
Uncovering Ideological Polarization: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Posts of Representatives of Iran and US during Iran-US conflict 2026

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Abstract

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, communication through social media platforms acts as the space to construct the narrative of war and peace. However, existing literature failed to address how the adversarial political actors utilize social media to construct their favorable narratives. This study examines the digital media posts of U.S. representative, Trump, from Truth Social and two Iranian representatives, Araghchi and Baqaei, from X to investigate the shift in strategic use of linguistic feature to frame “us vs them” ideology and “war” and “peace” narratives across three phases: pre-peace talks (3–9 April), during peace talks (10–12 April), and post-peace talks (13–19 April). This study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model as the primary framework to analyze the discourse at the micro level through textual analysis and integrates van Dijk's ideological Square and Chilton's Deictic Space Theory (DST) at this level. At the macro level, it explores the broader discursive and social practices in the discourse. The posts are selected using purposive sampling to compare ideological framing of power, military dominance, legitimacy, resistance, and national identity. The findings of the study reveal that political actors of both states maintain “us vs them” dichotomy through ideological polarization, strategic semantic fields, and deictic positioning. Moreover, the embedded discourse of peace through the competing ideologies of hegemony and sovereignty reflects that in modern geopolitical crisis, the linguistic features of diplomatic relations function not only as conflict resolution but also as a source of maintaining power and

ideological dominance. The finding of this study which sets it apart from the previous researches is the emergence of temporal compression theme. US representative uses language to compress time, transforming it into combat instrument to coerce inter-state conflict.

Keyword: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fairclough's 3D Model, Iran-US conflict, War Discourse, Media Framing, Military Dominance, Hegemony, National Identity, National Resistance

1. Introduction

The ideologically polarized conflict between United States of America and Islamic Republic of Iran has been causing economic decline and financial uncertainty. This divide has structurally conflictual foundation since 1979, which led to 2026 military escalations and geopolitical friction (Hussain, 2015; Saleem et al., 2025). This 2026 Iran- US conflict is not only a physical war but an online and virtual manipulation as well. Language is used to shape and influence war narratives. Prior to military actions, War narratives are generated to normalize their escalations, legitimize their actions and to rehearse the reasons (Kvernbekk & Bøe-Hansen, 2017).

The space for international negotiations in wartimes has been shifted from traditional means such as official letters and formal press releases to modern, digital diplomacy. Today, this has been shifted due to the involvement of social media which has removed the screening parameters traditionally applied by news editors (Duncombe, 2017). State actors shape political and social realities, and deterrent severing during severe hostilities, like 2026 Iran-US war, by utilizing these digital platforms' strategic instruments. It follows that when political leaders use micro structure, like political talk, etc., it leads to the acting out, defending and changing of macro structures, such as politics, and state power (Van Dijk, 1993).

The similar trajectory can be observed in 2026 Iran-US conflict, making this time significant for the analysis. Political discourse is not static, rather it is constantly evolving in response to the ongoing situations. Additionally, social media platforms are unfiltered and can be utilized to shape the realities and influence narratives during wartimes which makes it crucial to analyze the wartime discourse. The major concern is that this wartime narrative imposition can disrupt global narratives and cause major problems. To address this problem, this study explores US representative's posts, Donald J. Trump from Truth Social, and Iranian representatives', Abbas Araghchi and Esmaeil Baqaei from X in pre, during and post peace talk phase. Fairclough's 3D Model, van Dijk's Ideological Square and Chilton's Deictic Space Theory are applied in this study to unveil the nature of language used by the leaders of both countries at three levels: textual, discursive and social level of Fairclough 3D Model. While textual level being backed by other two theoretical frameworks.

