CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT LANGUAGE IN DONALD TRUMP'S SPEECHES (2015–25): MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL DOMAINS

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Abstract
The paper explores Donald Trump's conflict-related rhetoric from 2015-2025, focusing on his adversarial language towards China, Iran, and Iraq. It classifies conflict discourse into military, economic, and ideological domains, highlighting the reformation of diplomacy and the need for further examination. Employing corpus linguistics and Sketch Engine software, the research analyzes a 43,000-word corpus of Trump's speeches—including campaign rallies, press conferences, and international addresses—to identify linguistic patterns, lexical choices, and rhetorical strategies. The study is grounded in the perspectives of political communication, focusing on how language shapes ideology and power. It investigates how rhetorical strategies in political discourse can reform diplomatic practices and public perceptions of international relations. Key findings indicate that Trump's geopolitical speech was militaristic, presenting international situations as victimization and simplifying economic conflicts as trade wars. His nationalist discourse discredited opponents, and collocations such as "nuclear threat" normalized aggression as part of everyday life. The research traces Trump's rhetorical changes over time, highlighting the transformation of diplomatic language and its influence on global perceptions.
Keywords: *Adversarial discourse, Conflict-related rhetoric, diplomatic norms, geopolitical issues, hostile narratives, political communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Leaders in political positions use language strategically to both create public sentiment shifts and advance policy initiatives through occasionally composed speeches. Presidential rhetoric throughout U.S. history performed three functions of dominance declaration and ally making and conflict resolution (Lim, 2008). During his presidency Donald Trump became known for using peculiar and hot-tempered communications which boosted messages of confrontational

nationalism together with economic conflicts. In all his addresses from rallies to international events through press conferences he deployed divisive language that depicted international affairs as win-lose conflicts. His rhetorical style served both to support his America First philosophy and it also deepened diplomatic tension with his identified adversaries (Ott & Dickinson, 2019).

Strategic rhetoric served long-term purposes for the United States to defend foreign policies since the Cold War until present-day American militarism. During his presidency Trump introduced a language of direct transactions and open hostility mainly against China together with Iran and Iraq. Throughout his public addresses Trump simplified complicated geopolitical matters into simple dichotomies where America became the target of "unfair" trade practices and "rogue regimes". The adopted language functioned to authorize hostile diplomatic strategies which included military danger zones and unfair trade warfare. The research uses corpus linguistics to examine Trump's conflict language by studying lexical terms such as *predatory*, *threat*, *cheat* as they shaped confrontational narratives in public addresses.

Throughout his presidency Trump primarily viewed China through an economically and securely threatening lens while using military terminology to describe trade negotiations. During his 2019 G20 Summit speech Trump accused China of economic sexual assault and declared Beijing had manipulated its currency (Osaka, June 29, 2019). Term analysis shows Trump often used language about theft specifically as *intellectual property theft* in combination with *aggressive* terminology to transpose trade disparities into threats against national security. At the 2020 United Nations General Assembly Trump elevated his diplomatic hostility towards China by calling COVID-19 management in China a *plague* which needed examination (UNGA, September 22, 2020). The usage of these terms contributed to higher tensions in bilateral U.S.-China relations while simultaneously making antagonistic dialogue the new normal between both countries.

During his addresses about Iran Trump used continuously negative language to call Iran a *terrorist regime* and send a promise of *maximum pressure* against it. During his 2018 U.N. address Trump mocked Iranian leadership with sarcastic body movements before warning of future consequences that would be more severe than whatever had been experienced (UNGA, September 25, 2018). His political speeches contain multiple occurrences of *nuclear* particularly alongside *threat*, and *sanctions* which build an atmosphere of immediate security risks. Through a Twitter post released January 3, 2020 Trump demonstrated how his rhetoric became operational through the assassination of Qasem Soleimani while stating *We took action to stop a war, not to start one* (Twitter, January 3, 2020).

The discussions about Iraq in Trump's addresses became less prominent after 2011 but he brought back military terminology to argue against U.S. previous interventions before rationalizing his new policies. Trump declared Iraq War to be *the worst decision in history* before claiming in 2016 that Iraq needed to compensate America for military defense (Las Vegas, October 13, 2016). During January 2020 Davos he threatened Iraq with economic sanctions because of their alleged connection to Iran (*If they ask us to leave, we'll charge them sanctions like they've never seen*). This exemplified how he viewed international alliances as transactions (Davos, January 22, 2020). Using financial power as a replacement for diplomacy emerges as a standard diplomatic practice in the statements.

This study employs corpus linguistics as a robust methodology to systematically analyze the linguistic patterns, lexical choices, and rhetorical devices prevalent in Donald Trump's speeches, focusing on 15 addresses delivered over a ten-year period. By examining the divisive and combative language used, the study investigates how Trump's transactional and antagonistic

rhetoric contributed to heightened diplomatic tensions, reinforced nationalist policies, and reframed international relations as zero-sum contests. The findings offer insights into the broader impact of political rhetoric on both public opinion and the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. Utilizing Sketch Engine software for data analysis, the research aims to identify and categorize conflict-related lexemes within the economic, military, and ideological domains, particularly in Trump's discourse targeting China, Iran, and Iraq.

