RESEARCH TITLE

Wartime Diplomacy in Conflict Zones: A Discourse Analysis of Abbas Araghchi's Statements During the 2025 Iran–Israel War

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Abstract

The paper analyses the diplomacy discourse of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, in 2025 in the course of a two-week conflict between Iran and Israel, which constituted a major shift in regional geopolitics. Within a critical discourse analysis (CDA) model, the study explores how Araghchi's public speech act constitutes ideological positioning, national identity and degree of diplomatic legitimacy at moments of warfare. The study is inspired by the Van Dijk and Fairclough critical discourse analysis approaches to discourse and analyzes a number of speeches, interviews and press releases produced by Araghchi over the period April 2–15, 2025.

It examines his rhetoric, intertextuality and the calculated deployment of modality and agency in his language. The results show that a calibrated discursive framework combines resistance narratives with references to international law, frames Iran as a victim but also actor of deterrence, and redraws—to a large extent implicitly—regional allegiances. The analysis also reveals a two-tiered rhetorical strategy -a domestic one aimed to instil national cohesion and an international one addressed to international audiences, aimed at justifying Iran's military and diplomatic standing, respectively. This discussion is inspired by my case study, and it is relevant for the study of political linguistics because it illustrates how language is instrumentalised as an element of power play when crisis breaks out, a point that is especially topical in the case of the turbulence-prone diplomacy of the Middle East.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Iranian Diplomacy, Abbas Araghchi, Iran–Israel Conflict, Political Linguistics.

عنوان البحث

الدبلوماسية في زمن الحرب بمناطق النزاع: تحليل خطابي لتصريحات عباس عراقجي خلال حرب إيران–إسرائيل عام 2025

المستخلص

تحلل هذه الورقة خطاب الدبلوماسية لنائب وزير الخارجية الإيراني عباس عراقجي عام 2025 خلال صراع استمر أسبوعين بين إيران وإسرائيل، والذي شكّل تحولاً كبيراً في الجغرافيا السياسية الإقليمية. وفي إطار نموذج التحليل النقدي للخطاب(CDA) ، تستكشف الدراسة كيف يشكّل الفعل الكلامي العلني لعراقجي موقعاً أيديولوجياً وهوية وطنية ودرجة من الشرعية الدبلوماسية في لحظات الحرب. تستلهم الدراسة من مقاربات فان دايك وفيركلاف في التحليل النقدي للخطاب، وتحلل عدداً من الخطب والمقابلات والبيانات الصحفية التي أصدرها عراقجي خلال الفترة من 2 إلى 15 أبريل 2025. تتناول الدراسة بلاغته، والتناص، والاستخدام المحسوب لصيغ اللغة وفاعليتها. وتظهر النتائج أن إطاراً خطابياً مدروساً يجمع بين سرديات المقاومة والإشارات إلى القانون الدولي، ويصور إيران كضحية، ولكن أيضاً كفاعل رادع، ويعيد – إلى حد كبير بشكل ضمني – رسم التحالفات الإقليمية. كما يكشف التحليل عن استراتيجية خطابية ثنائية المستويات: داخلية تهدف إلى تعزيز التماسك الوطني، وأخرى موجهة للجمهور الدولي بهدف تبرير المكانة العسكرية والدبلوماسية لإيران على التوالي. ويُظهِر هذا النقاش من خلال دراسة الحالة أهميته في ميدان اللسانيات السياسية، لأنه يوضح كيف تُستَخدم اللغة كأداة في لعبة القوة عند اندلاع الأزمات، وهو أمر يكتسب أهمية خاصة في حالة الدبلوماسية الشرق أوسطية المعرّضة للاضطرابات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الدبلوماسية الإيرانية، عباس عراقجي، الصراع الإيراني الإسرائيلي، اللسانيات السياسية.

1. Introduction

The language of diplomacy can take on a sharper and more strategic tone in times of war. In the volatile geo-political Middle-East region, language is not merely communicative, it is a weapon of power, legitimization, and resistance. The 2025 Iran–Israel clash, a direct confrontation lasting 2 weeks involving aerial and cyber warfare attracted international attention and the resurgence of Iranian foreign policy narratives. Abbas Araghchi, Deputy Foreign Minister and battle-hardened diplomat was among the leading voices that explained the Iranian position and his public statements were as much intended for domestic audience as they were for an international audience.

