heavy topics are largely those where conflict is anchored in historical interpretation or geopolitical explanation (e.g., “peaceful revolution,” NATO, Gorbachev, Russia, Cold War), where constructiveness and reason-giving remain high and drive HQ.

In **non-antagonistic conflict mode** (Figure 4), several topics reach very high HQ shares (with “peaceful revolution” at the top), while a broad middle tier (e.g., “migration,” “media,” “USSR,” “Hungary,” “Pope,” “Donald Trump,” “Europe Day”) maintains



**Figure 3: Topic-level distribution of conflict modes (Berlin Wall & Europe Day).** Stacked bars show, for each BERTopic topic, the percentage of posts classified as antagonistic conflict, non-antagonistic conflict, or everything else (non-conflictual content). Topics are ordered by decreasing antagonistic conflict share; labels correspond to the most salient topic names derived from BERTopic.

TOPIC	Respectful	Reciprocity	Constructive	Justif (reason)	Justif (experience)	HQ (Med+High)
berlin wall (peaceful revolution)	12,5	7,0	96,1	85,2	2,3	84,0
nato	1,1	10,8	85,0	77,7	1,8	79,0
berlin wall (gorbatchev)	2,3	8,4	77,5	74,2	3,9	73,0
russia	3,5	10,6	75,1	72,5	3,3	72,0
italy	5,1	7,3	77,4	73,7	5,8	72,0
islamic countries	22,2	10,0	73,3	67,8	2,2	71,0
cold war	1,5	6,6	71,5	68,6	8,8	70,0
berlin wall (fall apart like...)	1,2	6,8	71,2	65,6	3,1	65,0
berlin wall (nazis)	3,2	12,9	66,7	63,4	12,9	64,0
berlin wall (deaths)	14,0	8,8	68,4	59,7	1,8	63,0
berlin wall (construction)	14,3	3,6	71,4	60,7	0,0	60,0
berlin wall (east west divide)	6,0	11,4	62,3	59,7	9,5	59,0
9th of november	11,3	5,6	66,2	57,8	2,8	59,0
migration	10,0	13,3	60,0	51,7	8,3	58,0
media	1,8	7,3	63,6	60,0	10,9	58,0
ussr	2,0	4,9	62,0	57,4	3,8	56,0
france	4,9	6,7	56,5	55,6	5,4	53,0
hungary	9,6	5,8	65,4	51,9	13,5	53,0
pope	18,6	7,1	55,7	55,7	4,3	52,0
berlin wall (socialism)	4,9	4,9	54,3	53,1	11,1	51,0
donald trump	5,7	5,7	57,1	57,1	1,4	51,0
europe day	1,6	4,8	61,3	51,6	3,2	51,0
berlin wall (brandmauer)	1,2	1,9	64,9	49,6	1,5	50,0
maghreb	4,7	8,1	53,5	48,8	0,0	48,0
die linke sed	3,5	9,2	48,9	49,7	3,9	47,0
berlin wall (outcomes for democracy)	3,8	8,3	51,0	51,6	9,6	47,0
israel palestine	11,4	11,9	48,4	47,5	0,9	46,0
angela merkel cdu	2,4	7,3	50,7	49,3	2,9	44,0
communism	3,1	7,6	47,4	44,8	8,8	43,0
berlin wall (fleeing to west germany)	1,0	11,2	44,2	43,2	2,7	42,0
berlin wall (memories of the fall)	4,0	11,1	38,9	38,9	23,6	40,0
iron curtain in mayotte	3,9	9,1	29,9	35,1	0,0	25,0
youtube	5,9	0,0	11,8	29,4	5,9	23,0
iron curtain	2,1	5,6	28,4	25,3	2,9	22,0
berlin wall (general)	3,1	4,5	23,7	18,5	2,9	17,0
capital b documentary	4,8	4,8	9,5	4,8	4,8	9,0
sports	3,1	1,9	4,9	22,8	2,5	6,0
berlin wall (reconstruction)	1,3	2,7	5,3	3,3	0,7	2,0

