

FRAMING POWER AND CONFLICT: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S POSTS ON THE IRAN-ISRAEL WAR

Yaser Ahmad

MPhil Scholae in English (Linguistics), Abasyn University Peshawar

Email: yaserw027@gmail.com

Maleeha Nazim

(Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, University of Management and Technology, Lahore

Email: maleeha.nazim@umt.edu.pk

Aasma Nijabat

Lecturer, University of Management and Technology, Lahore

Email: aasma.nijabat@umt.edu.pk

Abstract

This study critically examines Donald Trump's posts on the Iran-Israel conflict, employing Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover how his rhetoric constructs perceptions of power, conflict, and international relations. Through a detailed analysis of three representative posts, the research dissects the linguistic features, discursive practices, and socio-political contexts surrounding Trump's statements on the conflict. The findings reveal how Trump's discourse strategically frames the actors, events, and consequences of the conflict, shaping public opinion and reinforcing specific ideological stances. His language employs powerful framing techniques, including military metaphors, binary distinctions of "us vs. them," and the projection of American exceptionalism, which collectively contribute to the construction of a narrative that emphasizes dominance and American superiority. The present study also examines the implications of this type of framing on international diplomacy and the broader Middle East geopolitical landscape. The analysis highlights the significant influence of social media in contemporary political communication, illustrating how Trump's posts serve as a tool for shaping perceptions and affecting international relations. This study, employing CDA, sheds important light on how online platforms can be leveraged to influence the discourse of humankind, as exemplified in the case of international conflicts. Further research can extend this framework to examine other geopolitical processes and discuss the long-term consequences of digital discourse on global political processes.

Keywords: *Iran-Israel conflict, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, Social Media, Political Communication, International Relations.*

Introduction

In modern politics, social media has become one of the crucial avenues through which political leaders can convey their messages directly to the people, bypassing traditional media intermediary institutions. The presidency of Donald Trump heralded a remarkable shift in the way social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), is used to express and shape political language. His prolific use of X to communicate policy stances, comment on international conflicts, and engage with both supporters and detractors has been a subject of much scholarly attention (Benkler et al., 2020). His posts, primarily focused on hot international topics such as the Iran-Israel conflict, offer a unique insight into how contemporary political leaders utilize social media to present international conflicts and establish national authority.

The epitome of Middle Eastern politics has always been the Iran-Israel conflict, which was grounded in ideological, religious, and geopolitical disputes. The historical antagonism between Iran, a Shiite-majority state, and Israel, a Jewish-majority nation, has led to a complex relationship defined by military confrontations, diplomatic tensions, and deep-seated ideological divides (Roomi, 2023). Throughout his presidency, Trump's administration took an active role in this geopolitical conflict, most notably through policies such as the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), and various military postures that influenced the region's dynamics (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020). In his X posts on the matter, Trump tended to present Iran as the primary foe in the region, in the role of championing Israeli interests as well as rhetoric on military supremacy and American exceptionalism.

Nevertheless, the emergence of digital platforms has redefined the production of political communication in the global political sphere. These posts by Trump are not just political remarks; they reflect more than a political identification, as they serve as a point of contact through which conflict can be framed and national identities can be constructed. Framing Theory has shown that the selective choice of some events of a story can be used to influence how the mass interprets and act on what they see. For instance, Entman (2009) argues that media framing involves selecting particular aspects of an issue, making them more prominent, and thus influencing public perception. By framing the Iran-Israel conflict in a way that positions the U.S. as a righteous power confronting an evil adversary, Trump utilized X as a tool of ideological warfare, reinforcing the dichotomy of "us vs. them" and promoting narratives of peace through strength (Benkler et al., 2020).

Simultaneously, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a framework for examining how language in political discourse both shapes and reflects power dynamics. According to Fairclough (2003), language is not neutral; it actively constructs and maintains social realities, including political power structures. Regarding posts of Trump, researcher has applied CDA to the ideological usage of language in his posts (metaphors, emotional appeals, and rhetorical framing) to justify the position of the U.S. government in the conflict between Iran and Israel and to control the perception of the geopolitical problem by the population.