Focusing on the language used to frame the war, construct ideological narratives, and maneuver regional and global political tensions, this article investigates the discursive strategies employed by Araghchi in this conflict, the highest stakes ever of the Islamic Republic. With military maneuvers filling the headlines, the parallel discursive war — waged by means of speeches, press conferences and televised interviews — was the one that counted, shaping perceptions and asserting legitimacy. Araghchi's speech is a rich and complex interplay of assertiveness, deflection, moral framing and reference to international norms that deserves detailed linguistic attention.

The following research question is used to focus this review:

How does Abbas Araghchi's rhetoric in the 2025 Iran–Israel war shape discursive concepts of ideology, politics and diplomacy?

The study seeks to address this issue using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as method and theoretical perspective, utilizing the theoretical work of Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk to analyze power relations within the language of diplomacy.

In examining a particular case the wartime remarks of a high level Iranian diplomat this study adds to emerging literature on political linguistics, Middle Eastern discourse, and rhetorical devices in international conflict. It also sheds light on how political subjects discursively construct war, sovereignty, and resistance under global diplomatic conditions that present both limitations and affordances.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between language, ideology and political power has long been studied and analyzed in the area of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Normal Fairclough, (1995) discourse is not of course merely a mirror image of ideology but a site, where power is both wielded and resisted. According to Van Dijk (2006), discourse has an ability to sustain and reproduce hegemonic ideologies, especially in politics. These fundamental views frame the methodological base of this research.

Academics have recently begun to focus more on political discourse in conflict, especially in the Middle East. Wodak (2015) highlights the ways in which the political actors use metaphors, presuppositions and intertextuality strategically to shape the narratives, especially when the country is immersed in a national crisis. In Middle Eastern geopolitics, language is employed as both a means of resistance, and a means of legitimation (Al-Rawi, 2018). The language of policy-makers is anything but neutral; it 'authors' national identity, 'sells' foreign policy, and situates the speaker in global political alignments (Zaharna, 2010).

On Iranian political rhetoric: A number of studies have considered how Iranian leaders deploy languages to enforce control, challenge Western dominance and conform to Islamic dogma. As an example, Shayegh and Akhavan (2020) studied Iranian leaders' utterances in the context of nuclear negotiation, finding two dominant frames: "us" versus "them," victim

versus aggressor. In a similar vein, Rezvani (2021) demonstrated how Iranian officials integrate Qorr'anic references and revolutionary language into mod- ern diplomatic discourse in order to reconcile tradition with current political objectives.

Although there has been considerable academic attention to figures such as Ayatollah Khamenei and former President Rouhani, there is a dearth of literature on Abbas Araghchi, even as the latter has been instrumental in moulding Iran's foreign policy narrative at key junctures. Araghchi's rhetoric is more international and diplomatic in tenor, characterised by layers of legalistic discourse, references to international law and sophisticated ideological framing.

There is also a wealth of work in wartime diplomacy that argues powerfully that language in conflict environments is aimed precisely at moral legitimacy. As it has been argued by Chilton (2004), politicians also have a way of dehumanizing their enemy through language while moralizing one's own and appealing to universalizable values like peace, justice, minus aggression. We can see this in Iranian discourse, particularly when considering war with Israel – a repeated, highly charged theme within Iranian political discourse.

our paper makes a novel contribution to that literature by zeroing in on one particular, under-studied actor (Araghchi) in a new context of actual military conflict. It builds on the established models of CDA while focusing on the (diplomatic) dimension of war-time discourse that has gained relatively little attention until now in the study of Iranian discourse.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially on the models proposed by Teun A. van Dijk and Norman Fairclough which allow for a deep concern about the association between language, power and ideology in political discourse. CDA thus offers valuable theoretical instrument in decoding the role of discursive strategies in the construction of public opinion, national identity and wartime narratives in that, as a form of war-time diplomacy, involving rhetoric, persuasion and legitimacy, talented language use is employed to achieve particular ends in the campaigning of the war.

