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President Biden's Speech about the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan: A Critical Discourse Analysis

A B S T R A C T

President Biden gave a speech on August 16, 2021 regarding the status of the withdrawal of the United States military from Afghanistan, which was to be concluded by the end of August. This speech was laced with several critical linguistic strategies that communicated the perspective of the American government and its citizenry towards the military presence in Afghanistan and the longstanding war against terror. This paper aims to investigate the concepts of negative lexicalization, ideological square and rhetorical strategies, which are employed in the speech by President Biden. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the research tool that is used in this paper to examine the use of language in President Biden's speech. To examine the ideology underline Biden's speech, van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998) is adopted as a framework in this study. Data sets is extracted from the White House's website on the internet. The findings from President Biden's Speech exhibit various aspects of discourse, which are discussed along the themes of textual structure, social structure and social cognition. The three dimensions of discourse contain the various linguistic strategies described in the results. However, using these themes contextualizes the application of diverse linguistic devices in a national and global society that is witnessing the unfolding of a political and humanitarian crisis following the withdrawal of foreign military personnel from a global hegemony and the resurgence of an insurgent group considered to have terrorist tendencies and extremist Islamic ideologies.

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خطاب الرئيس بايدن حول انسحاب الولايات المتحدة من أفغانستان:

تحليل خطاب نقدي

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المستخلص

ألقى الرئيس بايدن خطابًا في ١٦ أغسطس ٢٠٢١ بشأن حالة انسحاب الجيش الأمريكي من أفغانستان، والذي كان من المقرر أن ينتهي بحلول نهاية أغسطس. تخلل هذا الخطاب عدة استراتيجيات لغوية نقدية نقلت وجهة نظر الحكومة الأمريكية ومواطنيها تجاه الوجود العسكري في أفغانستان والحرب الطويلة ضد الإرهاب. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى التحقيق في مفاهيم المعجمية السلبية ، والمربع الأيديولوجي ، والاستراتيجيات الخطابية التي يتم توظيفها في خطاب الرئيس بايدن. تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) هو أداة البحث المستخدمة في هذه الورقة لفحص استخدام اللغة في خطاب الرئيس بايدن. لفحص الأيديولوجية التي تؤكد خطاب بايدن، تم اعتماد المربع الأيديولوجي لـ van Dijk (١٩٩٨) كإطار عمل في هذه الدراسة. تمت استخراج مجموعات البيانات من موقع البيت الأبيض على الإنترنت. تعرض النتائج المستخلصة من خطاب الرئيس بايدن جوانب مختلفة من الخطاب ، والتي تمت مناقشتها على طول موضوعات البنية النصية والبنية الاجتماعية والإدراك الاجتماعي. تحتوي الأبعاد الثلاثة للخطاب على مختلف الاستراتيجيات اللغوية الموصوفة في النتائج. ومع ذلك ، فإن استخدام هذه الموضوعات يضع في سياقه تطبيق أدوات لغوية متنوعة في مجتمع عالمي يشهد تطور أزمة سياسية وإنسانية عقب انسحاب الجيش الأمريكي من الهيمنة العالمية وعودة ظهور جماعة متمردة يُنظر إليها على أنها تمتلك التيارات الإرهابية والأيديولوجيات الإسلامية المتطرفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: خطاب بايدن، أفغانستان، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، المفردات السلبية، المربع الأيديولوجي، استراتيجيات بلاغية

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1. Introduction

The United States has been embroiled in a protracted war against terrorism since the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, which killed almost 3000 people and injured over 6,000 others. In pursuit of the leader of Al Qaeda and its operatives that conducted the four well-coordinated terrorist attacks on critical and monumental infrastructure on American soil, President Bush declared the *war against terrorism* and invaded Afghanistan to depose the Taliban, who were allegedly harbouring Osama Bin Laden and the terrorist group Al Qaeda (Maley, 2002: 251). Subsequently, the United States and its NATO allies commenced a military offensive in Afghanistan to rid the world of Al Qaeda and defeat the Taliban; an effort that has persisted to date, despite the deviation from the original mission. American Presidents, including Bush, Obama, Trump, and now Biden, have made momentous speeches that elucidate the mission and direction of the *war on terror* in Afghanistan. These speeches incorporate several linguistic strategies that are meant to endearing the support of Americans and its allies, while depicting Afghanistan as the cradle of terrorism and the Taliban as the terrorists' protectors. While the previous administration has hinted about an end of the United States military presence in Afghanistan, since the elimination of Osama bin Laden and the defeat of the Taliban thereafter, President Biden is the one overseeing the actual withdrawal of American troops from that country. His speech came amid the extension of the date for the

withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan by the previous Obama and Trump administration and the political and socioeconomic effects of the eventual withdrawal effort commenced during President Trump's administration. This speech invites a critical discourse analysis that interrogates the power play between the United States and Afghanistan within the sociocultural context in the two countries that is encompassed in the deliberate use of language to communicate the political and policy position of the American government and its citizens in international military engagements (Liu & Guo, 2016). The discourse projected by President Biden's endeavours to redeem the image and reputation of the United States following the social and political chaos that erupted after the exit of the United States military from Afghanistan.

The United States has suffered a reputation crisis continuously since the Vietnam War, with many Americans questioning the justification of protracted wars undertaken by the country in foreign lands far away from home (Tirman, 2011). The presence of the American military in the gulf region and the Levant, particularly with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, has been criticized immensely by several observers, including policymakers, media, citizenry, and international commentators. Nonetheless, the United States has always sought to assert its authority and articulate its hegemony in social, economic and political spheres in international discourses, and its political leadership has used language designed to express explicitly its intention to dominate and control global geopolitics. Presidential speeches, such as that by President Biden, present the American ideologies and political standpoints, which depict the grandiosity of the United States as a model nation state and the derogation of other countries and groups of people outside the United States that hold divergent views or uphold different cultures.

2. Background of the study

American presidents make significant speeches to communicate the positions of their administration related to pertinent international issues and justify their current and future actions to forestall any public backlash and damage to the image of the United States as an ethical superpower and guardian of global security (Graham, 2018). These speeches have been made during moments when critical political issues have caused or accompanied the actions of the United States government. The United States military has a longstanding history of engaging in various wars in foreign countries since the First World War. The United States has always justified its foreign military engagements by evoking the need to protect its national security in foreign lands before the violence permeates into the country. However, this foreign policy ideology has often invited harsh criticism from those that feel that the United States used this justification to violate the sovereignty of foreign states and pursue selfish American interests. Therefore, American presidents have often given speeches that aggrandize the United States and derogate other countries and their actions. Desch (2007) states that:

> Illiberal U.S. policies-including the pursuit of global hegemony,
> launching of a preventive war, imposition of restrictions on civil

liberties in the name of national security, and support for torture under certain circumstances-manifested themselves even before the September 11 terrorist attacks and were embraced across the political spectrum (p:7).

The speech made by President Biden on the status of the ongoing withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and the turmoil that ensued, which has precipitated a security and humanitarian crisis, demonstrates the use of linguistic and discourse features in the speech that are often used to communicate certain political messages by powerful countries, like the United States. President Biden was witnessing the effects of withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan, which apparently left more turmoil that the projected political stability in a fragile country that is still influenced by the Taliban. Although the United States falls short of declaring failure in its mission in Afghanistan; leaving a politically and self-ruling stable country devoid of the political influence from the Taliban, the withdrawal process is chaotic and perilous to innocent Afghanis and international workers in the country, as the Taliban promptly moved to fill in the void left. The critical problem addressed by the speech is that America needs to save its face amid the embarrassing perceptions of the failure of its military occupation of a foreign country for an elongated period. This problem is exacerbated by the waning perceptions of an all-powerful United States as the self-declared moral protector of the world against evil individuals, groups and governments that use terrorism to destabilize societies and nations.

3. Method

The present paper adopts qualitative analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research tool that is used to interrogate the use of language as a form of social practice within specified contexts eliciting extant social relations. President Biden's speech on August 16, 2021 is extracted from the official White House's website on the internet to be under analysis.

In this regard, social discourse analysis focuses on the enactment, reproduction, legitimization and resistance of texts and talks, collectedly known as discourses, within political and social contexts (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). Formation and interpretation of discourses when conducting critical discourse analysis are interrogated using historical contexts, inter-discursivity and intertextuality. Because the primary focus of critical discourse analysis is political issues and social problems instead of merely discourse structure, this analytical methodology employed in this analysis addresses the political issue encompassed by the presence and withdrawal of military forces in foreign countries.

