

LINGUOSTYLISTIC FEATURES OF DONALD TRUMP'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE FORDOW STRIKE ADDRESS (JUNE 2025) AND THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH (SEPTEMBER 2025)

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SUMMARY

This article presents a qualitative critical discourse analysis of two emblematic texts from Donald Trump's second presidency: the prime-time White House address of 21 June 2025 announcing US strikes on the Iranian nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan, and his address to the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2025. Combining classical stylistic analysis (metaphor, hyperbole, repetition, parallelism, antithesis, lexical simplicity, modality, and pronoun choice) with four Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks—Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Wodak's discourse-historical approach, van Dijk's socio-cognitive ideological square, and Chilton's strategic functions of political discourse—the study examines how a consistent set of stylistic resources operates across two contrasting genres, a 526-word emergency address and an 8,317-word multilateral oration. In both texts, four interlocking features recur: lexical simplicity combined with intensified evaluative absolutes; rhythmic repetition and parallelism; a polarising us/them ideological square; and a combination of high modal certainty, threat–promise structures, and religious-mythological appeals. The analysis suggests that the Fordow address foregrounds a discourse of military finality, while the UN address reframes the same evaluative absolutism within a sovereignist, anti-globalist position. Because the study is limited to two texts and to their verbal (transcribed) layer, its findings are interpretive and illustrative rather than statistically generalisable; they nonetheless indicate continuity with the right-wing populist discursive strategies documented in the first-term literature. Multimodal features (prosody, gesture, and pausing) and a larger corpus are identified as priorities for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Few political speakers of the twenty-first century have been more analytically scrutinised than Donald J. Trump. From Sclafani's (2017) sociolinguistic monograph to Kreis's (2017) analysis of his "tweet politics," Wodak's (2015) account of right-wing populist rhetoric, and Wodak, Culpeper, and Semino's (2021) work on the normalisation of impoliteness, scholars have repeatedly returned to Trump's idiolect as a paradigmatic case of populist communicative style. Yet most of this literature is grounded in his 2015–2020 corpus—campaign rallies, presidential debates, and tweets.

The discursive practices of his second presidency, beginning in January 2025, have only recently begun to attract critical attention, and the genre repertoire has shifted: Trump is no longer primarily a candidate at the rally pulpit but a sitting president addressing the nation in moments of geopolitical crisis and the world at multilateral summits. This article asks whether the linguostylistic profile mapped during the first Trump term persists, intensifies, or changes in this institutionalised setting.

To explore this question, the study analyses two highly visible texts. The first is Trump's 21 June 2025 address to the nation from the White House, delivered shortly after Operation Midnight Hammer, a coordinated B-2 and Tomahawk strike on the Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan nuclear facilities (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2025). The second is his 57-minute, 8,317-word remarks to the 80th session of the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2025. The two texts contrast in genre, audience, and length, but share a single political voice. Examining them together helps to indicate which features of Trump's style are genre-bound and which recur across genres. This is a qualitative, in-depth case study of two emblematic texts rather than a corpus-wide survey; accordingly, its findings are offered as illustrative and interpretive, and no claim is made that two

speeches can stand for Trump's second-term discourse as a whole (see Section 2 for scope and limitations).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not a single method but a family of approaches united by the view that “discourse does not merely reflect social relations but actively enacts, legitimizes, reproduces, or challenges dominance and other forms of social inequality” (Fairclough, N., 1995). The study draws on four traditions.

Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional model treats every communicative event as the simultaneous instantiation of a text with describable linguistic features, a discursive practice of production and consumption, and a wider sociocultural practice in which power and ideology operate. Van Dijk's (1998, 2006) socio-cognitive approach introduces the “ideological square”: emphasising positive properties of “Us,” de-emphasising negative properties of “Us,” emphasising negative properties of “Them,” and de-emphasising positive properties of “Them.” Wodak's discourse-historical approach (Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R., 2009) emphasises five strategies—nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, and intensification/mitigation. Chilton's (2004) framework proposes three strategic functions of political language: coercion, legitimisation/delegitimation, and (mis)representation.

Alongside CDA, the article draws on classical stylistic categories and on cognitive metaphor theory. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) thesis that abstract reasoning is structured by conceptual metaphors has been extended by Charteris-Black (2018) into a “critical metaphor analysis” framework. Lakoff's (1996, 2016) account of the “Strict Father” model identifies a moral hierarchy in which authority, discipline, and the punishment of wrongdoing are valorised. Pilyarchuk and Onysko (2018) confirm empirically the recurrence of conceptual metaphors such as IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD, NATION IS A CONTAINER, and POLITICS IS WAR in Trump's first-term speeches.