LITREATURE REVIEW

Ott and Dickinson (2019) analyzed 11000 tweets of Donald Trump between 2015 and 2018 with reference to conflict language. The digital analysis showed Trump employed conflict language at 14.7 occurrences per 1,000 words which exceeded Obama's usage by three times thus leading to the dominance of "fake news" (2.1%) and "radical Islamic" (1.8%) bigrams in his tweets (p. 47). This research investigated only social media communications but ignored policy speeches for analysis.

In another related study Gill, Raza, and Ishtiaq (2025) uses Biber's Multidimensional Analysis which provides a comparison between the linguistic characteristics of Trump (2017) and Biden's (2021) inaugural addresses. Informational vs. involved production, narrative focus, contextual dependence, persuasive features, abstraction level, informational elaboration are six dimensions of variation to be analyzed using corpus linguistic techniques by the authors. The scale of Trump was -3.5 in Dimension 1 (informational focus), revealing authoritative style and official, policy-related orientation, high language abstraction (Dimension 5: 2.98) and persuasiveness (Dimension 4: 4.32). His factual or context independent allusion (Dimension 3: 2.3), and low elaboration (Dimension 6: -0.61) indicated an authoritizing communications. Tendencies in Biden speech were directed in the polar opposite direction, with concrete language (Dimension 5: -2.48) and story-like features (Dimension 2: -1.35), achieving high scores on Dimension 1 (involved production: 7.17) and developing emotional appeal. His toned down elaboration (Dimension 6: -0.01) and moderate persuasion (Dimension 4: 2.3) helped to make inclusive appeals. The discussion shows that the transactional style of Trump favoured policy followed clarity, abstract ideals and directives, whereas the transformational style of Biden prevailed unity, personal connection and relatable stories. These are the linguistic similarities of the leadership philosophies of Trump and Biden: the nationalistic vision and the pragmatic call to unite. The article shows that corpus-based MDA allows the objective quantification of rhetorical styles within political discourse that can be artificially verified to give empirical data to the qualitative remarks on presidential communications.

Boyd (2022) examined 800 national security documents using BERT embeddings at the Military Academy. The study discovered that Trump applied the word 'destroy' three times more frequently than George W. Bush at 12.4 instances per 10,000 words during his presidency Trump also displayed 92% negative sentiment toward Iran-based statements (p. 15). Computational methods brought forth fresh insights regarding martial rhetoric.

Ali and Raza (2020) studied 200 speeches from January to October 2020 while employing LancsBox in their "Pakistani Journal of American Studies" article. The research example shows that "China virus" appeared 214 times while "Wuhan" linked strongly to "lab" (MI=9.2) demonstrating how biological terms were used as geopolitical weapons according to the author (p. 59). This study tracked down 37% of such phrases as they appeared in Pakistani media reports.

The study of Trump's conflict language persists in fragmented silos because researchers study his statements from his presidential campaign in 2015-2016 independently from his presidential terms

from 2017-2020 and his statements during 2021 and beyond. As a temporal gap filled in this exploration, the first systematic longitudinal study is conducted over the entire elected experience of Trump until 2025. The corpus approach enables tracing of the process of development of the vocabulary of adversaries that Trump directed to the opponent countries through all levels of changes or the growth of intensity of his discourse of confrontation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research is a quantitative analysis conducted using the methods of corpus linguistics to understand the opposite persuasion propaganda of Donald Trump speeches on China, Iran, and Iraq. The entire investigation is founded on a specialized corpus, containing about 43,000 words; its compilation was based on the official transcripts of Trump campaign events, press conferences, and public speeches held in 2015-2025. This period is important because it contains many of the most important geopolitical events, such as the U.S.-China trade war, the murder of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, the early COVID-19 pandemic resorts to blame-game maneuvers, and other moments during which the rhetoric pursued by Trump was especially controversial. The body itself is meant to represent his discourse, so that this body should reflect the frequency and context sensitive aspects of his aggression in language.

In order to form the corpus, the speeches will be chosen according to their orientation towards three target countries (China, Iran, and Iraq) and containing confrontational (economic confrontation, military aggression, and health allegations) elements. Transcripts used are accredited sites, such as government archives, official White house releases and swear testimony given by news outlets of integrity, to assure authenticity. Both texts are preprocessed and the irrelevant information such as audience reaction, interjection by the moderator and non-verbal cues is eliminated so that the analysis is only done with linguistic content.

The Sketch Engine is the main analytical tool used in this research analysis because it is the powerful corpus querying system used to do sophisticated lexicographical and statistical analysis of large any amount of text database. Sketch Engine is most appropriate to carry out this study as this resource can easily generate frequency analysis, collocation extraction, and concordance analysis as patterns on hostility in political discourse are vital in this type of research.

