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TERRORISM IN ENGLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE:
A RHETORICAL ASPECT

MA Paper
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Abstract

This research aims to identify the pragmatic perspective for the representation of terrorism in English-language political discourse. The study hypothesizes that modern political discourse concerning terrorist threats functions as a tool of ideological influence, realized through specific linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic strategies. Research tasks include identifying key semantic fields, analyzing the pragmatic functions of political statements, describing discursive strategies of polarization and framing, and identifying metaphorical models that structure the concept of terrorism.

The research material comprises speeches by U.S. presidents, addresses by British Prime ministers, official government statements, media publications, and analytical reports produced between 2001 and 2022. The methodological basis includes approaches from critical discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, political text semiotics, and qualitative content analysis.

The study reveals that English-language political discourse frames terrorism through a binary "us vs. them" opposition, supported by emotionally charged vocabulary, conceptual metaphors, cultural references, and pragmatic speech acts. The findings highlight the deeply ideological nature of political language, wherein terrorism-related rhetoric serves to legitimize government decisions and mobilize public opinion.

Keywords: *political discourse, terrorism, framing, rhetorical aspect, critical discourse analysis*

Introduction

Terrorism constitutes a significant contemporary threat to national and international security and stability. State leaders' responses to terrorist acts profoundly shape public opinion, political strategies, and international relations. In times of crisis, political discourse assumes critical importance, serving as the primary vehicle for government leaders to address the populace, construct narratives surrounding terrorism, legitimize security measures, and mobilize societal support.

Given the relevance of the topic, the aim of this master's thesis is to explore the **pragmatic perspective** of political discourse related to terrorism in speeches delivered by prominent political figures from the United Kingdom and the United States. Special attention is paid to the analysis of linguistic devices, rhetorical and discursive strategies used by UK Prime Ministers (Tony Blair, Theresa May, Keir Starmer) and U.S. Presidents (George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump) in response to major terrorist events.

The **object** of this research is the political discourse concerning terrorism-related communication as manifested in the speeches of the aforementioned leaders

The **subject** of the research is the rhetorical means employed in these speeches to construct meanings, shape public narratives, and to legitimize governmental actions

The **working hypothesis** implies that political speeches delivered in response to terrorist acts demonstrate systematic use of particular rhetoric patterns. These patterns are adapted to specific political, social, and historical

contexts and reflect the characteristics of national discourse in the UK and the USA. It is also assumed that said linguistic strategies combine moral-ethical reasoning, emotional appeal, and rhetoric of unity to consolidate society in the fight against terrorism.

The **main aim** of the thesis is a comprehensive analysis of the rhetorical means employed in British and American leaders' political discourse on terrorism, their communication strategies, as well as their evolution over time.

To achieve this goal, the following **tasks** are set:

- identify lexical, semantic, and stylistic traits of speeches by UK Prime Ministers and US Presidents;
- disclose discursive strategies that contribute to constructing discursive texts on terrorism and security;
- compare the Rhetorical strategies in British and American political discourse;
- determine changes in language strategies depending on the type and context of terrorist threats;
- highlight the role of emotional vocabulary and appeals to moral values in mobilizing public support.

The **research material** includes official speeches of UK Prime Ministers (Tony Blair, Theresa May, Keir Starmer) and US Presidents (George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump), delivered in response to major terrorist incidents from 2001 to 2025.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, a set of methods is employed: rhetorical and discourse analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a deep understanding of the linguistic communication strategies employed by political leaders in crisis situations and enables the identification of both universal and culturally specific linguistic patterns shaped by sociopolitical realities.

Theoretical Background

1.1 The Concept, Origins, and Classification of Terrorist Phenomena in Political, Social-Cultural and Linguistic Terms

Terrorism has always been and remains a complex and relevant topic for research and discussion. Unfortunately, humanity both in the past and nowadays has suffered and continues to suffer from terrorist acts worldwide. Some directly associate the term "terrorism" with Bin Laden and the 9/11 attacks, while others link it to the war crimes of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. However, all these phenomena share one thing — there is a victim and there is an aggressor.

Society interprets terrorism in different ways; there are more than 100 definitions of this phenomenon. However, none of them is universally accepted. Terror aims to destabilize society and coerce decisions that will be beneficial to the terrorists. The FBI defines terrorism as "The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the

civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (FBI).

One of the goals terrorism pursues is a political one, urging governments to take certain actions, as well as influencing state policy. In the context of political discourse, terrorism is usually viewed as a tool of political influence to achieve ideological/religious/national objectives.

According to Enders W. and Sandler T., "the terrorism is the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate noncombatant victims" (Enders and Sandler, 2012, p.4).

The concept "terrorism" has first become known after the Great French Revolution (1789–1794), following the "revolutionary terror" organized by the Jacobins. In 1798, German philosopher Immanuel Kant introduced this concept into scientific discourse to illustrate his pessimistic views on human nature. The first attempt to give a definition of terrorism that could be accepted by all members of the international community was made by the League of Nations (the precursor of the UN) in 1937. However, this definition did not gain widespread use (Washington ProFile). For example, the European Parliament considers an act of terrorism to be "an internationally condemned act committed by an individual or group against one or more countries, their institutions, or citizens, aimed at frightening them and fundamentally changing or destroying the political, economic, or social structures of the state" (European Parliament). The U.S. Department of State uses the following formulation: "The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets perpetrated by subnational groups or clandestine agents" (US Department of State).

Currently, the universal definition is: "Terrorism is a policy based on the systematic use of terror." Synonyms for the word "terror" (Latin Terror – fear, dread) include "violence" and "intimidation."

Various manifestations of terrorism cause massive human casualties. Terrorism, due to its scale, consequences, destructive power, and cruelty, has become one of the most terrible problems for all humanity.

Henry Astier also believes that "the word 'terrorism' has no universally accepted definition." The Global Terrorism Database uses three criteria to define terrorism. To classify an act as "terrorist," it must have the following features:

1. Political, social, or religious motives;
2. Actions aimed at attracting the attention of a large number of people, beyond the immediate victims;
3. The commission of terrorist acts outside the territory where officially recognized hostilities are taking place (Astier, BBC News, 2017).

The threat of terrorism remains one of the most pressing problems of today, causing not only general fear but also forcing all countries to sit at the negotiating table.

For effective counter-terrorism efforts, it is essential to study foreign experience, which brings the issue of translating texts on this topic to the forefront. Primarily, this concerns the problem of translating terms, as they cause the main difficulties when working with texts addressing this theme.

When discussing terrorism, it is important to outline the legal aspects of terrorism, as they cover a range of issues related to national and international legal norms. For example, there are certain conventions and treaties through which international law defines terrorism. These include the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005), the United Nations Convention on the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999), the United Nations Convention against Terrorism (1977), and others. International law also regulates issues such as the extradition of terrorists and the rights of persons suspected of terrorism.

Regarding national legislation of individual states — the USA states in its Patriot Act: “The purpose of the USA Patriot Act is to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and other purposes” (USA Patriot Act). In 2015, the USA Patriot Act was partially replaced by the USA Freedom Act, which set limits some of the US government’ of powers, particularly the one related to mass collection of telephone metadata. However, not all provisions of the Patriot Act were repealed; some remain in force to this day. Thus, the USA Patriot Act has partially lost its power, but certain provisions continue to operate.

In the European Union, many directives, executive decisions, and other legal normative acts define and establish issues of terrorism. These include, for example, Directive (EU) 2016/681 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the use of passenger name record (PNR) data for the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of terrorist offenses and serious crime, the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/759 of 28 April 2017 on common protocols and data formats used by air carriers in transmitting passenger name record data to passenger information units C/2017/2743 (OJ L 113, 29.04.2017, pp. 48–51), the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, and others.

