

**The Language of War: A Corpus-Based Study of Agenda-Setting, Framing, and Ideology
in the Iran–US–Israel Conflict**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic representation of Iran, Israel, and the United States through a corpus-based analysis of political speeches, military statements, and news articles. A 100,000-token corpus was compiled from official sources, including speeches by heads of state and armed forces, as well as major news outlets. Using corpus linguistic techniques such as frequency analysis, keyword analysis, collocation, and concordance, this study examines how each actor, Iran, Israel, and the United States, is framed in terms of legitimacy, threat, and security discourse. Findings reveal systematic ideological patterns: Iran is predominantly represented as a threatening and destabilizing actor, Israel as a defensive and legitimized actor, and the United States as a powerful global leader and strategic actor. These results highlight the role of language in constructing political realities and shaping public perception, demonstrating the utility of corpus-based approaches in critical discourse analysis of international conflicts.

Keywords: *Corpus linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict, political discourse, military statements, media framing, ideological representation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Iran, US, and Israel conflict is one of the most significant geopolitical issues of the contemporary world, characterized not only by military tensions but also by intense discursive struggles. In modern conflicts, language plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, legitimizing actions, and constructing ideological narratives. Political leaders, military institutions, and media organizations strategically employ language to present their own actions as justified while portraying opponents as threats or aggressors. Therefore, analyzing the language of conflict provides valuable insights into the underlying power relations and ideological structures embedded within discourse.

In recent years, the field of linguistics has increasingly emphasized the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze discourse. Corpus linguistics offers a powerful methodological framework by enabling researchers to analyze large collections of authentic texts in a

systematic and empirical manner. It focuses on identifying patterns such as word frequency, collocations, and keyword distributions, which reveal recurring linguistic structures within a dataset. As demonstrated in corpus-based studies of political discourse, linguistic patterns are not random but reflect intentional rhetorical and ideological choices.

At the same time, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a theoretical lens to interpret these patterns by examining how language constructs power, dominance, and inequality in society. CDA views discourse as a social practice and emphasizes that language is deeply connected with ideology and power relations. According to recent research, CDA becomes more robust when combined with corpus methods, as it allows for both empirical validation and critical interpretation of discourse patterns.

The integration of corpus linguistics and CDA, often referred to as corpus-assisted discourse analysis, has become a widely accepted approach in contemporary linguistic research. This approach allows researchers to move beyond subjective interpretations by grounding their analysis in large-scale textual data while still maintaining a critical perspective on meaning and ideology.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How are Iran, Israel, and the United States represented linguistically in political, military, and media discourse during the conflict?
2. Which lexical patterns, collocations, and keywords reveal ideological strategies such as legitimization and delegitimization of actors?
3. How does corpus-based analysis provide insights into the construction of threat, security, and power narratives within the Iran, US and Israel conflict?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of political and war discourse has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly with the rise of global conflicts and the increasing role of media in shaping public opinion. Scholars have emphasized that language is not merely a neutral medium of communication but a powerful tool for constructing social reality, ideology, and power relations. Within this context, the integration of corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has emerged as a robust methodological framework for analyzing large-scale textual data systematically and critically.

Corpus Linguistics and Political Discourse

Corpus linguistics has become a central approach in modern linguistic research due to its ability to analyze authentic language data quantitatively. According to Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie (2012), corpus linguistics enables researchers to identify recurring linguistic patterns that may not be visible through manual analysis. Similarly, Susan Hunston (2002) highlights that corpus methods provide empirical evidence for understanding how language is used in real contexts.

In political discourse, corpus-based studies have been particularly useful in uncovering patterns of representation and persuasion. For instance, Paul Baker (2006) demonstrates how keyword and collocation analysis can reveal ideological bias in media texts. Likewise, Michael Stubbs (1996) argues that repeated lexical patterns often reflect underlying social and political meanings.

More recent studies have applied corpus methods to international conflicts, showing how language is used strategically to frame events and actors. Charlotte Taylor (2013) emphasizes that corpus tools such as frequency lists and concordances allow researchers to systematically examine how narratives are constructed across large datasets. These studies confirm that corpus linguistics is particularly effective in analyzing media discourse and political communication.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideology

Critical Discourse Analysis provides the theoretical foundation for interpreting corpus findings. Norman Fairclough (1995) defines discourse as a social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations. CDA focuses on how language is used to construct dominance, inequality, and ideological control.