The theoretical underpinning of this critical discourse analysis is that of van Dijk, a renowned textual linguistic scholar from the Netherlands. In his theoretical framework, van Dijk views the critical discourse analysis as the study and analysis of spoken and written texts to unearth the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias (Liu & Guo, 2016; van Dijk, 1998). He explains that the sources of discourses are conserved and replicated within specific contexts. These contexts are situated within certain historical, political and social aspects. In other words, critical discourse analysis is about the interrogation of the

interrelationship between power and social structure and mediated by social cognition (Liu & Guo, 2016). In his explanation, the most valuable significance of discourse depicting the relationship between discourse and social structure, as presented in speeches and texts, are preserved in semantic representations that underpin social cognition (van Dijk, 1998). Van Dijk introduces the social cognitive approach, which is a triangular model in which society, discourse and cognition intersect and become formulated (van Dijk, 2006).

This framework is commonly used to analyze political texts and speeches made by powerful leaders targeting their citizenry, leaders of weaker nations, and the international audience (Waugh, et al., 2016). These kinds of political texts and speeches are often made in national and international forums targeting a wide audience in which the speakers make powerful statements using several linguistic strategies aimed at delivering critical political messages. Often, manipulation is a critical component of the critical discourse analysis of political discourses often delivered through speeches delivered by political leaders of dominant groups. Van Dijk (2006) argues in his triangulated approach that manipulation has social, cognitive and discursive dimensions. Specifically, manipulation, from a social perspective, encompasses illegitimate domination that confirms social inequality, while from a cognitive dimension, manipulation comprises mid control that interferes with comprehension processes and promotes the creation of biased mental models and social representations of ideologies and knowledge. From a discursive aspect, manipulation enacts ideological discourse by highlighting the good in the in-group and the bad in the out-group, thus creating polarizing ideologies (Najarzadegan, Dabaghi & Eslami-Rasekh, 2017). Analyzing manipulation using the critical discourse analysis through the triangulated linkage between society, discourse and cognition expose the abuse of power employed by political manipulators to the disadvantage of the powerless group. Van Dijk (2006) explains that the distinction between manipulation and persuasion is vague and highly dependent on the context of the discourse. While persuasion is considered to be legitimate because the speakers are free to believe and act as they wish, manipulation has a negative connotation because the recipients are often passive and hence, victims (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2017). For instance, governmental discussion about war and military occupation in foreign countries is often blamed on national security threats rather than inappropriate government policies. This analysis exposes the manipulative and persuasive tactics employed by President Biden in his speech and it explains the power play between the United States and Afghanistan, and the domination that the United States strives to perpetuate under the guise of combating terrorist groups in its war on terror.

The concepts used in this analysis include negative lexicalization, ideological square and rhetorical strategies, which are employed in the speech by President Biden.

4. Negative Lexicalization

Lexicalization is the acceptance of words and phrases into a language to economize the use of words. Lexicalized words are often new words that become accepted in a language and often comprise of reconstructed words whose individual elements do not deliver their original meaning in the new words or phrases. In linguistic analysis, lexicalization is about the choices of words employed to confer meaning to ideologically controlled discourse, Chilton (2004: 203) states that "the tendency in much political discourse is towards antonymous lexical choices, and other lexical choices that must lead to hearers making mental models that are binary in character". Van Dijk (1995) assumes that the word choice clarifies ideologically controlled discourse meanings. This approach is premised on the semantic macrostructure theory by van Dijk, which explains political discourse as a social phenomenon with linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural dimensions. From van Dijk's explanations, political discourse can be analyzed at the macro-level to unearth the sentences or clauses that represent independent meanings in thought and language (1998: 69). The political discourse can also be analyzed at the micro-level to discover the lexical structures that are used to strategically position an identity of frame a situation. Altogether, words can be carefully selected and deftly used in political discourses to advance the distinction between the in-group and out-group. In this case, negative lexicalization are the carefully selected words used to depict and highlight the negatives, faults and flaws of an out-group for the political mileage of an in-group. This analysis focuses on the negative lexicalization used in President Biden's speech to derogate and discredit the Afghanistan and Taliban administrations.