The position of social media in the politics of the modern world is of particular importance, where statement promotion can be seen as a tool for enhancing the perspectives of a specific ideology, e.g., the Iran-Israel conflict. The emergence of social media, such as X, has led to the democratization of information dissemination, but it has also exposed it to manipulation and polarization. As Morales (2025) argues, the algorithms and real-time nature of social media platforms like X can exacerbate political polarization by promoting content that aligns with users' existing beliefs, reinforcing pre-existing biases, and further entrenching divisive narratives. Trump's use of such platforms presents a rich site for examining the intersection of language, power, and political framing, particularly in the context of a conflict as complex and politically charged as the Iran-Israel dispute.

The approach of the current study is to fill the gap in scholarly studies by conducting a critical analysis of the discursive strategies deployed by Donald Trump on X related to the Iran-Israel conflict, using the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Fairclough (2003). This is the reason why, by investigating how Trump's framework of cost attributes it to the agency and reproduces ideological stances, this study will expand our knowledge of how social media is used in politics can help in establishing a political discourse and shape national and international relations. In particular, it will explore how Trump's use of X functions not only as a

political tool but also as a means of shaping perceptions of power, conflict, and identity on the global stage.

Social media and its influence on the process of political discourse, especially with one of its leading platforms, X, have transformed the way political leaders, such as Donald Trump, communicate and address geopolitical concerns. Trump's posts regarding the Iran-Israel conflict provide a unique opportunity to examine how social media discourse constructs narratives of power, conflict, and peace in international relations. While previous research has explored the role of social media in political communication (Entman et al., 2009; KhosraviNik, 2017), there is a gap in understanding how Trump's specific framing strategies impact public opinion and influence diplomatic relations in the Middle East. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing Trump's posts through Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (2003), investigating the ideologies and power relations embedded in his discourse and their broader geopolitical implications.

Research Questions

1. Which linguistic strategies does Trump apply to create a specific narrative about the Iran and Israel conflict itself and the players involved in it?
2. What ideologies are highlighted in Trump's posts on the conflict between Iran and Israel, with forces and identity?
3. How do Trump's posts on the Iran-Israel conflict influence public perception of the U.S.'s role in the conflict and the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape?

Significance of the Study

The research work is imperative because it provides a highly analytical examination of how political leaders utilize social media platforms, specifically X, to frame and manipulate international disputes. Regarding the example of the posts on the Iran-Israel standoff created by Donald Trump, the study will contribute to the understanding of how digital communication is utilized to enhance strategic control over the masses and create perceptions related to power and diplomacy in the global context. Through the application of Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper will reveal the discursive practices, linguistic strategies, and socio-cultural context through which the conflict is being framed, thereby sharpening the knowledge of how language, power, and politics intersect in the digital era. Moreover, the study will also contribute to the existing literature on the role of social media in political communication, particularly in non-Western contexts, including studies on the construction and propagation of political discourse via X. The results will be beneficial to policymakers, political researchers, and communication researchers, providing them with insights into the use of digital platforms to create and broadcast political messages in international relations.

Literature Review

The literature surrounding the use of social media in political discourse, particularly in the context of political leaders' communication strategies, is vast and multifaceted. This literature review will summarize the research that investigates the concepts of political discourse, social media, and framing theory, with an emphasis on the study of the framing art that Donald Trump employed on X during the Iran-Israel conflict. The review draws on key theories, frameworks, and past research to situate the research within a broader academic context.

Political Discourse and Social Media

Social media platforms and their influence on political discourse have become a hot topic of scholarly studies recently, especially concerning the rise of populism and the re-prioritization of

political communication. Social media platforms, particularly X, have become crucial sites for political communication, enabling politicians to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and engage directly with the public (Bucy & Groshek, 2017). Trump's prolific use of X during his presidency revolutionized the way political messages were disseminated, characterized by direct and often provocative language that resonated with his base (Chester & Montgomery, 2017).