Schoor's (2017) analysis in *Discourse & Society* shows that Trump's 2016 speeches conform to a “full populist style” along five ideological traits: the people are unified and virtuous; the elite is corrupt; the leader is a singular saviour; politics is a moral struggle; and crisis is permanent. The methodology of the present study followed four stages: (1) annotation of stylistic devices in both transcripts; (2) qualitative close reading; (3) application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model to move from textual description to sociocultural explanation; and (4) application of van Dijk's ideological square, Wodak's discourse-historical strategies, and Chilton's strategic functions at the interpretive layer.

The corpus comprises verbatim transcripts of two speeches. Speech A: Trump's address to the nation after the Iran air strikes (Roll Call/Factbase, 2025), 38 sentences, 526 words, 222 seconds. Speech B: Trump's remarks to the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2025 (Peters, G., & Woolley, J. T., 2025), 8,317 words, approximately 57 minutes.

Two limitations define the scope of this study. First, it is a qualitative analysis of two texts selected as emblematic of two genres; the sample is therefore small, and the patterns described should be read as illustrative tendencies rather than as statistically representative claims about Trump's second-term discourse in general. A larger, systematically sampled corpus would be required to test whether these tendencies generalise. Second, the analysis is restricted to the verbal layer of the speeches as preserved in transcripts. Prosody, intonation, pausing, gesture, and facial expression are integral components of political delivery, and of Trump's performative style in particular, but they fall outside the present textual analysis. A multimodal study combining transcripts with audiovisual data is identified below as a direction for future research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lexical features: simplicity, intensification, and evaluative absolutes. A foundational observation about Trump's style is its lexical simplicity. The Fordow address yields a Flesch–Kincaid grade level of approximately 7–8, with several segments dropping to 2.5–5.8. The vocabulary is

overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon and monosyllabic; technical or Latinate forms (“obliterated,” “infrastructure”) appear only when politically functional. Within this simple lexicon, evaluative intensifiers are pervasive. The Fordow address compresses into 526 words a high density of absolutes: *“massive precision strikes ... horribly destructive enterprise ... world’s number one state sponsor of terror ... spectacular military success ... completely and totally obliterated ... bully of the Middle East ... No military in the world could have done what we did tonight; not even close.”* (Roll Call/Factbase, 2025)

The verb obliterated, reinforced by the doublet completely and totally, can be described—using the term descriptively—as a rhetorical claim of finality that overstates the verifiable material outcome (later assessments suggested Iran’s nuclear programme had been set back by months rather than years; CSIS, 2025). A comparable evaluative pattern appears in the UN address: “America is blessed with the strongest economy, the strongest borders, the strongest military, the strongest friendships, and the strongest spirit of any nation on the face of the Earth” (Peters, G., & Woolley, J. T., 2025). In van Dijk’s (2006) terms, this is an ideological lexical strategy: positive qualities of the in-group are upgraded to absolutes, while negative qualities of the out-group are similarly maximised.

A second lexical feature is the negatively loaded lexicon used for adversaries. In the UN address, Mexican drug cartels are “savage,” “bloodthirsty,” “the enemies of all humanity”; traffickers are “animals” and “villains”; migrants are characterised through a “colossal invasion.” Iran, in the Fordow address, is “the bully of the Middle East” and “the world’s number one state sponsor of terror.” This lexicon is consistent with the conceptual metaphors NATION IS A CONTAINER and IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD documented by Pilyarchuk and Onysko (2018), and extends into animalising reference, a pattern that Wodak (2015) identifies as characteristic of right-wing populist scapegoating.

Syntactic features: short sentences, parallelism, repetition, and tricolons. Trump’s syntax across both speeches is dominated by short, declarative, and often paratactic sentences. The Fordow address opens with plain declaratives; the naming of the three sites—Fordow, Natanz, Isfahan—forms a three-part list (tricolon) whose rhythm reinforces the claim of a complete strike. In both texts, tricolons mark moments of climactic claim: “with precision, speed, and skill” (Fordow address); “the strongest economy, the strongest borders, the strongest military, the strongest friendships, and the strongest spirit” (UN address; here a five-part list).

Parallelism is the dominant cohesive device. The UN address opens with a balanced, contrastive parallel: “Six years have passed since I last stood in this grand hall and addressed a world that was prosperous and at peace in my first term. Since that day, the guns of war have shattered the peace I forged on two continents.” The structure is then resumed through repeated sentence-openings (anaphora) in the recurring “I ended seven wars” formula, whose listing of conflict pairs (“Cambodia and Thailand; Kosovo and Serbia; the Congo and Rwanda... Pakistan and India; Israel and Iran; Egypt and Ethiopia; and Armenia and Azerbaijan”) functions as a ceremonial list of achievements (an epideictic catalogue, in the sense used by Charteris-Black, 2018).

