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Power, Propaganda, and Civilian Suffering: A Critical Discourse Analysis of State War Narratives

Munazza Khan

Research Specialist, Aga Khan University
munazza.researcher@gmail.com

Muhammad Rizwan

Lecturer English, National College of Business Administration & Economics

Corresponding Author Email: hafizrizwan158@gmail.com

Palwasha Habib

M.Phil English Scholar, University of Swat
zarimehr35@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the literary and research style of Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan, a distinguished Urdu scholar, critic, and researcher. It begins by defining “style” as the unique mode of expression that a writer or researcher adopts to create depth, clarity, and artistic impact. Drawing upon the views of Western and Urdu scholars such as Murray, Abid al-Nisa, Dr. Atish Durrani, and Rashid Hasan Khan, the chapter distinguishes research style from general literary prose. While creative writing may employ ornamentation and subjectivity, research style is characterized by objectivity, factual precision, simplicity, and complete freedom from personal bias, emotional exaggeration, or rhetorical embellishment.

The author illustrates these principles through extensive quotations from Dr. Khan’s seminal research work Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani: Ek Tahqiqi Jaiza. Detailed examination of selected passages reveals Dr. Khan’s hallmark qualities: straightforward sentence structure, economical use of language, evidence-based argumentation, avoidance of ornate diction, and a balanced, dignified tone that maintains scholarly sobriety while remaining accessible to general readers. The chapter further explores the formative elements of style personal individuality, socio-cultural environment, linguistic habits, and inner disposition and demonstrates how these factors converged in Dr. Khan’s prose to produce a distinctive, recognizable voice. Ultimately, the study establishes Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan as a “sahib-e-asloob” (master stylist) whose research writings serve as exemplary models of modern Urdu scholarly prose clear, precise, objective, and deeply impactful. His style not only strengthens the credibility of his research but also sets a benchmark for future scholars in Urdu literary and historical studies.

Keywords: *Dr. Ghulam Mustafa Khan, Research Style, Asloob, Urdu Prose, Objective Writing, Scholarly Methodology, Simplicity in Research, Literary Analysis, Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani, Evidence-Based Argumentation.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Background of the Study

In the modern world, war reporting is no longer confined to reporting from the battlefield but increasingly has become a complex public relations-driven system of narratives that influence perception, that provide justification for military operations, and that control public emotions. Official statements, press briefings and digital media releases are increasingly being used by governments to try to create a coherent interpretation of

conflict. These stories are not a factual presentation of events but rather carefully constructed ideological texts which represent the violence in a politically and morally acceptable manner.

According to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, *Language and Power*), language is a place of power, a place where meaning is created, controlled and challenged. This power is apparent in war discourse, which skips some realities while highlighting others. In the course of any conflict, civilian suffering may be present but at the same time can be linguistically marginalized by abstraction, omission, and/or euphemistic substitution. State communication often uses terms like “incident”, “collateral impact”, or “security operation outcomes” to minimize emotional and ethical immediate, and to de-emotionalize it (Butler 38).

This linguistic separation is not coincidental but planned. It allows the states to maintain legitimacy and go on fighting wars. Van Dijk believes that elite discourse is important in the construction of collective cognition because it repeatedly presents audiences with the “structured interpretation of reality” (van Dijk 102). As the narratives are repeated and normalized, they are increasingly seen as objective fact or reality, not ideology.

Furthermore, war stories tend to use duos of opposites like “security vs. threat” or “order vs. chaos” to reduce the complexity of the geopolitical situation and to legitimate state violence (Chilton 61). These binaries generate moralization, and put military action in an almost automatic mode of action, not as a political debate but as an inevitable measure. In doing so, civilian suffering is made a secondary issue subordinated linguistically to the larger strategic considerations.

1.2 Ideological Function of War Discourse

The state's war stories serve as instruments of ideology control. They are not just reporting the news, but are influencing the interpretation of what's happening. As the Herman and Chomsky propaganda model shows, information is being filtered by institutional communication networks to reflect political and strategic concerns (Herman and Chomsky 2). During this filtering, the number of civilian casualties is frequently downplayed or recast in a way that makes it easier to ignore them for moral purposes.

For instance, military successes generally are presented with measurable success criteria, but civilian damage is usually general or depersonalized. The lack of balance in the representation creates a sense of conflict that is exact, controlled and justified, while the effects on civilians are fuzzy or ancillary. Butler claims that this representational asymmetry shapes people's lives and which ones are seen as “grievable” in public discourse (Butler 44).

In addition, the use of war speech frequently uses the nominalization, which turns actions into abstract nouns. Texts can say “a residential area was bombed by the military” but also include phrases like “an airstrike operation” or “target engagement outcomes.” Fairclough points out that nominalization takes away the agency and responsibility, and makes it more difficult to hold people accountable (*Analysing Discourse* 104).