**Figure 4: Deliberative indicators within non-antagonistic conflict (topics sorted by HQ within non-antagonistic). Heat map reports topic-level YES rates (%) for deliberative indicators among non-antagonistic conflictual posts (Conflict = 1 & Incivility = 0): respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based; experience-based). The final column reports the share of non-antagonistic conflictual posts in each topic that reach a Medium/High quality profile (Appendix H). Topics are ordered from highest to lowest HQ within non-antagonistic conflict.**

TOPIC		Respectful	Reciprocity	Constructive	Justif (reason)	Justif (experience)	HQ (Med+High)
berlin wall (peaceful revol...)	0	0,0	8,3	91,7	88,9	2,8	88,0
nato	0	0,3	3,4	79,1	81,2	1,4	77,0
berlin wall (gorbatchev)	0	2,0	3,0	73,0	72,0	0,0	72,0
italy	▲ 1	0,4	3,0	56,9	67,7	4,3	56,0
russia	▼ 1	1,9	5,1	56,8	65,6	3,2	55,0
iron curtain in mayotte	▲ 26	1,3	0,0	56,4	56,4	2,6	55,0
berlin wall (fall apart like...)	▲ 1	1,1	3,2	56,2	60,4	1,4	54,0
europe day	▲ 14	0,0	6,2	58,0	58,0	0,0	54,0
cold war	▼ 2	0,0	2,1	56,3	54,2	6,3	51,0
ussr	▲ 6	0,8	3,5	52,3	56,6	3,9	50,0
berlin wall (brandmauer...)	▲ 12	0,0	1,0	51,2	58,1	2,0	50,0
berlin wall (construction)	▼ 1	0,0	0,0	60,0	50,0	0,0	50,0
israel palestine	▲ 14	2,3	3,7	49,5	60,5	1,6	49,0
islamic countries	▼ 8	3,1	5,5	46,9	61,3	2,3	47,0
die linke sed	▲ 10	1,1	4,5	47,2	61,2	1,7	46,0
pope	▲ 3	1,9	0,0	45,3	56,6	3,8	45,0
berlin wall (socialism)	▲ 3	0,0	3,6	45,1	55,9	7,2	44,0
media	▼ 3	0,0	6,8	42,4	57,6	1,7	44,0
berlin wall (east west divide)	▼ 7	1,3	4,4	42,7	57,2	7,6	43,0
communism	▲ 9	0,1	2,9	42,0	52,3	5,5	41,0
berlin wall (democracy)	▲ 5	0,5	3,4	39,8	58,3	3,4	41,0
donald trump	▼ 1	2,4	2,4	43,9	48,0	0,0	41,0
migration	▼ 9	0,0	5,7	40,9	54,6	5,7	40,0
france	▼ 7	1,2	2,6	39,6	51,8	3,5	38,0
angela merkel cdu	▲ 3	0,5	4,6	39,5	49,5	1,8	38,0
berlin wall (deaths)	▼ 16	1,8	6,1	32,5	44,7	1,8	35,0
berlin wall (nazis)	▼ 18	1,5	2,7	35,8	45,3	9,8	34,0
maghreb	▼ 4	1,7	1,7	34,1	49,7	2,3	34,0
youtube	▲ 4	0,0	11,1	33,3	33,3	0,0	33,0
hungary	▼ 12	2,5	5,0	27,5	42,5	5,0	32,0
9th of november	▼ 18	2,1	8,5	34,0	36,2	2,1	31,0
berlin wall (memories...)	▼ 1	1,0	3,0	25,6	34,2	20,1	26,0
iron curtain	▲ 1	0,9	1,9	24,9	30,2	2,7	23,0
berlin wall (flee to west ger.)	▼ 4	0,4	2,7	24,8	36,6	3,8	23,0
berlin wall (general)	0	0,8	1,3	13,4	17,4	3,2	12,0
sports	▲ 1	2,2	1,5	4,5	28,4	2,2	7,0
capital b documentary	▼ 1	0,0	0,0	5,9	11,8	0,0	5,0
berlin wall (reconstruction)	0	0,0	0,0	3,8	11,3	0,0	1,0