A third syntactic resource is the conditional threat–promise. The Fordow address contains a clear case: “Iran, the bully of the Middle East, must now make peace. If they do not, future attacks will be far greater... But if peace does not come quickly, we will go after those other targets with precision, speed, and skill.” The “if...then” formula lends the act of warning a quasi-legal appearance: the speaker presents himself not as the agent of escalation but as the executor of a contingency already announced—an instance of Chilton’s (2004) coercion function presented in the guise of legitimisation.

Rhetorical and figurative features: metaphor, antithesis, and myth-making. Conceptual metaphor analysis (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M., 1980; Charteris-Black, J., 2018) points to four dominant metaphor sets across both speeches: (i) POLITICS IS WAR—the vocabulary of war recurs in the UN address through a “colossal invasion” at the southern border, an “assault on Western countries,” and a “battle” against “savage” cartels; (ii) NATION IS A CONTAINER—“strong borders” are presented as a core value rather than a policy; (iii) IMMIGRATION IS A NATURAL

DISASTER OR DISEASE—migrants “pour in” and form “caravans,” green energy is said to be “destroying” Europe, and climate discourse is labelled a “hoax,” “scam,” and “con job”; and (iv) THE LEADER IS THE STRONG FATHER—Trump positions himself as the singular agent of national recovery: “I ended seven wars”; “I built the greatest economy in the history of the world.” This last pattern aligns with Lakoff’s (1996, 2016) Strict Father model.

Both speeches are organised around binary antitheses. The Fordow address contrasts “magnificent machines” and “great American patriots” with the “horribly destructive enterprise” of Iranian nuclear infrastructure, and the “love” of God and military with the chant “Death to America, death to Israel.” The UN address contrasts the “Golden Age of America” with “the failed approaches of the past,” “strong borders” with “open borders,” and “traditional energy” with “the green energy scam.” Mapped onto van Dijk’s (2006) ideological square, the structure is consistent: in-group positive properties are emphasised, out-group negatives are intensified, and counter-evidence (civilian casualties, contested damage assessments, evidence-based climate science) is downplayed.

A notable feature of the Fordow address is its religious closing: “And I want to just thank everybody, and in particular, God. I want to just say, we love you, God, and we love our great military. God bless the Middle East, God bless Israel, and God bless America.” The repetition of the divine address across three referents orders a set of allegiances symbolically. The UN address ends with an extended myth-making closing passage (peroration) that illustrates what Chilton (2004) describes as legitimisation through appeal to shared heritage: “From London to Lima, from Rome to Athens, from Paris to Seoul... we stand on the shoulders of the leaders and legends, generals and giants, heroes and titans... With their own courage, strength, spirit, and skill, our ancestors climbed to mountains, conquered oceans, crossed deserts...” The accumulation of three-part lists without connectives, alliterative pairings (“leaders and legends,” “generals and giants”), and a broad geographical sweep produces a register reminiscent of nineteenth-century ceremonial and commemorative oratory.

Pragmatic and CDA features. Pronouns in both speeches construct a tightly bounded “we, here, now” deictic centre. In the Fordow address, we/our refers to the US military, the administration, and the Trump–Netanyahu axis; I appears at moments of authority (“I decided a long time ago that I would not let this happen”); they is reserved for Iran, marked by negative predications. The UN address sustains this pattern at scale but uses you to address heads of state directly: “You’re doing it because you want to be nice. You want to be politically correct, and you’re destroying your heritage.” The shift from third-person description to second-person accusation departs from the conventions of multilateral diplomacy and illustrates what Wodak, Culpeper, and Semino (2021) term the “shameless normalisation of impoliteness.”

Trump’s modality combines high epistemic certainty with high deontic obligation. In the Fordow address, almost every clause is in the categorical declarative or the high-modal future: “have been completely and totally obliterated,” “must now make peace,” “will be far greater.” The UN address replicates this high-certainty modality and adds pseudo-evidential expressions—markers that have the form of evidence but supply none—which intensify rather than soften the claims: “I’m telling you,” “believe me,” “I’ve been right about everything.” These correspond to what Sclafani (2017) describes as Trump’s metadiscursive strategy of self-authorisation.

Wodak’s discourse-historical approach highlights the role of topoi—argumentative shortcuts that make conclusions appear plausible without explicit warrants. The Fordow address rests on the topos of threat/danger: because Iran is “the world’s number one state sponsor of terror,” military action is presented as requiring no further justification. The UN address mobilises a broader network of topoi: burden, culture, finance, history, authority (“I’ve been right about everything”), and law and order.