5. Ideological Square Model

The ideological square model advanced by van Dijk is an analytical tool that critical discourse analysts can use to interrogate cognition. The model is part of the socio-cognitive theory that van Dijk formulated. Society, cognition and discourse are the three components of critical discourse analysis, with cognition mediating the mediating the linkage between society and discourse, as illustrated in Figure (1) bellow based on Flowerdew & Richardson (2018).
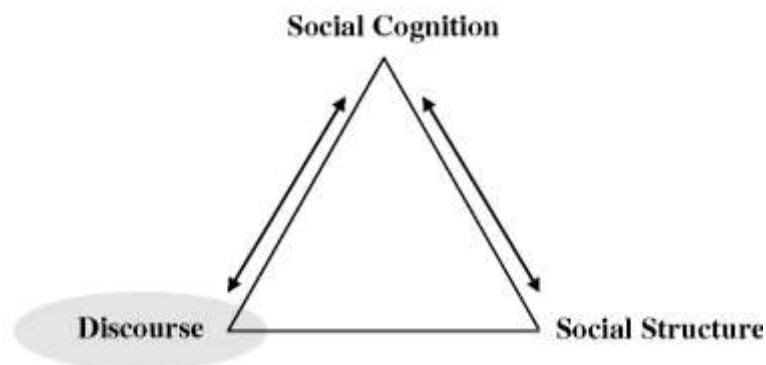
Figure 1. Discourse-cognition-society triangulation adopted from
(Flowerdew &Richardson, 2018)

In this framework, society presents the context within which the production and comprehension of discourse are interrogated while discourse is the encapsulating of language to deliver certain ideologies held in the cognitive layer, as illustrated in figure 1. Therefore, the ideological square analyses the cognition layer as characterized by polarized discourse representations demarcating in-group ideologies from out-group ones (Najarzadegan, Dabaghi & Eslami-Rasekh, 2017). The linguistic dimensions presented in the ideological square are positive self-representation and negative other-representation, creating the ideology of US versus THEM, also presented as boasting and derogation, respectively. The descriptive features of the two representations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Ideological Square Proposed by van Dijk (1998)

Overall strategy	Groups	Features	
		Emphasis	De-emphasis
Positive self-representation	In-group (us)	Positive	Negative
Negative other-representation	Out-group (them)	Negative	Positive

Ideologically-laden terms evoke proven psychological feelings, such as comfort, dependability, trustworthiness and greatness. Furthermore, superiority is commonly found in political discourses. These concepts are often used to create a dominant ideology in a persuasive manner. They are also employed to subliminally seduce people toward the in-group political and social ideas. Ideologically-laden terms are also deployed to justify power inequalities by manufacturing the recipients' consent and propagating the ideologies through mass-media coverage. This analysis analyses the ideologically-laden words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs that are used to project the ideologies of the Biden administration and the American society.

6. Rhetorical Devices

Rhetoric devices are words or phrases used to deliver meaning, encourage response, and persuade an audience during a communication episode. They are carefully selected words and phrases used to manage the views of listeners and persuade them to think or act in a particular manner desired by the speaker (Unvar & Rahimi, 2013). Van Dijk argued that rhetorical strategies are used to promote the effectiveness of communicative interaction between the speaker and the audience, and ultimately, the effectiveness of the discourse to facilitate the realization of the speaker's goals (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Politicians often use rhetoric devices to influence the ideologies of their constituencies and international audiences, particularly during national and international crises. Rhetoric devices are employed to appeal to the logic, credibility, emotion and a sense of timeliness in the audience sufficiently as to be persuasive. Euphemism, metaphors, rhetorical questions, and anaphora

are rhetoric devices employed by politicians in their speeches often to persuade their audiences and leave a lasting impression. This analysis unearths the various rhetoric stratifies and devices used to manipulate the speech recipients and persuade them to accept certain ideologies advanced by President Biden.

7. Data Analysis

This section investigates and analyses the concepts of negative lexicalization, ideological square and rhetorical strategies employed in President Biden's speech.