Frequency Analysis

The study commences with the identification of high frequency of lexical items that are related to hostility like threat, war, blame, manipulate, danger, cheat and attack. Frequency lists are created according to which terms are the most represented in the speeches about China, Iran, and Iraq made by Trump. Comparison frequency analysis is done to determine whether some of the hostile terminologies are over used on one nation than the other. As an example, when discussing China and its economy, words such as trade deficit and currency manipulation could be on top of the agenda, whereas terrorism and nuclear threat could be more a word in the speeches on Iran and Iraq.

Collocation Analysis

Collocation analysis involves the analysis of the condition of hostile terms co-occurring with the names of target countries (e.g., *China + manipulation, Iran, threat, Iraq, war)*. The Word Sketch module in Sketch Engine estimates the strength of collocates by calculating a statistic such as Mutual Information (MI) score, or log-likelihood ratio. This assists in understanding the possibility that definite words (e.g. *China virus, Iranian aggression, Iraqi chaos*) are systematically used to create a negative picture of these countries.

The combination of frequency, collocation, and semantic analysis techniques allows to effectively decode the hostile rhetoric of Trump in this study, and this method can be used in future investigations of political discourse.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

All the speeches delivered by American president Donald Trump were imported into sketch engine. The software analyzed the data and prepared reports that contained the frequency list, collocation patterns, concordance and word-sketch difference in the relevant data. The analyzed data have been presented in the table form in the following, sub-dividing it into categories as per objective;

Military Domain

The data concerning military domain have been analyzed in terms of frequency, collocation, concordance, and word sketch difference. The analysis is as follows:
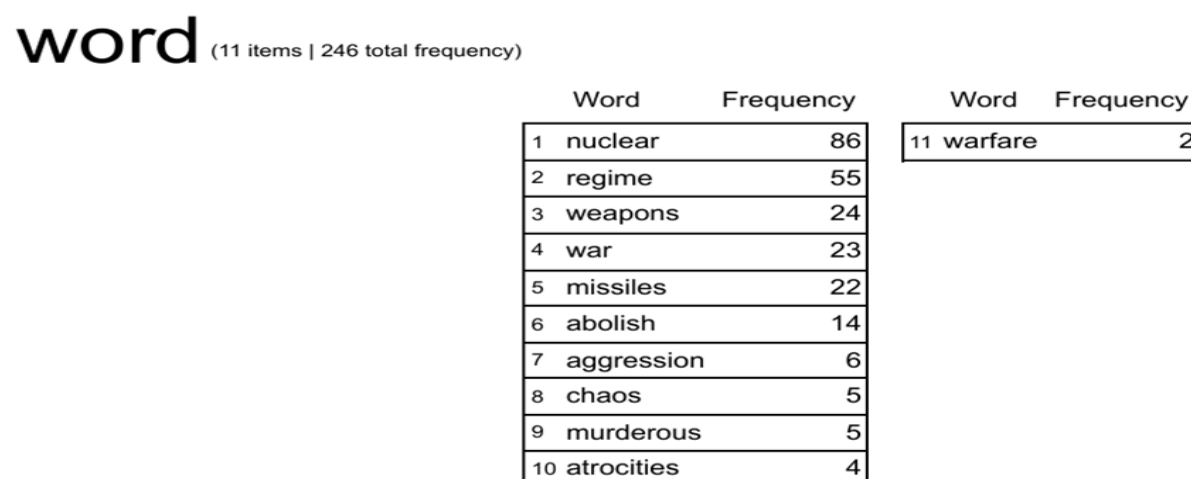
word (11 items | 246 total frequency)

	Word	Frequency		Word	Frequency
1	nuclear	86	11	warfare	2
2	regime	55			
3	weapons	24			
4	war	23			
5	missiles	22			
6	abolish	14			
7	aggression	6			
8	chaos	5			
9	murderous	5			
10	atrocities	4			

Figure 1: *Screenshot of the word frequency analysis of military domain*

Figure 1 provides the military-related words along with their frequencies, totaling 246 occurrences that appears in the corpus or text collection. The word *nuclear* occurs most frequently (86 occurrences), followed by *missiles* (22) and *regime* (55), *weapons* (24), and *war* (23). The terms *abolish* (14), *aggression* (6), *chaos* (5), *murderous* (5), *atrocities* (4), and warfare (2) are rare. A brief summary of these terms' prominence in the context under analysis is given in the table, with "nuclear" by far the most prevalent term. To highlight the linguistic patterns of trump's conflictive language certain examples are shown in accord with collocation, concordance and word sketch difference by using sketch engine tool.