Synthesis. Read together through classical stylistics and the four CDA frameworks, the two texts point to three observations. First, genre does not appear to domesticate style. The Fordow address is a compressed 526-word emergency speech; the UN address is an 8,317-word multilateral oration. Yet both rely on the same set of resources: tricolons, anaphoric repetition, hyperbole, high modal certainty, and threat–promise speech acts. Within this two-text sample, this consistency is

compatible with Sclafani's (2017) argument that Trump's idiolect is closely tied to his political identity rather than fully adapted to situation.

Second, the two speeches foreground distinct but complementary logics. The Fordow address can be described as enacting a discourse of finality: the claim of absolute success ("completely and totally obliterated") tends to foreclose contestable damage assessment, even though later reporting placed the actual setback to Iran's nuclear programme at months rather than years (CSIS, 2025). The UN address generalises the same evaluative absolutism into a sovereignist position in which leaders are urged to choose between sovereignty and decline ("your country is going to fail").

Third, the UN address adds a ceremonial, myth-making register in its closing peroration—catalogues such as "leaders and legends, generals and giants, heroes and titans"—that goes beyond the register typical of campaign-rally populism. This suggests that, in these texts, Trump's discourse draws on the genre conventions of commemorative oratory while retaining a populist core. In Lakoff's (1996, 2016) terms, this ceremonial register can be read as the affective complement to the Strict Father's emphasis on discipline.

A further point concerns the negatively loaded characterisation of out-groups. The UN address contains references—migrants as "animals," cartels as "savage" and "bloodthirsty," traffickers to be "blown out of existence"—that depart from conventional diplomatic register. Wodak (2015, 2021) argues that such language, repeated across institutional genres, can contribute over time to the normalisation of exclusionary discourse. Within the limits of a two-text study, the UN data are consistent with this argument, though confirming it would require a larger corpus.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the linguostylistic features of two texts from Donald Trump's second presidency: the Fordow Strike address of 21 June 2025 and the United Nations General Assembly speech of 23 September 2025. Combining classical stylistics with four Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks, the analysis supports three concrete conclusions.

First, across these two contrasting genres the same core inventory of devices recurs: lexically simple but evaluatively absolute wording; tricolons and anaphoric parallelism; conceptual metaphors organised around POLITICS IS WAR, NATION IS A CONTAINER, IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD, and LEADER IS THE STRONG FATHER; and a pragmatic grammar of high modal certainty, threat–promise structures, and religious appeals. In this sample, genre difference changes the scale and topic of the speeches more than it changes their stylistic machinery.

Second, the two texts realise the same evaluative absolutism through different political logics: the Fordow address through a discourse of military finality that resists contested assessment, and the UN address through a sovereignist, anti-globalist framing.

Third, the UN address incorporates a ceremonial, myth-making register that is not typical of campaign-rally populism, indicating that second-term presidential settings can combine populist style with the conventions of commemorative oratory.

These conclusions are necessarily limited. They rest on two texts and on the verbal layer alone, and are therefore best understood as detailed, framework-based interpretations rather than generalisable findings. Three directions follow for future work. (1) Corpus expansion: a larger, systematically sampled set of second-term addresses—including both spontaneous and scripted genres—would allow the tendencies described here to be tested quantitatively. (2) Multimodal analysis: combining transcripts with audiovisual data would make it possible to incorporate prosody, pausing, gesture, and facial expression, which are central to political delivery but absent from a text-only study. (3) Comparative analysis: applying the same combined framework to other right-wing populist leaders, and to the institutional genres of multilateral diplomacy, would clarify which patterns are specific to Trump and which are shared features of contemporary populist political discourse.

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XÜLASƏ

DONALD TRAMPIN SİYASİ DİSKURSUNUN LİŇQVOSTİLİSTİK XÜSUSİYYƏTLƏRİ: FORDO HÜCUMU (İYUN 2025) VƏ BMT BAŞ ASSEMBLEYASI ÇIXIŞLARININ (SENYTABR 2025) TƏNQİDİ DİSKURS TƏHLİLİ