These laws also determine the measures permitted in combating terrorism, including the possibility of arrest without a warrant, use of military forces, surveillance, and wiretapping.

An important aspect is the balance between combating terrorism and protecting human rights. Sometimes, measures applied to fight terrorism (for example, restrictions on personal freedom or privacy) may conflict with international human rights standards.

For instance, the above-mentioned Patriot Act in the United States provoked outrage among citizens, as this law allowed the FBI to conduct wiretapping, electronic surveillance, i.e., special agencies and departments gained the ability to monitor US citizens in virtually all spheres. However, such a law was regarded as violating the Fourth Amendment because it permitted law enforcement agencies to carry out secret searches (so-called sneak and peek warrants) without notifying the person. It also allowed extended electronic surveillance, including phone tapping and monitoring of internet activity without the need to obtain traditional warrants, and the collection of metadata of phone conversations of US citizens without their consent, which was revealed after the leak by Edward Snowden, a former CIA employee who exposed information about the National Security Agency's surveillance of information systems in many countries around the world.

One of the most interesting aspects, in my opinion, is the “religious background” of terrorist acts. The rhetoric of terrorist acts based on religion is as illogical as Putin's “war for peace.”

In Bernard Lewis's work, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, it is noted that Islamic extremists often refer to the concept of “jihad,” distorting its meaning as a purely violent conflict, whereas in traditional Islam it has a broader interpretation. Lewis explains that traditional Islamic teaching considers jihad in two main aspects:

- The Greater Jihad (al-jihad al-akbar) — the internal struggle against sins, self-improvement.
- The Lesser Jihad (al-jihad al-asghar) — armed struggle, which in classical Islam is allowed only as defense of the faith in case of aggression (Lewis, 2003, p. 48).

Modern radical groups emphasize only the armed aspect, ignoring the spiritual meaning of jihad. Lewis also notes that the use of this concept for political purposes has been observed since the colonial period when some Muslim leaders called for jihad as a fight against European empires.

In other words, some terrorist organizations may use excerpts from sacred texts to justify war against “infidels,” refer to historical cases from religious texts where past figures used force, and claim that their actions fulfill divine command.

In Jessica Stern's book *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, the author explores the motives and justifications used by religious extremists of different faiths to legitimize violent actions. Stern conducted numerous interviews with members of groups such as Islamic jihadists, Christian fundamentalists, and Hindu nationalists to understand their psychology and ideology.

Key Findings of Jessica Stern's Research:

Psychological Transformations and Ideological Justifications for Violence: Stern found that many terrorists are not mentally ill but rather

undergo profound psychological transformations, where religious beliefs serve as motivation and justification for violence. They often believe their actions contribute to a higher purpose or divine plan.

Group Dynamics and Leadership: The author examines how charismatic leaders manipulate vulnerable individuals by employing religious narratives to form collective identities and justify violence. These leaders often create an image of the enemy, enabling the group to unite against a common “ungodly” adversary.

Social and Political Contexts: Stern emphasizes that terrorism often arises within contexts of social isolation, political repression, and economic injustice. These conditions create fertile ground for radicalization, where religious ideas are used to legitimize violence as a means to fight injustice.

Diversity of Motivations: The research shows that motivations for terrorism are multifaceted and include not only religious beliefs but also personal, social, and political factors. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding and countering terrorism (Stern, 2003, pp. 83–106).

It is important to note that many militants feel isolated or humiliated in society, making them vulnerable to recruitment by extremist leaders. Some groups use historical narratives or territorial disputes as justification for violence. As mentioned above, leaders of these movements often manipulate religious texts and beliefs to justify violent actions and attract followers.

Terrorists frequently employ a dichotomy of “us versus them,” where enemies are equated with “infidels” or “apostates,” accused of betraying the true faith. Killing such people is presented as purification or punishment. Abdullah Azzam, one of Al-Qaeda’s ideologues, wrote that “the war against the unbelievers is the duty of every Muslim” (Azzam, 1987, p. 14).

Some religious extremists justify terrorism by their belief in an imminent “end of the world” or “Judgment Day.” They may claim that their actions hasten the arrival of a messianic figure (Imam, Messiah, etc.) and believe that through violence, they accelerate divine intervention in world affairs. For example, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, which carried out the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, believed that their actions would speed up the “end of the world” and the reign of a messianic leader.

Terrorists may consider that their religious community is oppressed and therefore entitled to “respond.” This can include revenge for attacks or discrimination, protection of “co-religionists” in conflict zones, and resistance to global or national influences perceived as “anti-spiritual.” Many contemporary terrorist organizations use the rhetoric of “defending Muslims,” even when their activities target civilian populations.

1.2 The Rise of Terrorism as a Globally Marked Phenomenon

Scientific research does not specify the exact time and place of the first terrorist acts in human history. It is generally accepted that the first terrorist was

Herostratus from Ephesus, who in 356 BCE set fire to the Temple of Artemis. Herostratus was a poor craftsman who sought to gain fame by destroying a structure considered one of the wonders of the ancient world (Borkowski, 2001, p. 20).

Terrorism can also be identified in ancient Greece, where the assassination of a tyrant was considered justified. Seneca explicitly stated that there is no sacrifice more pleasing to the gods than the blood of a tyrant. An example of such an assassination is the killing of Julius Caesar by conspirators on March 15, 44 BCE. Terrorism also emerged in Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War, when the Spartans imposed an oligarchic commission on the Athenians. During the rule of the Thirty Tyrants, 1,500 citizens were executed, and another 5,000 were exiled. The city was engulfed in persecution and property looting (Smoktunowicz, 2002, p. 1028).

In 1st century CE Israel, anti-Roman groups such as the Zealots and Sicarii practiced assassination attempts. From the 11th to the 13th centuries, terrorism was systematically employed in the Middle East by the Assassins (Hashshashins)—an Ismaili sect specializing in targeted killings. In the medieval period, the theory justifying tyrannicide was developed by John of Salisbury and later expanded in the 16th century by monarchomachs (Tomasiewicz, 2000, p. 32).

The word "terrorism" became widely used during the French Revolution, referring to the period of rule by the Committee of Public Safety, whose Jacobin members were labeled "terrorists." At that time, the term described a form of governance based on the practice of violent repression. Later, the concept of "individual terror" emerged, denoting attacks by oppositionists against state officials and the ruling class. During this period, approximately 40,000 people died as a result of public guillotine executions, punitive actions, and mass killings of prisoners. Around 300,000 French citizens were repressed and imprisoned. In some regions, bloody executions and genocidal suppression were carried out without judicial decisions (Bolechów, 2012, p. 53).

Although the concept of terrorism during the French Revolution significantly differed from its modern meaning, it shared key features with the contemporary phenomenon. First, the acts were not random or blind but deliberate. Second, the goal served was the construction of a better, just, and new society.

Terrorism in Western culture first gained prominence during the Great French Revolution. It was associated with terror and fear, aiming to intimidate the enemies of the revolution (Aleksandrowicz, 2008, p. 45).

Activity associated with terrorism intensified in the late 19th century due to anarchists who advocated uprising against the existing social order. Terrorism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was characterized as a protest against state tyranny. It became synonymous with revolution, anarchism, separatist and national movements, and a tool to combat state structures.

In 1874, Italy witnessed a series of terrorist attacks, including the first assassination attempts on heads of state. Among the most notable assassinations of political leaders were:

- French President Lazare Hippolyte Carnot (1884);
- Spanish Prime Minister José Canalejas de Castillo (1897);
- Austrian Empress Elisabeth (1898);
- Italian King Umberto I (1900);
- U.S. President William McKinley (1901);
- Spanish Prime Minister José Canalejas (1912);
- Austrian heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie (1914).

Over time, terrorists' targets shifted from individual politicians to society or its segments (e.g., government officials). The goal of attacks on society was to provoke dissatisfaction with the government. Terrorist attacks directed at administration and police officials often enjoyed public support.