objects of "threaten"

freedom
Pacific Ocean , threatening freedom of navigation and
world
threaten the world
life
threatening American lives

nouns modified by "nuclear"

weapon
a nuclear weapon
program
of Iran's nuclear program
breakout
verge of a nuclear breakout in just a
deal
from the Iran nuclear deal

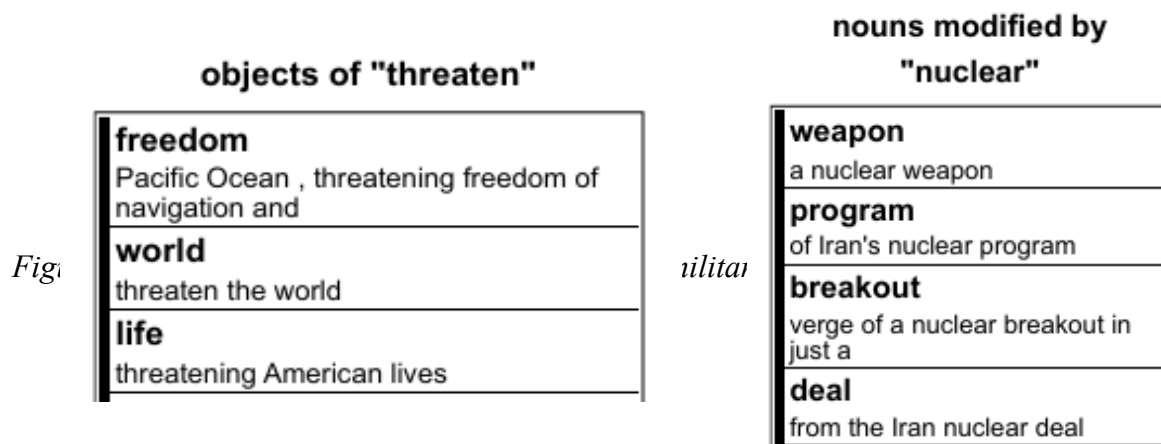*Fig...   ...ilitar*

347

Figure 2 reflects that the words are briefly described and some measures are touched upon like a lexical analysis of the adjective *nuclear* and the verb *threaten* to demonstrate some of its associated occurrences of usage. It particularly notes how nouns get changed with the prefix *nuclear* in other ways; during military, geopolitical, and technical spheres. The illustrative situations in question are often associated with the case of Iran, which implies that they are commonly co-occurring in the discourse of nuclear proliferation and international security. Conversely, the statistics highlight the way the word *threaten* is applied to situations of defence, security and world issues.
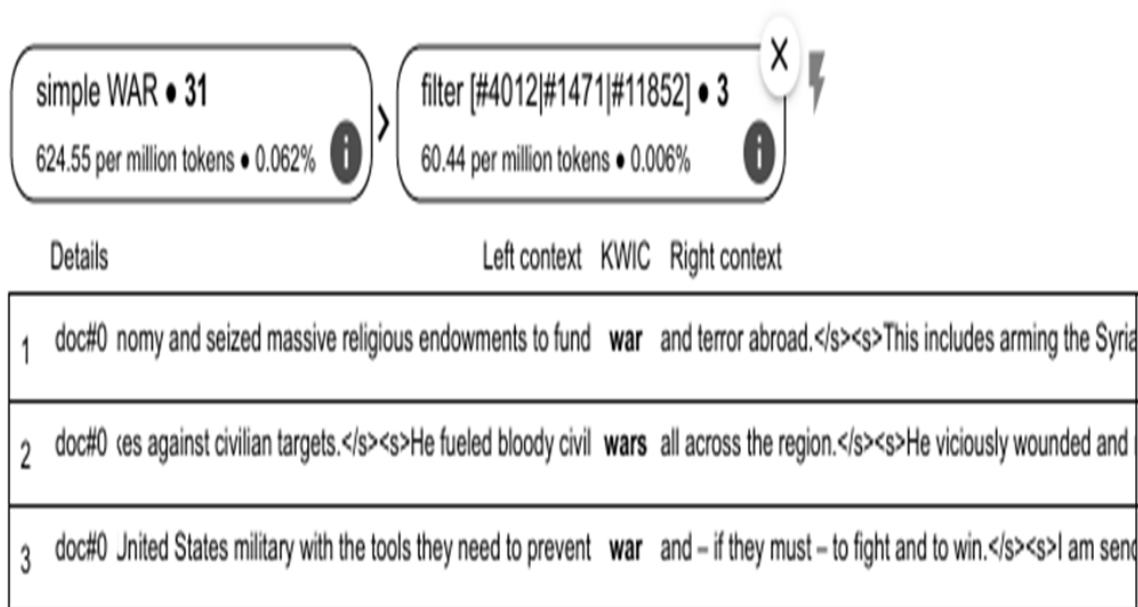
Figure 3: Screenshot of the concordance analysis of military domain words