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Bu məqalə Donald Trampın ikinci prezidentlik dövründən iki səciyyəvi mətnin keyfiyyət əsaslı tənqidi diskurs təhlilini təqdim edir: 21 iyun 2025-ci il tarixli, ABŞ-ın İranın Fordo, Natanz və İsfahan nüvə obyektlərinə zərbələrini elan edən Ağ Ev nitqi və 23 sentyabr 2025-ci ildə BMT Baş Assambleyasının 80-ci sessiyasındakı çıxışı. Tədqiqatda klassik stilistik təhlil (metafora, hiperbola, təkrar, paralelizm, antiteza, leksik sadəlik, modallıq və əvəzliliklər) dörd Tənqidi Diskurs Təhlili çərçivəsi ilə—Faircloughun üçölçülü modeli, Wodakın diskurs-tarixi yanaşması, van Dijkın sosial-koqnitiv ideoloji kvadratı və Chiltonun strateji funksiyaları ilə—birləşdirilir və eyni stilistik vasitələr toplusunun iki fərqli janrdə (526 sözlük fəvqəladə nitq və 8317 sözlük çoxtərəfli çıxış) necə işlədiyi araşdırılır. Hər iki mətndə dörd qarşılıqlı bağlı xüsusiyyət təkrarlanır: qiymətləndirici mütləqlərlə

birdəşən leksik sadəlik; ritmik təkrar və paralelizm; “biz/onlar” ideoloji kvadratı; yüksək modal qətiyyət, hədə-vəd strukturları və dini-mifoloji müraciətlərin birdəşməsi. Təhlil göstərir ki, Fordo nitqi hərbi qətilik diskursunu önə çəkir, BMT çıxışı isə eyni qiymətləndirici mütləqliyi suverenist, anti-qlobalist mövqe daxilində yenidən çərçivələndirir. Tədqiqat yalnız iki mətnlə və onların verbal (transkripsiya olunmuş) qatı ilə məhdud olduğundan, nəticələr statistik baxımdan ümumiləşdirilə bilən deyil, interpretativ və illüstrativ xarakter daşıyır; bununla belə, onlar birinci dövr ədəbiyyatında sənədləşdirilmiş sağ-populist diskurs strategiyaları ilə davamlılığı göstərir. Multimodal xüsusiyyətlər (intonasiya, jest və pauzalar) və daha böyük korpus gələcək tədqiqatın prioritetləri kimi müəyyən edilir.

Açar sözlər: Donald Tramp, siyasi diskurs, tənqidi diskurs təhlili, stilistika, populizm, metafora, hiperbola, ideoloji kvadrat

РЕЗЮМЕ

ЛИНГВОСТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО ДИСКУРСА ДОНАЛЬДА ТРАМПА: КРИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДИСКУРС-АНАЛИЗ ОБРАЩЕНИЯ ПОСЛЕ УДАРА ПО ФОРДО (ИЮНЬ 2025) И РЕЧИ НА ГЕНЕРАЛЬНОЙ АССАМБЛЕЕ ООН (СЕНТЯБРЬ 2025)

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В статье представлен качественный критический дискурс-анализ двух показательных текстов второго президентского срока Дональда Трампа: обращения из Белого дома 21 июня 2025 года, объявившего об ударах США по иранским ядерным объектам в Фордо, Натанзе и Исфаханае, и выступления на 80-й сессии Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН 23 сентября 2025 года. Классический стилистический анализ (метафора, гипербола, повтор, параллелизм, антитеза, лексическая простота, модальность и местоимения) сочетается с четырьмя рамками Критического дискурс-анализа—трёхмерной моделью Фэркло, дискурсивно-историческим подходом Водак, социокогнитивным идеологическим квадратом ван Дейка и стратегическими функциями Чилтона—для изучения того, как один и тот же набор стилистических средств действует в двух контрастирующих жанрах (обращение в 526 слов и многосторонняя речь в 8317 слов). В обоих текстах повторяются четыре взаимосвязанные черты: лексическая простота в сочетании с оценочными абсолютами; ритмический повтор и параллелизм; поляризующий идеологический квадрат «мы/они»; сочетание высокой модальной определённости, структур угрозы-обещания и религиозно-мифологических обращений. Анализ показывает, что обращение по Фордо выдвигает на первый план дискурс военной окончательности, а речь в ООН переосмысляет ту же оценочную абсолютность в рамках суверенистской, антиглобалистской позиции. Поскольку исследование ограничено двумя текстами и их вербальным (транскрибированным) слоем, его результаты являются интерпретативными и иллюстративными, а не статистически обобщаемыми; тем не менее они указывают на преемственность с правопопулистскими дискурсивными стратегиями, описанными в литературе о первом сроке. Мультимодальные характеристики (просодия, жесты и паузы) и более крупный корпус определены как приоритеты будущих исследований.

Ключевые слова: Дональд Трамп, политический дискурс, критический дискурс-анализ, стилитика, популизм, метафора, гипербола, идеологический квадрат