



## **Interplay of Language: A CDA of Selected Iranian Media Reports after US Withdrawal of Troops from Afghanistan**

**Aziz Ullah Khan**

PhD Scholar, Qurtuba University, Peshawar [Email.azizullah50@yahoo.com](mailto:Email.azizullah50@yahoo.com)

**Mujib Rahman**

Professor of Applied Linguistics, Qurtuba University, Peshawar

**Saqlain Hassan\***

Assistant Professor, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Email. [saqlain.hassan@riphah.edu.pk](mailto:saqlain.hassan@riphah.edu.pk)

### **Abstract**

The withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan was a significant development in the war on terror, which insinuated a wide range of perceptions among politicians, diplomats, and relevant personnel around the world as presented through their media outlets. In this paper, news reports from selected Iranian English newspapers between August 15, 2021, and December 31, 2021, have been taken up for analysis using a discourse historical approach and corpus linguistics to analyse and evaluate how perceptions have been shaped and presented using various discursive strategies. The aim is also to understand how the Iranian media presented this event and shaped the specific narrative through different linguistic tools and strategies. The analysis reveals that, with a recurring emphasis on common themes, keyword co-occurrences, content choices, and specific linguistic strategies such as argumentation and perspectivation, Iranian media have sought to portray the US-led war in Afghanistan as a disaster and failure with far-reaching effects in the region. The Iranian media has also projected its in-group and out-group identities and associated itself with different countries and ideologies. The researcher believes that further studies can be conducted by comparing news reports from different countries within the given time period, or by selecting editorials from different countries for comparative analysis.

**Keywords:** Withdrawal of Troops, Coalition, Discourse Historical Approach, Corpus Analysis, Discursive strategies.

### **1. Introduction**

The current study is based on two significant issues. Among the issues is the fact that despite the departure of the US troops in Afghanistan, the war does not appear to have ended. Barry Pavel (2021), the senior vice president and director of the Scowcroft Centre for Strategy and Security at the Atlantic Council, has aptly opined that there is a need for



more strategies, efforts, and resources at the levels of media, the military, and diplomacy to navigate this transitional period into a new age. They require new alliances and discourses that would guarantee the success and safety of concerned countries and actors on the international level (van Dijk, 2021). It is unclear how the media will be instrumental in determining and constructing the identities and ideologies of the US and allied countries, along with the now ruling Taliban regime in Afghanistan. However, it seems that media sources are already in the process of creating, imposing and ascribing identities and ideologies of Afghanistan and the US, as the media involvement, biased coverage and treatment of events are inevitable in the wake of how media has been playing its role in the past (Berger & Luckmann, 1976; Fowler, 1991; Beard, 2000). This is also a major concern and the driving force behind conducting the study.

As for why Afghanistan continues to matter, various arguments have been presented, suggesting that the post-US withdrawal scenario is mainly a paradigm shift in global politics, especially in South Asian political conflicts and relationships. As Gopalan and Vezhaventhan (2021) have suggested, it represents a significant paradigm shift and was unanticipated by the international community. Through the arrival of the so-called 'notorious, terrorist organisation' Taliban, all the burden falls on them in building a state and developing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Yet, they have their own worldview and peculiar geopolitical significance, which makes their future more mysterious. The challenges of terrorism, economic crisis, internal conflict, international sanctions, and pressures are the most significant problems that cause significant threats to the people of Afghanistan, especially the women. The fact that Afghanistan holds untapped mineral resources like platinum, silver, copper, lithium, uranium, aluminium, chromite, and gold can help the country scale down its reliance on foreign assistance, outlawed economies, and security challenges. However, resolutions to these grave challenges are not sufficient for a smooth transition of the country to prosperity. Of serious concern is that the hardline approach of the Taliban regime might render the country unable to prosper, and there will be civil war and an acute humanitarian crisis in the country (Daniel, 2021).

Despite establishing the government, the Taliban declared some promising decrees to the country, which appear to be far-fetched before they become a reality. They declared a blanket amnesty to former government employees and their allies in case they acknowledged the Taliban government. They also announced that they will employ all civilian and military workers according to their skills. Additionally, their pledges further strengthened government and social structures, ensuring the safety of minorities, enabling them to coexist harmoniously, and creating a secure environment in which



business, industrial, and non-governmental organisations could operate. The Taliban government, too, sought assistance from neighbouring countries. China announced it would help its neighbours during the crisis. Russia also made a bold claim that the Taliban had secured the country within the first twenty-four hours, as compared to the previous government that existed before the withdrawal of American troops (Tariq et al., 2020).

In these risky, difficult, and dynamic circumstances in Afghanistan, the culture and procedures of constructing a particular discourse by the media persist as usual in the West, particularly in the post 9/11 world. All potential tools and strategies are used to create narratives about the Taliban government. The use of print media is also a major means of disseminating and shaping ideologies and identities among the masses. As a primary manifestation of mass media, news reports play a critical role in both the distribution of information and the construction of societal discourses (Allan, 2010).

Critical Discourse Analysis is considered a useful way to critique and analyse the hidden agendas, strategies, and techniques used in news discourse (van Dijk, 1995). Fairclough, Mulderrig, and Wodak (2011) stated that CDA is critical, problem-oriented, and interdisciplinary, and that it is closely interdependent in analysing the applications of linguistic means and other strategies in the media. The media text producers choose to report certain events, make their evaluations based on certain perspectives and omissions, and focus on some details. Such information falls under critical discourse analysis because discourse is a social practice that shapes most people through the media. CDA, therefore, helps us understand how the ideologies and identities of the text producers shape news releases and how national identities and ideologies are created, discredited, or formulated in accordance with the vested interests of the text producers or their agencies. Accordingly, a news report is not simply a fact about any event but a particular socio-political talk that has propagated implications and interests. CDA offers both a theoretical and methodological foundation for examining the realities of media reporting on events and phenomena.

Another tool that has been well used to study discourses at larger scales is Corpus Linguistics. The researcher has also combined this research approach with CDA to gain an in-depth understanding of Lexico-grammatical features and collocation patterns in the selected discourse of news reports. Corpus-driven research is deemed faster and more dedicated at delivering results by leveraging diverse software tools. This study can be further improved, particularly in its detailed discourse analysis and genre research. In the present research, news items are considered a media language genre; thus, a combination of the two mentioned research techniques would be more efficient for the



study and analysis of media language.

The very concepts of neutral language and journalistic ethics in the news media, along with the purported factuality that features the style of hard news reports, can be methodically approached and analysed. Such an approach examines how various news media, which profess to follow a set of journalistic values, provide alternative discursive constructions of discourses of the same event. Even though Fried (2021) remarks on the US's disengagement from Afghanistan, stating that history bewilders expectations, particularly those expressed in the aftermath of significant events, is true, by all means. Yet, participants and doers of the discourses since the modern era have placed the greatest importance on the war waged in the media. Critical discourse analysis has been advanced by Fowler (1991) and Kress (1983), who argue that press reporting seeks to impose a version of the actual world that may be decisively tailored and manipulative.