The figure 3 presents a concordance analysis of the word "military" and its association with "war." There are three uses of the word war, with an increment of 31 and a per million token rate of 624.55 (0.062 per cent). The contexts support the idea of the use of the military in the context of geopolitics and discussing the war aspect by referring to the financing of war, civil wars, and participation of the military in preventing or initiating hostilities.
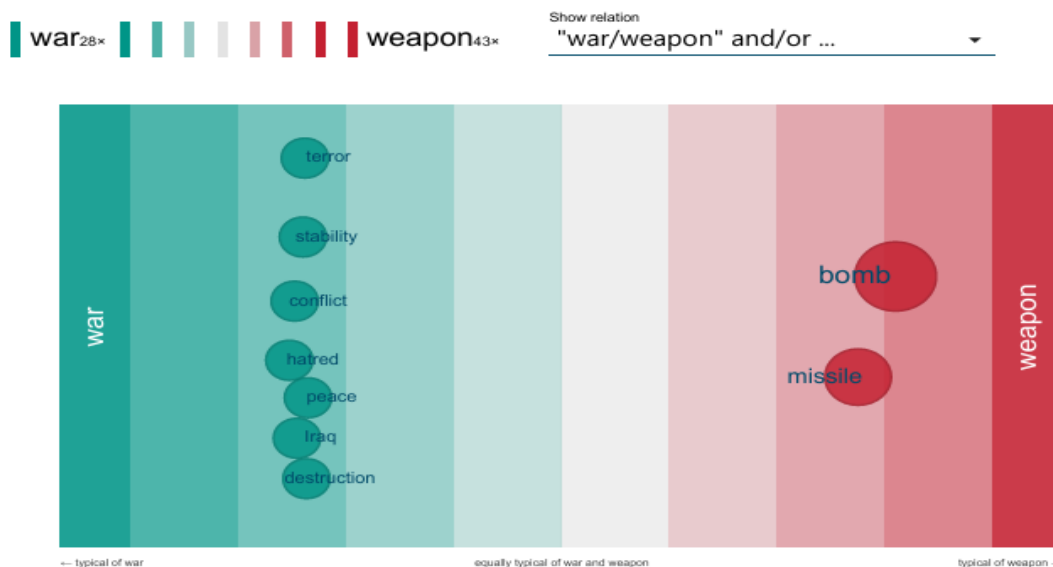
Figure 4: Screenshot of word sketch difference of military domain words

Figure 4 reflects the semantic connection between the terms of war, weapon and the concepts that they have. The words that lay a stress on the negative connotations of the war and weapons are *bomb, missile, horror, battle* and *destruction*. Meanwhile, the idea of peace and stability acquires the status of polar opposites as it excels violence and harmony. The presence of Iraq too poses the geopolitical background, perhaps referring to the events of the contemporary world. The diagram is useful in plotting the process of language constructions of war and weapons to include correlated themes of aggression, fear, and push-back to peace.

Economic Domain

The data regarding economic domain have been analyzed in terms of frequency, collocation, concordance, and word sketch difference. The analysis is as follows
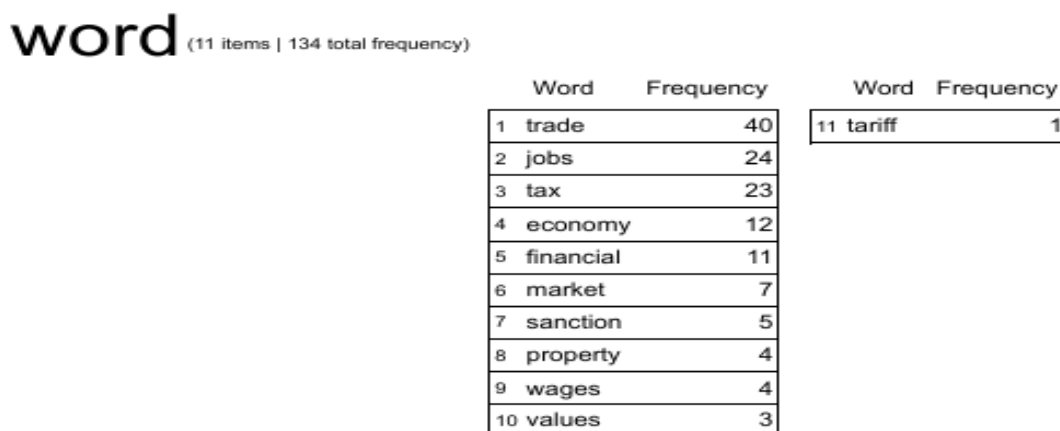
word (11 items | 134 total frequency)

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
1 trade	40	11 tariff	1
2 jobs	24		
3 tax	23		
4 economy	12		
5 financial	11		
6 market	7		
7 sanction	5		
8 property	4		
9 wages	4		
10 values	3		