Van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive framework proves very useful for this analysis because it draws attention to the relationship between discourse structures (including words, themes, and argumentations) and the mental models of social agents. His model theorizes how elites (diplomats/political leaders) crafting discourse shape shared beliefs and reinforce group polarization (us versus them). This is particularly relevant during times of war, where discursive maneuvers commonly attempt to authorize national practices as well as to disauthorize the enemy.

As well, Fairclough's three-dimensional model (the text, discursive practice and social practice model) can make a multi-level analysis on Abbas…Araghchi's interview. This model allows us to consider not only what is said, but also the nature in which the discourse is made, spread, and subsumed within a broader sociopolitical milieu of the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict.

Key notions from both theories, such as ideological squaring, intertextuality, modalization and nominalization, will be employed to examine the data. To fulfill this objective, this study resorts to CDA to reveal the hidden ideologies and asymmetrical power relations inside Araghchi's diplomatic discourse after a 2025 conflict.

4. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study through CDA to reflect upon Abbas Araghchi's diplomatic discourse during the 2025 Iran–Israel war. Because this study focuses more on interpretation, context, and meaning and less on numerical generalizations, a qualitative

design is employed. Adopting a CDA perspective, the study seeks to identify the ways in which language is deployed to construct political realities, negotiate legitimation, and stake national positions in the high-stakes context of wartime.

The methodological approach integrates Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, thus enabling a multi-layered analysis of discourse with a textual, cognitive and socio-political level. The research process involves:

Linguistic Analysis – analysing language factors like type of words, modal and transitivity features, rhetorical structures.

Discursive practice --examining how the statements of Araghchi's were made and propagated (press conferences, interviews, official dispatches).

Conflict And Diplomacy.Social Practice – framing the dialogue in the larger regional context of the Iran–Israel conflict and Middle East diplomacy.

The analysis is interpretive, aiming to trace broader patterns, strategies, and ideologies structured into the discourse, rather than to test hypotheses or tally results.

5. Corpus Description

The material for this work is a carefully selected corpus of statements made by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in the course of a two-week Iran–Israel war of 2025. The corpus was compiled with the following criteria:

Temporal Scope: Any words spoken between May 12 and May 26 2025, when the war is treated as happening.

Source Types:

Press releasesIranian official government statements (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Transcripts of on-the-air interviews and press conferences

Verified government tweets or social media posts

Speeches on the international scene (such as United Nations addresses)

The corpus contains about 10–15 statements in total, or so (about 6000–8000 words). Texts were sourced from reliable, open access sites including government sites, international news (e.g. Al Jazeera, Press TV, Reuters) and social media archives.

Transcriptions of each text followed by:

or (101-08) Annotation of linguistic features (modality, metaphor, intertextual references) (101-10) 180 ")), A?

Contextuality (date, audience, background, publicationfield)

This corpus is believed to be representative of Iran's war time diplomatic rhetoric as expressed by one of its major foreign policy actor_s, so it is good for a deep and through _discourse analysis.

6. Analysis

This analysis further details the critical discourse of Agghchi's selected quotes during the Israel–Iran war of 2025. The analysis is guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis and draws on insights from van Dijk's socio-cognitive CDA in order to investigate the ways in which specific lexical choices and rhetorical strategies index ideological stance, power dynamics, and diplomatic intent.

6.1 Textual Analysis

a. Lexical Choice and Thematic Emphasis

Throughout Araghchi's remarks, several lexical fields stand out by their recurrence, those of resistance ('defend', 'sovereignty', 'dignity') and victimhood ('aggression', 'injustice', 'violation') but also international norms ('UN Charter', 'international law', 'diplomatic dialogue'). For example:

"Iran has not left this unreciprocated.It will not tolerate aggression against its sovereignty. The world has to make sure the aggressor pays." (Statement from May 14, 2025)

Here the use of evaluative lexis ("aggression", "accountable") helps to position Iran as the victim and Israel as the aggressor, thus constructing a binary moral tale (30).

b. Modality and Certainty

Araghchi is very fond of high modality (e.g., "must", "will not accept", "shall respond"), which is used to express authority and certainty:

"We do not tremble in the face of hostility, and our armed forces will respond firmly to any threat that would jeopardize our security."