## **2. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

It is necessary to examine news articles critically to avoid bias in the aftermath of the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The views and actions of many countries, especially the US and Afghanistan, could take new shapes in the light of the events following the end of the longest war on terrorism. In this way, the reporting must be evaluated critically, and it must be determined whether it is made on a specific angle (Fowler, 1991, p. 10). Beard (2000) also emphasises the point mentioned earlier in the paper: there is no unbiased news because there has been no neutral language.

The value of this research also lies in its exploration and analysis of news reports in a discursive manner and in its demonstration of how the human mind is highly manipulated and how incidents are made headlines. It is to understand the power of language and how it can be wielded to control the masses, discursively, through the creation of ideologies and identities, despite providing coverage of a disastrous event.

In this interconnected, digital world, where media has emerged as a potent weapon for both combat and competition, the assimilation and dissemination of ideologies and identities have become increasingly important, especially in the expression of international politics in the aftermath of globalisation. This aspect also justifies the current research because it reviews how the war against terrorism by the US and allied forces ended and the withdrawal of troops that was executed and then projected through the media. The concerned countries have various stakes, especially the allied forces, since they have invested trillions, yet much remains unfinished. The media has gained immense significance in shaping discourses and perceptions of the masses across the globe, as the military does not appear at the scene. Therefore, it is important to evaluate and analyse the media's representation of this event and the use of specific techniques



and strategies through various linguistic and non-linguistic devices in news reports.

The current research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the selected Iranian newspapers ideologically frame the 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and what specific ideological narratives formed through Van Dijk's ideological square?
2. What patterns of typicality, keyword co-occurrences, and collocational strengths emerge within the corpus to signal the dominant ideological themes of the Iranian media's coverage of the withdrawal?
3. How discursive macro-strategies, specifically those within Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) are employed to position the US withdrawal as a geopolitical failure and to reinforce the Iranian regional ideology?

### **3. Research Design**

#### **3.1. Method and Material**

This research is conducted within the constructivist research paradigm. Constructivism and interpretivism are used interchangeably; in most cases, they adopt a qualitative research methodology because the researcher is expected to explore the issue in depth and examine it through the development of contextual and interdisciplinary methods. Interpretivism holds that reality is multidimensional and not fixed (Creswell and Poth, 2016). While the research employs quantitative data, its analytical approach remains predominantly qualitative. The qualitative research methodology is designed to provide answers to questions that begin with 'how' and 'why'. Guba & Lincoln (1994) also argue that qualitative studies aim to reach empirical conclusions using evidence. The qualitative studies have the most important characteristics of trustworthiness and authenticity. Credibility refers to the reality of the information in one way or another. It means the veridicality of the people providing the data and the interpretation of the data as well (Polit and Beck, 2012). In a similar study, Khan (2026) points out that 'geopolitical storytelling' functions as a power instrument. The article illustrates effectiveness of narrative management. It explains how narrative shapes the conditions under which international intervention is flagged as either 'legitimate' or 'foreign aggression.' Ismail et al. (2026) maintains that the US and its allies are routinely portrayed by the Middle Eastern media system as "civilized" or "aggressor". This reinforces the ideological assimilation of regional allies. It is further demonstrated through CDA that news headlines are weaponized via evaluative language. After the failure of 'War on Terror' discourse, Haimed (2025) notes that a battle of narratives has



begun which gives enables Iranian media to effectively disengage itself from the failed Western nation-building model by using the topos of disaster.

### 3.2. Data Acquisition

Qualitative methodology offers numerous analytical approaches. The researcher has chosen the research methods and theoretical framework, Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics, as discussed in detail below under the section on theoretical framework. These discourse analysts have developed methods for analysing discourse based on their theories. CDA is also an interdisciplinary method for examining language use in society at the national and international levels. The theoretical model developed by Fairclough (1995), known as the critical discourse analysis model, argues that language is a component of society and that internal factors do not determine the relationship between the social world and language. His theory of CDA primarily focuses on language and the form in which it is practised in a particular society in various dimensions. Therefore, these CDA experts differ both theoretically and methodologically.

### 3.3. Corpus Design

The finalised corpus comprises 175,693-word tokens drawn from both Tehran Times and IRNA across the collection period. The corpus was designed as a specialised, event-driven corpus (Orpin, 2005; Hardt-Mautner, 1995), focused exclusively on a defined geopolitical event within a bounded temporal window. This design was chosen because the research questions require ideological and discursive analysis of a specific media event rather than longitudinal tracking of general media language patterns. All collected texts were converted into plain text format compatible with AntConc corpus analysis software. No lemmatisation or stop-word removal was applied prior to analysis, as the full word-form distribution, including function words and their collocational environments, was considered analytically relevant to the discursive strategies under examination.

### 3.4. Corpus Analysis

This paper has opted for the Discourse historical approach by Ruth Wodak, ideological square by van Dijk and corpus analysis technique of finding collocations as part of method of analysis to understand and analyse how interplay of language exists to develop and project specific policies and ideologies and identities towards the issue of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by Iranian print media.

### 3.5. Theoretical Framework

Since CDA has at times been criticised as subjective, corpus linguistics is currently



combined with it to create a blend of qualitative and quantitative analysis, introducing objectivity. These two methods have also been combined and investigated by different researchers. Polit and Beck (2012) suggest that the combination of CDA and CL is more effective for understanding collocational and syntactic patterning, as well as word and phrase frequencies. A significant amount of research has been conducted on the exploration and analysis of various features of discourse, drawing on a mix of CDA and CL. For example, Stubbs and Gerbig (1993) analysed the use of transitivity to express cause and agency in geography textbooks using both methods. Hardt-Mautner (1995) has analysed the representations of the EU in the British press. Caldas-Coulthard (1993) has analysed the representation of women in the news using these methods and conducted a diachronic analysis of ethnic, racial, and tribal representation in a corpus of 18 million words from the pre-1985 period. Orpin (2005) also applied corpus linguistics alongside CDA to examine the ideological construction of 'sleaze' in political discourse, demonstrating that collocational patterns indeed reveal hidden ideological meanings. All these studies used CL and CDA for objective analysis and understanding of the issues, with greater emphasis on delineating the linguistic features of the media discourses.

Various studies have used CDA to examine Iranian print media. One such study is Tierney's (2022), which explored the relations between Iran and the US as presented in the print media. He opined that, besides strained relations, Iran and the US have also been working together in Afghanistan, and that media coverage has been influential in portraying a positive image of Iran-Afghanistan relations. Cooley and Hinck (2018) conducted the media narrative analysis of Russian, Iranian, and Chinese news articles regarding the future of Afghanistan. They have tried to emphasise in their analysis that Afghanistan has more stable neighbours. The Iranian media have also pointed out that the presence of the US is better for the political and economic security of Afghanistan. In a paper on the difficulties and opportunities of Iran following the US withdrawal, Shafiee Seifabadi (2022) argues that there are significant opportunities for Iran, especially in creating new state media in the region, which would significantly help diminish US influence.