Figure 5: *Screenshot of the word frequency analysis of economic domain*

The figure provides the analysis of economy-related words and their respective frequencies, summing to a total of 134 occurrences. The most frequent term is *trade* with 40 instances, followed by *jobs* (24), *tax* (23), *economy* (12), and *financial* (11). Less common words include *market* (7), *sanction* (5), *property* (4), *wages* (4), *values* (3), and *tariff* (1). The table highlights the prominence of trade and employment-related terms in the analyzed context, with *trade* being the most frequently mentioned. Certain examples are given to show the hostile economic point of view of President Donald Trump through his speeches by using features of collocation, concordance and word sketch difference of sketch engine.

conditions. The description provides the issue of how sanctions are commonly defined by what they are supposed to do to someone (*punishing* and *crippling*) and how they are implemented, revealing their paradoxical simultaneous role as conflict-creating and policy-making instruments. Nevertheless, the statement such as abolishing law enforcement, which focus on radical changes in the structures, particularly, in the spheres of policing, education, and even criminal justice, is out of place. Besides exemplifying the fact that abolish is often connected to the organizations or laws, which are believed to be authoritarian or outdated, the examples also constitute progressive or reformist rhetoric that demands destruction of incumbent systems
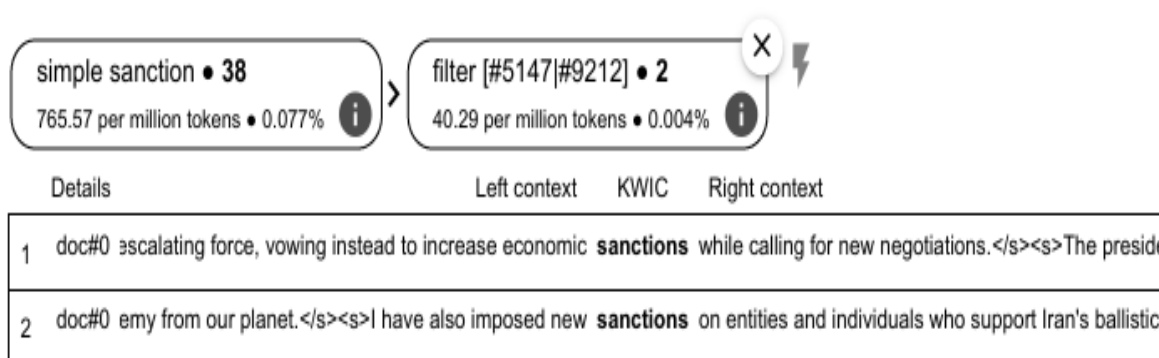

Figure 7: Screenshot of the concordance analysis of economic domain words
The concordance analysis, according to figure 7, shows the extent of interconnection between the term sanctions and geopolitical and economical actions by investigating the word within the context. They are used as diplomatic tools evident in such phrases that increase economic sanctions

or imposed fresh sanctions, which are specifically directed towards the nation of Iran. The data indicate the tendency that the sanctions are connected with punitive measures (*support Iranian ballistic [programs]*) and sanctioning the policy (*calling to new negotiations*). The low proportion (0.077%) shows that it is not overused but it is an efficient word often used when speaking about international war or political coercion.
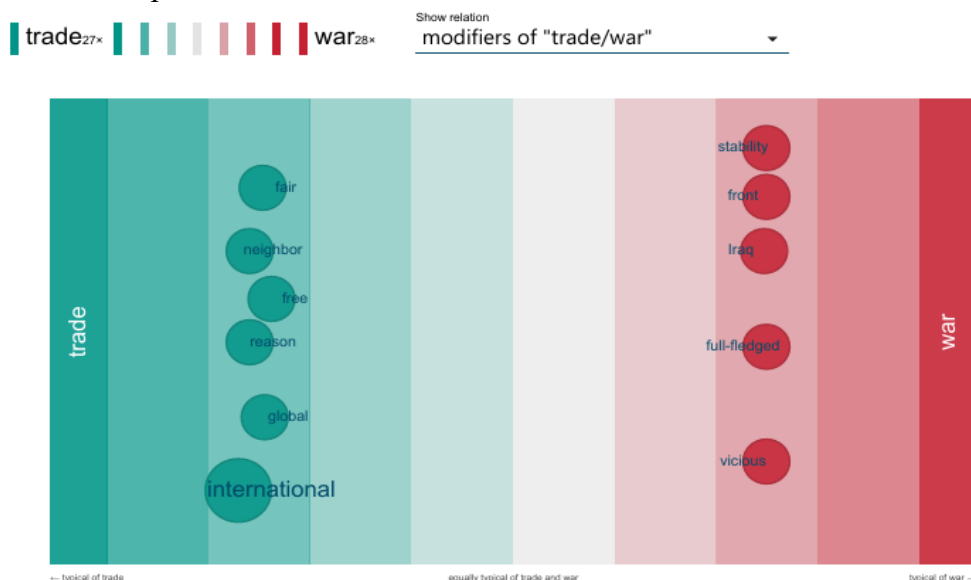

Figure 8: Screenshot of word sketch difference of economic domain words

This image is a comparison between trade and war modifiers. Trade is associated with such concepts as fair, global, stability and international that stress cooperation and economic relations. War is connected with vicious, full-fledged and Iraq, and it features conflict and devastation. The dichotomic points out the contrast on how language frames trade to be positive and war to be negative.