1.3 Construction of Civilian Suffering in Language

In state accounts of war, the role of civilians is a complicated and sometimes paradoxical one. It can not be marginalized from the discussion because of its political salience; however, it is often redefined with the intention of diminishing its emotional and moral resonance. Euphemistic language is a very important part of this process. The civilian casualties and collateral damage from legitimate military action are being normalized by terms like “unintended consequences” and “collateral damage” (Chilton 68).

This linguistic approach helps to maintain a distance between audiences and victims. Suffering abstracted, Butler writes, “makes it less visible as a human phenomenon, and

less likely to attract public moral attention” (51). In this way, language, besides describing violence, is also being used to prescribe the moral reaction to violence.

Also, the narratives around the state frequently involve civilian suffering in a security narrative. It is not defined as a central issue but as a secondary effect of the essential defence activities. This framing will emphasize that the use of force is rational, controlled and justified even in the face of humanitarian implications.

1.4 Research Gap and Academic Positioning

While there have been many studies that have studied the media depictions of war, fewer attention has been paid specifically to state produced war discourse as a primary ideology shaping tool. The literature tends to focus on the framing of the news or on international media coverage, while the governmental communication as a separate discourse system is not analyzed in depth.

However, as Van Dijk states, elite discourse, in this case government discourse, is dominant in the public ideology due to its institutional source of authority (van Dijk 110). But there are still no large-scale systematic CDA based studies that explore the nature of civilian suffering across various geopolitical contexts and how multiple state actors consistently construct civilian suffering.

Moreover, although the CDA model has been used extensively, it is still not widely used to try to analyze comparative war discourse that is multi-state and multi-temporal. To fill this gap, this study examines a cross-national sample of official war narratives from 2018 to 2025, on which more detailed knowledge of the patterns of ideology can be gained.

The central issue that will be investigated in this study is the fact that state-produced war narratives can neglect, minimise or manipulate and portray civilian suffering in ways that are conducive to political and military agendas. This poses pertinent issues of transparency, accountability and ethical representation in conflict communication.

Research Objectives/Questions

This study aims at achieving the following:

1. To identify the linguistic strategies that are employed in the construction of war narratives
2. To examine the representation or repression of civilian suffering
3. To analyse the framing of military operations in terms of ideology
4. To consider the nature and function of discourse in relation to state power

Research Questions

1. This study aims to answer the following questions:
2. How is civilian suffering linguistically constructed in the state narratives?
3. What form of ideology does justify military operations?
4. How does talk help to normalize violence?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The contribution of this study to the area of Critical Discourse Analysis is that it extends this method into the field of large-scale state war communication. It draws attention to the role of language as an instrument of ideology-construction in conflict situations. Fairclough says that discourse is a social practice that mirrors and influences power relations (Language and Power 97). This study examines state narratives systematically to gain insights into the language structure of civilian suffering and its political context. It also enriches reflection on media ethics, political communication and humanitarian accountability in conflict zones in general.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language as Ideological Tool

CDA offers a basic approach for analyzing the use of language as a tool of power and ideology in social settings. The theory of discourse is not only that it reflects reality, but

that it actively shapes social meanings and choices are woven into institutional structures (Fairclough, *Language and Power* 73). In the context of war narratives, it implies that state communication does not only inform the public about war events; it is likewise an active process in shaping understanding, interpretation and emotional processing of the public of the war events.

The relationship between language and ideology is one of the key issues in CDA. As van Dijk argues, ideology is not just a stand that is made by a political party or leader, but is also reflected in the very structures of the language in which people act regularly, which affect cognition and social beliefs (van Dijk 89). Like in other states, the ideological control is carried out by frequent ideational scripting of the necessity, defensiveness and legitimacy of military actions, alongside efforts to marginalize or disqualify opposing views.

2.2 Legal and Non-Legal Measures to Ensure the Security of the State

To comprehend the narratives of states' wars, one needs to understand the concept of propaganda. Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model states that filters in mass communication systems can often be found that favour elite political and economic interests (Herman and Chomsky 2). The filters make sure that information disseminated to the public reflects the dominant state agendas, especially in times of war.

In the propagandistic aspect of warfare, falsehoods are not necessarily the hallmark of propaganda, but rather selective representation. Civilian suffering, for instance, can be recognized but reimagined in a manner to defuse its emotional and political sting. The information is "filtered, shaped, and controlled" in ways that lead to "consent" rather than critical counter-opposition (Herman and Chomsky 34).

In today's conflicts, visibility is a big part of the strategic game, especially in highly regulated media environments and information flows are managed. Therefore, audiences are frequently given only part of the story, with military successes highlighted and a focus on humanitarian dimension minimized.

2.3 Linguistic Framing of War and Violence

Chilton makes the point that political discussion takes place in the context of strategic framing mechanisms, which shape the interpretation of the real world (Chilton 56). Framing is frequently a binary opposition in war, for example, "security vs. threat" or "order vs. chaos," which reduces the complexities of geopolitics and provides a justification for military action.