The immediacy and reach of social media platforms have altered political communication by providing a platform for real-time engagement with constituents and global audiences (Effing et al., 2011). The interactor aspect enables political leaders, such as Trump, to establish a background and expand narratives without relying on conventional news channels. However, this democratization of political communication comes with significant challenges, including the rapid spread of misinformation, political polarization, and the potential manipulation of public opinion (Grossman, 2022). The Iran-Israel conflict highlighted the potential of X as an instrument of international relations, as exemplified by Donald Trump's use of the social media platform to influence global opinion.

Political Communication and the Framing Theory

Framing theory, as articulated by Erving Goffman (1974), offers a valuable lens through which to analyze how political actors construct narratives and shape public perceptions. Goffman (1974) describes framing as the narrowing down of certain features of reality that are perceived and laying stress on those features to create the disposition in the audience to apprehend and interpret the events. In political discourse, framing helps to define issues, categorize actors, and assign moral judgments, which in turn influence public opinion and political outcomes (Entman, 2009).

When it comes to Trump's posts and the development of his narrative about the Iran-Israel conflict, the framing theory can help us see how he constructs his narratives. Trump's use of language like "attack," "payload," and "war" constructs the conflict as a military struggle, which reflects a broader ideological stance that prioritizes military intervention and American dominance (Fairclough, 2003). Presenting the fight in such a manner, Trump is moving the United States as a powerful actor, the one who can take decisive measures unreservedly, on the one hand, and presents Iran as a threat requiring being contained or eradicated, on the other hand. This framing contributes to the construction of a binary opposition between the U.S. and its adversaries, reinforcing nationalist sentiments among Trump's followers and justifying U.S. interventionism in the Middle East (Duncombe, 2019).

Language Use and Construction of Power and Ideology

The political expressions that political leaders choose to adopt play a crucial role in shaping power relations and ideologies. Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a framework for examining how linguistic choices reflect and reproduce power dynamics. According to Fairclough (2003), discourse is not merely a medium for communication but a site where power is both enacted and challenged. As it applies to the posts Trump made, the language he comes up with is in line with his strategy of demonstrating American geopolitical and military superiority and making the conflict between Iran and Israel a conflict that can be resolved once the Americans become involved. The rhetorical choices he makes, such as using military metaphors and appealing to nationalist sentiments, contribute to the construction of a particular political reality that aligns with his administration's foreign policy goals.

Additionally, there is an inseparable relationship between Framing and Ideology; however, in many cases, language shapes ideological stands by political leaders and becomes a mirror to the wider socio-political setups to which the political leaders belong. Trump's posts often reinforce an

ideological framework that prioritizes American exceptionalism, military power, and a binary understanding of international conflicts (Homolar & Scholz, 2019). This ideological positioning can be seen in how he discusses the Iran-Israel conflict in his X account by ideologically portraying the U.S. as a peacekeeper and military powerhouse and Iran as a threat to world peace.

Role of Social Media on the Development of National Identity and International Relationships

The interest in the role of social media in shaping national identity and international relations has been growing rapidly among scholars. Social media platforms like X enable political leaders to communicate directly with both domestic and international audiences, thereby influencing the construction of national identities and the perception of international conflicts (KhosraviNik, 2017). Besides, a tendency towards using X to build international relations, observed with Trump, extends to changes in international relations in general, which are characterized by the addition of new elements of international relations conducted through social media interactions and even the replacement of conventional methods by unconventional ways of pursuing international relations. This shift has significant implications for how international conflicts are framed and understood by the global public (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020). Trump's posts on the Iran-Israel conflict demonstrate how leaders can utilize social media to assert their position in the international arena and shape how global audiences perceive complex geopolitical issues.