This study has major significances in the domain of war communication and digital diplomacy, emphasizing the conceptualization of capabilities of unauthorized digital platforms to escalate, de-escalate and solve the conflict. For students and discourse analysts, it can be helpful to understand the integration of these frameworks for war discourse analysis. Overall, this study contributes to the comprehension of deeply rooted and hidden ideologies of official social media posts which is pivotal for awareness, education of citizens, preventing political miscalculations, and recognizing manipulations in online spaces. This study aims to analyze the linguistic and discursive strategies deployed by US and Iranian representatives to frame “us vs. them” and their ideological framing in social media posts. Existing literature mostly analyze the political discourse in peace times and previous studies lack the analysis at all three phases, pre, during and post, especially in comparative analysis. This study fills this gap in the literature by addressing these questions:

1. How do US and Iran strategically use linguistic tools to represent war and peace in their digital posts during 2026 Iran-US conflict?
2. Which ideologies do both government representatives embed deeply in their social media posts across peace talk?

2. Theoretical Background

This study employs Fairclough’s three-dimensional model as a macro framework, backed by Chilton’s Deictic Space Theory and van Dijk’s Ideological Square at textual level.

2.1 Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Model

Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, proposed in 1992, provides a comprehensive approach to analyze a text by studying both social interaction and wider social and political context (Fairclough, 1992). The model analyzes the discourse at three interrelated dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice.

At first level, the capabilities of textual choices are examined for ideological framing. In this context, textual analysis identifies how linguistic choices may frame issues such as “war” and “peace” in a particular way. At second level, the production, circulation and consumption of text is examined. In this context, the production and distribution of narrative and discourse by state representatives is examined at this level. Whereas, at third level, social level, it is examined how social structures are maintained, ideologies power relations and hegemonic structures are sustained in the society through discourse. In this discourse, it is analyzed how government uses language to legitimizes their actions and construct identities.

2.2 Paul Chilton’s Deictic Space Theory

The Deictic Space Theory (DST) by Paul Chilton is a cognitive-linguistic framework that is based on the assumption that individuals understand the world through spatial, temporal and modal coordinates by discourse manipulation. These coordinates are centered on a deictic point of reference, that represents the speaker or their immediate in-group (Chilton, 2014). In this context, it is examined how the government uses these coordinates to place themselves at

the deictic center, and out-group at the far distance, marginalizing them. In this study, DST is an important analytical tool employed alongside Fairclough's three-dimensional framework at textual level. It is used to investigate how Iranian and U.S political representatives reframe their political relationship by constructing "us vs. them" relation before, after and during peace talk across digital media platforms.

2.3 van Dijk's Ideological Square

Teun van Dijk's Ideological Square is an influential framework to identify how political figures intentionally reproduce, legitimize specific ideologies and strengthen group identity and legitimize their actions through discourse. Individuals employs these strategies to emphasize or de-emphasize the positive and negative attributes of certain social groups, using polarization between "Us" and "Them". In this study, van Dijk's Ideological Square is backing Fairclough's textual level to analyze how Iranian and U.S representatives shape positive self-identity and negative other-identity in their social media discourse during Iran-US conflict 2026.

2.4 Review of Previous Studies

Political discourse on international conflict is primarily established on the intentional symbolic boundaries that shape the public opinion to support aggressive actions. Van Dijk (2005) called this as ideological polarization between "Us" and "Them" that reflects positive self-identity and negative other-identity, a mechanism employed in various geopolitical crisis. Research on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict shows that state control media use cognitive stereotypes and strategic lexicon to frame military operation into a wider global issue (Brusylovskaya and Maksymenko 2023). Similarly, textual analysis of Gaza war (2008-2009) reporting and news coverage on the Palestine-Israeli conflict reveals strategic manipulation of agency through passivization and nominalization, to emphasize the positive actions of allied groups while portraying the opponents as criminal and violent (Amer, 2017; Aljoundi, 2025). Moreover, study on East African war reporting further illustrates that local media organizations create in-group and out-group divides to reinforce unequal power structures and legitimize state-sanctioned violence (Nigatu, 2023).