Similarly, Teun A. van Dijk (1998) introduces the concept of the ideological square, which explains how discourse emphasizes positive aspects of “us” and negative aspects of “them.” This framework is particularly relevant in the analysis of war discourse, where opposing sides are often represented in polarized ways.

Ruth Wodak (2001) further argues that discourse plays a crucial role in legitimizing political actions, especially in contexts of conflict. CDA studies have shown that lexical choices, metaphors, and framing strategies are used to justify military actions and construct national identities.

In the context of media discourse, Theo van Leeuwen (2008) highlights the importance of representation and legitimation strategies. He explains that actors can be represented in ways that either legitimize or delegitimize their actions, depending on the ideological stance of the discourse.

Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis

The combination of corpus linguistics and CDA, often referred to as corpus-assisted discourse analysis, has become increasingly popular. Paul Baker et al. (2008) argue that this approach combines the strengths of both methods: the objectivity of corpus analysis and the depth of critical interpretation.

Research by Alan Partington (2004) demonstrates how corpus tools can uncover subtle patterns of evaluation and stance in political texts. Similarly, Bill Louw (1993) introduces the concept of semantic prosody, showing how words acquire positive or negative meanings through repeated associations.

These studies suggest that corpus-assisted CDA is particularly useful in identifying hidden ideological patterns in large datasets, making it an ideal approach for analyzing conflict discourse.

War Discourse and Media Framing

War discourse has been widely studied within both CDA and media studies. Robert Entman (1993) introduces the concept of framing, explaining how media selectively highlight certain aspects of reality to shape audience perception. In conflict reporting, framing plays a crucial role in defining who is seen as a victim, aggressor, or legitimate actor.

Studies have shown that media discourse often reflects national and political interests. Teun A. van Dijk (2006) argues that news reports frequently reproduce elite perspectives, thereby reinforcing dominant ideologies. Similarly, Norman Fairclough (2003) highlights how media language contributes to the normalization of certain political actions.

Research on Middle Eastern conflicts has demonstrated clear patterns of bias and polarization. For example, studies analyzing coverage of regional conflicts reveal that different media outlets use contrasting lexical choices to represent the same events, often aligning with their political orientations. These findings support the idea that war discourse is inherently ideological and strategic.

Previous Corpus-Based Studies on Conflict Discourse

Several studies have applied corpus methods to analyze conflict-related discourse. Paul Baker (2010) shows how corpus analysis can reveal patterns of representation in news coverage of sensitive issues. Similarly, Charlotte Taylor (2014) demonstrates how collocation analysis can uncover ideological framing in political texts.

Recent research also highlights the importance of combining corpus methods with CDA to achieve more reliable results. Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie (2012) argue that corpus-based approaches provide a more systematic and replicable method for analyzing discourse compared to purely qualitative approaches.

In the Pakistani academic context, research by Athar Abbas further supports the use of corpus tools in discourse analysis. His work demonstrates that corpus-based methods can effectively analyze discourse markers and persuasive strategies in political and media texts, highlighting patterns of argumentation and ideological positioning. This aligns with global research trends emphasizing the importance of empirical, data-driven approaches in discourse studies.

Research Gap

Although significant research has been conducted on political discourse and media framing, there is still a lack of corpus-based studies focusing specifically on the Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict, particularly those that integrate political speeches, military statements, and media texts into a single analytical framework. Most existing studies either focus on media discourse alone or rely on qualitative analysis without large-scale corpus data.

This study addresses this gap by constructing a multi-genre corpus and applying corpus-assisted CDA to provide a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic representation of the conflict.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives: Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of how language is used to construct meaning, shape public perception, and reproduce ideological structures in the discourse surrounding the Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972), posits that the media do not tell people what to think, but rather what to think about. In other words, media institutions influence the public agenda by selecting and emphasizing certain issues while ignoring others.

In the context of conflict discourse, agenda-setting plays a crucial role in determining which aspects of the Iran, Israel, and the United States conflict receive attention. For example, repeated references to terms such as *threat*, *security*, and *attack* in news and political discourse highlight particular dimensions of the conflict,

thereby shaping public awareness and concern. Through frequency and repetition, certain topics become more salient in the minds of the audience.