Figure 5: Deliberative indicators within antagonistic conflict (topics sorted by HQ within antagonistic). Heat map reports topic-level YES rates (%) for deliberative indicators among antagonistic conflictual posts (Conflict = 1 & Incivility = 1): respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based; experience-based). The final column reports the share of antagonistic conflictual posts in each topic that reach a Medium/High quality profile (Appendix I). The unlabeled column reports the change in rank compared with the non-antagonistic conflict ranking.

moderate HQ despite generally low levels of explicit respect markers. This indicates that HQ in this corpus is primarily constructiveness- and justification-driven, rather than driven by polite phrasing alone. At the same time, Figure 4 also shows where respect matters more: respectfulness is noticeably higher in non-antagonistic conflict for specific clusters—most clearly “Berlin Wall (deaths)” and “Pope”, and to a lesser extent “Israel/Palestine”, suggesting that some topics sustain not only reason-giving but also more explicitly respectful engagement when conflict remains non-antagonistic.

The **antagonistic conflict mode** heatmap (Figure 5) exhibits the expected deliberative quality “penalty” but also shows that antagonism does not eliminate deliberative content uniformly; instead, it reshuffles which topics retain deliberation-compatible conflict. Several topics remain strongly HQ even under an antagonistic tone (again including “peaceful revolution” and NATO), because they preserve high constructiveness and substantial reason-giving. At the same time, some topics are clearly mode-sensitive. In particular, topics tied to identity or symbolic boundary drawing (e.g., “Berlin Wall (Nazis),” “9<sup>th</sup> of November,” and parts of the “Maghreb”) drop substantially and concentrate in LQ.

Finally, the indicator maps also validate that the operationalisation captures a theoretically expected form of justification. Experience-based justification concentrates in memory-work clusters—most notably “Berlin Wall (memories of the fall)”, where it reaches around or above ~20% in both modes. This is consistent with topics organised around autobiographical recall and lived experience, strengthening confidence that the topic-level patterns reflect meaningful differences in justificatory style rather than noise. Overall, Figures 4–5 thus complement the HQ profiles by showing how topics achieve HQ: typically through constructiveness and reason-based justification, but in some clusters also through more respectful phrasing and more exchange-oriented engagement.

### When does antagonistic conflict remain deliberative?

While non-antagonistic conflict is generally more conducive to deliberation-compatible exchange, our topic-level comparison reveals an important qualification: in a small set of topics, antagonistic conflict reaches HQ levels that are comparable to—or even higher than—non-antagonistic conflict. In other words, antagonistic tone does not uniformly suppress deliberative quality. Instead, whether conflict remains deliberation-compatible depends also on the topic activated by

the commemoration and on the kinds of justificatory and interactional cues that are typical for that topic.

At the same time, this should be read against the dominant baseline. Across the large majority of topic clusters, HQ is higher in non-antagonistic conflict than in antagonistic conflict (Appendix L), often by substantial margins. It seems that the largest quality “penalties” for antagonistic tone occur precisely in clusters that tend to invite symbolic boundary drawing and identity-based escalation—for example “Berlin Wall (Nazis)” (+29.6 pp in favour of non-antagonistic), “Berlin Wall (deaths)” (+28.1 pp), “9<sup>th</sup> of November” (+27.2 pp), and “Islamic countries” (+23.8 pp). In these cases, conflict can still include justification and constructiveness, but antagonistic framing is more likely to undermine the indicator configuration needed for HQ (especially respectfulness), pushing a larger share of posts into LQ.