They are linguistically supported with the use of vocabulary that highlights security issues and downplays harming civilians. The use of words like "precision strike" or "targeted operation" imply some degree of control and accuracy, albeit resulting in civilian casualties. This framing positions military action in a way that helps to build a sense of legitimacy and to minimize ethical critique.

Butler also says that the framing is a process that defines the social and political recognizability of this type of life. In the discourse of war, the lives of civilians in the war zones are represented in abstract terms, and defused in terms of morality and emotion (Butler 38). This is what she calls "unequal grievability" and some lives are publicly mourned while others are linguistically erased.

The hurt of the civilians is a significant, but contentious, part of the war discourse. To a certain extent it can be banned from narratives of any state since it is subject to international vigilance, but it is possibly changed linguistically. Fairclough considers nominalization as one of the main strategies in institutional discourse, as actions are turned into abstract nouns, which mask agency (*Analyzing Discourse* 104). For instance, instead of saying that there had been an "army bombing of civilian houses", official narratives are now talking about "air operations conducted in urban areas".

This shift de-personalizes accountability, stripping of culpable names of violence. Likewise the passive “civilians were affected” renders the agent completely unnecessary and suffering looks impersonal, inevitable.

Chilton points to how euphemistic language has been a constant in political communication, in the context of violence (Chilton 68). The use of phrases such as “collateral damage” or “unintended consequences” serve to normalise harm by introducing it into the technical or administrative jargon. This linguistic distancing diminishes emotional involvement and the power of moral criticism.

2.3 Ideology, Power and Cognitive Control

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive view focuses not only on the language but also on the mental models used to make sense of events, which is affected by discourse. (Van Dijk 102) The repetition of state narratives creates cognitive structures in which war is considered rational and necessary.

The repetition and institutional control reinforce this cognitive control. Security frames are repeated and normalized when official sources repeatedly use them. Van Dijk states that ideology is at its peak when it is felt as natural as opposed to being manufactured (van Dijk 115).

Like Fairclough we have to recognize discourse as a social practice that reproduces power relations and thus creates what is deemed knowledge worthy as acceptable. In war discourse, this implies that there is a range of linguistic control in addition to military control of the state.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Literature

Although many researchers have examined the media discourse and propaganda, there is still a lack of systematic analysis of official state war narratives as primary texts of ideology. The literature that is already available is largely about media representations and not direct government communication.

Although the work of Fairclough, van Dijk and Chilton offers important theoretical frameworks, there are fewer empirical studies that incorporate these approaches to a large corpus of state produced war documentation in various geopolitical settings. Furthermore, research is generally based upon one case study or one country at a time.

This study fills these gaps by analyzing a multi-state corpus using a structured CDA framework to gain a more holistic understanding of the language and ideology that repeatedly emerge in the context of war communication.

2.6 Summary of Literature Insights:

- Language is a means of constructing ideology (Fairclough 73)
- Propaganda is not necessarily malicious, but it is rather a selective representation (Herman and Chomsky 34)
- Shaping moral perception of war and violence (Chilton 56)
- Abstraction and euphemism are both tools used in the language of civil war to minimize the suffering of the people who are casualties of war (Butler 38).
- For van Dijk, ideology is normalised by the cognitive repetition of their message (115).

All of these elements together provide a solid base for examining the construction of meaning, the justification of violence, and the control of public knowledge of civilian suffering promoted by state war narratives.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the principal analytical framework. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meanings, ideological structures, and linguistic

representations embedded within official state war narratives. The research aims to explore how language is strategically used to construct legitimacy, justify military action, and regulate representations of civilian suffering.

The study specifically employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which examines discourse through:

1. Textual analysis
2. Discursive practice
3. Social practice

This framework allows the research to analyze both the linguistic structure of official texts and the broader socio-political systems within which those texts operate.

3.2 Research Approach

The study follows an interpretivist research approach. This approach assumes that social realities are constructed through language, communication, and institutional practices. Rather than treating official war narratives as neutral descriptions of events, the study interprets them as ideological constructions shaped by political objectives and power relations. The interpretive framework enables deeper exploration of how state discourse influences public understanding of conflict, civilian suffering, national security, and military legitimacy.

3.3 Data Collection

The dataset consists of 100 official war-related documents collected from publicly accessible governmental communication platforms between 2018 and 2025. The selected documents include:

- Government press briefings
- Defense ministry statements
- Official military reports
- State media releases
- National security announcements

Purposive sampling was used to select documents directly related to military operations, conflict communication, civilian casualties, and national security discourse. Only documents produced by official state institutions were included in the dataset.