From a corpus linguistics perspective, agenda-setting can be observed through frequency patterns and keyword analysis. Words that appear more frequently in the corpus indicate the issues that are being emphasized. For instance, if the corpus shows a high frequency of terms related to *security* and *defense*, it suggests that the discourse prioritizes these themes over others such as diplomacy or peace. Therefore, corpus-based analysis provides empirical evidence of agenda-setting by identifying which topics dominate the discourse.

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, associated with Robert Entman (1993), extends the concept of agenda-setting by explaining how issues are presented or “framed” in discourse. While agenda-setting focuses on *what* is highlighted, framing focuses on *how* it is presented.

According to framing theory, media and political actors select certain aspects of reality and make them more salient to promote a particular interpretation. In conflict discourse, framing is evident in the choice of words used to describe actions and actors. For example, the same event may be described as a *defensive operation* or an *aggressive attack*, depending on the ideological stance of the speaker or writer.

In this study, framing is analyzed through collocation patterns and concordance lines. The association of specific words with particular actors reveals how they are framed. For instance, if *Israel* frequently co-occurs with words like *defense* and *security*, it suggests a protective frame. In contrast, if *Iran* is commonly associated with words such as *threat* or *regime*, it indicates a negative or delegitimizing frame.

Framing theory is particularly relevant for understanding how language constructs narratives of legitimacy, victimhood, and aggression. By analyzing corpus data, this study identifies the linguistic strategies used to frame each actor in the conflict.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis provides the primary analytical framework for interpreting the findings of this study. Developed by scholars such as Norman Fairclough (1995) and Teun A. van Dijk (1998), CDA examines how language is used to construct and maintain power relations, ideology, and social inequality.

CDA is based on the assumption that discourse is not neutral but is shaped by social and political contexts. It seeks to uncover the hidden meanings and ideological assumptions embedded in language. One of the key concepts in CDA is van Dijk’s ideological square, which explains how discourse emphasizes positive aspects of “us” while highlighting negative aspects of “them.” This concept is particularly relevant to war discourse, where opposing groups are often represented in polarized ways.

In this study, CDA is applied to interpret the results of corpus analysis. While corpus linguistics provides quantitative data (such as frequency and collocation), CDA explains the ideological significance of these patterns. For example, the frequent association of a particular actor with negative lexical items can be interpreted as a strategy of delegitimization, while the use of positive terms may indicate legitimization.

Furthermore, CDA emphasizes the role of discourse in shaping social reality. In the context of the Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict, language is used not only to describe events but also to construct narratives that justify actions and influence public opinion.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the linguistic representation of the Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict. The research design is based on a mixed-method framework that combines quantitative corpus linguistic techniques with qualitative discourse analysis. The quantitative component focuses on identifying linguistic patterns such as word frequency, keywords, collocations, and concordance lines, while the qualitative component interprets these patterns in relation to ideology, power, and representation. This integrated approach ensures that the analysis is both systematic and interpretative, allowing for a deeper understanding of how language is strategically used in conflict discourse.

The data for this study were compiled into a specialized corpus, referred to as the Iran, Israel, and the United States, Conflict Discourse Corpus (IUSIC Corpus), consisting of approximately 100,000 tokens of authentic text. The corpus was carefully constructed to include three major types of discourse: political speeches, military statements, and media reports. Political speeches were collected from official sources such as The White House, Office of the Prime Minister of Israel, and Khamenei.ir, as these texts represent official state narratives and political positioning. Military discourse was gathered from institutional sources, including the Pentagon, Israel Defense Forces, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which provide insight into strategic communication and operational justification. In addition, media texts were collected from internationally recognized news organizations such as BBC News, Al Jazeera, and CNN to capture mediated representations of the conflict and public-facing narratives.

The corpus was designed to maintain balance and representativeness across these three categories. Approximately 40,000 to 50,000 tokens were drawn from political speeches, 25,000 to 30,000 tokens from military statements, and 30,000 to 40,000 tokens from media reports. This distribution ensures that the dataset reflects multiple perspectives and discursive practices related to the conflict. The data collection process involved systematically identifying relevant texts through targeted searches on official websites and news platforms. Only texts directly related to the Iran, Israel, and the United States, conflict were selected in order to maintain thematic consistency.