This study recognizes that the Iranian media has the capacity to eliminate US influence in the region and would be a healthy factor in the regional balance of power. After analyzing 200 journalistic sentences from international media web portals, Shirejini, M. L., and Afrouz (2021) argued that how the media project ideologies may escalate competition and social-political conflicts between countries. Their analysis confirmed that US-Iran relations were portrayed as strained in the selected journalistic sentences, which may have led to the development of the rivalry between the countries. This kind of



rivalry was not necessarily limited to the political front between the countries; it may also occur on the social front between the citizens of the countries. An analysis of US-Iranian media coverage of the Afghan conflict by Omid & Mobini (2022) demonstrates that both countries have distinct subject and objective interests, which are key factors in the framing of news items. Another proposal in this study is that the two countries have their own versions of terrorism and resistance movements, and that these expressions actually connote the disharmony between the two countries.

The corpus for this study comprised news reports from Tehran Times and the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), collected between August 15 and December 31, 2021, yielding a total of 175,693-word tokens. The analysis proceeded in three sequential stages, each corresponding to one of the research questions above.

In the first stage, AntConc (Version 3.5.8; Anthony, 2019) was used to generate a frequency list of all content words across the corpus. From this list, keywords were selected on the basis of their relative frequency and their theoretical salience to the discursive construction of ideology, identity, and geopolitical positioning, in line with the event-driven keyword selection approach adopted by Orpin (2005) and Hardt-Mautner (1995). The selected keywords - including *withdrawal*, *Afghanistan*, *Taliban*, *US*, *war*, *peace*, *Islamic*, and *imperialism* - were then submitted to concordance and collocation analysis within AntConc to identify their most frequent collocates and co-occurrence patterns. This constituted the corpus linguistics (CL) layer of analysis and provided the quantitative basis for the qualitative interpretive stages that followed.

In the second stage, van Dijk's (1998) ideological square was applied as an interpretive lens to the concordance outputs. Each keyword's collocational environment was examined for evidence of the four ideological moves: positive self-presentation (ingroup), negative other-presentation (outgroup), suppression of negative self-attributes, and suppression of positive other-attributes. Concordance lines and collocation clusters were coded manually against these four categories, allowing the analysis to map how the Iranian media constructs its ideological positioning through lexical choice and collocation.

In the third stage, Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) Discourse Historical Approach was applied to the same concordance outputs and selected full-text passages to identify the macro- and micro-discursive strategies at work. Specifically, the analysis examined: (a) *predication strategies* – how referential labels and attributes attached to actors such as the US, the Taliban, and regional powers encode ideological evaluation; (b) *argumentation strategies* – which topoi (e.g., topos of history, topos of threat, topos of humanitarian responsibility) are invoked to legitimise Iranian positions; and (c)



*perspectivisation strategies* – how spatial and temporal framing positions Iran as a responsible regional actor in contrast to the US. These three analytical stages were applied iteratively, with the CL outputs informing the DHA coding and the DHA analysis in turn directing further corpus searches where additional concordance evidence was needed.

#### **4. Analysis and Findings**

Between 1978-88, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Iran already had its spheres of influence in this country. It was not a mere political and economic sphere, but also an ideological sphere because Iran has been playing an active role in empowering the Shiites in Afghanistan (Milani, 2006). After such Iranian contributions, which have been predominantly in the political, economic, and ideological fronts, Iran has been making attempts to have a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that has more moderate views on religion, particularly the Shiite sect, which Iran says is the head of the religion. The US intervention in the region had now made Iran's position very intricate. The US entry also brought fresh challenges, even though Iran had been experiencing an existing relationship with Afghanistan since 2001. Though the US had led in the spread of its influence in Afghanistan, overthrowing the Taliban regime, which was considered to be hardliners against the Shiites, the presence of the US soldiers in this proximity with Iran was a big challenge that was looked at through the lens of nuclear sanctions and the problems between Iran and the West. This has played the most significant role in the way Iran is waging the war on terror, which has lasted 20 years up until the withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan. Iran's moves during this notorious war are rather inconvenient. Iran, on one hand, has been offering controlled assistance to the Taliban; on the other hand, it has been maintaining good relations with the US-backed central Afghanistan government (Nader, 2011). This fact appears to be very complex since historically Iran has been allied with Tajiks and Shiites who have been engaged in war with the Taliban. Nader himself agrees that geopolitics has been the dominant factor in shaping Iranian policy towards Afghanistan. Iran has been taking strategic steps for the nation and its different classes. It is also the home of the support and containment against the Taliban because they are the direct enemies of the US.

However, Iran has also been keen on protecting its interests against their historical and ideological adversaries, i.e., the Taliban. Indicatively, it is the Iranian government that bears the brunt of the Karzai government's anti-Taliban government existence. Iran can transform the Tajiks or the Pashtuns who do not back the Karzai government into subjects of the Karzai government (Dobbins, 2007). Iran has also been extending colossal support to Afghanistan in terms of the economy. In 2002, she made a total



donation of up to 100 million to help Afghanistan and became one of the country's major donors (Farrar-Wellman, 2010). There are also approximately 2000 Iranian privately owned companies operating in Afghanistan. The majority of them are located in Herat, the area that was redeveloped following the Taliban regime's overthrow (Gardesh, 2006). It also says that Iran can be an active participant in the economic and political development of Afghanistan, yet it has been taking a cover position for some reasons. They are bad rapport between Iran and the US, America declaring Iran as an axis of evil, war in Iraq, American protests against Iran's nuclear program, and finally the overthrow of the government by the Revolutionary Guards in 2005. The combative nature of Iran's policies vis-à-vis the American presence in the region has also contributed to the country's refusal to offer Afghanistan any more substantial assistance. The Balochi factor has also played its role in determining the Iranian ideology towards the US and Afghanistan. Iran feels that the US is inciting the Baluchis, who are subsequently stirring trouble at its eastern border with Sistan. Baluchis are semi-nomads and are estimated at 7 million, who are distributed in 3 countries, i.e., Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The remaining 1-2 million are an Iranian liability, but approximately 5-6 million are found in the Baluchistan province in Pakistan (Nader 2011).

Iran believes that they are massively threatening its border, and it can never be on a soft-line position with them. Baluchis are nationalists who have their way and even view the Baluchis found in Afghanistan as the West Baluchistan. Secondly, they are Sunni majority ideologically and culturally, of course, Iran has been wary and hostile of them, they are Shiites. This sentiment is what made Baluchis feel like they are not getting the rights and position that they deserve from Iran. Subsequently, it only heightened their attacks on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards since 2009 (Caldas-Coulthard, 1993). The Iranian government has also accused the US, the UK, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia of supporting Jundullah, a Balochi militant group. (Bozorgmehr, 2010)

The collected materials comprised news reports from the Iranian major newspaper Tehran Times and the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) between August 15, 2021, and December 31, 2021. Antconc 3.5.8 (2019) was used to analyse this collection of texts (corpus). The total number of word tokens in these two sources of Iranian news was 175,693. They were narrowed down to news items about the US exit from Afghanistan, specifically, and Iran's reaction to it. Using the corpus tool, frequency, collocation, and concordance analyses were conducted to identify common topics and examine the relationships and strengths of co-occurring keywords. The keywords, as they have appeared with their collocates, were selected because they can reflect Iran's ideological



perspective on Afghanistan, itself, and other nations, particularly the US. Such keywords were: withdrawal, Afghanistan, US, Taliban, Kabul, military, Islamic, peace, war, past, present, and future.