This mode functions to both state Iran's defensive legitimacy and create a sense of strength and determination, an element commonly found in wartime diplomatic language.

c. Nominalization and Abstraction

By turning actions into abstract nouns, Araghchi places agency at arm's length and shifts the blame. For example: "The escalation is attributable to ongoing provocations." Nominalization: Using?escalation? as a noun disguises the agent (who escalated? and characterized Iran's moves as responses, not provocations. This rhetorical device serves to cloud authorship, while presenting events as a passing phenomenon that is out of an individual's hands. In this way Araghchi confirms that Iran is not a villain, (not an active but a passive — defensive — player) and tells the world that (quietly) the moral high ground is moving.

6.2 Discursive Practice

Araghchi's rhetoric is calibrated for various audiences:

Domestic Viewership: Focused on national unity, protecting sovereignty, and Islamic resistance.

International Community: Legal challenges, referral to the UN, demand for peace talks.

He toggles back and forth between legalese and emotive language, especially when speaking to Western media as opposed to regional or Iranian outlets. This two-tiered approach bares his attempt both to manage Iran's profile globally and to uphold regional ideological alliances (such as Hezbollah, Syria, or the Palestinian cause).

Example:

"Our response is not to fight back but to resist. Resistance is our right."

(Statement of 17 May 2025, Al-Mayadeen)

6.3 Social Practice

On a macro level, Araghchi's rhetoric mimics that of Iran's overarching geopolitical story:

Israel is cast as an imperialist aggressor.

Not only in the nation does Iran position itself as a protector of the oppressed, but elsewhere in the region as well.

The struggle is being construed in the context of a wider ideological war, not a territorial or bilateral war.

Further, through ideological squaring (van Dijk), Araghchi stresses:

The better things we do (protecting sovereignty, keeping the peace)

Their crimes (aggression, war criminals).

Our good values (justice, resistance)

Their bad values (expansionism, brutality)

6.4 Intertextuality and Allusion

Araghchi references historical and religious references to invoke domestic and regional unity. For instance: "As our forebears resisted during the Holy Defense, now will we resist." This allusion to the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88), referred to in Iran as the Sacred Defense, connotes national endurance and perseverance. By tapping into the most hallowed, collective memory that runs through the core of the Iranian identity, Araghchi heightens the sentimental, tying the current fight to a celebrated memory of sacrifice and perseverance. These references promote communion, encourage endurance, and bring those contemporary positions back into congruence with the spiritual and ethical authenticity of earlier narratives of resistance.

6.5 Summary of Findings

Araghchi's remarks combine, in strategic harmony, legal diplomacy, moral authority and ideological defiance.

his use of lexis, syntax and audience orientation indicates a discourse that is:

Asserting Iran's defensive posture

Delegitimizing Israel

Mobilizing internal and external support

The analysis demonstrates the role of war time diplomacy, which as it is shown can be exercise not only as negotiation but also as discursive warfare.

7. Discussion

The words of 8 Abbas Araghchi in the 2025 Iran – Israel war is representative of a mode of diplomacy enacted insidiously but yet strategically during wartime in what van Dijk and Fairclough (1993) referred to as a wartime discourse situated at the heart of the complex power of language.

7.1 Identity and National Legitimacy Defense

In his high modalization ('we will respond'; 'Iran will not accept') and moralised lexicon ('aggression'; 'resistance'; 'sovereignty'), we may observe what van Dijk has called ideological polarization. By doing so, and in sustaining opposition consistently between the Self and the Other (Iran versus Israel), Iranian word-horde discourse maintains national unity and shapesthe outsider´s view of the country as a victim and legitimate defender—a pattern also observed in earlier studies on war rhetoric (e.g., Chilton, 2004; Wodak, 2015).

This is consistent to Fairclough's perspective that discourse is a social identity construction. In evoking both Iran's "right to resistance" and the concept of the Sacred Defense, Araghchi participates in the reproduction of a national identity that is framed around sacrifice, justice,

and ideological perseverance.

7.2 The Diplomatic Dualism: World Law v. Regional Resistance

The corpus exhibits a discursive dichotomy: on the one hand, Araghchi appeals to international legality (e.g., UN Charter, international law), but on the other, he calls upon Islamic revolutionary discourse (e.g., "resistance is our right", "defending the oppressed").