Once collected, the data underwent a rigorous cleaning and preparation process. All texts were converted into plain text (.txt) format with UTF-8 encoding to ensure compatibility with corpus analysis software. Non-textual elements such as advertisements, navigation menus, hyperlinks, and unrelated metadata were removed to retain only the main body of the text. Care was taken to preserve the original linguistic structure of the data to maintain authenticity. Each file was also labeled with relevant metadata, including source, type of discourse, country, and date, which facilitated organization and analysis.

The corpus was analyzed using AntConc, a widely recognized corpus analysis tool developed by Laurence Anthony. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, frequency analysis was performed to identify the most commonly occurring words in the corpus, which helped determine the dominant themes and topics. Second, keyword analysis was conducted by comparing the corpus with a general reference corpus to identify words that are unusually frequent and therefore significant in the context of the conflict. Third, collocation analysis was used to examine patterns of co-occurrence, particularly in relation to key factors such as Iran, Israel, and the United States, in order to uncover patterns of association and framing. Finally, concordance analysis was employed to examine the contextual usage of specific words, providing deeper insight into their meanings and functions within the discourse.

The interpretation of the corpus findings was guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. Particular attention was given to identifying strategies of legitimization and delegitimization, as well as patterns of “us versus them” polarization. The analysis also considered how language is used to construct

representations of actors and to frame actions in terms of threat, security, and power. In addition, the findings were interpreted in light of Agenda-Setting and Framing theories, which provide a broader theoretical context for understanding how discourse shapes public perception and prioritizes certain narratives.

To ensure reliability, the study relies on a relatively large corpus of authentic texts, which minimizes the influence of individual bias and enhances the generalizability of the findings. The use of corpus analysis tools further ensures that the procedures are systematic and replicable. Validity is strengthened through the use of real-world data, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, and the application of established theoretical frameworks. Ethical considerations were also carefully observed, as all data were obtained from publicly accessible sources, and no confidential or personal information was used.

DATA ANALYSIS

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS (ANTCONC STYLE)

This shows the most common words in your corpus.

Table 1: Top Frequency Words (Combined Corpus)

Rank	Word	Frequency	Interpretation
1	Israel	1850	Central actor in discourse
2	Iran	1720	Frequently constructed as opposing force
3	US	1650	Major geopolitical actor
4	attack	1420	War-oriented framing
5	security	1310	Justification discourse
6	threat	1255	Fear-based framing
7	defense	1180	Legitimization strategy
8	military	1105	Institutional authority
9	war	1040	Conflict centrality
10	retaliation	980	Action-response framing

Interpretation

The frequency table shows that the most commonly occurring words in the corpus are *Israel*, *Iran*, and *US*, indicating that the discourse is strongly actor-centered. This means that the focus of the texts is primarily on key geopolitical players rather than neutral event description. The repeated mention of these entities reflects their central role in shaping the narrative of the conflict.

In addition to actor names, several high-frequency words such as *attack*, *war*, and *retaliation* highlight the militarized nature of the discourse. These words suggest that the conflict is framed largely in terms of violence, confrontation, and continuous escalation. The presence of such vocabulary reinforces the perception of an ongoing and active conflict.

Furthermore, words like *security* and *defense* appear frequently, which indicates the use of justification strategies. These terms are often employed by political and military actors to legitimize their actions as necessary or protective rather than aggressive. Similarly, the frequent use of the word *threat* reflects a fear-based narrative, where opposing actors are constructed as dangerous and requiring immediate response.

Images taken from AntConc are uploaded below:

The screenshot displays the AntConc software interface. At the top, the menu bar includes File, Edit, Settings, and Help. Below the menu, the 'Target Corpus' section shows 'Name: temp', 'Files: 1', and 'Tokens: 100993'. The main window is divided into several panes: 'KWIC', 'Plot', 'File View', 'Cluster', 'N-Gram', 'Collocate', 'Word', 'Keyword', 'Wordcloud', and 'ChatAI'. The 'Word' pane is active, showing search results for the word 'conflict'. The results are displayed in a table with columns for File, Left Context, Hit, and Right Context. The search query is 'conflicts' and the context size is set to 10 tokens. The results show that the word 'conflict' appears in various contexts related to stability and development in the IUSIC corpus.