The Power of Social Media, Opinion, and Publicity

Another critical topic in political communication is the impact of social media on public opinion. Social media platforms, particularly X, have been shown to play a significant role in shaping public opinion by allowing political leaders to engage directly with their followers (Benkler et al., 2020). Moreover, the interaction methods at the heart of social media result in a feedback mechanism that both influences and reflects popular opinion in real time. This immediacy and direct engagement between political leaders and their audience amplifies the power of social media as a tool for political mobilization and influence (Riedl et al., 2023). The brevity of Trump's posts and their clarity make them part of constructing an inevitable reality in politics that affects how the Iran-Israel conflict is viewed in both local and international settings. By focusing on how Trump's posts frame the Iran-Israel conflict, this research will provide insight into the role of social media in shaping political discourse and influencing international relations (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020; Benkler et al., 2020; KhosraviNik, 2017).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a qualitative research design, relying on the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as described by Fairclough (2003) to analyze the posts of Donald Trump on the Iran-Israel conflict. The primary data consists of purposively selected posts from Trump's official X (formerly Twitter) account, chosen for their direct relevance to the conflict and their representative rhetorical features. Secondary data involves literature, news articles, and policy studies on political communication, framing theory, U.S. foreign policy, and the Iran-Israel conflict to provide the socio-political and historical context in which the interpretation takes place. Textual analysis in terms of linguistic and rhetorical elements (micro-level), examination of production and distribution practices on X (meso-level), and contextual interpretation within global power and ideological structures (macro-level). Coding up of the themes used in the analysis includes the military metaphors, American exceptionalism, and binary oppositions (us vs. them). Triangulation of sources and grounding of interpretations on existing research on CDA and framing theory are the ways of ensuring reliability and validity.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing how discourse serves not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for constructing power, shaping societal norms, and reflecting ideological positions. Such a model is instrumental when it comes to the political discourse, particularly regarding the social media communication by the famous sociopathic leaders, such as Donald Trump. It is a three-level model: text, discursive practice, and social practice are related to each other. Such levels enable a systematic and broad analysis of the process of costuming reality through language.

1. Text (Micro-level)

Fairclough (2003) supposes that language in the text is never neutral; it is always strategically selected and reveals the text to be influenced by certain ideologies. The initial stage in Fairclough's (2003) model involves examining the linguistic characteristics of the text. In the present research, the source material consists of Donald Trump's posts on the subject of the Iran-Israel conflict. Analyzing the linguistic features of the text and answering the question: what does the text say? The language, choice of words, syntax, grammatical forms, tone, style, and metaphors used in a text are the main focuses of this level. Additionally, the rhetorical devices are analyzed to uncover how these elements influence public perception of power and military capability.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-level)

The second tier of the Fairclough (2003) model is related to the discursive practices that regulate the production, distribution, and consumption of the text. This level explores the context in which the text is produced, focusing on the medium (in this case, X), the audience, and the interaction between the sender (Trump) and the receiver (his followers) understanding how the text interacts with the audience and the immediate context, or how is the text used and understood in interaction? This level explores the relationship between the text and its social context, including the purpose of the producer and the reception by the audience.

3. Social Practice (Macro-level)

The final level of Fairclough's (2003) model examines social practice, which involves placing the text and discursive practice in the broader socio-cultural and historical context. This level examines the way language operates concerning higher orders of power, ideology, and social relations. Fairclough (2003) stresses that discourse not only expresses reality but also creates and maintains healthy power relations. At this level, the focus is on understanding how discourse sustains or challenges power relations and ideologies in society.

Discussion and Analysis

This section provides a detailed analysis of Donald Trump's posts regarding the Iran-Israel conflict, utilizing Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover the power dynamics, ideologies, and rhetorical strategies embedded in his discourse. Trump's posts, especially in the context of international conflict, provide valuable insight into how social media can be leveraged to shape public opinion, construct political narratives, and reinforce power structures. In the considered analysis, three dimensions, according to Fairclough (2003), will be applied: the textual dimension, the discursive practice dimension, and the social practice dimension. By examining each of these layers, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Trump's

posts construct particular realities surrounding the Iran-Israel conflict and the underlying ideologies that inform his discourse.