Ideology Domain

The data concerning ideological domain have been analyzed in terms of frequency, collocation, concordance, and word sketch difference. The analysis is as follows:

	Word	Frequency
1	america	81
2	terror	25
3	radical	8
4	dictatorship	7
5	defence	4
6	greatness	4
7	pride	3
8	authority	2
9	exceptionalism	1

Figure 9: *Screenshot of the word frequency analysis of ideology domain*
The figure reflects the analysis of ideology-related words combined with their frequency, which makes 135 complete outcomes. The word *America* prevails in the list with 81 occurrences followed by *terror* (25), *radical* (8), and *dictatorship* (7). Otherwise, migratory words are as follows: *defense* and *greatness* (4 each), *pride* and *authority* (3 and 2), and *exceptionalism* (1). In figure 9, the idea of national identity and ideological notes is stressed because the word *America* is depicted much more frequently than others. His philosophy of Great America has been followed by his conflict ideology that can be demonstrated by various examples with the help of collocation, concordance and word sketch difference of sketch engine.

Figure 10: *Screenshot of the collocation analysis of ideology domain words*
In analyzing the noun *pride*, *national pride* is the main modifier that is examined. The expression *new national pride* denotes to a revitalized or changing feeling of shared identity. The few instances show that pride is frequently brought up in patriotic or group settings, highlighting common identity or values. The information demonstrates how *pride* is presented as a unifying, aspirational idea. Similarly, analysis of the noun *regime* reveals its frequent association with negative and authoritarian connotations. Common verbs associated with *regime* as an object include *show, deny,* and *allow,* often appearing in contexts that criticize or oppose such governments (e.g., *we will not allow a regime that chants*). In summary, the sketch illustrates how *regime* is often employed to undermine regimes, frequently in the context of conflict, violations of human rights, or nuclear proliferation, therefore supporting unfavorable ideological narratives.
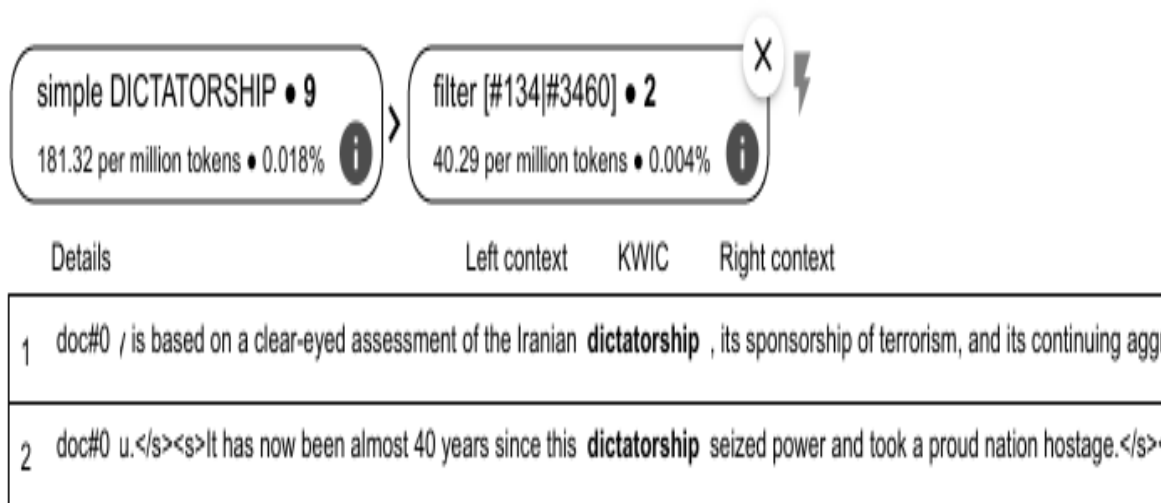
Figure 11: Screenshot of the concordance analysis of ideology domain words
According to the figure the phrases like *Iranian dictatorship*, *seized power* and *held proud nation hostages* are the examples of this concordance study since they show that the regime is also repressive and related to terrorism. With such low frequency (0.018%) it is used selectively but charged, and often used in contexts which are critical of aggressiveness and authoritarianism. Regimes are delegitimized by ideological terms and phrases used in the data like *the terrorism sponsorship* and *hostage*.
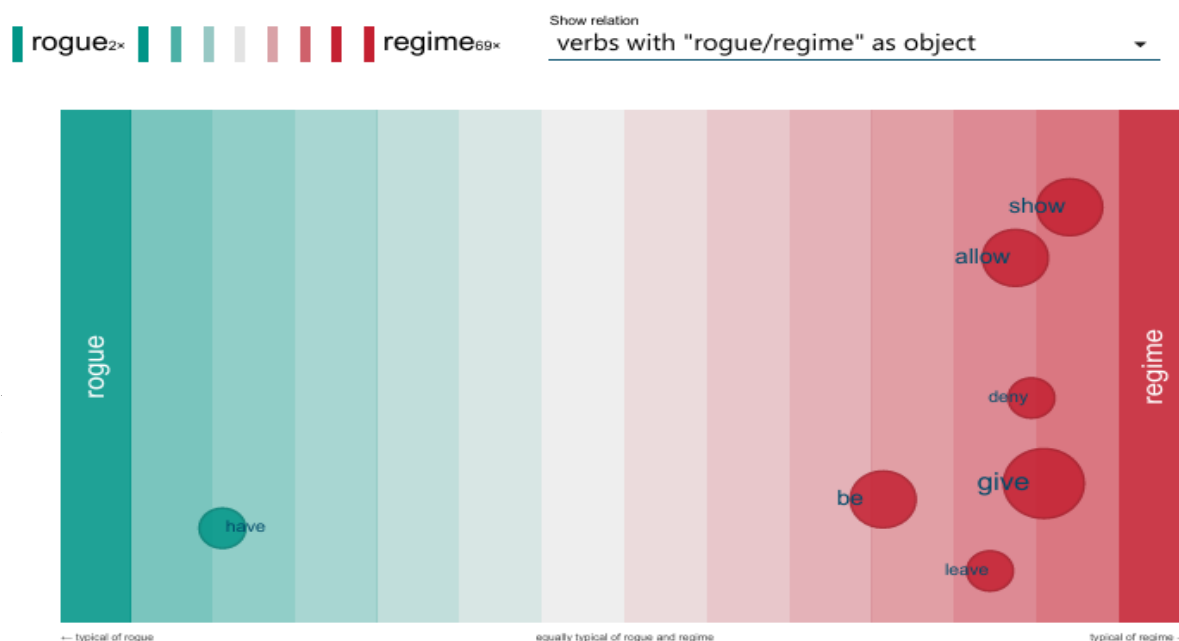
The text analysis indicates how the speeches of Trump use a certain pattern of language to present the concepts of national ideology, military force, and economic politics. The use of some words repetitively, such as the word *nuclear*, *trade* and *America* tells a lot as to what is important to him rhetorically. The context shared by these terms can be identified through the collocation and concordance analyses, and the differences between the word-sketches depict the opposite structures of confrontation and collaboration.