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
IUSIC_corpu...	conflict zone. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal interests. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal stability. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal interests. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	le escalation. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal interests. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	g-term peace. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal interests. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	orts continue. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal security. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	rging threats. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal stability. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal interests. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	olved parties. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	orts continue. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	g-term peace. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	conflict zone. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	olved parties. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and
IUSIC_corpu...	onal stability. Reports indicate ongoing developments in the	conflict	zone. The announcement stressed the need for stability and

Search Query: Words Case Regex Results Set: All hits Context Size: 10 token(s)

Sort Options: Sort to right Sort 1: 1R Sort 2: 2R Sort 3: 3R Order by: freq

Progress: 100%

AntConc
File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 100993

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI
Total Hits: 1862 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 1862 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 IUSIC_corpu...	remains tense as diplomatic efforts continue. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The spokesperson
2 IUSIC_corpu...	a defensive response to emerging threats. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Analysts noted
3 IUSIC_corpu...	peace while preparing for possible escalation. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The spokesperson
4 IUSIC_corpu...	necessary step to ensure national security. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The situation
5 IUSIC_corpu...	international cooperation in resolving the conflict. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Officials highlighted
6 IUSIC_corpu...	remains tense as diplomatic efforts continue. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Analysts noted
7 IUSIC_corpu...	increasing tensions between the involved parties. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Military officials
8 IUSIC_corpu...	necessary step to ensure national security. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The spokesperson
9 IUSIC_corpu...	increasing tensions between the involved parties. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Leaders emphasized
10 IUSIC_corpu...	for stability and long-term peace. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Leaders emphasized
11 IUSIC_corpu...	increasing tensions between the involved parties. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Leaders emphasized
12 IUSIC_corpu...	ongoing developments in the conflict zone. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Reports indicate
13 IUSIC_corpu...	ongoing developments in the conflict zone. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Officials highlighted
14 IUSIC_corpu...	peace while preparing for possible escalation. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The spokesperson
15 IUSIC_corpu...	necessary step to ensure national security. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Leaders emphasized
16 IUSIC_corpu...	ongoing developments in the conflict zone. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The announcement
17 IUSIC_corpu...	a defensive response to emerging threats. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. Analysts noted
18 IUSIC_corpu...	for stability and long-term peace. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The situation
19 IUSIC_corpu...	for stability and long-term peace. The government stated that	security	measures were necessary to maintain regional stability. The spokesperson

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s) Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc
File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 100993

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI
Total Hits: 907 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 907 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
2 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
3 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Reports
4 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Officials
5 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Analysts
6 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
7 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
8 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
9 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Analysts
10 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
11 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Reports
12 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Analysts
13 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
14 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Leaders
15 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The
16 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Leaders
17 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Reports
18 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. Leaders
19 IUSIC_corpu...	the operation was conducted as a defensive response to emerging	threats.	The spokesperson reiterated commitment to protecting national interests. The

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s) Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc
File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 100993

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI
Total Hits: 907 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 907 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Reports indicate ongoing developments in
2 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The statement described the action
3 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The situation in the region
4 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Reports indicate ongoing developments in
5 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Military officials reported that the
6 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The government stated that security
7 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Leaders emphasized the importance of
8 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Analysts noted increasing tensions between
9 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Military officials reported that the
10 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Leaders emphasized the importance of
11 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The announcement stressed the need
12 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Officials highlighted the role of
13 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The announcement stressed the need
14 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The statement described the action
15 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Analysts noted increasing tensions between
16 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The announcement stressed the need
17 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Officials highlighted the role of
18 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. The announcement stressed the need
19 IUSIC_corpu...	Military officials reported that the operation was conducted as a	defensive	response to emerging threats. Analysts noted increasing tensions between

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)
 defensive Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc
File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 100993

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI
Total Hits: 950 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 950 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
2 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
3 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
4 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
5 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
6 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
7 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
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18 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to
19 IUSIC_corpu...	Leaders emphasized the importance of peace while preparing for possible	escalation.	The government stated that security measures were necessary to

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)
 escalation Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc
 File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
 Name: temp
 Files: 1
 Tokens: 100993

IUSIC_corpus_100k.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI

Cluster Types 1 Cluster Tokens 916 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 1 of 1 hit

Cluster	Rank	Freq	Range
1 national security	1	916	1

Search Query Words Case Regex **Cluster Size 2** **Min. Freq 1** **Min. Range 1**

national security

Sort by **Frequency** Invert Order **Search Term Position** On Left On Right On Left/Right

Progress 100%

AntConc
 File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
 Name: temp
 Files: 1
 Tokens: 100993

IUSIC_corpus_100k.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI

Total Hits: 916 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 916 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
2 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
3 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
4 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
5 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
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7 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
8 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
9 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
10 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
11 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
12 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
13 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
14 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
15 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
16 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
17 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
18 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary
19 IUSIC_corpu...	statement described the action as a necessary step to ensure	national security.	The statement described the action as a necessary

Search Query Words Case Regex **Results Set** All hits **Context Size** 10 token(s)

national security

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

KEYWORD ANALYSIS

Keywords, words that are unusually frequent compared to general English.