In the 1930s, the meaning of "terrorism" changed again. During this period, the term was less frequently applied to revolutionary movements and violence against governments and their leaders.

Technological advances expanded opportunities for terrorist acts, influencing a change in target types. Attacks increasingly targeted buses, trains, airplanes, and ships, marking the beginning of terrorism directed against transportation.

In the 1970s and 1980s, terrorism acquired an international character. This was evidenced by connections among terrorist groups across countries. Terrorist acts became one of the most common forms of political struggle used by various organizations to address socio-political, religious, and national issues. During this period, phenomena of financial and logistical support of terrorism by certain states (USSR, Cuba, Libya) emerged.

In the early 1980s, religiously motivated terrorism emerged. Its origins are linked to key events such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. During the Afghan war (1979–1989), recruitment centers for Islamic fighters were established, as well as networks connecting combatants and Muslim communities worldwide that supported them.

The largest terrorist attack in history occurred on September 11, 2001 — the assault on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Bartnicki, 2008, p. 97).

A characteristic feature of religious terrorism is a different system of values, distinct mechanisms of legitimization and justification, and a different moral and worldview concept of religious terrorists. For a religious terrorist, violence is primarily a sacred act, a fulfillment of a duty derived from divine command (Capana, 2007, p. 59).

Thus, terrorism acquires a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are not limited by any political, moral, or practical norms. Secular terrorists rarely carry out large-scale acts of terror, whereas religious terrorists often aim

to eliminate broad categories of enemies, which results in more extensive violence. This explains the higher number of victims in attacks motivated by religious reasons.

Furthermore, secular terrorists typically try to appeal to their electorate, community members, or sympathizers. Religious terrorists consider their mission a total war and do not seek to appeal to any social groups.

Finally, secular and religious terrorists differ significantly in their self-perception and understanding of their activities. For secular terrorists, violence is a means to achieve changes that should result in a new system. In contrast, religious terrorists do not see themselves as part of the system that needs change; rather, they view themselves as fighters for radical transformations of the existing order (Dziekan, 2008, p. 129).

Twenty-first-century terrorism manifests through illegal acts, including frequent occurrences of hijackings and kidnappings of airplanes and other vehicles (e.g., ships, trains, buses) along with passengers as hostages; acts of economic sabotage; hacking; assaults; ransom demands; assassination attempts targeting government officials; attacks on persons under international protection; kidnappings and hostage-taking of foreigners (e.g., journalists, clergy); and the use of automatic weapons, rockets, and explosives in public places, creating a significant threat to bystanders (Dziekan, 2008, p. 132).

Most terrorist acts involve hostage-taking to enhance the drama of the terrorist operation, draw attention to proclaimed ideas, and strengthen terrorists' positions during negotiations. Additionally, terrorism is often linked to trafficking in humans, drugs, weapons, and fissile materials such as missiles.

Favorable conditions for the development of terrorism and terrorist organizations are created by Middle Eastern terrorism, Muslim fundamentalism (jihad), nationalist tendencies in the former GDR, post-Soviet nationalism, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Horgan, 2008, p. 38).

Currently, many experts believe that the goal of a terrorist act is not necessarily to commit a specific crime but rather to achieve a certain effect on authorities or public opinion. It is often said that terrorist acts are a form of theater aimed at eliciting a specific reaction from the audience (Szafrński, 2007, p. 71).

An additional threat lies in the fact that terrorism in international relations is an extremely dynamic and almost unpredictable phenomenon. This means that, due to rapid technological development, it can take various forms, which are difficult to foresee. One such contemporary form is cyberterrorism.

Cyberterrorism involves attempts to intimidate governments by threatening to paralyze various computer systems that control vital processes and sectors of the economy, such as finance, banking systems, national defense, city water supply, ballistic missile launches, etc. (Zasieczna, 2004, p. 56).

An important aspect of countering terrorism is the prohibition of its financing. To prevent and punish financing, countries have signed the

International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Unfortunately, terrorism is financed both by business structures and state sponsorship. We will further consider possible financing sources.

Freeman M. notes that there is no ideal source of financing for terrorist groups. However, he identifies six main criteria considered when choosing sources: volume of funding, legitimacy, security, reliability, control, and simplicity. The researcher classifies sources of terrorism financing into four main groups: state sponsorship, illegal activities, legal activities, and support from the population (Freeman, 2011, pp. 461–475).

Terrorism directly depends on the funding of its activities; thus, cutting off financing channels significantly reduces the risk of terrorist acts.

Often, terrorist groups create certain charitable or non-governmental funds to “legitimize” financial transfers, and they may own companies (e.g., restaurants or construction firms) that finance such activities (Fink & McDowell, 2017, p. 135).

Another highly relevant and popular method of financing terrorist organizations, especially in the context of the 21st century, is cryptocurrency. Due to its anonymous nature, cryptocurrency often complicates the monitoring and tracing of financial flows.

Groups such as the Taliban and Hezbollah largely obtain funds through drug trafficking. ISIS (the Islamic State) earned millions from the illegal sale of oil. Other well-known methods of terrorist financing include ransom demands for hostages, credit card fraud, and financial scams (LaFree & Groutledge, 2009, pp. 120–122).

In Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian countries, the informal money transfer system known as Hawala remains popular. Because it operates outside formal banking channels, financial transactions through Hawala are not always easily traceable.

Horgan (2005) notes that “State sponsorship of terrorism involves direct or indirect support by a government for a terrorist group or its activities. This support can take various forms, such as providing financial aid, arms, training, safe havens, and logistical support. Countries may sponsor terrorism to achieve political or strategic objectives, including destabilizing rival states, advancing ideologies, or asserting influence over regions” (Horgan, 2005, pp. 104–106).

According to research by Jackson and Sinclair in *Terrorism and Political Violence: Analyzing the Causes of Terrorist Acts*, popular support plays a significant role as a source of terrorism financing. Traditionally, terrorist organizations receive funding from local communities or diaspora groups that share their political or ideological views. This support can take the form of voluntary contributions or forced levies (Jackson & Sinclair, 2012, pp. 97–99).

Voluntary contributions often come from sympathizers or individuals supporting terrorists’ political or social causes. These donations may be organized through charitable organizations or virtual platforms collecting funds

for “educational” or “humanitarian” projects, although some of the proceeds are diverted to finance terrorism.

Forced levies involve terrorist groups using violent methods to extract money or resources from local residents, businesses, or even charitable institutions operating in conflict zones.

Terrorist organizations may also raise funds from supporters abroad, particularly in diaspora communities located in countries with significant immigrant populations backing certain political ideologies or national movements. These funds are often transferred via personal remittances or through cultural organizations that act as fronts.

To intercept terrorists, authorities typically monitor their financial activities, electronic communications, travel patterns, and other relevant data.

1.3 Political Discourse Practices as a Variety of Social Practices

In the study of terrorism, it is important to consider not only social, political, and psychological aspects but also communication processes that contribute to shaping the perception of terrorist acts in society. Media and other communication channels play a key role in constructing images of terrorism, which influence public opinion and political decisions. To analyze these processes, communication theories are particularly useful, including framing theory, aggression theory, and manipulation theory.

Framing theory, proposed by Robert Entman, asserts that the media not only reflect reality but also shape it by selecting certain aspects of events and emphasizing their significance for the audience. This allows the media to influence how events and individuals are perceived, determining who is labeled a “terrorist” and who is labeled a “hero.” Media use frames to define these roles, thereby affecting public perception and political decisions (Entman, 1993, pp. 51–58).