In digital age, social media platforms have become central space for political communication and ideological controversy, enabling political leaders communicate directly with global audiences without any mediation (Chadwick, 2017). State actors use these platforms strategically to shape public perceptions and trigger emotional responses during geopolitical crisis. Recent empirical studies on similar conflicts confirm that political leader consistently employ intense lexicons, aggressive military metaphors, and modality expressions to portray their absolute power while delegitimizing opponents (Awad et al., 2026; Ahmad et al., 2025). In the specific context of Iran-US conflict 2026, study by Putri et al. (2026) demonstrate that international media employs systematic lexical framing to construct the narrative of threat and moral polarization that shape social perceptions of the conflict. Besides media framing, the Iran-US conflict represents a multidimensional

ideological crisis that is shaped by decades of competing regional interests, proxy wars, and nuclear enrichment programs and is further extended into military escalation (Ismail et al., 2026; Bibi et al., 2025).

From CDA perspective, research shows that a sustainable de-escalation demands gradual discursive shifts where interaction and negotiation build trust over time (Lundgren et al., 2023). However, contemporary geopolitical conflicts suggest de-escalation process is increasingly weekend by persistent ideological polarization embedded in digital political discourse.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design and does comparative critical discourse analysis of social media posts of Iranian and US representatives in the context of 2026 Iran-US conflict.

3.1 Data Corpus and Sampling

The data corpus for this study consists entirely of social media text produced by primary state actors during 2026 Iran-US war. The data corpus was collected from the official websites, Truth Social for US representative, Donald J. Trump and X for Iranian representatives, Abbas Araghchi and Esmail Baqaei. After purposive sampling and carefully selecting only war context, text-based posts, the total number of 42 Trump's posts and 25 Iranian representatives' posts were included, across all three phases: one week of pre (3-9 April), during (10-12 April) and one week of post peace talk phase (13-19 April).

3.2 Analytical Framework

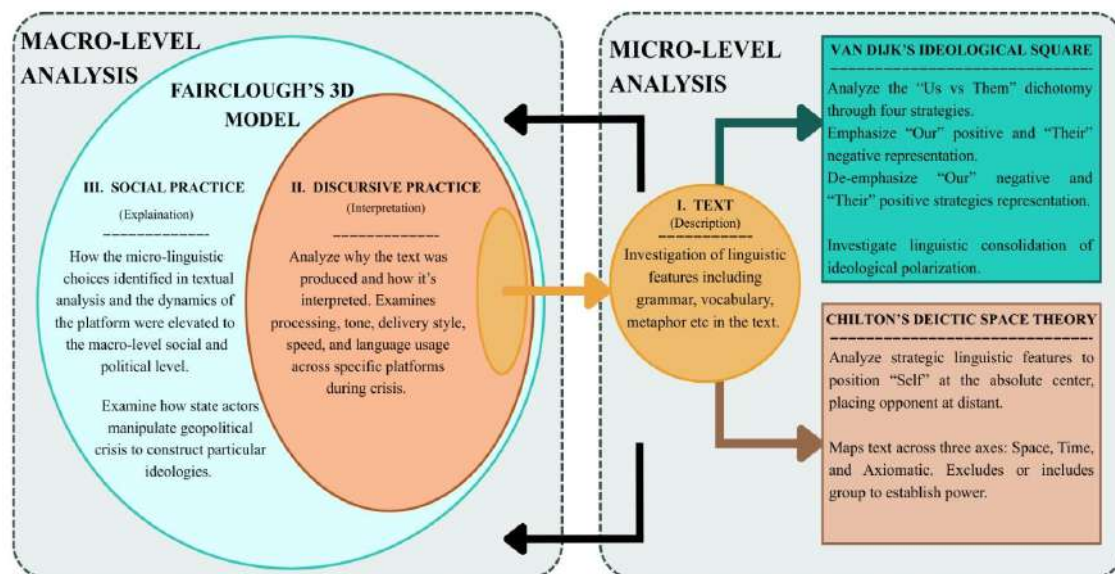
This study incorporates the multilayered theoretical frameworks for the foundation of this critical analysis that synthesizes Fairclough's 3D Model Framework, Chilton's Deictic Space Theory (DST) and Van Dijk's Ideological Square. These models are not isolated from each other, rather they support and strengthen each other and are integrated into each other.