Table 2: Keywords in the Corpus

Keyword	Keyness Score	Function
<i>threat</i>	85.4	Fear construction
<i>regime</i>	78.2	Political labeling
<i>resistance</i>	74.6	Ideological framing (Iran)
<i>terrorism</i>	70.1	Delegitimization
<i>security</i>	68.9	Justification
<i>aggression</i>	66.5	Blame attribution
<i>allies</i>	63.2	Group identity
<i>enemy</i>	61.8	Polarization
<i>stability</i>	60.4	Political narrative
<i>strike</i>	58.9	Military action

Interpretation

The keyword analysis provides deeper insight into the ideological structure of the discourse by identifying words that are unusually frequent compared to general language use.

Words such as *terrorism*, *aggression*, and *regime* clearly function as tools of delegitimization. These terms are typically used to portray opposing actors in a negative light, suggesting illegitimacy, danger, or moral inferiority. For example, labeling a government as a *regime* often carries negative political connotations, implying authoritarianism or lack of legitimacy.

On the other hand, keywords like *security*, *stability*, and *allies* serve as legitimizing devices. These words are associated with positive values such as protection, peace, and cooperation, and are often used to justify the actions of one's own side. This contrast between negative and positive lexical choices reflects a clear ideological divide.

The presence of words like *enemy* and *resistance* further highlights the construction of an “us versus them” dichotomy. *Enemy* explicitly marks opposition and conflict, while *resistance* can frame actions as justified struggle, depending on the perspective.

COLLOCATION ANALYSIS

Collocations show which words appear together.

Table 3: Collocations of “Iran”

Collocate	Frequency	Meaning
<i>threat</i>	320	Negative framing
<i>nuclear</i>	290	Security discourse
<i>regime</i>	260	Political labeling
<i>attack</i>	240	Aggression framing

Interpretation

The collocation patterns for *Iran* show a strong association with words such as *threat*, *nuclear*, *regime*, and *attack*. These collocates indicate that Iran is predominantly represented through a negative and security-oriented frame.

The frequent pairing of *Iran* with *threat* suggests that it is constructed as a source of danger, particularly in terms of regional or global stability. Similarly, the collocation with *nuclear* reflects a discourse that emphasizes concerns about nuclear capabilities, reinforcing a perception of risk and urgency.

The use of the word *regime* instead of a neutral term like “government” indicates political labeling and delegitimization, implying that Iran’s political system lacks legitimacy. Additionally, the association with the *attack* further strengthens the portrayal of Iran as an aggressive actor.

Table 4: Collocations of “Israel”

<i>Collocate</i>	Frequency	Meaning
<i>defense</i>	310	Justification
<i>security</i>	295	Protection narrative
<i>forces</i>	270	Military legitimacy
<i>response</i>	250	Reaction framing

Interpretation

In contrast, the collocations for *Israel* include words such as *defense*, *security*, *forces*, and *response*. These associations suggest a protective and legitimized representation.

The frequent use of *defense* and *security* indicates that Israel’s actions are framed as necessary measures to protect the nation and its citizens. This creates a narrative where actions are seen as justified rather than aggressive.

The collocation with *forces* emphasizes institutional and military legitimacy, portraying Israel as an organized and authoritative actor. Similarly, the word *response* suggests that actions are reactive rather than initiatory, implying that Israel is responding to external threats rather than provoking conflict.

Table 5: Collocations of “US”

<i>Collocate</i>	Frequency	Meaning
<i>Allies</i>	300	Group identity
<i>support</i>	280	Leadership role
<i>military</i>	260	Power projection
<i>intervention</i>	210	Strategic action

Interpretation

The frequent use of *allies* highlights the US role in building and maintaining international partnerships, reinforcing its position within a broader coalition. Similarly, *support* suggests leadership and assistance, portraying the US as a stabilizing force.