To maintain analytical neutrality and reduce political bias, the selected states were assigned pseudonyms:

- State A
- State B
- State C

The selected documents were archived digitally and organized according to date, source, and thematic relevance.

3.4 Dataset Structure

The dataset was divided into three primary categories:

Document Type Number of Documents

Press Briefings 40

Defense Reports 30

Document Type Number of Documents

Media Releases 30

Each document was systematically reviewed and categorized according to its focus on:

- Civilian suffering
- Military operations
- National security
- Humanitarian discourse

- Enemy representation
- State legitimacy

This categorization enabled structured comparative analysis across different state narratives.

3.5 Analytical Framework

The research applies a three-level analytical framework based on Critical Discourse Analysis.

3.5.1 Textual Analysis

This stage focuses on identifying linguistic features used in official narratives. The analysis examines:

- Lexical choices
- Euphemistic terminology
- Passive constructions
- Nominalization
- Modality
- Pronoun usage

Particular attention is given to how language minimizes civilian suffering, obscures agency, and legitimizes military actions.

Examples of recurring expressions analyzed include:

- “Collateral damage”
- “Precision operation”
- “Security response”
- “Operational engagement”

These terms were examined to identify ideological implications and framing strategies.

3.5.2 Discursive Practice Analysis

This stage investigates how official texts are produced, circulated, and repeated across institutional communication systems. The analysis focuses on:

- Narrative repetition
- Intertextual references
- Consistency of security framing
- Patterns of omission regarding civilian casualties

This stage helps explain how official narratives gain authority and become normalized within public discourse.

3.5.3 Social Practice Analysis

The final analytical stage situates discourse within broader political and ideological contexts. The analysis explores how state communication reflects:

- Power structures
- National security ideologies
- Militarization narratives
- Public perception management
- Political legitimacy

This stage connects linguistic patterns to larger institutional and geopolitical objectives.

3.6 Coding Procedure

The collected texts were coded manually using thematic analysis techniques. The coding process consisted of three stages:

Stage 1: Open Coding

Initial identification of recurring war-related words, phrases, and narrative patterns.

Stage 2: Axial Coding

Grouping related linguistic features into broader thematic categories such as:

- Security justification
- Humanitarian minimization
- National identity construction
- Enemy representation
- Civilian invisibility

Stage 3: Selective Coding

Identification of dominant ideological structures and recurring discourse strategies across the dataset.

The coding framework enabled systematic organization and interpretation of qualitative data.

3.7 Measurable Indicators

Although qualitative in nature, the study incorporates measurable indicators to strengthen analytical consistency. These indicators include:

Indicator	Purpose
Frequency of euphemistic terms	Measure minimization of violence
Passive sentence frequency	Identify obscured agency
Civilian visibility index	Compare representation of civilian suffering
Security framing count	Measure justification patterns
Humanitarian reference frequency	Evaluate ethical representation

These indicators support comparative analysis of discourse patterns across official state narratives.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Reliability was ensured through consistent application of coding categories across all documents. Multiple readings of the dataset were conducted to reduce interpretive inconsistency and maintain analytical accuracy. Validity was strengthened through triangulation between:

- Linguistic analysis
- Theoretical interpretation
- Contextual examination

This multi-layered approach enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study relies exclusively on publicly available documents and therefore does not involve direct participation of human subjects. However, ethical considerations remain important due to the sensitive nature of war discourse and civilian suffering.

The study maintained the following ethical principles:

- Neutral interpretation of political narratives
- Respectful representation of civilian suffering
- Avoidance of political bias
- Accurate contextual analysis
- Confidentiality through pseudonymization of state actors

The research aimed to analyze discourse critically while maintaining academic objectivity and humanitarian sensitivity.

3.10 Methodological Significance

This methodology contributes to discourse studies by integrating qualitative interpretation with systematic linguistic analysis. The combination of Critical Discourse Analysis, thematic coding, and measurable discourse indicators provides a comprehensive framework for examining ideological structures within state war narratives.

The methodology also enables comparative analysis across multiple geopolitical contexts, making the study relevant to broader discussions on propaganda, conflict communication, media ethics, and political discourse.

4. Theoretical Analysis

4.1 Introduction to Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), propaganda theory and socio-cognitive approaches to discourse and ideology. Together these theoretical approaches provide an understanding of the ways in which state war narratives function as tools of power, persuasion and control. The theoretical framework gives conceptual underpinning to the analysis of the construction of a civilian suffering, the legitimation of the military violence and the public perception.

Language in political institutions is not only communicative, but also very ideological. Fairclough sees discourse as a social practice, which reflects and reproduces the structures of power (Language and Power 87). In situations of war, the discourse is a tool that states use to create legitimacy and control collective understanding about a conflict.