Textual Analysis: Word Choice and Figure of Speech.

The textual dimension of Fairclough's (2003) model focuses on the linguistic features within the posts, examining the vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices used. There are also numerous uses of loaded vocabulary in the first post issued by Trump on the Iran-Israel conflict, which talks of completing a military strike on nuclear installations of Iran, as this builds a specific narrative around the military offensive. Through subtle words, such as "Attack", "Payload of the Bombs", and "Warriors", he creates images of power and control that are strong and visceral. The lexical choice of "bombs" and "attack" frames the military action as decisive and authoritative, minimizing the human cost of the violence and positioning the U.S. as a force for peace, as evidenced by the concluding sentence: "NOW IS THE TIME FOR PEACE!" This framing of violence as a pathway to peace simplifies the complexity of war and reduces it to a dichotomy of good versus evil, where the U.S. is portrayed as the righteous actor (Benkler et al., 2020). The use of the capitalized phrase "NOW IS THE TIME FOR PEACE" acts as a rhetorical device, employing urgency and the appeal to logic, which might suggest to the reader that the action taken was both justified and necessary for achieving peace. However, this juxtaposition of violence and peace is a strategic rhetorical move that obscures the moral implications of military intervention and constructs a narrative that American military actions are inherently peace-oriented (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020).

The same applies to the second post, in which Trump claims "Exactly where the so-called Supreme Leader is hiding", putting the U.S. in a mighty and powerful position where all possible power lies. The term "so-called" undermines the legitimacy of the Iranian leadership, conditioning the Supreme Leader as the symbol of illegitimate power whose authority is only appreciated by followers of Iran. This attitude, combined with the statement that he is an "Easy target", creates a picture of Iran as a weak opponent that the U.S. can trounce. The term "Patience is wearing thin" introduces a sense of impending action, which is another rhetorical device used to escalate tension, invoking a sense of urgency while maintaining the image of a controlled yet dominant force (KhosraviNik, 2017).

The third post creates the top rhetoric of American exceptionalism by stating that "We now have complete and total control of the skies over Iran". Here, Trump's use of "complete and total control" employs hyperbole to exaggerate American dominance, reinforcing the message that no other country—mainly not Iran—can rival the power of the U.S. military. The reference to "American made, conceived, and manufactured stuff" further bolsters this narrative of U.S. technological superiority, highlighting the perceived gap between U.S. military technology and Iran's defensive capabilities. By saying, "Nobody does it better than the good ol' USA," Trump taps into populist sentiments, invoking national pride and positioning the U.S. as the best in the world (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020). This language construction supports a rhetoric of American exceptionalism, one that reassures its constituency that the U.S. remains number one in the world in terms of military capabilities.

Discursive Practice: Text Production, Distribution, and Consumption

The discursive practice dimension focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse, examining how Trump's posts are framed and interpreted in a broader social context. Trump's posts, particularly during his presidency, were not only direct expressions of his views but were also shaped by

the broader political environment in which they were produced. The choice to use X as the medium for these messages is crucial, as it enables Trump to bypass traditional media channels and engage directly with his audience, including both supporters and critics (Benkler et al., 2020). This communication with the population without intermediaries through social media represents a transition to more familiar approaches to political communication, offering the opportunity to be more personal and convey a more provocative message. Trump's use of X has been described as a tool for shaping and controlling the narrative surrounding his policies, bypassing the filters of traditional news outlets (McDonnell & Wheeler, 2019). In the example of the Iran-Israel conflict, Trump posts as part of such a direct communication mechanism to enlist public support and sway the discussion about that conflict. With a focus on military powers, American supremacy, and the ethics of U.S. measures, Trump develops a discourse that resonates with his electorate and the broader American population. Furthermore, his posts were often picked up and circulated by both media outlets and his followers, amplifying his messages and shaping public discourse around U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020). This phenomenon illustrates how social media platforms, such as X, serve as powerful tools in the production and dissemination of political messages, contributing to the construction of global political ideologies and power relations (KhosraviNik, 2017).