The Fairclough 3D Model Framework acts as an umbrella concept analyzing the text at three dimensions: text (Description), discursive practices (interpretation) and social practices (Explanation). The first dimension of this framework, Textual level, is explained by Van Dijk's Ideological Square. This tool is utilized to analyze how linguistic choices consolidates "us vs them" dichotomy by highlighting their virtues, opponents' negative actions and de-emphasizing their own negative actions and adversaries' virtues.

Chilton's DST support this level of framework that how actors position themselves at the absolute central point by making strategic linguistic choices. The opponents are placed far and at distance from the deictic central space where they position their "Self". Furthermore, these tools get linked to outer dimensions of Fairclough's framework, examining how the language is produced, circulated and how it shapes and constructs ideologies in society.

Figure 3.1

Integrated Analytical Framework



3.3 Data Analysis procedure

After finalizing the data and carefully arranging it according to the time, the data is analyzed at two levels: micro and macro level.

3.3.1 Micro-Level Analysis

At this stage of data analysis, Fairclough's Text Dimension serves as the bases for the investigation of grammar, vocabulary, metaphors and other linguistic items' choices. Concurrently, van Dijk's Ideological square assist in text examination at this stage for creating ideological polarization by focusing on four different strategies. Whereas, Chilton's DST is employed at this level to analyze how text is exploited to exclude or include groups and establish power by mapping it across three axes, space, time and axiomatic axis.

3.3.2 Macro-Level Analysis

This level of analysis includes the other two dimensions of Fairclough's 3D Model, discursive practice and social practice. At the stage of discursive practice analysis, the researcher moves from "what" to "why" of the text. The researcher analyzes text's processing and interpretation by examining how being constrained to specific platform influence tone, delivery style, speed, and linguistic usage of the respective actors used across the crisis.

However, at the level of social practices analysis, the micro-linguistic choices identified at micro-level and dynamics of platform were elevated into macro (sociopolitical) level. Here, it is analyzed how the linguistic choices constructed, perspectivized, and manipulated the narrative warfare, keeping the events of Strait of Hormuz blockade and Islamabad negotiations in consideration that how do political events and social realities impact the lexical selection and vice versa.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Phase 1: Pre-Peace Talks (3–9 April)

4.1.1 Micro-Level Analysis

Lexicalization and Evaluative Language. Lexicalization is the prominent strategy deploy by both state actors, but with different semantic domains for expression. Trumps posts repeatedly frame military dominance and hegemony as the testaments of efficacy and capability through dictions like “the greatest and most powerful anywhere in the World”, and “Complete and Total Regime Change”. The positively characterized military lexicons naturalize coercion and subjugation while legitimizes decimation as medium of attaining political imperatives. Conversely, Iranian discourse present Iran as the subject of unjust violence and aggression employing vocabulary of vulnerability, defiance and moral acceptability such as “terrorist war crime,” “crime of aggression,” “illegal war,” “moral collapse,” and “destruction of Iran and Iranians”.

Agency and Transitivity. The attribution of agency varies among two discourses. US representative utilizes active transitivity to present US as the grammatical actor and Iran as the affected and targeted participant. US discourse emphasizes Americans competence by using stating, ““We have rescued,” “We have achieved,” “The United States will work closely with Iran,” and “we have already met and exceeded all Military objectives”. However, Iranian representatives exclusively linked with resilience and reformulation through statements such as, “Every bridge and building will be built back stronger,” “Iran stands taller,” and “Aggressors will see our might”. The Iranian discourse constructs Iran’s identity as the resilient actor who can bypass eradication rather than instigating hostilities while frame US as the active aggressor and initiator of conflict.

Pronouns and Collective Identity. There is a contrastive difference in the use of a cohesive and strong collective pronoun “Us”. US representative uses integrative first-person plural pronoun “we” along with possessive forms such as “our Military,” “our troops,” and “our great MILITARY WARRIORS!” to presents national unity as undisputed, configuring the consensus between the President, the armed establishment and the American nation. On the contrary, Iranian discourse use collective pronouns “our” in statements such as, “our brave armed forces”, and “our Bushehr plant” to portray a sense of preserving national security, protection of civilians and autonomy.