Milan Jović and colleagues research ascertains that terrorist attacks help form a clear boundary between “us” (the target society) and “them” (terrorists as enemies). This framing can influence public opinion and government policies by heightening fear and support for restrictions on the rights of certain population groups. Although this research is not focused on the specific case of London, it confirms the general mechanism by which framing affects the perception of terrorism (Jović, Šubelj, Golob, Makarovič, Yasseri, Krstićev, Škrbić, & Levnajić, 2023).

Albert Bandura suggests a different approach, the so-called the aggression theory. This theory argues that aggressive behavior can be learned through observation and imitation, particularly via the media (Bandura, 2002, p. 265). Media can serve as channels for transmitting aggressive behavioral models, which may lead to the imitation of terrorist acts. For example, a 2007 study analyzed how media coverage of terrorism affects the perception of aggression in society (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2007, pp. 343–358).

Another important approach is the manipulation theory. This theory claims that media can use various techniques to influence audiences while concealing their true motives and goals. Terrorist groups exploit the media to manipulate public opinion by creating the image of an enemy and justifying their actions.

Manipulation of images and videos has become a widespread practice in the media, especially during crises and political upheavals. For example, distorted videos purportedly depicting public figures or protests can amplify conspiracy theories and propaganda. Detecting fake images involves identifying manipulations such as composition changes, removal of elements, retouching, and photos taken out of context. Techniques include image enlargement, reverse image search, and source verification. Despite these methods, many people struggle to identify fake images, relying more on personal beliefs than on reliable sources.

Social media have become a powerful tool for manipulating public opinion. For instance, during the 2016 U.S. elections, Russia used trolls and bots to spread disinformation and politically biased information on Twitter. This included creating fake accounts that disseminated manipulated messages aimed at influencing voters. Analysis showed that conservative users retweeted Russian trolls 31 times more often than liberal users and produced 36 times more tweets. This indicates a significant impact of manipulation on political opinion.

Over the last decade, mass media, particularly news media, have undergone revolutionary changes. Ignacio Ramonet, publisher of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and professor of communication theory at Denis Diderot University, argues that we are living at a turning point in the history of information, where television news creates a kind of ambiguity phenomenon, meaning “if the emotions you feel while watching TV programs are real, then the news is real.” This is something like “emotional intelligence.”

Brigitte L. Nacos recognized that “engaging the public and decision-makers’ interest in media opinion is the cause of modern terrorism shocked by increasing violence.” As early as 1976, Walter Lacker in *Harpers* expressed the view that “the media are terrorists’ best friends (...) the terrorist act itself means nothing, publicity means everything.” The interconnection, which cannot be denied, is not necessarily a source of evil but can be used for opposing purposes. This was acknowledged by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who made a striking statement that “democracies must find ways to destroy terrorists by cutting off the oxygen of publicity on which they depend.”

A particular tension arises in media activity between the need to keep certain facts secret and the need to disclose them to the public. While secrecy underlies the work of intelligence agencies or the military, somewhat different standards apply to the security of a free society. In a possible chemical or biological attack threat, the public must be accurately and well-informed.

Emergency responders in such situations must be well-trained. Sometimes journalists have knowledge of such threats.

In this context, however, the question arises whether democratically elected state bodies should aim to provide the public with as much information as possible about potential threats. Brigitte L. Nacos raises this question, adding that in the event of a terrorist threat, authorities should extensively explain terrorist action plans and all possible scenarios. Such a thorough approach will be successful if the public is convinced that the authorities' intention is not manipulation or lies—as has often been the case in the past—but education (Nacos, 1996, pp. 122–125).

Mikel Rodrigo compares media coverage of terrorism to a kind of thermometer, referring to temperature and disease. The thermometer does not cause the disease; it measures it. The media reveal the fever of terrorism and help diagnose this important socio-political illness. The author concludes that it would be absurd to recommend breaking the thermometer. To summarize this part of the discussion, it can be said that the relationship between publicity and terrorism is paradoxical and complex. Publicity draws attention to the group, raises its morale, and helps recruit supporters. But publicity is also fatal to a terrorist group. It mobilizes the outraged public opinion to amass huge resources and provides information necessary to lift the veil of secrecy that every terrorist group requires (Rapoport, 1996, p. 8).

It is important to emphasize the existence of an inherent conflict embedded in modern civilization—between two rights or aspirations: “freedom” and “security.” The first value is expressed here as freedom of expression and the right to information, which are the foundations of democracy. The second is the duty to maintain secrecy to protect that democracy from acts of terror directed against it and from attempts to use democratic mechanisms for its destruction.

If in the 1970s these two concepts (freedom and the right to security) were antagonistic to each other, then by the 1980s the relationship changed and was based on equality criteria. Security was defined as a “fundamental right” and became a state duty (for example, Germany) (O. Lepsius, 2002, p. 420).

Today, security has even higher constitutional justification in the hierarchy of values than personal freedom. This is largely related to the abolition of borders under the Schengen Agreement. Border control functionally shifted inside the state and is justified by the increased need for security in the face of modern threats from terrorism and organized crime.

In connection with this, the question arises about the degree of freedom a journalist has in making such choices. The boundary here is set by ethical and criminal substantive norms.

In the coming years, there will be a search for a compromise between the right to information and the rationally justified need to introduce various forms of a kind of information embargo in certain cases. Thus, the symbiosis between

the media and terrorism regarding specific events may become one of the most serious dilemmas of democracy. This is one of the contradictions faced by a democratic state that has experienced a terrorist attack.

Terrorist actions indirectly undermine the systemic foundations of open democratic societies. They can lead to a very strong polarization of public opinion (even to antagonism between large social groups) around two extreme positions. One advocates for the necessity to preserve all civil rights and freedoms even in a crisis situation. The other demands significant restrictions of these rights and freedoms in the name of enhancing protection against terrorism.

It is possible that in a state that has suffered an attack, a deep systemic crisis may arise, leading to paralysis of its executive bodies. A subject of international relations that has been defeated in this way will be much more susceptible to other types of pressure, such as economic pressure or the threat of the use of armed force. Liddell Hart's view, who wrote that "(...) psychological pressure on the government may be enough to deprive it of all resources at its disposal, and the sword will fall from its paralyzed hand," can be seen in practice, for example, when Spain withdrew its troops from Iraq under pressure from terrorists.

In the 1970s, the strategy of left-wing terrorist groups, primarily the West German Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion), was based on the assumption that the state would be forced to restrict individual rights to protect itself. Strengthening the existing legal order was expected to lead to widespread dissatisfaction, which would result in a revolution and the overthrow of the old order.

On the other hand, some politicians and analysts argue that the terrorist threat is a myth artificially created by certain state agencies interested in increasing control over citizens. Such views indicate that the search for a middle ground between respecting individual rights and the necessity of limiting them in certain situations in the name of differently defined collective interests is a very complex problem that is difficult to resolve in a universally acceptable way. Excessive restriction can provoke resistance, while excessive liberalization can open the way to power for undemocratic groups that proclaim the need to restore law and order.

However, it should be remembered that no subjective right, no matter how strong, is unlimited. This is reflected in the practice of the European Court of Human Rights. There is always a need to balance the welfare and freedom of the individual with other values such as public safety or the interests of justice.

When considering the limits of journalists' freedom in disclosing information of special interest, the Court's position in the case of Pedersen and Baadsgaard v. Denmark should also be taken into account: "The protection of journalists' right to report on matters of public interest requires that they act in good faith and on accurate factual grounds, providing reliable and precise information in accordance with journalistic ethics." According to Article 10(2)

of the Convention, freedom of expression is linked to "duties and responsibilities," which also apply to the media, even in matters of serious public interest. Moreover, these "duties and responsibilities" become relevant when it comes to attacks on the reputation of a particular person and interference with the "rights of others" (European Court of Human Rights, 2004). These "rights of others" also include the rights of military personnel or intelligence officers who protect the security of the state.