Social Practice: Society and Power Moves

The social practice aspect examines the broader socio-cultural contexts within which the Trump discourse is situated. Trump's posts about the Iran-Israel conflict are not isolated expressions; they are embedded in a broader geopolitical context marked by the U.S.'s ongoing involvement in the Middle East, particularly regarding Iran and Israel. By putting the conflict into the words of American military supremacy and demonizing Iran as an opponent, Trump associates himself with the American historical narrative of taking control over world conflicts by relying on military power. This framing reflects and perpetuates the longstanding ideological divide between the U.S. and Iran, shaped by decades of tensions, including the Iranian Revolution, the U.S. embassy hostage crisis, and ongoing nuclear negotiations (Roomi, 2023). Trump's rhetorical choices reinforce the dominant power dynamics in the Middle East, where the U.S. positions itself as the ultimate global authority on peace and security, contrasting sharply with Iran's portrayal as a destabilizing force in the region (Benkler et al., 2020).

Moreover, Trump's invocation of American exceptionalism and military dominance speaks to broader societal attitudes in the U.S. that emphasize national pride and military strength. These posts are strategically designed to resonate with the American public, particularly his base, by tapping into populist sentiments and reinforcing the idea that the U.S. is both a global leader and a defender of peace (McDonnell & Wheeler, 2019). By simplifying the complex geopolitical realities of the Iran-Israel conflict into a binary of good versus evil, Trump's discourse not only shapes domestic perceptions of the conflict but also influences how the U.S. is perceived by other nations and global audiences (Ashbee & Hurst, 2020).

Therefore, Trump's posts on the Iran-Israel conflict illustrate the power of social media in shaping political discourse and framing international conflicts. Through strategic lexical choices, rhetorical devices, and framing techniques, Trump's posts construct a narrative that emphasizes American superiority, military dominance, and the righteousness of U.S. actions while positioning Iran as a threat to peace. The production, dissemination, and consumption of this discourse occur within broader contexts of U.S. foreign policy and global forces of power, which support existing power structures and have a significant impact on society globally.

Conclusion

This research sets out to critically analyze Donald Trump's posts on the Iran-Israel conflict using Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). An analysis of Trump's discourse, examining his social media communications in a highly meticulous manner, was undertaken to identify the ideologies, power relations, and framing strategies employed in his communications. It was observed that the posts by Trump on the Iran-Israel conflict follow a strategic protocol that allows U.S. military superiority over Iran, Iran as a feigned opponent, and U.S. intervention as necessary and justified in establishing peace. The rhetorical devices used in these posts include the

utilization of loaded vocabulary, hyperbole, and framing as methods to influence the masses and confirm the hierarchy of power. Furthermore, the discursive practices surrounding Trump's use of X as a direct communication tool enabled him to bypass traditional media, thereby exerting more control over the political narrative surrounding the conflict.

These results underscore that Trump's posts play the role of framing the Iran-Israel conflict as one that involves American exceptionalism, superior military capabilities, and a position of moral superiority, and downplay the ambiguously defined complexities and human cost of military involvement. Such discursive practices align with larger U.S. foreign policy interests and facilitate the construction of a binary narrative, according to which the U.S. is the bringer of peace and the Iranian government is the primary opponent. Trump's use of X as a platform for these messages is not incidental; it reflects a broader trend in political communication that leverages social media to influence public opinion and shape international relations in real time.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on how Donald Trump's posts about the Iran-Israel conflict serve as instruments in the construction of politics and the building of perceptions in society. By applying Fairclough's (2003) Three-Dimensional Model of CDA, the study not only illuminates the linguistic strategies employed in Trump's discourse but also reveals the broader socio-political implications of his posts. The results suggest that social media, and X in particular, have evolved into an influential platform that enables political leaders to shape international relations and perceptions on key issues, thereby transforming the process of political communication in the digital era.

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