**Table 1.** Frequency of Keywords in Iranian Newspapers

Keywords	Frequency
Afghanistan	2995
Taliban	989
US/America	384
Islamic	365
Kabul	340
War	333
Peace	274
Support	207
Withdrawal	198
Future	129
Past	80
Present	36

*Note.* Frequency data were generated using AntConc (Version 3.5.8; Anthony, 2019) from a corpus of 175,693-word tokens compiled from Tehran Times and the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) covering the period August 15, 2021, to December 31, 2021. Keywords were selected based on their relevance to the themes of US troop withdrawal and Iranian ideological positioning rather than solely on statistical frequency. Frequencies reflect the total number of occurrences across both sources combined.

The keyword list is not complete. Iranian attitude and ideology are also implied with other words such as imperialism, hegemony, suffering, and oppression. In corpus linguistics, a keyword is technically defined as a word whose frequency in a study corpus is statistically significant when compared against a reference corpus, typically measured using log-likelihood or chi-square tests (Baker, 2006; Scott & Tribble, 2006). However, given the specialised and event-specific nature of the present corpus - which focuses exclusively on Iranian media coverage of a single geopolitical event within a defined five-month window - a purely statistical keyword extraction would risk foregrounding high-frequency function words and generic news vocabulary at the expense of ideologically salient terms. The selection of keywords in this study was therefore guided by a combination of relative frequency within the corpus and their theoretical relevance to



the discursive construction of identity and ideology in the context of the US withdrawal, in line with approaches adopted in similar event-driven CDA-corpus studies (Orpin, 2005; Hardt-Mautner, 1995). The keywords selected in the table above were based on the notions of war and withdrawal in Afghanistan and the Iranian ideology that developed around it. To comprehend the ideology of a country, it is necessary to research the way in which it perceives a significant event, and what its future interests and activities may be. The keywords selected in the table above were based on notions of war and withdrawal in Afghanistan and the Iranian ideology that developed around them. The coincidence of these words also shows how Iran has been shaping its ideological perspective. *Figure 1* shows the concordance of the word 'withdrawal,' indicating how Iran has been projecting and viewing this event.

occupation of Afghanistan and subsequent chaotic withdrawal; a report suggests former members of the  
as possible and make the U.S. withdrawal a turning point for lasting peace and  
which were disabled before the chaotic August withdrawal. According to Pentagon officials, U.S. service  
implementation of his predecessor's planned troop withdrawal after two decades of presence on the  
U.S.-led foreign forces complete their withdrawal after 20 years of occupation, an Afghan governmen  
mer Republican President Trump had negotiated the withdrawal agreement with the Taliban, and said Biden'  
with China. For Japan, however, U.S. withdrawal and China expanding influence in the country  
to bring democracy to Afghanistan after its withdrawal and contributed to the weakening of the  
to critics of the chaotic U.S. withdrawal and evacuation of Afghan allies, which has  
to arrive there since the U.S. withdrawal and the first step towards getting the  
among the experts. Some experts regard the withdrawal as a defeat and humiliation of the  
of America is trying to portray its withdrawal as a result of achieving its goals  
wish to leave. However, they backed the withdrawal as necessary, even if it was painful.  
media outlets are blaming Biden for the withdrawal, but assessing no blame to anyone for  
the U.S. exit is not a withdrawal but rather, the Americans are fleeing Afghanistan  
heading in the direction of a full withdrawal, but State Department spokesperson Ned Price clai  
vacuum in Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal? China will undoubtedly look to fill the  
icans after the withdrawal deadline. The official withdrawal date for U.S. troops remains 31 August,  
try to remain in Afghanistan beyond a withdrawal deadline next week. Thousands of troops have  
from foreign allies to extend the military withdrawal deadline. Speaking to British media, Taliban Spo

**Figure 1.** Concordance for 'Withdrawal'.

An interesting observation is that the term 'withdrawal' is collocated with 'chaotic'. The term 'chaotic' appears 37 times in the chosen news articles, and, surprisingly, in the majority of instances, it refers to the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. This shows that Iran regards it as a state of anarchy and openly criticises it. To Iran, the US withdrawal was untidy and generated anarchy in the region. It also indicates that Iran considers the whole US misfortune against the Taliban as a failure that brought more issues than solutions. The Iranian media characterise the twenty-year war on terror as a withdrawal of a messy, chaotic 20-year war (Messy Chaotic War, 2021). This remark continues the position of Iran that the US is a hegemonic state that does not seek peace but attempts to exert its influence by disorderly means. *Figure 2*, which corresponds to the word hegemony, further elaborates on Iran's ideological standpoint.



with the aim of establishing a new hegemony after the invasion of Afghanistan, but to achieve the same disastrous ends. U.S. hegemony is receding into the past. The Russian that Washingtons comfortable position of U.S. hegemony is receding into the past against the the failure of unilateral efforts to establish hegemony over Afghanistan in the face of the the challenges they pose to the American hegemony. So, the failure of the USA in resistance in the region against U.S. hegemony. The Taliban too proclaims to resist U. powers have started to challenge U.S. hegemony. They will try to resist in all , including Taliban's stance against US's hegemony, which may lead to enhancement of an

**Figure 2.** Concordance for 'Hegemony'.

The media in Iran claims that the US aimed to have a new form of hegemony by invading Afghanistan, but it has miserably failed. The concordance phrase that US hegemony is retreating into the past clearly underscores the Iranian stance that the US no longer holds the reins of the world as it did previously. The same ideological stand is strengthened as one looks at the concordance of the word imperialism in *Figure 3*.

endencies and ideologies and opposition to global imperialism among religious intellectuals and people of every for their alliance: to combat U.S. imperialism and Zionism. Second, Iran and Afghanistan have 9 Iranian Revolution exhibited a significant anti-imperialism dimension. Iran took a hard stance against , will not support more American adventurism and imperialism especially there. Biden is in enough trouble player and restores the dream of Soviet imperialism in the region, which is a scenario coming to an end. U.S. imperialism is experiencing historical decay and has no over invariably outweighs military strength. U.S. imperialism is experiencing historical decay and has no estern power and expansionism and colonialism and imperialism is fast dying, giving way to developments , on behalf of Zionism as well as imperialism. When we pray for the victims of

**Figure 3.** Concordance for 'Imperialism'.

The fact that the US imperialism is going through a historical decline (U.S. imperialism is experiencing historical decay, 2021) underplays the US power. Iran regards America as an imperialist nation that is obsessed with hegemony, but thinks that power is now on its knees, particularly after the withdrawal. This is reinforced by such appellations of imperialism as 'fast dying' and 'historical decay'. But Iran has another ideological stand to Afghanistan as such, and to Afghanistan, yet another to the Taliban and the former government of Kabul. Even though the Taliban takeover has stopped the influence of the US-supported government, Iran appears to be more preoccupied with airing its opinion on the Taliban, which it believes is the real government. The concordance of such keywords as Afghanistan was also investigated to explore the Iranian ideology towards Afghanistan and the Taliban. The withdrawal was seen as a turning point, and Iran was keen to take the opportunity to have a neighbour that would protect its interests. Thus, Iran would prefer a stable Afghanistan, but at the same time, an inclusive government. Iran believes that the US-led war has torn Afghanistan apart, and it is now time to have all the members of the Afghan society involved in the construction of a peaceful nation.