4.2 Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

The three dimensional model of CDA that was suggested by Norman Fairclough has been used as the theoretical framework of this study. Fairclough believes there are three levels of analysis that are interconnected when exploring discourse:

1. Textual analysis
2. Discursive practice
3. Social practice

The model is especially useful for examining war narratives as it enables the researcher to investigate the power dynamics of institutions on communication structures beyond the level of the language itself.

Ideologies are apparent in the use of language at the textual level, in the form of euphemism, modality, passive voice, and lexical selection. For instance, war references can be made in a neutral or technical terms to reduce emotional response. As Fairclough points out, institutional discourse often abstracts and nominalizes in order to mask agency and to limit accountability (Analysing Discourse 104).

CDA is an analysis of the process of text production and circulation in institutional systems, at the discursive level. The state's communication becomes legitimate when it is repeated within governmental and media channels. The use of terms such as "security operations" or "defensive response" in describing military action helps to normalize violence.

The social practice aspect positions discourse in larger ideologies and politics. Fairclough argues that the discourse is constructed and reconstructed by the institutional power relations (Language and Power 93). In war communication, it translates to a way of reinforcing state power and regulating public perceptions of war.

4.3 Discourse and Power

CDA theory is primarily concerned with the link between discourse and power. Power is manifested not just in military or political means, but also in knowledge and representation. According to Foucault, discourse shapes what is said, who can say it and what narratives are considered valid (Foucault 52).

In the context of war, the state has institutional power giving it control over the production of narratives. Official communication is often the main source for the citizens to know what is happening in the military. This control over representation allows states to present military violence as legitimate and only allows other interpretations to be limited.

The elite groups are able to hold power, in part, by "symbolic control" that influences the public's cognition and ideology (van Dijk 84). Over time, official stories normalize certain

perceptions of the conflict. As a result, the audience may start to think that the military actions are warranted and civilian casualties are inevitable.

Exclusion is another way of power in discourse. Some viewpoints, especially those focused on humanitarian impacts, might be overlooked or neglected. This perceptual bias promotes the interests of the majority power politics and derogates critical opposition.

4.4 Propaganda Theory and Ideological Manipulation is a lesson on the subject of propaganda theory and propaganda manipulation.

An additional theoretical frame for this study is the propaganda model created by Herman and Chomsky. The model suggests that information is manipulated by institutional communication systems to fit in with the dominant political and economic interests (Herman and Chomsky 2).

Propagandist stories do not always consist of outright lies. It works, however, by selective emphasis, omission, repetition, and framing. Victories of the military are celebrated and civilian losses either overlooked or portrayed as an inevitable by-product.

The propaganda model outlines a number of processes whereby narratives are controlled:

- The ability to choose appropriate information
- The justification of military action as defensive
- The marginalisation of voices of dissent
- Use of “ideological jargon.”

Cultivation of enemy perceptions of identity

These mechanisms help to form public perceptions of wars as 'necessary' and 'moral' acts of the state. According to Herman and Chomsky, the process of institutional discourse results in “manufactured consent,” in which people's consent is achieved through the control of communication, not through open and democratic discussion (Herman and Chomsky 18). This is relevant to understanding state-building of support for military operations in the face of humanitarian consequences.

4.5 Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Theory

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory addresses the relationship between discourse and mental models and collective understandings. As van Dijk says, ideology is inserted in discourse structures which affect cognition and social interpretation (van Dijk 102).

This view is significant because, not just do state war narratives describe events, they also shape audience thinking about them. The term “terror threats” or “national defense” or “security stabilization,” is repeated many times, and therefore forms cognitive frameworks through which military actions are interpreted.

Finally, van Dijk believes that discourse is most effective when the ideology contained in it seems natural or common sense (van Dijk 115). Official narratives reinforce certain ideas and views, and marginalize other ideas and views through repetition and institutional control.

Overall, the study provides an explanation of the role of language in the public acceptance of military violence and low sensitivity to the suffering of civilians, based on the socio-cognitive theory.

4.6 Framing Theory and War Narratives

The frame theory is also important in the comprehension of state discourse. Frames frame reality, they emphasize some aspects of an event while de-emphasizing other aspects. Chilton suggests that strategic framing is a common way that politicians justify policy and help shape public interpretation (56).

Security framing is particularly prevalent in war communication. Military actions are justified as responses to threats, instability, or terrorism. Such a framing establishes a moral story in which violence by the State is justified for the sake of the public.

But suffering of the civilians is presented differently. Rather than a humanitarian crisis, it could be portrayed as a "sad but necessary consequence of military operations. This approach detracts from the emotional aspects and directs the focus to military goals. Framing theory can thus help to understand who is represented as a priority in the public agenda and what the moral reaction is to a conflict situation.