7.1 Negative Lexicalization

President Biden's speech is characterized by several negative lexicalizations derogating Afghanistan's government and the Taliban. One negative lexicalization is directed towards Al Qaeda, which is juxtaposed negatively against the United States. On the other hand, President Biden uses this speech to highlight the achievement of the United States since it deployed its military to Afghanistan two decades ago. In his explanation, he said that:

> We went to Afghanistan almost 20 years ago with clear goals: get those who attacked us on Sept. 11, 2001, and made sure Al Qaeda could not use Afghanistan as a base from which to attack us again. We did that. We severely degraded Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. We never gave up the hunt for Osama bin Laden and we got him (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

This statement was used to downgrade Al-Qaeda, which was a terrorist group, whose leader was based in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda is depicted as powerless and nonexistent, at least in its original form, although it may have morphed into ISIS, a terrorist organization that is against the presence of the American military in the Muslim world.

Similarly, in a statement that demonstrated the weakness of the Afghanis military, President Biden observed that, "Afghanistan political leaders gave up and fled the country. The Afghan military collapsed, sometimes without trying to fight." In another part of his speech, President Biden observed that:

> …if Afghanistan is unable to mount any real resistance to the Taliban now, there is no chance that one year - one more year, five more years or 20 more years- that U.S. military boots on the ground would have made any difference (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

President Biden continued with derogating the Afghani government and military by adding that:

> The political leaders of Afghanistan were unable to come together for the good of their people, unable to negotiate for the future of their country when the chips were down (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

These statements depict the Afghanistan government and armed forces as incompetent, cowardly, weak and hopeless because they did not defend their country against the Taliban despite having been trained and equipped by the United States.

7.2 Ideologically-laden terms and phrases

President Biden's speech was laden with words and phrases expressing his personal ideologies and those of Americans and the free world. Two main ideological strategies are apparent in this speech; the polarizing words and statements that depict the president and United States in positive light, and Afghanistan and al Qaida in negative representation. In this speech, the speaker highlights the deeds, achievements, policies and consideration of the American president and society in appositive manner while derogating Afghanistan by depicting the Afghanis government and the Taliban negatively.

7.2.1   Positive self-representation

According to van Dijk's ideological square, a speaker can achieve positive self-representation by stressing the self-positive and minimizing self-negative representations of himself, his country, and the western society that he represents. President Biden is a democrat, and therefore embodies the ideologies of humanism, patriotism, liberalism, Christianity and democracy. He selects topics that depict positive meanings of describing himself, the United States and the western world, which include tolerance, goodwill and diligence of himself and the American people, equality in the United States, and the protection of the rights of women and children.

One instance when the speaker employed positive self-representation for self-promotion is when says:

> When I hosted President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah at the White House in June, and again when I spoke by phone to Ghani in July, we had very frank conversations. We talked about how Afghanistan should prepare to fight their civil wars after the U.S. military departed. To clean up the corruption in government so the government could function for the Afghan people. We talked extensively about the need for Afghan leaders to unite politically. They failed to do any of that. I also urged them to engage in diplomacy, to seek a political settlement with the Taliban (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

In this excerpt, the speaker communicates the ideology of goodwill by inviting foreign leaders to a round-table talk and phone call conversations premised on openness and frankness. In this regard, the speaker projects himself as a tolerant and liberal leader able to shepherd reconciliation among leaders in troubled countries. The speaker goes on to state that:

> I will not repeat the mistakes we've made in the past. The mistake of staying and fighting indefinitely in a conflict that is not in the national interest of the United States, of doubling down on a civil war in a foreign country, of attempting to remake a country through the endless military deployments of U.S. forces. Those are the mistakes we cannot continue to repeat because we have significant vital interest in the world that we cannot afford to ignore (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

In this part, the Biden projects himself as a considerate and patriotic leader who would not want to endanger the lives of his citizenry by constantly engaging them in military offensives and occupations in foreign land that does not service the national interests of his country. The speaker also noted that, "I've worked on these issues as long as anyone" (Biden, 2021, 16:02). In this statement, the speaker highlights himself as a diligent leader and worker, which characterized the pillars and ideals of the American society. Altogether, the three excerpts depict the speaker in positive light as a human being and a patriotic leader and a diligent individual who places the interests of his country and society above his own, which are ideologies upheld by his society.

In highlighting the positive aspects of his country and the western world, the Biden said:

> We will continue to support the Afghan people. We will lead with our diplomacy, our international influence and our humanitarian aid. We'll continue to push for regional diplomacy and engagement to prevent violence and instability. We'll continue to speak out for the basic rights of the Afghan people, of women and girls, just as we speak out all over the world (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

This statement advances the ideologies of diplomacy in resolving international conflicts, humanism by helping other people in distress, and human rights by seeking to protect the rights of women and children.