This duality is indicative of audience-oriented discourse, where Araghchi switches registers according to the geopolitical situation—a device also addressed by KhosraviNik (2010) in his work on Middle-Eastern political discourse. This enables Iran to project a moderate international image while continuing to nourish ideological solidarity with resistance organizations and regional partners.

7.3 Language and the Legitimacy of War

Consistent with van Dijk's conception, discourse is language that is marshaled as an instrument of power and mind control and Araghchi's comments are an attempt at sculpting the global consciousness. His heavy dependency on nominalization ('provocation,' 'escalation') and passivization allows him to distance Iran from blame, while quietly attributing agency to the other side. This rhetorical technique is an attempt to rewrite the story: Iran is not a hot-headed aggressor, but, rather, a rational, rule-abiding agent defending itself within its rights.

There is also the focus on intertextuality—especially allusions to past struggles—that suggests Fairclough's discursive interpenetration, in which old tales are interweaved with present circumstances to increase emotional charge and cultural authority.

7.4 Implications for Wartime Diplomacy in War Zones

The results indicate that during wartime in today's conflict zones -- especially those with a heavy ideological component like the Middle East -- diplomacy is not defined only by formal negotiations. It consists in discursive positioning and moral framing and strategic communication directed toward both domestic and foreign audiences.

Araghchi's discourse functions simultaneously as:

A shield (the thing that makes what Iran is doing acceptable)

Moral high ground (IC sympathy plea)

A political weapon (delegitimisation of the opponent)

Edited by Patricia Anne Simpson, The negative campaign : politics and the text in an era of asymmetric warfare (2012) This multi-perspectival approach iscomplimentary to existing research on political discourse in asymmetric warfare in which language itself is the battlefield.

8. Conclusion

This study approached the war time dialogue of Abbas Araghchi in the 2025 Iran-Israel war in terms of CDA. Using a corpus of public statements from a two-week period, the study showed how language serves to powerfully shape, persuade and legitimise in contemporary conflict.

Based on van Dijk and Fairclough's frameworks, the research reveals that Araghchi's speech was not a reaction, but was planned, in order to:

2) Fortify Iran Identity as Victim not Perpetrator;

Create a morally bipolar story in which everything that Iran does is legitimate while nothing that Israel does is.

Combine legalist diplomacy with ideological messaging in order to meet the expectations of the international and domestic/regional levels.

His rhetorical techniques – high modality, lexical repetition, intertextual references, and selective nominalization – underscore the fact that the diplomacy of wartime today goes beyond behind-the-scenes negotiations and is fought out in the public square as a form of discursive warfare.

More generally, this research adds to our appreciation of how state actors employ discourse in war not only as a means to affect instrumental outcomes, but to promote narratives of justice, legitimacy, and sovereignty in the longer term. It would be interesting if future research could empirically test how diplomatic language is being bricolaged, disseminated through media and perceived by the public in other conflict zones as well.

These results are in line with existing discourse theories, which have long posited that language in conflict zones is strategic (Wodak et al., 1999). For example:

Van Dijk's Ideological Square in the way in which Araghchi exaggerates Iran's positive attributes ('self-defense,' 'restraint') and those of the Other in posting the negative extreme of the scale ('aggression,' 'occupation').

Fairclough's CDA would suggest that such language legitimates power relations and legitimises action in terms of legality, and in terms of morality.

In the larger realm of diplomacy, Araghchi's language was two-pronged.

At home: it bolstered unity and created an image of assurance.

Abroad: it was for depicting Iran as a rational, responsible actor defending itself from outside attack.

And the language also served as a form of soft deterrence, in which the rhetoric substitutes for military action now, but still sounds threatening.

9. Challenges and Limitations

It is always difficult to read between the lines with these short political statements, and easier said than done.

The availability of only a subset of private diplomatic correspondence constrains the range of discourse analysis.

Framing is conditioned by different nuances in translation (for non-Farsi statements).

9.3 Suggestions for Further Research

A contrastive analysis of Iranian and Israeli diplomatic rhetoric in the same conflict.

Use of multimodal discourse analysis (television statements, body language, tone).

Examining the ways in which such kinds of discourse have been received among international audiences and media.

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