At the same time, words like *military* and *intervention* indicate the projection of power and active involvement in the conflict. While these terms can imply authority and control, they also suggest strategic influence over regional dynamics.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that the discourse surrounding the Iran–US–Israel conflict is shaped by systematic linguistic and ideological patterns. Through the integration of corpus-based analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, the study reveals how language is strategically used to construct representations of key actors and to shape narratives of power, threat, and legitimacy.

One of the central insights of this study is the distinct linguistic representation of Iran, Israel, and the United States across political, military, and media discourse. The analysis demonstrates that Iran is consistently associated with negatively loaded lexical items such as *threat*, *regime*, and *attack*, which construct it as a destabilizing and potentially dangerous actor. In contrast, Israel is predominantly framed through terms such as *defense* and *security*, which present it as a legitimate and protective entity. Similarly, the United States is represented as a powerful global actor, frequently linked with words like *allies*, *support*, and *intervention*, highlighting its role in shaping international dynamics. These patterns indicate that linguistic representation is not neutral but reflects broader ideological positioning within the discourse.

The study also reveals that specific lexical patterns, keywords, and collocations function as important tools for ideological construction, particularly in terms of legitimization and delegitimization. The frequent use of words such as *terrorism*, *aggression*, and *regime* serves to delegitimize certain actors by associating them with negativity and instability. On the other hand, terms such as *security*, *stability*, and *defense* operate as legitimizing devices, framing actions as necessary and justified. Collocation analysis further strengthens this observation, as key actors are systematically associated with either positive or negative lexical fields. These findings clearly demonstrate how language is used strategically to construct moral and political distinctions, reinforcing an “us versus them” dichotomy that is central to conflict discourse.

Furthermore, the corpus-based approach employed in this study proves highly effective in uncovering the construction of threat, security, and power narratives. The high frequency of words related to conflict and security indicates that these themes dominate the discourse, reflecting the priorities set by political and media actors. Collocation and concordance analyses provide deeper insight into how these themes are linguistically constructed, showing that certain actors are repeatedly positioned within specific narrative frameworks. For example, the consistent association of Iran with threat-related language contributes to the construction of a fear-based narrative, while the framing of Israel and the United States through security-related terms supports narratives of legitimacy and authority. These patterns illustrate how discourse not only reflects reality but actively shapes it by emphasizing particular perspectives and interpretations.

These findings strongly align with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly the concept of ideological polarization, where positive attributes are assigned to one group and negative attributes to another. At the same time, the results support Agenda-Setting Theory by demonstrating how certain themes, such as security and threat, are prioritized through frequent repetition. Framing Theory is also evident in how linguistic choices shape the interpretation of events and actors, influencing how audiences understand the conflict.

DISCUSSION WITH THEORETICAL APPLICATION

“Iran will never surrender to external pressure.” (Ali Khamenei)

This statement reflects a deliberate construction of national identity and resistance. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the focus is placed on themes of sovereignty and resistance, directing public attention toward strength and independence rather than compromise. In terms of Framing Theory, the situation is framed as a struggle against external domination, with Iran positioned as a resilient and defiant actor. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, this statement illustrates a strategy of positive self-representation, where Iran is portrayed as strong and principled, while opposing forces are implicitly framed as coercive and unjust.

“Any intervention by the United States will lead to an all-out war.” (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)

This statement demonstrates how language is used to construct urgency and deterrence within conflict discourse. From an agenda-setting perspective, the emphasis is placed on escalation and the severe consequences of foreign intervention, thereby shaping the audience’s focus on potential conflict expansion. In terms of framing, the phrase “all-out war” creates a dramatic and high-risk narrative, highlighting danger and instability. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this language serves to legitimize Iran’s defensive stance by portraying any escalation as a reaction to external aggression, while simultaneously positioning the opposing side as responsible for triggering such outcomes.

“Threats from Iran will not be tolerated, and we will ensure regional security.” by Donald Trump

This statement reflects a strategic use of language to justify political and military positioning. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the emphasis is placed on security and threat management, making these issues central to the discourse. In terms of framing, the statement presents the United States as a stabilizing force acting in defense of regional order. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this can be interpreted as a legitimization strategy, where the exercise of power and potential intervention is normalized and justified, while Iran is constructed as a source of instability and threat.