7.2.2   Negative other-representation

In the ideology square advanced by van Dijk, negative other-representation emphasizes the other-negatives, while curtailing other-positives. In this strategy, the weaknesses, mistakes and inadequacies of others are exaggerated while the positive accomplishments are ignored and avoided. In this regard, President Biden selects topics relating to the weakness of the Afghani government and military, and the rise of the Taliban, whose doctrine is premised on suppressing the rights of women and children. He adopts an accusatory stance when he blames the incompetence and cowardice of the Afghani government and military as the cause of the humanitarian crisis, chaotic withdrawal of civilians and deteriorated security in Afghanistan.

Examples of the use of negative other representation to define the Afghanis government and the Taliban can be discerned from the speech. For instance, the speaker noted that, "…the Afghan government and its supporters discouraged us from organizing a mass exodus to avoid triggering, as they said, a crisis of confidence (Biden, 2021, 16:02). The speaker also said that, "The events we're seeing now are sadly proof that no amount of military force would ever deliver a stable, united, secure Afghanistan, as known in history as the graveyard of empires" (Biden, 2021, 16:02). Besides, the blame game continues when the speaker said:

> To clean up the corruption in government so the government could function for the Afghan people. We talked extensively about the need for Afghan leaders to unite politically. They failed to do any of that. I also urged them to engage in diplomacy, to seek a political settlement with the Taliban. This advice was flatly refused (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

These three excerpts demonstrate the negative light shed on the Afghani government and military. The speaker blames the Afghanis for the developing political and humanitarian crisis in their country and portrays then as being beyond help because they have not used the American assistance over the last two decades to rebuild their society.

7.2.3   Pronouns

Pronouns are used to advance the discrimination between the in-group and out-group. Therefore, pronouns seek to appeal to the recipients to adopt the views and ideologies of the speaker and ignore those of other entities in the communication. In this regard, President Biden uses the pronouns "**I**", "**we**", "**us**", and "**our**" to persuade the listener to accept the speaker's perspectives and accommodate his ideologies because they are supposedly better that those of other people. He says:

> We gave them every tool they could need. We paid their salaries, provided for the maintenance of their air force, something the Taliban doesn't have. Taliban does not have an air force. We provided close air support. We gave them every chance to determine their own future. What we could not provide them was the will to fight for that future. (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

In turn, he uses the pronoun "**they**" and "**them**" to differentiate the inferior others from the superior ideologies of his country and his society.

7.3 Rhetorical strategies

Several rhetoric strategies are evident in President Biden's speech.

7.3.1   *Rhetorical questions*

President Biden used rhetorical questions to provoke the thoughts of his audience and encourage their acceptance of certain ideologies. For instance, when he said:

> How many more generations of America's daughters and sons would you have me send to fight Afghanistan's civil war when Afghan troops will not? How many more lives, American lives, is it worth, how many endless rows of headstones at Arlington National Cemetery? (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02).

7.3.2   *Repetition*

President Biden also used repetition to emphasize the importance of the day the American troops should have withdrawn from the United States and the undesirable effects this would have yielded. Specifically, the he said, "There would have been no cease-fire **after May 1**. There was no agreement protecting our forces **after May 1**. There was no status quo of stability without American casualties **after May 1**" (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02). In this example the sentences have 'after May 1' as a repeated ending, to emphasize the how ill-prepared Afghanistan and the Biden's administration were to conduct a peaceful withdrawal of the American military personnel.

To add power of persuasion, President Biden repeatedly said: "I want to **speak** today", "I'll **speak** more", "We'll continue to **speak**", "just as we **speak** out all over the world" to convince people about the "counterterrorism missions against terrorist groups". However, he emphasized on the word "**mistake**" to justify the departure of the USA army from Afghanistan, he said:

>I will not repeat the **mistakes** we've made in the past. The **mistake** of staying and fighting indefinitely in a conflict that is not in the national interest of the United States, of doubling down on a civil war in a foreign country, of attempting to remake a country through the endless military deployments of U.S. forces. Those are the **mistakes** we cannot continue to repeat because we have significant vital interest in the world that we cannot afford to ignore (Biden, August 16, 2021, 16:02). (Emphasis mine)