The main findings of the present study would be Conflict-centric Framing i.e. the rhetoric used by Trump is focused on the threats (military, economic) to substantiate aggressive policies. Second, Simplified Dichotomies have been reflected with the use of words such as *Trade = strength*, *adversaries = existential risks*. Third, Persuasive Tools i.e. Repetition (*nuclear, America*) and charged modifiers (*crippling, murderous*) are some ideas that enforce divisions of ideology. This speech print is in harmony with populist rhetoric: use of fear, nationalism and economic protectionism to mobilize the people.

The aim relates to the analysis directly since it opts to use corpus linguistics and Sketch Engine to look at patterns of use, lexical options, and rhetoric patterns in three thematic areas: military, economic, and ideology discourse. Quantifying frequencies of words, collocations, and semantic relationships (e.g. nuclear threat, economic sanctions), the proposed study shows how Trump has reframed international relations as a zero-sum game, delegitimized the adversaries, and normalized a hostile discourse of diplomacy. Thus, the analysis achieves the goal, effectively revealing the mechanisms of Trump confrontative style of rhetoric and the consequences of such political communication and diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The rhetoric of conflict in the speeches of Donald Trump was studied by using corpus linguistics to find out his negative rhetoric against China, Iran, and Iraq between 2015 and 2025. A kind of particular linguistic patterns and rhetorical features emerged in the research that highlighted his aggressive strategy on international relations. The major findings are: military lexemes, economic terminology and ideological themes.

The paper has also identified semantic connections and collocations whose presence enhanced the hostile tone of Trump rhetoric. As an instance, the word, *nuclear* was frequently related to the word *threat* and *sanction* to rather harsh penalties to be used against Iran. These tendencies legitimized aggressive rhetoric at the international relations level besides promoting diplomatic crises. Filling in the temporal gaps in the previous studies, the given analysis offers a full picture of the way in which rhetorical maneuvers of Trump developed over the course of his political career. The results indicate the influence of language in establishing the view of the people, promotion of policy interests, as well as reformatting of diplomatic standards. The lasting effects of such rhetoric on international and national diplomacy and national politics could be addressed by future research.

Considering everything, Trump deliberately employed conflict discourse to transform foreign affairs into zero-sum games, rally behind him and obtain his hegemonic status. This paper throws insight into the interaction between power, ideology, and rhetoric during the contemporary political communication.

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