In most of the reports, Iran has insisted that an inclusive government would be the most appropriate, a claim that also implies that Iran would not rest well with the Sunni Taliban being the sole government. This demand is depicted in *Figure 4*.

national reconciliation and establishing a truly inclusive, broad-based and fully representative Government t  
no favorites in Afghanistan. It supports an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive negotiated politica  
national reconciliation and establishing a truly inclusive, broad-based and fully representative government t

**Figure 4.** Inclusive Government Requirement.

Iran desires to retain its influence in its neighbour to protect its interests, hence it is relevant that Shiite groups are also a constituent of the government. Iran also asserted that Afghanistan was its brother and that there was a need to have peace in the country. The accusation by Iran against the US and NATO is unrelenting, with a story that they ruined the nation, and it has to be put back on its feet. Iran has gone further to support Afghanistan, as the news reports indicate. The ideology of Iran depicts the people of Afghanistan as their brothers who have endured much, and offers of assistance are mixed with sympathy. Words such as catastrophe, unrest, and negative all refer to US actions, placing the entire blame for instability on Washington. The figure above presents the evidence of such an obvious ideological position through the Iranian media.

and the livelihood of the people of Afghanistan." According to the diplomat, the meeting mechanis  
have been posted on the streets of Afghanistan. According to the Child Protection Association, Af  
meeting was positive and in favor of Afghanistan." According to TOLONews, the foreign ministers of  
Group of 20 summit on the situation in Afghanistan, according to two national newspapers. Italy hold  
the negative consequences of the unrest in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the Pakistani foreign minister has  
those responsible for the current situation in Afghanistan accountable, making collective endeavor to form a  
praised the role of neighbors in helping Afghanistan achieve the desired situation, and praised Iran'  
and the catastrophic US-engineered situation in Afghanistan," added the tweet. Zarif is leaving office  
as the common enemy of Iran and Afghanistan, adding that commonalities between the two countr  
20 years of NATO presence and leadership in Afghanistan, admitting defeat. The result of the US  
has made all its efforts to help Afghanistan advance, he noted. At the end of  
a special envoy of the president for Afghanistan affairs. An immigration official in Razavi Khoras  
Hassan Kazemi Qomi's command of the Afghanistan affairs and his presence at the Ministry  
s of Special Envoys (Special Representatives) for Afghanistan affairs, as well as the regular meetings  
transfer of power. President Ashraf Ghani flees Afghanistan. Afghan local media and officials said on  
the best situation for the nation of Afghanistan." "Afghanistan is our brother country, with the  
to ensure peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is our dear neighbor. It is

**Figure 5.** Concordance of the word Afghanistan.

The fact that Iran has made all efforts to assist Afghanistan (Help for Afghanistan, 2021) suggests that to Iran, a stable and peaceful neighbour is helpful, but according to Iran, on its conditions, primarily the all-inclusive government. This ideological perspective can be understood in the concordance of the word future in *Figure 6*.



years will probably get lost in the future. Moreover, the Afghan experience will probably de of consultations with Iran on the political future of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was also on the in Afghanistan. How do you see the future of Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal? more sense. How do you see the future of Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal? Do play a key role in the economic future of Afghanistan, Amraie noted, adding that Pakista are now turning their attention to the future of Afghanistan and the type of system noted. Tomorrow, eyes will be on the future of Afghanistan and on the determination of of Afghanistan's neighbors. Noting that the future of Afghanistan and the region is at 93agreed on the basic principles for the future of Afghanistan based on the will of this regard, some possible scenarios for the future of Afghanistan have been discussed and evaluated. would play a leading role in the future of Afghanistan in any case."Refugees seek , seek to work and cooperate for the future of Afghanistan. No one has the right must finally be realized and determine the future of Afghanistan, not foreign intervention or any , had the right to decide for the future of Afghanistan. "Of course, our role is get involved in making decisions for the future of Afghanistan. On August 13, Khatibzadeh express

**Figure 6.** Word concordance of Future.

Iran points out that it has been heavily hit by the war on terror and the US invasion. The withdrawal does not stop other problems, such as terrorism, refugees, and instability, from adversely affecting Iran. Thus, Iran promises to actively participate in the development of Afghanistan both politically, economically, culturally, and militarily. The news items state that Iran is attempting to offer assistance and has already sent the necessary items, despite harsh US sanctions. Iran seeks to be at the forefront of its future. The fundamental concept appears to be the desire for a neighbour with a futuristic, inclusive government that would allow Iran to retain influence in the region. Meanwhile, it is aimed at illuminating the horrors that the US and allied forces have inflicted. Iran does not ignore the presence of other actors in the region. Still, it feels directly affected by their actions, which explains its assertion that it should take a central role in shaping the future of Afghanistan; the concordance of the word support in Figure 7 provide evidence for this involvement.

a clear and strong message, reaffirming their support for the formation of an inclusive government steps in this regard, by providing great support for the monarchies in the (Persian) Gulf the Islamic Republic of Iran's continued support for the Palestinian people and their resistance cilitate transit trade, cross-border movement and support for the people of Afghanistan. It will nted the entry of immigrants, while international support for the services that Iran provides to of lies. At their highest points, American support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq allies depended on US logistics and aerial support for their military engagement in Afghanistan and to this meeting and will announce his support for this initiative and the efforts of cross Iran to provide humanitarian assistance and support for those in need, including migrants. The

**Figure 7.** Concordance of the word Support.

The word support in Iranian media is used in two ways. The former is Iran's promise to



assist the Afghan government and people on the path to prosperity and stability. The second is negative sense, which lists America as the principal contributor to the war against Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and the Muslim Ummah. The Iranian media use the grand-narrative of the Muslim Ummah and unity to communicate that all Muslims are united as brothers. In this regard, Afghanistan is seen as a brother. The media in Iran promotes this idea in three forms: first, the media frames the war on terror as the war against the Muslim Ummah by the western world; second, the media claims that the concept of Ummah is not abstract but real, citing bound by fraternal bonds (OIC in Pakistan, 2021); and third, the media offers a way forward that sees Muslim nations erasing differences to confront challenges by the west led by the US. This is supported in *Figure 8* of the concordance of the word, Ummah.

borders and establishing a unified pan-Islamic ummah. And they want to do it peacefully. arrogant powers continue to target the Islamic Ummah, especially the nations that through resistance a critics on the OIC say that Muslim Ummah is a vague concept; it has been and a unifying figure among the Muslim Ummah, said just leave Afghanistan. He stressed: The and other terrorist groups? Is the Muslim Ummah serious to nib their differences in the of Iran in bringing unity in Muslim Ummah the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami said the OIC. As part of the Islamic Ummah, we are bound by fraternal bonds of statement said as part of the Islamic Ummah, we are bound by fraternal bonds of

**Figure 8.** The word of the Ummah in its concordance.

Figure 8 concordance plot analysis shows that the term “Ummah” functions as a central ideological signifier, frequently appearing in the context of unity, identity, and geopolitical resistance. The frequent collocation with “Muslim” and “Islamic” suggests that the text focuses on a collective identity that transcends national borders.