Modality and Certainty. US discourse heavily relies on high modality and absolute certainty that projects the narrative of decisive and unnegotiable leadership in these modal formulation statements such as, “has to be done, and has to be done, FAST!” “There will be nothing like it,” “the Strait of Hormuz WILL BE OPEN & SAFE,” “There will be no enrichment of Uranium,” and “Shootin’ Starts”. Contrastingly, Iranian representatives use modality to imply prerequisite and tactful dispositions in expressions such as, “clarification is needed,” “the U.S. must choose,” “have never refused,” and “If the U S. wishes”.

Ideological Polarization (Van Dijk's Ideological Square). van Dijk's Ideological square is evident in corpora of both US and Iran. The US emphasizes positive-self presentation by claiming their forces as "professional," "brave," and "successful." while negative-other representation by stating Iranian leadership as "poorly and unwisely" which is leading "substantially degraded Enemy". However, Iranian discourse employs opposite dimension, emphasizing positive-self presentation as courageous by stating as "Iran stands taller, prouder, and greater than ever", whereas negative-other presentation by attributing US and Israel as "aggressors," and instigators of "war crimes".

Deictic Positioning (Chilton's Deictic Space Theory). The construction of opposing spatial center is evident in both discourses. US projects itself as the deictic centre while positioning Iran at a distance using expressions such as, "enemy territory," "deep inside the mountains of Iran," and "destroying what's left in Iran. US discourse frames Iran itself as deprived of peace-making agency and is bound to conformity to America's demands. Iranian discourse, instead position Iran at the deictic center of affiliation and validation as projects in statements like "beloved city of Shiraz", "our bridges", and "our petrochemicals" that constructs a proximate space threatened by distant transgressors.

4.1.2 Macro-Level Analysis

The use of particular lexicons in conflicting discourses highlights two different narratives of same geopolitical reality. The US representative's discourse frames military dominance and victory as basis of global order and political control and even establishes peace in aggressive context of regime change where peace is tied to the absolute surrender by the opponent. Concurrently, Iranian discourse posits anti-hegemonic narrative emphasizing hostilities on Iranian infrastructures to reconstruct the narrative of conflict as paternalistic intervention instead of systematic conflict. This discursive shift has given Iran the moral rights and international sympathy to retaliate.

At the macro-social level, the US projects himself as the warrantor of global security and stability through entitlement, interventionist control, and systematic superiority. While, Iran consolidates territorial integrity and anti-hegemonic contestation, projecting any external aggression as direct danger to both nationhood and national sovereignty.

Although the peace-talk was emerged by the end of this phase, both states continued using the language to consolidate their own ideological perspectives rather than implying conceptual alignment. Resultantly, the pre-peace talk phase created a completely divided environment where both states construct their notion of peace and war at the same time.

4.2 Phase 2: During Peace Talks (10–12 April)

4.2.1 Micro-Level Analysis

Lexicalization and Evaluative Language. Both governments continued to produce the divergent diplomatic narratives, but shifted from open warfare to conditional negotiations. The US discourse delegitimizes Iran while simultaneously reassuring America's authority through using strategic lexicons. For example, lexical items such as "LOSING BIG," and "unpredictable people" is used to project Iran as an irrational actor jeopardizes international security, while reinforcing America's preeminence through statements like "the finest in the World". On contrary, Iranian discourse avoids victorious lexicons, instead establishes on the diction of negotiation and legality. Remarks such as "good faith," "legitimate rights and interests," and "diplomatic process" introduce Iran as rational actor pursuing lawful dispute settlement rather than armed conquest.

Agency and Transitivity. Agency remains largely riveted in the US discourse. Expressions such as "the United States Navy will begin the process of BLOCKADING," and "we are fully LOCKED AND LOADED" presents US as the main actor who has military power and control while Iran is the recipient of American verdicts. Iranian discourse instead employs agency to negotiators and concerted efforts rather than military interventions. Statements such as "Iranian negotiators are employing all their capabilities," and "nothing can or should delay us from pursuing our mission" frame diplomacy as active engagement to negotiation rather than contestation.