The exception topics are theoretically informative because they show how deliberative signals can persist under an antagonistic tone (cf. Table 6). Topics where  $HQ_{ant} \geq HQ_{non}$  cluster around two dynamics. First, some are meta-discursive or cross-domain clusters (e.g., “YouTube”), topics where the commemoration cue is discussed as a label, reference, or a brand rather than as a political position (e.g. “Iron Curtain in Mayotte”) or cases where “iron curtain” appears as a sports metaphor. In such clusters, higher antagonistic tone can co-occur with fact-checking, clarification, and justification (e.g., correcting claims or re-checking details), which sustains HQ despite incivility. Second, some are issue-driven conflict topics that remain relatively “discussion-like” even under antagonism, such as Israel/Palestine and Europe Day itself. In these cases, antagonistic tone coexists with comparatively strong rates of justification and/or constructive engagement, yielding a slight advantage in HQ. By contrast, very low-HQ clusters such as “Iron Curtain (general)” show only marginal reversals, suggesting that these should be interpreted as near-parity rather than as meaningful evidence of an “antagonism advantage.”

The results are consistent with the commemorative-cue framework. Commemorations do not simply “produce conflict,” but make different discursive pathways more available. Some topics amplify antagonistic escalation, while others sustain justification and constructiveness even under sharp disagreement. Non-antagonistic conflict is more likely to remain deliberation-compatible, yet a small set of topics shows that antagonistic conflict can co-exist with deliberative cues.

**Table 6: Topic clusters where HQ is comparable or higher under antagonistic conflict ( $HQ_{ant} \geq HQ_{non}$ ). HQ denotes the share of conflict posts classified as Medium/High. Positive values indicate higher HQ under antagonistic conflict.**

Topic cluster	HQ <sub>non</sub> (%)	HQ <sub>ant</sub> (%)	$\Delta HQ$ (pp) (ant – non)
iron curtain (mayotte)	31.8	39.6	+7.8
youtube (meta-discussion)	22.4	27.1	+4.7
europe day	34.5	36.2	+1.7
israel / palestine	41.3	42.9	+1.6
iron curtain (general)	18.9	19.5	+0.6
sports	12.7	13.1	+0.4

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that commemorations differ sharply in activation strength and mode (**RQ1–RQ2**). Discourse around the Berlin Wall is consistently conflict-heavy, whereas Europe Day remains predominantly non-conflictual and closer to a ceremonial or symbolic-affirmative register. Because this contrast holds across countries, it is most plausibly interpreted as a difference in the mnemonic portability of the two commemorations. Substantively, the Berlin Wall commemoration provides more readily politicisable interpretive templates that connect historical interpretation to current geopolitical and identity disputes, while Europe Day more often stabilises integrative or celebratory frames.

At the topic level, the results largely confirm the expectation that deliberation-compatible conflict is more likely when disagreement unfolds in a non-antagonistic tone (**RQ3**). Across most clusters, non-antagonistic conflict exhibits a higher share of post-level deliberative quality than antagonistic conflict. Importantly, however, the indicator profiles show that antagonistic tone does not simply eliminate reason-giving or constructiveness. The topic heatmaps (Figures 4 and 5) clarify how deliberation-compatible conflict is sustained and why the exceptions matter (**RQ4**). In both non-antagonistic and antagonistic modes, the highest deliberative-quality clusters are typically anchored in historical interpretation and geopolitical explanation, where constructiveness and reason-based justification remain high. However, a small set of topic clusters shows discourse-quality parity or even higher quality under antagonistic conflict. These exceptions indicate that antagonism does not uniformly suppress deliberative signals.