**Figure 9.** Concordance Plot of the word Afghanistan.

*Figure 9's* concordance plot analysis indicates that Afghanistan has been the main issue throughout the post-withdrawal period, as the term Afghanistan has spread in Tehran Times and IRNA. The coverage is consistent and frequent immediately after the withdrawal incident. Coverage was resumed immediately after, although there was a very short gap in the middle of November. The state news agency IRNA has been busy covering the Iranian activities concerning Afghanistan, and it has been reported that it is



## 4.1. Application of DHA to Iranian News Reports

As argued, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) can be used in this analysis because it is interdisciplinary, treats discourse as a social activity, and is abductive in its approach to historical context (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). DHA is three-dimensional, setting the topics and contents of the discourse, investigating discursive strategies, and analysing linguistic means. The first dimension was used when the researcher set the contents or topics of the news reports. These issues include opinions concerning the US and allies, the present situation in Afghanistan, the role of Iran, economic and political aid, the role of Pakistan and China, the Taliban and other groups, the refugee crisis, and the shaping of a new Afghanistan. The Iranian media can create a particular discourse through these issues and project its ideology. It is in these subjects that Iran employs the discursive strategies as explained by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) as deliberate strategies of attaining social, political, psychological, or linguistic goals. The second dimension is to analyse these discursive strategies to learn how identities and ideologies are made.

Another technique that is employed to characterise social actors negatively, positively, deprecatorily, and appreciatively is predication. The Iranian media employs this strategy in three forms that it uses too intensively: negative, positive, and appreciative labelling. The Taliban is the only group that can be subject to depreciatory usage, given historical ideological and political feuds. Nevertheless, once the Taliban came back to power, the previous events were either forgotten, softened, or referred to in derogatory terms. It has been reported that the Taliban have shown a more moderate image to the world ("Taliban Now", 2021), looking into the future instead of the atrocities in the past. It is also appreciative predication. Iran is cautious in its acceptance and appreciation, as seen in statements that there is no sign that the Taliban's Afghanistan would conflict with any neighboring country (Afghanistan: What to expect, 2021). The threat of conflict is minimised as a speculation that other countries can use. Therefore, it is more appreciative than depreciated to the Taliban. Conversely, the explicit negative characteristics are repeated in the case of the US, which is referred to as hegemonic, imperialist, and brutal, and is alleged to have waged war against Islamic states and abused human rights. The Taliban is described as moderate, a word of appreciation. In contrast, the US stay in Afghanistan is prefigured negatively as a failure that left the nation stateless and chaotic (A Moment for Regional, 2021). There is also explicit positive representation of the Taliban, such as in "Fortunately, the Taliban have stressed so much so far that they are not the Taliban of yesterday" ("Afghanistan Today", 2021), which softens their past and wishes it had been better.



The discursive strategy of argumentation is also used to support either positive or negative predication, using topoi that may be explicit or implicit. The topoi involved are: usefulness, advantage, uselessness, disadvantage, justice, danger, threat, humanitarianism, responsibility, burdening, finances, reality, history, culture, and abuse. The topos of usefulness emphasises that an inclusive government in Afghanistan would promote peace and enable the participation of Iranian-backed groups. The topos of uselessness/disadvantage is an argument that additional US intervention would be disadvantageous. The topoi of threat and danger are employed to support the necessity of having an inclusive government, illustrating the fear of civil war and the cultivation of narcotics. Negative predication of the US is justified with the help of the topoi of humanitarianism, abuse, and justice, accusing the US of crimes and abuses against humanity. It is the topos of opportunity which is positively predicated of Afghanistan. An affiliation with Afghanistan is developed with the help of the topoi of history and culture, as noted by Khamenei (2021), "Afghanistan is our brother country, the same language, religion, and culture". Conversely, negative predication of countries such as Saudi Arabia is justified by the ideological differences, even though they share the same religion.

## **4.2. News Items and Ideological Square (van Dijk)**

In terms of the ideological square, van Dijk (1998) perceives that the creation of ingroups and outgroups is achieved through: 1) behaviours of focusing on positive elements about us, 2) focusing on negative elements about them, 3) de-focusing on negative elements about us, and 4) de-focusing on positive elements about them. Indicatively, Afghanistan is included in the US category, focusing on the role of brotherhood and the invitation to Iran's national consensus (Raisi, 2021). Russia employs the same strategy to highlight the positive aspects of the Taliban in contrast to US operations. In the past, they were the ones to bear the brunt of the Taliban in the 1980s, and the same Taliban had been defeated, but as the conditions reversed and the Russian polarisation with the Americans shot to the skies, the same Taliban became the allies of the Russians. This ingroup sense is then accomplished through the focus on the positive aspects of the Taliban. The Taliban activities have impressed the Russian ambassador to Afghanistan, as reported in the Iranian media, which said that the group had transformed Kabul into a safer place within 24 hours (The New possibilities, 2021). China is not an outsider to the same bloc either, and it is more advantageous for the regional power to exert its influence by forging alliances with as many nations in the region as possible. The Taliban takeover is a great opportunity that China should not miss. Thus, even in China, the same population that was perceived as terrorists and



fundamentalists, turns out to be professionals as soon as they usurp Afghanistan. According to Iranian media, the Chinese described the Taliban as good, positive, and businesslike (US withdrawal, 2021). The other positive developments that have emerged in Iran include her efforts to retain the flow of immigrants into her country, her economic contributions, and her foreign assistance through hosting conferences with neighbours, such as Pakistan and China, to advance the nation's internal life.

The other ideological triangle point is to highlight their dark side. The Western allies, Israel, and the US constitute the larger portion of them in the case of Iran. The negative side, particularly concerning the US, has been taken seriously. The US has also been involved in egregious infringements on human rights, and it should be accountable in that regard, as highlighted by the Iranian media. The same line also addresses the case of withdrawal in the Iranian press, where it is said that the withdrawal of troops after 20 years of atrocities is not only the failure of the US but also the deterioration of American imperialism. It demonstrates that the nation was fatigued and that new blocs needed to be formed, such as the Russia-China bloc. The new powers in the region are also being identified with Iran.