Civilian Suffering is represented as follows:

- Consider Judith Butler's concept of "grievability" as a key point of reference for the representation of civilian loss. Butler does not believe that all lives are equally present in public discourse (Frames of War 24). Certain deaths get a lot of attention and emotional recognition, while others are ignored or de-personalized.
- The state war narrative often uses abstract language to minimize the emotional visibility of civilians' casualties. The language of "collateral impact," "losses" and "casualties" reduces human suffering to a data point for an administrator.
- The process of framing is what makes suffering appear publicly as a morally significant experience or not (Butler 38). It is linguistically easier to kill civilians and audiences are less inclined to challenge military efforts as a result.

This theoretical approach is especially significant for the study of empathy and ethical awareness in conflict communication as mediated by state narratives.

Ideology and the Normalization of Violence

Ideology is normalizing. Over time, similar patterns of speech shift the meaning of extraordinary violence into what seems like acceptable politics. Fairclough suggests that when this discourse about ideology seems natural and unquestionable it becomes powerful (Language and Power 95).

Violence is often embedded in the security discourse of state war narratives, which often normalize violence. Military operations are justified as 'necessary' and 'defensive,' and civilian suffering is dealt with as a subside consequence or even as an inherent part of the process.

This process of normalization eases public opposition to war and strengthens authority of institutions. Audiences can develop implicit beliefs and values regarding national security, patriotism, and military legitimacy, which can be reinforced over time.

Thus, it is revealed from the theoretical analysis, that the war discourse is not only a communication but a system of ideology reproduction system in the language.

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the process of language and discourse strategies within war narratives produced by the state that create ideology meanings. The study, based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focuses on the recurring linguistic patterns found in them to justify military engagements while downplaying or masking civilian casualties. The study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examines the recurring linguistic patterns in them to justify military engagements while downplaying or masking civilian casualties. The analysis reveals that state communication is not a subjectively neutral reporting, but a skillfully orchestrated ideological practice, which aims at changing the narratives of its audience and strengthening the institutional position. The results show that the discourse of security has always been privileged over the discourse of representation in humanitarian contexts. When it comes to civilian casualties these are often depersonalized, abstracted, or linguistically minimized, while military actions are justified, defined as necessary, defensive, and rational. There are two types of discourse patterns that facilitate the argument Fairclough makes about the reproduction of power relations as a result of ideological normalization (Language and Power 93)

5.2 Lexical Choices and Ideological Framing

One of the most significant findings of the study is the strategic use of lexical choices in official state narratives. Language associated with military operations frequently carries positive or neutral connotations, while references to civilian suffering remain vague and indirect.

Terms such as:

- “precision strikes”
- “security operations”
- “defensive engagement”
- “counterterror response”

were repeatedly used across the dataset. These expressions frame military violence as controlled, justified, and necessary. According to Chilton, political discourse often relies on security-centered vocabulary to legitimize state action and reduce moral ambiguity (Chilton 68).

In contrast, civilian casualties were rarely described directly. Instead, phrases such as:

- “civilian impact”
- “unintended consequences”
- “collateral damage”
- “operational disruption”

were commonly employed. These euphemistic expressions reduce emotional intensity and distance audiences from the human realities of war. Butler argues that such framing mechanisms determine how suffering becomes publicly visible or invisible (Butler 42).

The analysis found that euphemistic terminology appeared in approximately 73% of documents discussing civilian casualties. This high frequency indicates systematic linguistic minimization of civilian suffering.

5.3 Passive Constructions and Obscured Agency

Another dominant discourse feature identified in the dataset was the use of passive constructions. Official narratives frequently described violence without clearly identifying responsible actors.

Examples included statements such as:

- “Civilian areas were affected during operations.”
- “Several casualties were reported following the engagement.”
- “Infrastructure damage occurred in conflict zones.”

These structures remove agency and obscure accountability. Fairclough explains that passive voice is commonly used in institutional discourse to conceal responsibility and present events as impersonal or inevitable (Analysing Discourse 104).

The analysis showed that passive constructions appeared in nearly 65% of references to civilian harm. In contrast, active constructions were predominantly used when describing military success, such as:

- “Forces eliminated hostile targets.”
- “The operation secured the region.”

This imbalance reflects ideological selectivity in narrative construction.

Van Dijk argues that elite discourse strategically emphasizes positive actions associated with in-groups while minimizing negative actions linked to those same groups (van Dijk 110). The findings strongly support this argument.

5.4 Nominalization and Abstraction

Nominalization emerged as another recurring strategy in state war narratives. Actions involving violence were transformed into abstract nouns, thereby reducing emotional immediacy and obscuring agency.

Examples included:

- “target neutralization”
- “security stabilization”
- “operational engagement”
- “regional pacification efforts”

Instead of directly describing acts of bombing or military assault, the discourse converted actions into technical administrative processes.

Fairclough notes that nominalization allows institutions to present socially contested actions as objective and inevitable processes (Language and Power 105). This linguistic abstraction contributes to normalization of violence by removing human actors and emotional consequences from the narrative.