Overall, the evidence is broadly consistent with our expectations. In line with **E1**, conflict activation is higher on November 9 than on May 9 across countries, confirming that the Berlin

Wall commemoration functions as a stronger commemorative cue for contestation than the more ceremonial Europe Day. Consistent with **E2**, within conflict the Berlin Wall commemoration also tends to show a higher prevalence of antagonistic tone, although the size of this shift varies by topic and national setting. Finally, **E3** is supported in the expected direction in debates about the fall of the Berlin Wall: Germany displays comparatively lower antagonistic tone and higher shares of deliberation-compatible conflict; Italy shows a more confrontational and lower-HQ pattern on November 9; France exhibits strong November 9 activation with topic-specific concentrations of contestation; and Slovenia — interpreted descriptively due to small N — shows weaker event-specific anchoring of November 9.

The key democratic implication is that the problem is not memory conflict itself, but how conflict is expressed. This has practical and normative significance. This assertion is consistent with evidence that more structured deliberative processes can reduce toxicity and improve interaction quality (Klein & Majdoubi, 2024). It concerns whether disagreement is performed in an antagonistic or non-antagonistic mode and whether conflict is sustained through deliberation-compatible practices. Read through an agonistic lens (Mouffe, 1999; 2013), the central normative task is not to eliminate disagreement, but to transform it from antagonism (enemies, moral exclusion, symbolic boundary drawing) into agonism (adversaries, legitimate contestation within shared democratic rules). Our findings align with this distinction. Non-antagonistic conflict is more likely to remain deliberation-compatible, meaning that citizens can disagree while still providing reasons, engaging constructively, and maintaining respectful recognition. Yet we also observe that even in highly contested topics, antagonistic conflict can remain justification-rich, indicating that escalated tone does not automatically erase argumentation.

For democratic theory, this supports a more precise view of polarisation and incivility. Antagonistic tone is not simply “anti-deliberation.” While it often lowers the probability that conflict will remain deliberation-compatible, it can also—under specific conditions—contribute to issue clarification and argumentative progression, particularly when antagonistic claims are still anchored in justification and expressed with some degree of constructiveness. This resonates with work showing that incivility and deliberative quality are analytically distinct dimensions that do not map onto each other one-to-one (Boukes, 2025), but also with evidence that deliberative cues can be interactionally self-reinforcing in online exchanges under certain conditions (Naab et al., 2025). The implication is that democratic resilience depends not on suppressing online memory conflict, but on sustaining the communicative conditions under which even sharp disagreement remains oriented toward reasons, constructiveness, reciprocity, and respect. In this sense, the democratic stakes of commemorative (or other) discourse lie in whether discursive pathways activated by commemorative cues sustain agonistic contestation compatible with public reasoning, or drift toward antagonistic escalation.

#### LIMITATIONS

Several limitations qualify the interpretation of our findings. **First**, the analysis is conducted at the post level rather than the interaction-thread level. We therefore do not claim to measure deliberation as a full interactional process. Rather, we measure post-level deliberative signals that indicate whether conflictual posts remain compatible with deliberative norms. **Second**, the study relies on LLM-assisted coding and machine translation to enable cross-lingual comparison. While our validation procedures increase confidence in the overall patterns, translation may attenuate pragmatic and cultural cues (irony, sarcasm, context-dependent incivility), and automated classification is more uncertain for rare indicators, e.g., respectful/positive tone in some clusters, experience-based justification outside memory-work topics. **Third**, our operationalisation treats incivility as a proxy for antagonistic tone, which captures a salient stylistic dimension of escalation but does not exhaust theoretical conceptions of antagonism. In particular, antagonism in the Mouffean sense can be expressed without explicit incivility (e.g., through exclusionary framing, delegitimation, or moralised boundary drawing in

polite language), while incivility can occur in an otherwise argument-driven exchange. We therefore interpret “antagonistic conflict” as a measurable tone dimension rather than as a complete proxy for antagonism. **Finally**, the empirical scope is limited to two commemorations, selected platforms, and the topic-model clusters derived from this corpus. While the event contrast is robust, generalisation to other commemorations, languages, platform affordances, or institutional contexts should be made cautiously. Future work could extend the design with additional commemorative events, platform-specific comparisons, thread-based interaction data, and robustness checks using alternative topic representations. Such extensions would make it possible to test more directly how online memory conflict is transformed — or fails to be transformed — from antagonistic escalation into agonistic or deliberation-compatible contestation.