The other important message is the disadvantages of the self that are underemphasized. There are also several cases of deemphasising such things in the Iranian media. An example of this is that to balance her diplomacy policy with Afghanistan, which is the complete opposite of her past deeds, Iran subsidises her negativity by giving aid to the Taliban and even welcoming them into her government. Though Iran has previously been accused of aiding the Tajiks and the other anti-Taliban factions, since the Taliban assumed control of the government, Iran has denied the fact. It appears to be assisting the Taliban in that aspect. Simultaneously, Iran has also been sponsoring the same part of the Afghan society that resisted the Taliban.

From the perspective of van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, this reversal in Iran's position toward the Taliban represents a clear instance of de-emphasising negative aspects of the self. What is analytically significant here is not merely that Iran changed its policy, but how the Iranian media *linguistically manages* this contradiction so as not to disrupt the coherent ideological narrative being constructed. Rather than acknowledging the historical antagonism between Iran and the Taliban - rooted in the 1998 killing of Iranian diplomats by the Taliban and Iran's longstanding support for anti-Taliban Shiite factions - the Iranian media employs the discursive strategy of *positive reframing*, presenting the current relationship not as a reversal but as a natural progression toward regional stability. The Taliban's predication shifts from historically deprecatory terms to appreciative ones, as discussed earlier, and, crucially, this shift is



presented without a historical context that would expose the contradiction. In Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) DHA framework, this constitutes a deliberate use of the *topos of history*, selectively invoking historical and cultural brotherhood with Afghanistan while simultaneously suppressing the specific historical episodes that would undermine this fraternal narrative. The erasure of Iran's past anti-Taliban conduct from the media discourse is therefore not a journalistic oversight but an ideological strategy: it allows Iran to reposition itself as a consistent, brotherly regional actor without the burden of accounting for its contradictory past. This is precisely how the ideological square functions in practice: the negative aspects of the self are not denied outright but are rendered linguistically invisible through selective historical framing and strategic omission. The well-known one is the water dispute between Afghanistan and Iran over Helmand waters, used as a bargaining point to prevent the construction of the Bakhsabad Dam (Iran's balanced approach, 2011). Equally, the potential of over 600 miles long border between Afghanistan and Iran and refugee crises are also among the regions it has been actively engaged and continuously in sponsoring the activities of different insurgents and other national institutions of Afghanistan.

It is also reported that we can only wait to see the extent to which the Iran-US relationship will enable this in the future, depending on how they relate to one another. But appears that, as the next-door state, Iran would never cease to leverage its influence to meddle in the affairs of Afghanistan towards a secure and amicable neighbourhood. By so doing, the Iranians have kept the negative at bay.

Likewise, the fourth significant point in van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, i.e., the mitigation of the positive aspects of them, is also evident in the news reports. The CDA of the Iranian news report implies that Iran has been very interested in the dark side of the West, particularly the US, but has been totally blind to the bright side of the West, such as the aid offered to the new Afghan government under Taliban rule. This has not been brought to light, with the exclusion of the fact that there was a news item that 1.5 million euros of economic assistance was sent to Afghanistan to assist Iranian Afghan refugees. The news report is the sole mention of any other aid to the Afghan people and their government by the West.

## **5. Conclusion**

This corpus analysis and the CDA analysis demonstrate that Iranian news reports are structured in ways that create certain ideologies and identities, mostly on an us-versus-them basis. It is accomplished through certain subjects, discursive practices, and language. The ideological square also enhances these boundaries. Such factors as the confrontation with the US in the past, tension of the nuclear program, the cultural



opposition to Zionism, and the desire to enhance its influence in the region shape this ideology of Iran. The corpus and CDA analysis of the selected Iranian news items explicitly indicates that the media have been building some ideologies and identities towards Iran, Afghanistan, the players in the region, and the US and its allies. The most common ideologies are hegemonic, characterised by us-versus-them distinctions. The exploitation of certain topics, content, discursive strategies, and linguistic means has also contributed to the formulation of ideologies. They have also found that news reporting has been more forthright in its use of these channels and avenues to spread their ideologies and identities as they see fit. The ideological square is also extensively used in news reports, and the us-versus-them dynamics are quite clear. The projection of Iranian ideology and identity onto other states might be explained by several factors: the historical conflict between Iran and the US, the nuclear program struggle, the collision between Zionism and Islamic culture, and the desire to gain greater influence in the region.

This study also rightly highlights the importance of media and its use as a tool of war, diplomacy and propaganda. Therefore, the analysed news reports and the on ground conditions seem to have direct relationship which has been explored in detail from various corpus analysis and CDA perspectives to have deeper and better understanding as to what was going on after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

The corpus analysis and CDA of the Iranian news reports reveal that Iranian media is ideologically laden however the members of ingroups and outgroups are different with similar use of macro strategies but the choice of topics is markedly different. Deep analysis of its corpus suggests that with the specific typicality of topics, the relationship of the keywords is very strong making the corpus very elaborate with a total number of 175693 word tokens. Iranian media portrays the event of withdrawal as chaotic and a failure of the superpower. Rather it explicitly opines that the US is no more a super power and that there is a major power shift with power lying in the hands of the regional powers. Iranian media projects that Iran could play an effective role in the stability of Afghanistan and that Iran has always been supportive of Afghanistan either through finance or through aid in kind. Although Iranian media has explicitly argued that they have not been having historically friendly relations with Taliban owing to the ideological differences but Iran has been supportive to all the groups in Afghanistan especially the Shia community and Massoud tribal group. Iran also says that it has been supportive of the inclusive government in Afghanistan but its reasons are different because there is a significant number of Shia community in Afghanistan which is portrayed as the responsibility of Iran. The topos of responsibility is used there in order to justify the



ideological stance of Iran that Shia community is under the leadership of Iran. Iranian media has also explicitly propagated Iran's economic and other kind of help towards Afghanistan especially the issue of refugees that escalated with the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. For Iran, the members of outgroups are clearly the US and Israelis. NATO is also projected as the member of outgroup for Iran as it favours and extends the policies of Americans all over the world. The topics that are focused in the Iranian media, other than the overarching topic of withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan are: views about the US and allies, current condition of Afghanistan, Iran's role before and after the withdrawal, economic and political support to Afghanistan, role of other countries like Pakistan and China, Taliban versus the rest of groups in Afghanistan, refugee crises, Iran's complete involvement and making of new Afghanistan. Iranian media presents quite explicit and harsh views about the US. It could also be because of the tensions and sanctions on Iran by the US regarding nuclear program. The use of the phrases like "hegemonic empire", "imperialist invaders", "imperialist power", "despotic regime", "terrorist and criminal America", "inequality in America", "defeated America", "America's long war against humanity", "chaotic end to America", and "faux allies" suggest that Iran considers the US as the actual terrorist and the event of withdrawal is presented as a defeat for America in Iranian news reports. These predications are also supported through the use of argumentation strategy which is justified through the use of various topoi. In order to justify this kind of ideology towards the US, Iranian media makes maximum use of topos of humanitarianism in which the massacre and destruction caused during the war on terror are explicitly mentioned in the news reports in order to justify the claim that American hegemonic dreams have resulted in the murders of millions of Muslims across the world.