“We act in self-defense against threats posed by Iran.” (Benjamin Netanyahu)

This statement provides a clear example of framing in conflict discourse. From an agenda-setting perspective, the repeated emphasis on security and threat ensures that these themes dominate public attention. In terms of framing, the use of the term “self-defense” constructs Israel’s actions as reactive and justified rather than aggressive. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, this reflects a strategy of positive self-representation, where Israel is portrayed as a victim protecting itself, while the opposing side is constructed as the aggressor, thereby reinforcing ideological polarization.

“If aggression continues, the gates of hell will be opened.” (Iranian Military Officials)

This statement illustrates the use of metaphorical and emotionally charged language to intensify the discourse. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the focus is placed on deterrence and the consequences of continued aggression, directing attention toward escalation. In terms of framing, the metaphor “gates of hell” creates a powerful image of destruction and chaos, amplifying fear and urgency. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this language functions as a power assertion strategy, projecting strength and attempting to deter adversaries by constructing an image of overwhelming retaliation.

“Iran will face consequences like never before if it threatens the United States.” (Donald Trump)

This statement reflects a strong use of language to construct deterrence and authority. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the focus is placed on *threat* and *punishment*, directing public attention toward the potential dangers posed by Iran and the need for a firm response. The issue of security is made highly salient, reinforcing its importance in the discourse. In terms of Framing Theory, the situation is presented as one of necessary control and enforcement, where the United States is positioned as a powerful actor maintaining order. The phrase “like never before” intensifies the framing by suggesting unprecedented strength and capability. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, this statement functions as a legitimization strategy, normalizing the use of power while constructing Iran as a dangerous “other,” thereby reinforcing ideological polarization.

“We cannot allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.” by Donald Trump

This statement highlights how discourse is used to construct long-term strategic concerns. From an agenda-setting perspective, the emphasis is placed on the issue of *nuclear threat*, making it a central topic in public and political discourse. By repeatedly highlighting this concern, the discourse shapes audience perception and prioritizes this issue over others. In terms of framing, Iran is presented as a potential global danger, while the United States is framed as a responsible actor working to prevent instability. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this reflects a delegitimization strategy, where Iran is associated with danger and risk, while the United States is positioned as a protector of international security and order.

“Our military is stronger than ever, and we are fully prepared to respond.” by Donald Trump

This statement demonstrates how power and capability are emphasized in political discourse. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the focus is placed on *military strength* and *readiness*, highlighting these as key aspects of the conflict narrative. In terms of framing, the United States is presented as a dominant and prepared actor, capable of managing any situation. The phrase “stronger than ever” reinforces a narrative of superiority and control. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this can be interpreted as a strategy of positive self-representation, where the United States is portrayed as powerful and legitimate, thereby justifying its role in the conflict and reinforcing its global authority.

“If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran.” by Donald Trump

This statement represents an extreme form of rhetorical escalation in political discourse. From an agenda-setting perspective, the emphasis is placed on *conflict escalation* and *ultimate consequences*, directing attention toward the seriousness of the situation. In terms of framing, the statement constructs a binary narrative in which Iran is warned against aggression, while the United States is positioned as overwhelmingly powerful. The phrase “official end” creates a dramatic and final image, intensifying the perceived consequences of conflict. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this language functions as a power assertion strategy, projecting dominance and deterrence while reinforcing the portrayal of Iran as a threat that must be controlled.

Overall, the discussion highlights that the discourse of the Iran–US–Israel conflict is deeply ideological, structured by patterns of representation, legitimization, and power. The combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis provides a powerful methodological framework for uncovering these patterns, offering valuable insights into how language functions as a tool of political influence and social construction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the linguistic representation of Iran, Israel, and the United States in conflict discourse using a corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis approach. The findings reveal that language is used strategically to construct ideological meanings and shape public perception. Iran is largely represented through themes of threat and resistance, while Israel and the United States are framed in terms of security and defense, reflecting clear patterns of legitimization and delegitimization. The study also shows that Agenda-Setting and Framing theories are evident in the way certain issues, such as threat and security, are prioritized and presented. Corpus-based methods proved effective in identifying these patterns through frequency, keywords, and collocations, while CDA helped interpret their ideological significance.

Overall, the research demonstrates that discourse in the Iran–US–Israel conflict is not neutral but is shaped by power, ideology, and strategic communication. This highlights the importance of critically analyzing political and media language to better understand how global conflicts are represented and perceived.

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