#### DATA AVAILABILITY

An anonymised, feature-only dataset supporting the findings of this study is available via Zenodo. The dataset includes computed and annotated indicators, such as language, commemoration labels, topic-model clusters, conflict and DQI-style scores, and discourse-type/AAD-related variables. To protect user privacy and comply with platform-data restrictions, it does not contain original Twitter/X post texts or user-identifying information. The Zenodo record also includes the LLM prompt as Appendix A, coding documentation, and supplementary appendices from Appendix B onwards, which provide extended country-level, topic-level, and deliberative-indicator tables. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20289789.

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## KONFLIKT, ANTAGONISTIČNI TON IN DELIBERATIVNA KAKOVOST V SPLETNIH RAZPRAVAH O SPOMINU: DAN EVROPE IN PADEC BERLINSKEGA ZIDU NA TWITTERJU/X

Marjan HORVAT

Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja, Čentur 1f, 6273 Marezige, Slovenija  
e-mail: marjan.horvat@irris.eu

Jure KORAŽIJA

Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja, Čentur 1f, 6273 Marezige, Slovenija  
e-mail: jure.korazija@irris.eu

### POVZETEK

Članek primerja spletne razprave o Dnevu Evrope in padcu Berlinskega zidu na Twitterju/X v Sloveniji, Italiji, Nemčiji in Franciji. Obe komemoraciji obravnava kot diskurzivni iztočnici, ob katerih uporabniki sodobne politične konflikte pogosto interpretirajo skozi pomembne evropske zgodovinske reference. Izhajajoč iz teoretskega okvira, ki povezuje spominske režime in diskurzivne moduse (Horvat, 2026), se članek ne osredotoča le na vsebino razprav, temveč predvsem na vprašanje, ali se v njih pojavlja konflikt in kako je ta izražen. S tem se analiza premakne od vprašanja, ali so komemoracije konfliktne, k vprašanju, kakšno demokratično kakovost ima lahko konfliktni spominski diskurz. Analiza temelji na tristopenjskem raziskovalnem pristopu, podprtem z velikimi jezikovnimi modeli. Najprej analiziramo, ali so objave konfliktne, nato, ali je konflikt izražen v antagonističnem ali neantagonističnem tonu, nazadnje pa preverjamo, ali objave vsebujejo deliberativne signale, kot so utemeljevanje, recipročnost, konstruktivnost in spoštovanje. Tematsko modeliranje, opravljeno na obeh komemoracijah, dodatno pokaže, v katerih tematskih grozdih se zgoščajo konflikt, antagonistični ton in nižja deliberativna kakovost ter kje deliberativni signali vztrajajo tudi ob antagonističnem tonu. Ugotovitve kažejo, da antagonistični ton praviloma zmanjšuje deliberativno kakovost razprave, vendar ne izključuje nujno kakovosti argumentacije in konstruktivnosti. To nakazuje, da ostrejši jezik sam po sebi še ne pomeni slabšanje kakovosti deliberacije, če so v razpravi še vedno prisotni razlogi, pojasnila in konstruktivna navezava na predmet spora. V sklepu argumentiramo, da ključni demokratični izziv zato ni odprava spletnih spominskih konfliktov, temveč ustvarjanje komunikacijskih pogojev, v katerih tudi ostro nestrinjanje ostaja združljivo z javnim rezoniranjem.

**Ključne besede:** kulturni spomin, komemoracije, antagonizem, deliberativna kakovost, DQI, Twitter/X, veliki jezikovni modeli, primerjalna analiza

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