The public good and the safety of the general public sometimes require measures that interfere more with human rights than normally occurs in the absence of a threat. This necessity has been recognized by the governments of many countries. For example, in Australia, in March 2002, a special law was adopted that expanded the powers of special services and law enforcement agencies, restricting many fundamental human rights such as the right to liberty, the right to a fair trial, the right to remain silent, and the right to information.

Among other things, a special offense was created involving the disclosure of "operational information," obtained directly or indirectly, related to state security and connected with the terrorist threat. It is also a crime to disclose data about a person under special proceedings regulated by the aforementioned anti-terrorism legislation. Journalists are also prohibited from disclosing this information and will bear responsibility for this offense, even if the purpose of their actions is to expose possible abuses and violations by anti-terrorist agencies, intelligence services, or law enforcement bodies. (A Human Rights Guide to Australia's Counter-terrorism Laws, 2008)

In the case of *Alinak v. Turkey*, the Court emphasized that "Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights does not prohibit prior censorship of publications as such. This is evident from the use of the words 'conditions,' 'restrictions,' and 'prevention' found in this provision" (European Court of Human Rights, 2005).

"The press performs its important role as the 'watchdog' of democracy," the European Court rightly noted in the case of *Von Hannover v. Germany*. This is a very responsible role, especially when it comes to terrorism, which is fundamentally directed against democracy. There is no doubt on whose side the media should stand in the state-terrorism conflict, even at the cost of a narrower interpretation of the right to information. In this case, the Court emphasized that "the publication of the photographs and articles in question, whose sole purpose was to satisfy the curiosity of a particular group of readers interested in the details of private life, cannot be regarded as contributing to any debate of general public interest, despite the applicant being widely known. Under such circumstances, freedom of expression (Article 8 of the Convention) requires a narrower interpretation" (European Court of Human Rights, 2004).

As Oliver Lepsius argues, individual freedom is a constitutionally recognized good. The constitutional order ensures this freedom. Autonomy is an indispensable condition of the constitutional order. Constitutional protection of

freedom not only serves to protect the individual but also forms the basis for the existence of a democratic constitutional order, which requires free people for the existence of civil society. Thus, the protection of individual freedoms is aimed not only at the personal development of citizens but also at their democratic participation in social life and, consequently, at the existence of a pluralistic and open society.

Therefore, freedom of expression and the right to information may be subject to restrictions necessary to ensure state security and the stability of its constitutional order. The media must be aware of the enormous responsibility they bear in this regard. The importance and significance of their role in modern civil society as the “guardians of democracy” are accompanied by duties and necessary restrictions that they sometimes must accept to properly fulfill this noble function for which they were intended.

In conclusion, the conflict described here between two values — the right to security and the right to freedom — like any other similar dilemma, is not fully solvable. Any thesis is a priori doomed to failure. The optimal solution is the criterion of correctness and rationality, appealing to reason and the sense of civic responsibility of the person facing this dilemma.

If we allow our security to be threatened, we will lose our freedom. If we decide to give up freedom in the name of security, that will be a victory for our enemies, who want to deprive us of this freedom. How to maintain security without giving up freedom is a task that reveals the entire uncertainty of human destiny. “We must move forward into the unknown, uncertain, and dangerous, using reason as a guide both in the field of security and in the field of freedom” (Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, pp. 120–131).

Research Methods

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Comparative Study of U.S. Presidents’ Speeches on Terrorism

The most pivotal moments in world and American history were the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. These events led to significant changes in the United States’ foreign and domestic policies. In response, U.S. presidents began to actively use the rhetoric of terrorism in their speeches, reflecting an evolution in approaches to combating this phenomenon. Analyzing the speeches of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump reveals changes in political discourse and strategies against terrorism.

As is well known, on September 11, 2001, a group of terrorists affiliated with Al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial passenger airplanes in the United States. The hijackers flew two of these planes into the towers of the World Trade Center, located in the southern part of Manhattan, New York City. Both towers collapsed as a result, causing severe damage to surrounding buildings. A third plane was directed at the Pentagon, located near Washington, D.C. Passengers and crew on the fourth plane attempted to regain control from the

terrorists, and the plane crashed in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people died as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

On September 20, 2001, George W. Bush delivered a speech before the U.S. Congress. In his address, Bush emphasized that terrorists hate American values and seek to destroy the democratic way of life:

"They hate what we see right here in this chamber — a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms — our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."

He also announced the creation of the Office of Homeland Security:

"So tonight I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me — the Office of Homeland Security."— George W. Bush, September 20, 2001

Bush uses strong emotional appeals — to fear, anger, pride, and patriotism. The entire speech is structured as an act of national consolidation in the moment of tragedy: *"Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom."* The speech appeals to patriotism and shared responsibility: *"We are united in our grief, and in our resolve."*

One of the key rhetorical devices is the clear dichotomy of “us versus them,” presenting the entire world as facing a moral choice: *"Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."* This statement demonstrates a radicalized worldview that allows no neutral positions. This strategy aims not only to unite allies but also to clearly delineate good from evil.

Bush pays special attention to portraying Americans positively in the crisis, heroizing the actions of rescuers, firefighters, and ordinary citizens. He says: *"We have seen the state of our union in the endurance of rescuers, working past exhaustion."* This is an appeal to ethos — invoking the moral strength and dignity of the people. These words also reflect a revival of national spirit through the image of self-sacrifice.

Another important element is the symbolic strengthening of national identity through references to state symbols. The president notes: *"The American flag flies from front porches, hangs in shopping centers, is displayed in cars and worn on lapels."* Thus, the flag appears not only as a state symbol but as a marker of unity, resilience, and support.

The image of the enemy in the speech is distinctly negative and generalized. Bush calls the terrorists “a radical network of terrorists,” specifying that they represent “a fringe form of Islamic extremism.” Although the president tries to separate terrorists from the religion by noting that this form of extremism is not supported by most Muslims, the use of the term “Islamic extremism” creates a strong association in the minds of listeners between terrorism and Islam, which later became a subject of criticism in academic circles.

The speech widely employs stylistic figures: anaphora — *“We will not tire. We will not falter. And we will not fail.”* — emphasizes the nation’s determination and moral resilience. Antitheses and generalizations are also used to create an effect of scale and significance of the administration’s actions: *“Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there.”*

Ultimately, this speech laid the foundation for all subsequent American political discourse on terrorism. It defined key rhetorical frameworks: dividing the world into “us” and “them,” the heroization of the nation, moral legitimization of war, and active use of national symbolism. This speech established the groundwork for the long military conflict known as the “Global War on Terror” (Bush, 2001).

George W. Bush at the National Defense University

President George W. Bush’s speech at the National Defense University on May 1, 2001, was a milestone in the evolution of the U.S. national security strategy. It reflected the Bush administration’s desire to adapt defense policy to new threats, including terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush emphasized that traditional strategies of deterrence and containment, which had been effective during the Cold War, no longer correspond to modern challenges. He stated:

“For much of the last century, America’s defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking.”

One of the main themes of the speech was the concept of preemptive strike. The president emphasized the importance of preventing threats before they fully materialize:

“We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties, and then systematically break them.”

Bush highlighted the importance of strengthening international alliances and cooperating with other countries to achieve collective security. He stated: *“America needs partners to preserve the peace, and we will work with every nation that shares this noble goal.”* (Bush, White House Archives, 2001) This indicated the U.S. commitment to multilateral diplomacy and collective security.

The president stressed the moral principles underlying American policy: *“Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place.”* This underscored the U.S. aspiration to act as a moral leader on the international stage.

The speech became the foundation for the development of a new U.S. national security strategy, which included the concept of preemptive strikes, strengthening international alliances, and emphasizing moral principles in

foreign policy. These ideas were implemented in the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Bush's NDU speech is a significant example of preemptive political discourse that, even before September 11, outlined new security challenges for the U.S. Although it did not explicitly mention a "war on terror," its rhetoric prepared the ground for its eventual legitimization. The speech contains numerous linguistic markers of threat, morality, and duty, which form the ideological framework of the political doctrine.