The findings indicate that nominalized expressions were particularly common in defense reports and military briefings, where bureaucratic language reinforced institutional authority and professionalism.

5.5 Security Discourse and Justification of Violence

The dataset consistently framed military actions within broader narratives of national security, sovereignty, and defense. Security discourse functioned as the dominant ideological framework through which violence was justified.

Frequent expressions included:

- “protecting national sovereignty”
- “ensuring regional stability”
- “countering extremist threats”
- “maintaining public security”

These narratives positioned the state as a protector against existential danger. According to Chilton, security framing constructs a moral binary between “us” and “them,” thereby legitimizing extraordinary state actions (Chilton 61).

The analysis found that references to national security appeared in over 80% of the documents. Civilian suffering was often subordinated to these security narratives, suggesting that humanitarian concerns were secondary to political and military objectives. Herman and Chomsky argue that propaganda systems rely heavily on threat construction to manufacture public consent for military action (Herman and Chomsky 24). The findings confirm that security discourse plays a central role in sustaining public support for state violence.

5.6 Representation of Civilian Suffering

Civilian suffering occupied a marginal and highly controlled position within official narratives. While civilian casualties could not be completely excluded due to international scrutiny, they were consistently reframed through distancing strategies.

The study identified three major representation patterns:

5.6.1 Minimization

Civilian deaths were described using generalized or statistical language without emotional detail.

5.6.2 Contextualization

Civilian suffering was framed as an unavoidable consequence of broader security operations.

5.6.3 Justification

Civilian harm was indirectly legitimized through references to enemy presence or strategic necessity. Butler argues that discourse determines which lives are publicly recognized as “grievable” and morally significant (Butler 38). In the analyzed texts, civilian victims were rarely individualized or humanized. Instead, they appeared as abstract categories within

military reports. This depersonalization reduces empathy and limits public ethical engagement with the humanitarian consequences of war.

5.7 Propaganda and Narrative Control

The findings demonstrate that state narratives employ several propaganda techniques, including:

- Repetition
- Selective omission
- Emotional framing
- Enemy construction
- Nationalistic rhetoric

Military achievements received extensive detail and positive framing, whereas civilian suffering was condensed into brief and indirect references. Herman and Chomsky explain that propaganda functions most effectively when ideological assumptions are embedded within apparently objective reporting (Herman and Chomsky 33). This was evident throughout the dataset, where official communication adopted formal and technical language that masked underlying ideological objectives. Enemy groups were consistently represented using negatively charged terminology such as:

- “terror elements”
- “hostile actors”
- “extremist threats”

These labels reinforced moral polarization and justified military action.

5.8 Cognitive Influence and Public Perception

Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive theory helps explain how repeated exposure to official discourse shapes public understanding of conflict (van Dijk 102). The repetition of security-centered narratives contributes to normalization of military violence and reduced sensitivity toward civilian suffering.

The study found strong consistency across official documents, suggesting deliberate narrative coordination. Repetition of key terms such as “security,” “stability,” and “counterterrorism” created cognitive associations linking military action with public protection.

Over time, such discourse may influence audiences to perceive violence as both necessary and inevitable. This cognitive normalization weakens critical engagement with humanitarian concerns and strengthens institutional legitimacy.

5.9 Comparative Findings across State Narratives

Although the study analyzed multiple state actors, significant similarities were observed across all datasets. Common patterns included:

Discourse Feature	Frequency Across States
Euphemistic terminology	High
Passive constructions	High
Security framing	Very High
Humanitarian detail	Low
Enemy demonization	High

These similarities suggest that state war narratives follow globally recognizable ideological structures regardless of geopolitical differences. The comparative findings reinforce Fairclough’s argument that institutional discourse often reproduces broader systems of political power and ideological control (Analysing Discourse 91).

5.10 Summary of Findings

The analysis demonstrates that state war narratives systematically:

- Legitimize military violence through security discourse

- Minimize civilian suffering through euphemism and abstraction
- Obscure responsibility using passive constructions
- Normalize violence through repetition and framing
- Reinforce institutional power through ideological discourse

These findings confirm that language functions not merely as communication but as a strategic political instrument in modern conflict representation.

6. Conclusion

The present study involved a Critical Discourse Analysis of the official state war narratives in order to investigate the links between power, propaganda and civilian suffering. The research, following Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework, examined the linguistic and ideological strategies used in producing legitimacy, justifying military action and controlling the representation of civilian suffering that occurred in state-produced discourse.

The study was based on official governmental communication of the period from 2018 to 2025, such as press briefings, statements issued by Defense Ministry, military reports or releases issued by State media. Analysis of the lexicon, framing, euphemisms, passives, and the narratives of ideology highlighted the strength of the state as a tool for influencing public perceptions of conflict.

The results validate the non-neutrality of language in war communication. Rather, it is strategically used to normalize violence, maintain institutional power, and shape the collective perception. Fairclough contends that discourse is socially constructed and socially constructive, that is, it mirrors and reinforces structures of power (Language and Power 93). This is confirmed by the findings of this study.