Modality and Certainty. Regardless of the peace-talk, high modality is exhibited in US discourse through unconditional and explicit expressions. Expressions such as "IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON," and "Any Iranian who fires at us will be BLOWN TO HELL" leave little or no lexical space for diplomacy and frame international engagement as contingent on Iranian conformation with American requirements. On contrast, Iranian discourse employs mild and conditional modality. Expression like, "the success of this diplomatic process depends on the seriousness and good faith of the opposing side", ties the diplomacy process to the good faith while emphasizing sustainable negotiation over escalation.

Ideological Polarization (Van Dijk's Ideological Square). Ideological division remain apparent throughout the peace mediation phase. In US discourse, positive self-presentation is portrayed through military competence, leadership and capital resources' importance for the global order in statements like "WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL RESET!!!". Simultaneously, Iranians are projected as the instigators of negative actions, in the form of their involvement in "extortion", and "nuclear ambition". Iranian discourse instead projects a competing ideological dimension and presents themselves positively as devoted to diplomacy, equity, and constitutional rights. While they negatively portray US as the one that normalizes "terror", "violence", and "state terrorism".

Deictic Positioning (Chilton's Deictic Space Theory). US continues to position itself at the deictic center of interstate power and control and manipulates language to portray itself as legalized guardian of international affairs through expressions like, "International Waters", "the Strait of Hormuz", and "Countries all over the World". Iran is constantly positioned at distance whose actions are jeopardizing international stability.

In contrast, Iranian discourse formulates deictic space around the national autonomy and international relations in the expressions such as "our great historical mission" and "Iran's rights and interests". By mentioning Islamabad negotiations, Iranian discourse is positioned on the deictic center of national interest who is seeking regional stability through corporation rather than military escalation.

4.2.2 Macro-Level Analysis

The discourse of peace-talk phase, reflects a transformation from explicit military conflict to diplomatic debate, but with a persistent difference in the ideological perspectives. The discourse of Trump frames the negotiation as military dominance, economic power and strategic pressure while exploiting peace with conditional negotiation regarding Iranian nuclear abilities and the Strait of Hormuz. On contrary, Iranian discourse construct the narrative of diplomacy around the continuation of national resistance and grounding it in legality, historical experience, country's national rights, and good faith to protect state sovereignty rather than accepting external pressure. Their discourse continuously challenges American's framing strategies that are normalizing the state violence.

At the social level, representatives of both states continuously build the perception of world order. The U.S portrays itself as a global protector due to its military and ideological power while Iran tries to support their ideology of sovereign equality, resistance and diplomatic legitimacy. Despite the increase in the negotiation related lexicons during this phase, the constant ideological polarization between two states represents that peace talks primarily functions to renegotiate the power relations rather than resolve conflict.

4.3 Phase 3: Post-Peace Talks (13–19 April)

4.3.1 Micro-Level Analysis

Lexicalization and Evaluative Language. Discourse of post-peace talks phase shows a shift from negotiation to direct conflict and threat related vocabulary. Trump's discourse is full of capitalized militaristic dictions such as "BLOCKADE," "ELIMINATED," and "IRAN KILLING MACHINE" that reflects militaristic dominance and legitimization of disciplinary actions while establishing authority and urgency. Conversely, Iranian discourse employ expressions of legality and victimhood, such as "act of aggression," "collective punishment," and "crime against humanity" that frame US actions as violation of international laws. Additionally, the use of lexicons, like "heroic resistance" and "Long live Iran" in Iranian discourse reinforces Iran's national integrity and resilience against external forces.