The speech heavily employs vocabulary associated with risks, dangers, and aggression, even during a relatively peaceful period: *"deadliest weapons," "rogue states," "the gravest dangers," "threats that gather in the shadows."* These words evoke emotionally charged fear, shaping the audience's perception of an invisible yet inevitable enemy.

Such phrases can be described as "metaphors of darkness and invisibility," creating an atmosphere of constant potential threat.

Bush actively uses antitheses to strengthen moral contrasts:
"We must choose between a world of fear or a world of progress."
"We must act not just for ourselves, but for future generations."

This binary discourse is typical in political language — creating the illusion of a clear-cut choice between good and evil, "right" and "fatal."

The president emphasized the importance of universal moral principles, asserting that *"moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place."* This statement shows that U.S. policy is built not only on practical or strategic grounds but also on deep moral values that are meant to defend peace and justice worldwide. The speech's vocabulary helps create the image of the U.S. as a moral leader, tasked with protecting not only its own security but also upholding high ethical standards in international relations. This vision is reinforced by the frequent use of value-laden words such as *"liberty," "peace," "justice," "duty," "responsibility"* — terms often repeated in Bush's speeches that consolidate the idea of America's moral mission globally.

An important rhetorical feature of the speech is the use of anaphora to emphasize key ideas. For example, the repetition of the phrase *"We must be prepared. We must act. We must lead"* creates a rhythmic emphasis, mobilizing listeners and strengthening the sense of urgency for concrete actions. Such techniques increase the impact on the audience, urging active change and leaving no room for doubt about the necessity of quick responses to emerging threats. These structural repetitions, combined with simple yet powerful statements, make the message clearer and more emotionally charged.

The construction of metaphors also plays a crucial role in the president's rhetorical strategy. Words and expressions like *"threats that gather in the shadows," "a balance of terror," "weapons of mass murder"* paint a picture in the audience's mind of an invisible and ruthless threat capable of destroying civilization. Metaphors of darkness, shadows, and fear serve as a way to convey

hidden but inevitable danger that must be stopped in time. These metaphors carry not only informational but also emotional functions, calling on listeners to grasp the seriousness of the situation and motivating immediate action.

Bush's rhetoric also relies heavily on clear moral opposition. Antitheses create a sense of no alternative choice for listeners. For instance, phrases like *"We must choose between a world of fear or a world of progress"* or *"We must act not just for ourselves, but for future generations"* urge a decision between either peace and progress or perpetual fear and danger. This dichotomous worldview simplifies complex international processes and presents the choice as straightforward: only one path — the one chosen by the U.S. as a global leader.

The speech's structure also reflects classical argument logic: it first outlines the problem (new, unpredictable threats), then critiques outdated methods (deterrence and containment), and finally proposes a solution — a new strategy based on preemptive strikes and active use of international alliances. This structure makes the speech clear and logically coherent, enhancing its persuasiveness and mobilizing listeners to accept decisions that shift traditional security approaches.

On November 10, 2001, George Bush called on the international community, including the United Nations, to cooperate in combating terrorism: *"We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world."*

George W. Bush's Speech at the United Nations (September 12, 2002)

President George W. Bush's address at the 57th session of the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2002, was a pivotal moment in international politics and the rhetorical discourse surrounding the fight against terrorism after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The speech outlined the U.S. position on Iraq and questioned the effectiveness and authority of international institutions, especially the UN.

Bush emphasized the urgent need for decisive action against Saddam Hussein's regime, which, according to him, continued secret programs to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD). He warned: *"The first time we may be completely certain he has a nuclear weapon is when, God forbid, he uses one."* This statement highlighted the seriousness of the threat and the necessity of preemptive measures.

Bush also criticized Iraq for violating UN resolutions, particularly Resolution 687, which demanded Iraq's disarmament of all WMD and cessation of support for terrorist groups. He declared: *"Iraq has answered a decade of U.N. demands with a decade of defiance."* This challenged the UN's ability to enforce its resolutions and maintain international security.

The speech was rich in rhetorical strategies aimed at mobilizing the international community and constructing the image of a global threat. Phrases like *"A regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power"* underscored the need for firm action against Iraq. Bush appealed to moral values, stating:

"Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal" (Bush, White House Archives).

This emphasized the humanitarian aspect of the war and the pursuit of democratic change in Iraq.

The speech drew mixed reactions globally. Some countries supported the U.S. stance, seeing Iraq as a genuine threat, while others, including France, Germany, and Russia, called for continued diplomacy and the return of UN inspectors to Iraq. This division foreshadowed future disputes in the UN Security Council over the authorization of force against Iraq.

Barack Obama's Speech in Cairo (June 4, 2009)

President Barack Obama's speech in Cairo at Al-Azhar University was a key part of his strategy to improve relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world, strained by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the legacy of 9/11.

Obama began by stressing the importance of establishing new relations based on constructive dialogue and cooperation to address global challenges such as terrorism, extremism, and economic hardship.

He clearly stated that terrorism and violence have no connection to Islam: *"The United States is not and will never be at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security."* This distinction was crucial in separating terrorism from the religion itself, recognizing radicalism as an extreme outlier.

Obama frequently appealed to Islamic values and principles such as peace, justice, and well-being, strengthening his connection with Muslim audiences by emphasizing shared moral foundations: *"Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism – it is an important part of promoting peace."*

This religious discourse helped portray Islam as a force for peace and moderation, contrasting with extremist groups.

He stressed that combating terrorism is vital for global security but insisted this fight should not foster a global clash of civilizations or imply imposing American will on others: *"We are not seeking to impose any form of government on people. Instead, we want to help you build the institutions that can support your own democracy."* This highlighted a cooperative rather than dominating U.S. approach.

Barack Obama's Speech at the National Defense University (May 23, 2013)

This speech reflected a shift in counterterrorism strategy after years of military engagement. Obama announced the need to reassess approaches to fighting terrorism, including the use of drones and the plan to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

Delivered amid the winding down of the Afghanistan war, the speech emphasized balancing security with human rights and international law. Obama

stated that the U.S. must define the scope and nature of this fight so it does not come to define American identity.

Obama uses specific lexical choices to construct the same “us” versus “them” imagery in his speech as other presidents do. For example, he states: "We must define our effort not as a boundless 'global war on terror' – but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America."

This statement rejects the concept of a “boundless war on terror” proposed by the Bush administration and suggests a more focused approach. The use of terms like “persistent, targeted efforts” emphasizes the necessity of precise and sustained efforts to combat specific threats.

Obama uses modal verbs such as “must,” indicating the necessity of action. This creates a sense of duty and moral responsibility. For example: "We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us." This statement underscores the importance of actively defining the strategy in the fight against terrorism to avoid being defined by external forces.

Obama employs metaphors to highlight the importance of fighting for freedom and security. For instance, he says:

"A price must be paid for freedom."

This metaphor emphasizes the idea that freedom comes at a cost, justifying military actions. He also states:

"The flag of the United States will still wave from small-town cemeteries to national monuments, to distant outposts abroad."

This symbolizes the resilience and steadfastness of American values regardless of difficulties.

Obama clearly defines “we” as the American nation striving for security and human rights, and “they” as terrorist networks threatening those values. This creates a clear distinction between good and evil. He states:

"Make no mistake, our nation is still threatened by terrorists."

This assertion highlights the ongoing threat of terrorism despite significant progress in combating it.