7.3.3 *Euphemism/dysphemism*

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are expressions used to control the sensitivity of effect of language to make it socially acceptable or repulsive, respectively. Allan & Burridge (1991:11) states that "euphemisms are alternatives to disprefered expressions, and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face. The disprefered expression may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reasons have too many negative connotations to felicitously execute speaker's communicative intention on a given occasion". Enright (1985: 29) claims that "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication". In political discourse, euphemisms and dysphemisms are used persuasively and idiomatically to placate or exacerbate the feelings, emotions and actions of the audience or at least create a significant mental image of the references issue or item (Felt & Riloff, 2020). Hugh Rawson affirms that "euphemisms are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plain spoken, ever get through a day without using them" (Rawson, 1981, p.3). One example of euphemism in Biden's speech is the phrase "**over-the-horizon capability**". Contrastingly, and example of dysphemism found in the speech is the phrase "**gut-wrenching**". In this context, "**over-the-horizon capability**" is used to depict the use of military capacity outside the theatre of war using advanced technologies, in a non-alarmist manner. In turn, "**gut-wrenching**" is used in the speech to exaggerate the feelings evoked by the worrisome incidences being observed following the occupation of the government by the Taliban.

7.3.4 *Metaphor*

Metaphors are rhetorical devices used to strengthen figurative speech and create mental imagery to increase the persuasive power of a discourse. Based on the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson,1980; 1999), the analysis showed that the President Biden uses metaphors such as, **cold reality**, **stand squarely**, **learned the hard way**, **laser focus**, and **graveyard of empires** to make the language more expressive and persuasive.

8. Findings

8.1 A contextual overview

President Biden made this speech on August 16, 2021 following the collapse of the elected the United States-backed Afghani government and the abandoning of posts and surrendering of the United States-trained and equipped military personnel during a week-long insurrection by the Taliban. The speech was the first on the situation in Afghanistan delivered by President Biden, since the withdrawal of American troops occasioned the taking over of Afghanistan's government by the Taliban. It was also the first remarks made publicly in over a week following the escalation of the evacuation crisis. The speech was hurriedly arranged to be delivered from the White House's East Room and the President had to interrupt a summer vacation at Camp David. The speech was delivered in front of media reporters only, and even it was televised live across major news networks across the globe, President Biden did not take any questions from the reporters present, which limits communicative interaction. President Biden targeted not only the American citizens but also the global audience, and especially the Afghanis s the recipients.

President Biden was facing his first foreign policy crisis following the chaotic evacuation of American military personnel and workers, leaving a trail of confusion and panic among expatriates and Afghanis that worked with the United States government and others eligible for immigration into the United States. The speech sought to promote the image of President Biden as a meticulous planner and dependable leader to the American public, who have continuously questioned the rationale of the prolonged presence of the military in Afghanistan after Osama bin Laden had long been eliminated and Al Qaeda dismantled. The speech also addresses pertinent issues related to the American policy on military involvement in civil strife in foreign countries, the promises made to the American public, and the role of the United States as the global guardian of human rights and liberties for the marginalized sections of society, like girls and women. The speaker intended to make his audience to regard him as a man of commitment and promise, and a national leader ready to face internal and external criticisms for the sake of the safety of the American citizenry. Although he confesses that his administration was taken aback by the rapid deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American troops, President Biden blames previous administrations for not having ended the war sooner and evacuated the war theatre, and particularly, former President Trump for striking a deal with the Taliban, which not only obligated him to uphold but also created the environment conducive for encouraging the rise of the Taliban. He uses several linguistic devices to articulate his firmly-held beliefs, sound judgment, and patriotism, while promoting the perpetuation of the United States hegemony in international politics.

9. Discussion

The findings from President Biden's Speech exhibit various aspects of discourse, which are discussed along the themes of textual structure, social structure and social cognition. In this discussion, these three dimensions of discourse contain the various linguistic strategies described in the results. However, using these themes contextualizes the application of

diverse linguistic devices in a national and global society that is witnessing the unfolding of a political and humanitarian crisis following the withdrawal of foreign military personnel from a global hegemony and the resurgence of an insurgent group considered to have terrorist tendencies and extremist Islamic ideologies.