Agency and Transitivity. In post-peace talk discourse, US represent American's military and political power as sole actor of violence through the statements such as, "the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran" and "our BLOCKADE has already closed it" while simultaneously frame Iran as violator in expressions, like "Iran decided to fire bullets". On contrary, in Iranian discourse agency is divided strategically where Iran is positioned as an active diplomatic participant using statements like "Iran engaged with U.S in good faith to end war" while US is represented as the actor of the violence in statements like "America's heinous war crime in international waters".

Modality and Certainty. US discourse employs absolute future certainty which presents America's actions as final and non-negotiable through statements like, "is going to knock out," "will be immediately ELIMINATED," and "will never happen again". Even diplomatic statements like "We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL" are carried an imposed compliance. However, Iranian discourse shifts from conditional certainty to high certainty through declarative statements like, "The United States' so-called 'blockade' both unlawful and criminal" "it amounts to war crime and crime against humanity" and "No rule of international law forbids Iran" that accuses US of their violence and legitimizes Iranian actions.

Ideological Polarization (Van Dijk's Ideological Square). Discourse, in this phase, heavily relies on van Dijk's ideological square. Trumps discourse positions US as global protector by emphasizing positive self-image in statements like, "I am permanently opening the Strait of Hormuz. I am doing it for them, also - And the World" while emphasizing negative other-image and frames Iran as "killing machine," "extortionist state". Conversely, Iranian discourse employs van Dijk to emphasize their moral resilience, legitimacy of their actions, and national identity using terms like, "heroic resistance of the Iranian nation" while de-emphasizing U.S representation through terms such as "economic terrorism," "state violence," and "collective punishment".

Deictic Positioning (Chilton's DST). Trump's discourse position US in spatial and moral axes of global supremacy sending forces into Iranian territory as expressed in his statement "knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," while placing Iran at weary edge requiring military control. *Contrastingly*, terms like "homeland", "territorial waters", and "No rule of international law forbids Iran, the coastal State" in Iranian discourse position Iran's national sovereignty at the deictic center that owns defensive rights and resistance against external aggressors.

4.3.2 Macro-Level Analysis

The post-peace talk discourse shows a return to authoritarian communicative strategies. Trump's discourse reframes peace as an enforced restriction under military pressure rather than a mutual agreement. Iranian discourse simultaneously shifts from

negotiation to legal and moral resistance positioning the conflict within international laws war crimes, and violation of human rights instead of structural power imbalance. At social level, both discourses reflect the propagation of established geopolitical ideologies. Trump's discourse is based on the imperialist worldview where global order is imposed and maintained through military and economic dominance while Iranian representatives establishes anti-hegemonic ideology based on sovereign equality and legitimate resistance. In this phase, peace is represented as a condition imposed through dominance or gain through resistance instead of a mutual agreement between states while language is manipulated to establish geopolitical boundaries and dominance.

5. Discussion

Guided by Fairclough's 3D Model Framework, this study analyzed the interrelationship between text, discursive practices, and social practices across three distinct temporal phases of the 2026 Iran-US conflict. By tracking discursive shifts across these phases, the study illustrates how both state actors produced and distributed discursive practices to construct ideological dominance, impose military supremacy, or galvanize civilizational counter-hegemony — proving that in the 2026 Iran-US conflict, language remained the primal contestation arena.

Micro Level

The findings at the micro-linguistic level strongly align with Putri et al. (2026), who observed that international conflicts are framed by manipulating particular lexical features to reinforce threat and division between allies and adversaries. The analysis reveals the similar pattern of contrasting semantic fields. The US discourse is loaded with militaristic diction and economic framing while Iranian discourse is relied on stable, legal and civilizational language. The finding also supports Ahmad et al. (2025) and Awad et al. (2026), who argued that modern political leaders employ emotive and intensified lexicon, militaristic rhetoric and certainty markers in their digital discourse to construct perceptions of strength and authority. The present study extends this literature by illustrating that while US representative employs similar assertive language to frame military interventions as decisive and unavoidable, Iranian representatives instead used highly diplomatic and legalistic rhetoric to legitimize their resistance and challenge the opposing state's narrative. This finding broadens previous research by highlighting that adversarial states not only use different vocabulary but construct a totally different reality of the same event. The one state represents military escalation as success and power while the other portrays the same intervention as violation of international laws and threat to national sovereignty.