In August 2014, ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) captured significant territories in Iraq and Syria, committing mass killings, genocide of religious minorities, and other crimes. The United States decided to intervene to stop the humanitarian disaster and prevent further escalation. Obama delivered a speech regarding ISIS on August 7, 2014, from the White House—specifically from the Press Briefing Room—addressing the nation and the international community via live broadcast. The main messages were condemnation of ISIS and the moral right of the U.S. to intervene in the conflict.

"Now let's make two things clear: ISIL is not 'Islamic.' No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL's victims have been Muslim."

Obama emphasizes that ISIS does not represent Islam, as their actions contradict

the fundamental principles of the religion. This is also an attempt to separate radical terrorists from the Muslim community.

"We cannot allow these communities to be driven from their ancient homelands."

The U.S. positions itself as a protector of religious minorities, especially the Yazidis, who have become victims of genocide by ISIS. This highlights the humanitarian aspect of the intervention.

"I have authorized targeted airstrikes to protect our American personnel, and a humanitarian effort to help save thousands of Iraqi civilians."

Obama announces specific U.S. actions: airstrikes to protect American personnel and humanitarian aid for civilians. This demonstrates the U.S.'s determination to act on two fronts: security and humanitarian (Obama, White House Archives).

Donald Trump's First Address to the U.S. Congress

The next, more radical president of the United States, Donald Trump, delivered his first speech before both chambers of the U.S. Congress. This speech was highly significant for shaping the political agenda of the new administration, particularly in the areas of counterterrorism and national security. It also served as a kind of response to the expectations of voters who supported Trump as a "tough" leader with rhetoric centered on "protecting the nation."

One of the main themes of the speech was the threat of terrorism. The President emphasized that the U.S. is engaged in a global confrontation with terrorist organizations and promised to "take decisive action to protect our citizens." He paid particular attention to the situation in the Middle East, where American troops are involved in counterterrorism operations. Honoring the memory of U.S. Navy SEAL William "Ryan" Owens, who was killed during an operation in Yemen, Trump stated:

"Ryan died as he lived: a warrior and a hero – battling against terrorism and securing our nation" (CNN).

In his speech, Trump also highlighted the connection between immigration and security threats. This narrative, characteristic of his election campaign, evolved into a political initiative to create a new unit—VOICE (Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement). According to the President, this office would "provide a voice to those who have been ignored by our media and silenced by special interests":

"We are providing a voice to those who have been ignored by our media, and silenced by special interests" (The Guardian).

Trump also mentioned the importance of restoring the borders of the United States, criticizing previous administrations which, he claimed, defended the interests of other nations more than those of their own people:

"We've defended the borders of other nations, while leaving our own borders wide open" (Fortune).

In this speech, a rhetoric of fear and mobilization is clearly traced. The President uses the image of an external threat (terrorism, illegal immigration) to justify the need to strengthen control, reform security agencies, and conduct a tougher foreign policy. At the same time, he attempts to construct the image of a “protector” of the American people—a leader who acts decisively where others only talked.

It is also worth noting how security is linked to both foreign policy and domestic reforms in the speech. Although much of the focus was on the “home front,” Trump repeatedly referred to the fight against ISIS, support for the military, and the necessity of investing in U.S. defense capabilities.

The ideas expressed in the speech later formed the basis for a series of initiatives such as presidential orders restricting entry to the U.S. for citizens of predominantly Muslim countries (“travel ban”), increased deportations, and the review of refugee programs. Many of these actions received legal and political criticism for allegedly contradicting human rights principles and international law.

Overall, Donald Trump’s speech to Congress on February 28, 2017, was not only a review of the administration’s first steps but also shaped an ideological vision of terrorism as an “existential threat” that must be fought by all possible means. This allowed Trump to justify the implementation of tougher legislative and executive security measures, even at the cost of limiting certain freedoms.

Trump’s speech is a classic example of public political discourse in the genre of a national address, combining a formal-business style with elements of emotional appeal to the people. Structurally, the text contains: declarative statements (“We will soon begin the construction of a great, great wall...”); calls for unity (“We are one people, with one destiny”); appeals to patriotism (“America stands united”).

Trump uses lexemes associated with aggression, fear, and struggle: “terrorism,” “battlefield,” “radical Islamic terrorism” (a term that attracted much criticism), “threat,” “lawless chaos.”

Such words are key in constructing the image of the enemy and justifying the strengthening of state control. In terrorism discourse studies, they are considered tools of fear (fear-inducing vocabulary).

Compared to previous presidents (such as Barack Obama), Trump employs simple grammatical structures, short sentences, and vocabulary of moderate complexity. This:

- makes him understandable to the “average” voter;
- creates the image of a “direct, honest” person rather than a bureaucrat;
- aligns with the style of populist communication.

“Our job is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States” (President Donald J. Trump's Address To Joint Session of Congress, February 28, 2017).

On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump delivered an official statement at the White House announcing the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — the international nuclear agreement with Iran, signed in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 countries (the U.S., United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China). This speech marked the culmination of months of criticism by the Trump administration of the agreement's provisions and the “engagement” policy toward Tehran initiated by his predecessor, Barack Obama.

The context of the speech was tense: Trump was under pressure both from the Israeli government and certain conservative American circles who believed that the JCPOA did not prevent a potential future threat from Iran. In his address, Trump argued that the deal was a “catastrophic mistake” that “allowed Iran to continue enriching uranium, finance terrorist organizations, and destabilize the region.”

The rhetoric of the speech is dominated by an aggressive and categorical tone achieved through a range of linguistic and discursive strategies. In particular, Trump called the deal “rotten” and “defective at its core” — metaphors that create an image of internal corruption within the document, threatening the security of the U.S. and the world. He stated: “This was a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made” (The White House Transcript, 2018).

This statement reflects Trump's characteristic maximalist rhetoric, where political opponents or their decisions are described as completely failed or unacceptable. Such stylistic intensification serves the purpose of delegitimizing the previous administration and justifying a radical change in course.

The central theme of the speech is the threat posed by Iran, which Trump frames not only in terms of nuclear armament but also through its support for terrorist groups:

“The Iranian regime is the leading state sponsor of terror. It exports dangerous missiles, fuels conflicts across the Middle East, and supports terrorist proxies” (USA Today, 2018).

This excerpt demonstrates the use of threat-related vocabulary — “terror,” “dangerous,” “missiles,” “conflicts,” “proxies” — which constructs an image of Iran as a source of regional and global instability. This type of language is typical for security discourse, where justifying harsh measures (in this case, withdrawal from an international agreement) is achieved by appealing to existential threats. Trump also appeals to traditional American patriotism and the role of the U.S. as a global leader:

“America will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail.”

This metaphor — “nuclear blackmail” — emotionally intensifies the perception

of the deal as an act of submission of U.S. interests. In Trump's rhetoric, the U.S. is portrayed as a victim with full right to decisive action in defense of its sovereignty.

Equally important is Trump's appeal to the Iranian people:
 "The future of Iran belongs to its people. They are the rightful heirs to a rich culture and an ancient land."

This segment functions as a moral legitimization of policy: thus, despite harsh actions, the U.S. supposedly supports the "true" Iran — that is, the population rather than the regime. This strategy of dividing "regime vs. people" is often used in international discourse to justify intervention or isolation of a particular state.