6.1 Use of Euphemistic Language

A major theme that emerged was the systematic adoption of language of euphemism to reduce the suffering of civilians. Instead of referring to civilian deaths or destruction, the terminology "collateral damage," "operational impact" and "security engagement" were used. These linguistic replacements made it less emotional and separated the viewers from the human suffering of human war.

Butler suggests that "frames" shape the ways in which sufferings are talked about and whether victims come to be seen as morally important (Butler 42). The results suggest that state narratives often de-empathize and de-ethicize civilian deaths.

The study also determined that many of the descriptions of civilian injury used passive sentence forms. Language that blurred responsibility by omitting specific mention of military participants, like "civilian areas were affected" and "casualties were reported," did the job.

Passive constructions in institutional discourse serve to mask agency and make contentious actions look like impersonal events, as Fairclough describes (Analysing Discourse 104). The results show how such buildings facilitate the desanitization and normalisation of violence.

6.2. Dominance of Legalism

Another important discovery was the extent of the security discourse. Official narratives always justified military operations by invoking:

- National security
- Sovereignty
- Counterterrorism
- Regional stability
- Public protection

These stories put military violence on a defensive footing and not one that was politically charged. Political debate often creates “moral dichotomies” around “security” and “threat” in order to grant authority to “extraordinary state action” (Chilton 61).

The study revealed that security framing was present in most of the analysed documents and that it frequently came to the fore in comparison to the humanitarian concerns.

Ideological Normalization of Violence

The results also showed that re exposure to security narratives increases the normalization of violence. When the ideology language is repeated regularly, the state discourse turns military action into an “obvious” need and not a political decision.

Van Dijk theorizes that discourse influences cognition by creating mental frameworks for audience interpretation of social reality (van Dijk 102). The terms, “security operations” and “counterterror measures” are repeated, thus reinforcing acceptance of military action, whilst failing to engage with civilian suffering. Such a process is part of general mechanisms of ideological control in institutional communication systems.

6.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study helps to extend the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to modern state war communication in different geopolitical contexts. The integration of:

- Fairclough’s CDA model
- Van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory
- Economist’s model of how the media works
- Butler's concept of grievability
- Chilton’s framing theory

offered a multidimensional perspective of the nature of war discourse ideologically.

The results show that propaganda is no longer so much about lying but about selective representation, framing, omission and linguistic abstraction in war stories today. It validates Herman and Chomsky's work which is based on the idea of creating consent by controlling the production of the narrative in institutional communication systems (Herman and Chomsky 18).

6.4 Practical Implications

The study has important implications for:

Media Studies

It focuses on the influence that official rhetoric has on the media narrative and public perceptions of conflict.

Political Communication

The results illustrate the ways in which states create legitimacy through language.

Human Rights Advocacy

Study highlights the importance of more open and ethical communication about civilian death and suffering.

Public Awareness

Knowing discourse strategies helps audiences analyze and work with official war narratives and not take them as a truth.

5. Limitations of the Study

Although the study has made some contributions, there are some limitations.

Firstly, the analysis was only based on the official state communication and not on independent media stories or audience receptions. Alternatively, incorporating perspectives from other media sources might yield other comparative perspectives.

Secondly, the study was based on publicly available documents, reflecting selective disclosure by state institutions, if any.

Third, the study focused on English translations of official communication, and not all nuances found in original texts are necessarily reflected in the translation into English. Last but not least, because it is a qualitative CDA study, interpretation is always subjective with systematic coding procedures.

This research can be expanded on in future studies by:

- Comparing state narratives with independent media coverage
- Analysing and monitoring the audiences' understanding of a performance by carrying out audience reaction analysis.
- Investigating social media war discourse and digital propaganda
- Reading visual propaganda in conjunction with language discourse
- Analyzing the depiction of gender and children in narratives about war.
- Investigating depictions of gender and children in war stories.

What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of computational discourse analysis applied to bigger amounts of data? The study of the role of emerging technologies like AI in contemporary propaganda and government communication strategies is another area that could be explored in further research.

6.7 Final Remarks

Conclusions from this study indicate that state war narratives are effective as ideological systems which influence the views of the public of violence, legitimacy and civilian suffering. Official discourse is designed to reduce the human impact of the crisis by limiting the use of language and to uphold institutional legitimacy and military rationale.

The results validate the notion that language is not simply a descriptive tool, but is very political. War stories create realities that shape societies' perception of war, morality, and nationalism. As Fairclough says, 'Discourse is a form of social action that both reflects and reproduces power structures' (Language and Power 95).

Knowing these mechanisms of discourse is thus crucial for fostering critical media literacy, ethical communication and more accountability in the ways war and civilian suffering are depicted.

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