The strategic use of transitivity patterns in both discourses also confirms research on manipulation of grammatical agency in political discourse. Studies on Gaza war revealed that political leaders frame one side as dominant actor while suppressing the agency of the opposing side (Amer, 2017; Aljoundi, 2025). The current study highlights that US discourse consistently positions America as dominant actor responsible for geopolitical order while

Iranian discourse distributes agency strategically by emphasizing their diplomacy and collective resistance while transferring aggression to external forces. This confirms that even in digital communication, transitivity manipulation is a powerful strategy to construct ideology of power relations.

The integration of van Dijk's ideological square provides evidence that across all three phases, both state representatives persistently engage in positive self-representation and negative other-representation. This confirms similar polarization patterns observed by Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) and Nigatu (2023). However, this study contributes to existing literature by revealing that ideological polarization remained structurally same across all three phases even as situation changed from conflict to negotiation. Chilton's DST further supports that opposing representatives constructed contrasting geopolitical realities. US discourse extending its deictic center outward with strong deontic certainty while Iranian discourse adopted defensive spatial coordinates, legitimizing resistance through stable legal language rather than aggressive assertions.

Macro Level

The macro-level findings align with Chadwick (2017) on digital platform-mediated diplomacy but extend this research by highlighting that platform choice significantly influences discursive strategies. US representatives employed personalized, emotionally simplified communication while Iranian representatives maintained institutionalized, legal and formal statements throughout all three phases, demonstrating different ways adversarial states employ digital platforms to present their actions as legitimate. Moreover, the macro-discursive observations also align with Ismail et al. (2026) and Bibi et al. (2025), demonstrating that the US-Iran conflict cannot be comprehended through military escalation only but is equally a war over distinct perspectives of world order. The US discourse projects global dominance and imperialism while Iranian discourse relies on state sovereignty, anti-imperial resistance and national identity.

The most significant contribution of this study is its challenge to Lundgren et al. (2023), who illustrated that de-escalation emerges through stepwise communicative adjustments building trust over time. However, this study demonstrates that although negotiation-related language increased during the peace talk phase, ideological polarization remained intact throughout. Peace transformed from a shared agreement into a contested discursive construct where both states continued conflicting over power relations instead to achieve ideological alignment.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

This study illustrates that the Iran-US geopolitical conflict was not only established through military escalations but also actively fought across digital platforms through strategic use of discursive practices. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model alongside van Dijk's Ideological Square and Chilton's DST, this research reveals that language used by political

elites on social media during active warfare does not merely inform the global audience but operates a multi-layered linguistic mechanism to reinforce ideological control and particular geopolitical identities.

The findings reveal that two oppositions work on completely different communicative strategies regarding the same conflict. Trump constantly establishes the narrative of exceptionalism, global power, and threat using specific lexicons to assert imperial orders and commodify territorial sovereignty. On the other hand, Iranian representatives construct their discourse across post-colonial sovereignty and civilizational resistance against hegemonic control, exploiting international laws to frame their actions as demand for survival.

This research contributes to critical discourse studies by highlighting that continuous rhetorical conflict from pre-peace talk to post-peace talk phase reveals that diplomatic resolution cannot be achieved when language is used to impose threat and warnings rather than build mutual agreement. In the current digital world, on-ground war and virtual conflict reinforce each other where language is strategically framed to establish international legitimacy, threat and power.

Limitations: This study is limited to a specific three-phase time window around Islamabad peace talks. The dataset reflects irregularities, 42 Trump posts versus 25 Iranian posts, limiting comparability. Analysis relies entirely on textual content without incorporating visual or multimedia elements. Additionally, translation of Persian posts introduces slight risk of socio-cultural dilution. Future studies should expand the corpus to include original Persian sources, integrate Multimodal CDA, and conduct longitudinal analysis beyond the 2026 crisis to examine whether extreme wartime discourse permanently alters inter-state diplomatic pathways.

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