9.1 Text, processing and social analysis

Text analysis focuses on the social structure of a speech or text as the corpus used to support a political discourse. The speech has several words used to communicate the difference between 'us' versus 'them', where 'us' stands for the Americans and 'them' depicts the Afghanis and Taliban's. The findings of the critical discourse analysis revealed that the speaker employed various textual strategies to uphold the polarization of the American and Afghani societies. However, although pronouns were extensively used in the speech to differentiate the two societies explicitly, ideologically-laden phases were used particularly to highlight the positives of the American and western societies as the holders of power and derogate the Afghanis as the subjects in the power equation. However, the speaker was careful to avoid the use of strong language that would undermine his intension of communicating his ideologies, which are more subtle and reconciliatory compared to those of his predecessors from the republican party, especially President Bush and Trump.

9.2 Power Balance

The results indicated that President Biden's speech was rich with depictions of power, with the United States being portrayed as a global hegemony while Afghanistan and the Taliban were described as powerless entities heavily reliant on the presence of the American military personnel for peace to reign. However, from the findings, the speaker made concerted efforts to appear more persuasive than manipulative when steering the political discourse. In other words, although the speech was laced with ideologically-laden linguistic representations, the words and phrases selected were more subtle than scathing, and hence not intended to evoke aggressive resistance rebellion among the recipients.

9.3 Manipulation

From the findings, the speaker manipulated the cognitions and mental models of the recipients by employing rhetoric devices that appealed to the logic and emotions of the recipients (van Dijk, 2006). The findings demonstrate extensive use of societally-acceptable language rather that the aggressive and coercive kind. The manipulative linguistic strategies targeted universal ideologies, such as humanism, freedom, consideration of others over self, and a regard for the marginalized in society.

9.4 Persuasion

The findings indicated a heavy deployment of persuasive language rather than manipulative one. The speaker was intent of striking a reconciliatory note without losing the power advantage as a hegemony. The use of negative lexicalization was limited and placated by the promise of help in the future. Similarly, the speaker focused more on aggrandizing himself to emphasize his moral stature rather than the moral authority of his country and western society. Besides, the speech exhibited limited indications of domination as the speaker endeavored to project himself as an ethical leader that used power responsibly and militaristic coercion sparingly.

9.5 Implications

The speech has several implications to the perceptions of the withdrawal of the United States military by the current administration, particularly by the American citizens and the global community. The speech sought to secure the buy in of the withdrawal of the American troops by making emotional appeals. In the same vein, makers of the American foreign policy have critical lessons to learn from the speech, which could guide their future efforts. Although their current approach to foreign policy has not changed dramatically by this speech, the communication of the policy takes a subtler approach compared to that used by previous administrations, such as that of Presidents Bush and Trump. There is a deliberate effort to avoid using strong words and language yet the speech delivers a powerful message of the authority of the United States in international affairs, and communicates that the country is not ready to abandon its hegemonic position in international politics and security. Persuasion is central in political language, particularly when addressing controversial issues. In this case, the exit of the American military from Afghanistan is associated with the upsurge of the Taliban and their filing of the political void therein. The speech treads carefully in this dilemma by seeking to blame the Afghanis for their incompetence and failure despite receiving enormous support from the United States. This is a reflection of the no confrontational stance policymakers are likely to use in the future.

Likewise, researchers can draw valuable lessons regarding language use presented in this speech. Researchers can learn how language in political discourses is employed to perpetuate dominance and power inequalities between states and political structures without being overly forceful and repugnant. Besides, the speech demonstrates that the language used in political discourses camouflages the hegemony of the United States by using terms and phrases that hide the intension to dominate the cultural, social and political structure of societies without sounding offensive and combative.

10. Conclusion

Political speeches are often full of rhetoric and negative lexicalization when addressing sensitive and complex international matters. In this case, President Biden's speech addressed the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan and justifies this action despite the political and social turmoil it delivers in its wake. Unlike the speeches of his predecessor,

that of President Biden had measured undertones of the resolve to exit the Afghanistan war theatre while conceding that the military occupation had not succeeded entirely as expected. Although President Biden encountered an embarrassing situation, he transferred the blame to previous administrations adeptly without damaging the reputation of himself, his country or the dominating society he represents.

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The Data

President Biden's speech on Monday about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

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