Based on these arguments, Iranian media also presents the policy of Iran towards Afghanistan stating that the US must not involve itself in the internal affairs of the country. Making the most of the opportunity against their sworn foe i.e. the US, Iranian media clearly reports that American involvement in Afghanistan will be completely useless and Taliban would be able enough to form their own inclusive government. In this way they also attempt at developing affinity with Taliban. Similarly, the use of ideological square is also very clear in Iranian media which also helps in finding answer to an important research question of this study i.e. the use of ideological square in forming ingroup and outgroup. The bad characteristics of the members of outgroup are greatly emphasized in Iranian media which are markedly different and distinct than the news reports of any other country. The polarization of ingroup and outgroup is stronger in Iranian media. They are loud and clear in nominating members and also developing



arguments to justify their nominations. Even this nomination is not so loud in Afghan media that has suffered the most in this ordeal of war and exit from Afghanistan. However, Iran emphasizes the good point of self, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China. Although Iranian media also reports having issues with Afghanistan especially over the water, but that aspect is downplayed and mitigated.

Thus, it is evident from the corpus and CDA analysis of the selected Iranian news that the Iranian media has been developing specific ideologies and identities towards Iran, Afghanistan, regional players and the US and his allies. The predominant of these shaping of ideologies has been the dominant differences of us versus them. Specific topics, contents, discursive strategies and linguistic means have been used to further shape the ideologies in effective manner. It has also been found that the news reports have been more explicit in the use of these strategies and techniques to propagate their ideologies and identities openly. The use of the ideological square is also dominant in the news reports, which clearly marks the boundaries between us and them. Certain factors like the historical conflict between Iran and the US, the nuclear program tension, the cultural tension between Zionism and Islam, and will to have increased regional influence may be responsible for the shaping of Iranian ideology and identity towards other countries of the world.

## References

- Allan, S. (2010). *News culture* (3rd ed.). Open University Press.
- Anthony, L. (2019). AntConc (Version 3.5.8) [Computer software]. Waseda University. <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>
- Baker, P. (2006). *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. Continuum.
- Pavel, B. (2021, August 30). The war's not over. This is what the next phase looks like. In *Experts react: The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is complete. What's next?* Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-the-us-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-is-complete-whats-next/>
- Beard, A. (2000). *The language of politics*. Routledge.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1976). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin Books.
- Bozorgmehr, N. (2010, June 20). Iran hangs the leader of Baluchi militants. *Financial Times*.
- Caldas-Coulthard, C. R. (1993). From discourse analysis to critical discourse analysis: The representation of women in newsprint. In M. Hoey (Ed.), *Data, description, discourse* (pp. 196–208). HarperCollins.
- Cooley, S. C., & Hinck, R. S. (2018). *Strategic narratives: China, Russia, and the future of Afghanistan*. Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Publications.



- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fried, D. (2021, August 30). The lessons to learn—and not learn. In the Atlantic Council experts, Experts react: The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is complete. What's next? Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-the-us-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-is-complete-whats-next/#fried>.
- Dijk, T. A. van. (1995). Aims of critical discourse analysis. *Japanese Discourse*, 1, 17–27.
- Dobbins, J. (2007). *The beginner's guide to nation-building*. RAND Corporation.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (pp. 357–378). SAGE Publications.
- Farrar-Wellman, A. (2010). *Iran-Afghanistan foreign relations*. Critical Threats Project, American Enterprise Institute.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. Routledge.
- Gardesh, Ab. (2006). *Iran's growing influence in western Afghanistan*. Institute for War and Peace Reporting.
- Gopalan, N., & Vezhaventhan, D. (2021). The paradigm shift in South Asian geopolitics: Post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan. *Journal of Contemporary Political Studies*, 5(2), 45–59.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). SAGE Publications.
- Haimed, S. (2025). A critical analysis of the representation of America's withdrawal and the Taliban's takeover in world powers' newspaper headlines. *Journal of Media and Geopolitics*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386426845>
- Hardt-Mautner, G. (1995). 'Only Connect'. *Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics* (pp. 1-31). Lancaster: UCREL.
- Islamic Republic News Agency. (n.d.). *IRNA English*. Retrieved December 31, 2021, from <https://en.irna.ir/>
- Ismail, B. K. K., Ammar, H. M., Baloch, H. A., Khan, F. U., & Ullah, H. (2026). Language framing of the US–Israel–Iran conflict in international news headlines: A critical discourse analysis. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 4(1), 4246–4256. <https://doi.org/10.59075/xm4pg460>
- Khan, D. (2026, April 24). Media narratives as a weapon of war – Iran and the politics of geopolitical storytelling. LSE Media@LSE.



- Kress, G. (1983). *Linguistic processes in sociocultural practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Milani, M. (2006). Iran's policy toward Afghanistan. *Middle East Journal*, 60(2), 235–256.
- Nader, A. (2011). *Iran's balancing act in Afghanistan*. RAND Corporation.
- Omidi, A., & Mobini, M. (2022). Comparative analysis of US and Iranian media discourses on the Afghan conflict. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 18(1), 102–120.
- Orpin, D. (2005). Corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis: Examining the ideology of sleaze. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 10(1), 37–61.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach (DHA). In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 87-121). Sage (2nd revised edition).
- Scott, M., & Tribble, C. (2006). *Textual patterns: Key words and corpus analysis in language education*. John Benjamins.
- Shafiee Seifabadi, M. (2022). Opportunities and challenges for Iran following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. *Journal of West Asian Studies*, 14(3), 88–104.
- Shirejini, M. L., & Afrouz, M. (2021). Ideological projection in international news: A study of US-Iran relations in digital media. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 50(4), 789–805.
- Stubbs, M., & Gerbig, A. (1993). Human and inhuman geography: Anti-humanist rhetoric in UNESCO texts. In H. Schröder (Ed.), *Subject-oriented texts* (pp. 64–85). Walter de Gruyter.
- Tariq, M., et al. (2020). Geopolitical significance of untapped mineral resources in post-war Afghanistan. *South Asian Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(4), 312–325.
- Tehran Times. (n.d.). *Tehran Times*. Retrieved December 31, 2021, from <https://www.tehrantimes.com/>
- Tehran Times. (2021, September 14). *Angry Dems, GOP clash over Afghanistan*. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/465022>
- Tehran Times. (2021, August 31). *A moment for regional cooperation on Afghanistan*. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464574>
- Tehran Times. (2021, August 21). *Afghanistan: What to expect*. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464160>



Tehran Times. (2021, August 17). *President Raisi: Iran will make efforts to stabilize Afghanistan*. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/464105>

Tehran Times. (2021, December 20). *Inclusive government in Afghanistan key to sustainable security*. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/468276>

Tierney, D. (2022). Stuck on a hostile path? US policy towards Iran since the revolution. *International Affairs*, 98(1), 185–203.