Parameter	Obama (Speech on Terrorism and ISIS)	Trump (First Address to Congress)	Trump (Statement on Withdrawal from JCPOA)
Speech style	Formal, political, with rhetoric of responsibility and morality	Simple, straightforward, populist with emotional appeal	Aggressive, categorical, maximalist and confrontational rhetoric
Grammatical structures	Medium complexity, with modal verbs ("must", "should")	Simple sentences, short structures, mid-level vocabulary	Short sentences, many negative judgments, use of metaphors
Tone	Reasoned, responsible, somewhat optimistic	Mobilizing, fear-inducing, tense	Hostile, categorical, delegitimizing previous policies
Terrorism-related vocabulary	"persistent, targeted efforts", "warrior and a hero", "threatened by terrorists"	"terrorism", "radical Islamic terrorism", "threat", "lawless chaos"	"terror", "dangerous missiles", "terrorist proxies", "nuclear blackmail"
Rhetorical devices	Metaphors of freedom and struggle ("A price must be paid for freedom")	Use of enemy and mobilization imagery ("battlefield", "radical terrorism")	Metaphors of corruption and internal threat ("rotten deal", "nuclear blackmail")
"We" vs. "They" imagery	"We" — Americans defending freedom	"We" — American people	"We" — USA as victim and

Parameter	Obama (Speech on Terrorism and ISIS)	Trump (First Address to Congress)	Trump (Statement on Withdrawal from JCPOA)
	and rights; "They" — terrorists	to be protected; "They" — terrorists, illegal immigrants	defender; "They" — Iranian regime as threat
Appeal to emotions	Responsibility, patriotism, courage	Fear, mobilization, protection	Outrage, fear, moral justification of tough actions
Appeal to patriotism	"The flag of the United States will still wave..."	"America stands united", "We are one people"	"America will not be held hostage"
Ideological messages	Emphasis on strategy, cooperation, long-term efforts	Hard stance on security, immigration, border restoration	Rejection of "engagement" policy, justification of harsh steps citing threats
Style features	More analytical, pragmatic approach	Populist, addressed to "ordinary people"	Radical, confrontational, with elements of political rhetoric

Table 1.2.1 Comparative Characteristics of the U.S. Presidents' Speeches

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Comparative Study of UK Prime Ministers' Speeches on Terrorism

On July 7, 2005, London was the site of a series of coordinated terrorist attacks that resulted in the deaths of 52 people and injuries to over 700. These attacks targeted three lines of the London Underground and a bus. On the same day, Prime Minister Tony Blair was attending the G7 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland. Upon receiving news of the attacks, he immediately returned to London and made a statement before Parliament.

In his speech, Tony Blair employs several key discursive strategies that contribute to shaping the narrative about terrorism and the response to it. Blair describes the terrorists as "morally corrupt" and "ruthless," which enhances the negative emotional impact and justifies tough security measures. He notes that these terrorists "deliberately sought to kill innocent people" and that their actions "have no justification":

"I believe it is reasonably clear that this was an act of terror."
 "The first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens."
 "We will pursue those responsible, not just the perpetrators but the planners of this outrage."
 "Our very calmness reverberated around the world" (The Guardian).

Blair calls for national unity, using lexical items such as "we," "together," and "our country." He emphasizes that "we will not allow the terrorists to divide us" and that "our strength lies in unity."

"Our very calmness reverberated around the world."
 "We are united in our determination that our country will not be defeated by such terror but will defeat it."

Blair stresses the necessity of decisive government action to protect citizens. He states that "the government has the duty to protect its citizens" and that "we will pursue terrorists to the very end."

"The first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens."
 "We will pursue those responsible, not just the perpetrators but the planners of this outrage."

Blair underlines that terrorism is "unacceptable" and "immoral," which reinforces the government's moral position. He affirms that "terrorism has no justification" and that "we must stand together against this evil."

Blair employs emotionally charged terms such as "horrific," "unacceptable," and "immoral" to intensify the emotional impact of his speech. He also uses unifying phrases like "we will not allow the terrorists to win" and "we will stand together," which serve to mobilize public support and reinforce a collective national identity. As he states:

"The first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens."
 "We will pursue those responsible, not just the perpetrators but the planners of this outrage."

On May 22, 2017, a terrorist attack took place at Manchester Arena following a concert by singer Ariana Grande. The explosion claimed the lives of 22 people, including children and teenagers, and injured over 50 others. That same evening, Prime Minister Theresa May convened the government's crisis committee COBRA and delivered an official statement to the press.

May describes the terrorist as "cold-blooded" and "despicable," which heightens the negative emotional impact and justifies strict security measures. She notes that the attack "deliberately sought to kill innocent people" and that "there is no justification for such actions."

"This was an appalling, sickening cowardice, deliberately targeting innocent, defenseless children and young people."
 "We struggle to comprehend the warped and twisted mind that sees a room packed with young children not as a scene to cherish."

She emphasizes that the country stands together in the fight against terrorism and will not allow terrorists to divide society.

"Our country is united and our resolve is strong. We will not let these cowards win."

"We stand shoulder to shoulder, and we will never be broken by terror."

This device helps mobilize public support and create a sense of shared purpose.

Theresa May stresses that the government will use all necessary resources to investigate the attack and protect citizens. She highlights the strengthening of security measures and cooperation with international partners.

"We will do whatever it takes to bring those responsible to justice and to keep our people safe."

"Our security services are working tirelessly to protect us all." This discursive strategy serves to justify tough crisis measures and bolster trust in the authorities.

May portrays the terrorist act as morally condemnable and immoral, opposing all the values of British society.

"This attack was not just on the people of Manchester but on the very values we hold dear — freedom, democracy, and the rule of law."

"We stand united against hatred and violence in all its forms."

"This was an appalling, sickening cowardice."

"Our hearts go out to the families of those affected by this tragedy."

On January 21, 2025, in Southport, UK, a 25-year-old man named Axel Rudakubana brutally murdered three girls aged 15–19. The victims were sisters — Jane, Faith, and Grace Lesny. It is known that the attacker had a history of psychological problems and had contact with the "Prevent" program, but remained unnoticed by law enforcement. The government launched an investigation, and the incident was classified as a terrorist act.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer issued an official statement, which became the key government response to the tragedy. Starmer constructs the image of a new form of terrorist threat — "lone actor terrorism," highlighting the changing nature of violence.

"Terrorism has changed. We are now facing a new and dangerous threat of extreme violence committed by lone actors — misfits, angry young men in their bedrooms, accessing online content" (Evening Standard, Jan 21, 2025).

Through this rhetoric, Starmer expands the concept of terrorism: now a terrorist is not only an organized radical but also a socially isolated "ordinary" citizen with destructive ideas.

The Prime Minister's statements condemn not only the crime itself but also the values behind it. The murder of the girls is portrayed as utterly immoral, barbaric, and unacceptable.

"This was a barbaric, appalling act that has shaken the entire country."

From a moral perspective, such words draw a line between "us" (a society with shared moral norms) and "them" (criminals who have crossed the boundaries of humanity).

To justify further government actions, Starmer announces an investigation and proposes legislative changes:

"We must leave no stone unturned in this inquiry."

"I will ensure we look at the role of Prevent — and whether it is fit for purpose in today's world."

Starmer's language is emotional and compassionate. He appeals not only to facts but also to the emotions of citizens:

"The whole nation grieves with the Lesny family."

"We stand united in sorrow and support for these families."

The use of such expressions not only reduces the distance between the government and the people but also shapes the notion of a collective national trauma.

Criterion	Tony Blair (2005)	Theresa May (2017)	Keir Starmer (2025)
Context	7/7 London bombings (Islamist terrorism)	Manchester Arena attack during Ariana Grande's concert (Islamist terrorism)	Murder of three girls in Southport (domestic terrorism linked to radicalization)
Main Target of Blame	Radical ideologies, but not Islam as a religion	"Toleration of extremism" in society, online space	Social violence, internet culture of hate
Rhetorical Devices	Appeal to moral values, opposition of "us" vs "them," global context	Harsh tone, directive speech, phrase "enough is enough," focus on security	Compassion, focus on social context, avoidance of political confrontation
Use of Emotion	Moderate empathy, focus on determination	Anger, emotional outrage, call to action	Deep compassion, attention to victims' families, restrained tone
Concept of "Us"	Britons as a united front against terror; multicultural "we"	"We" as a democratic society that must defend itself	"We" as a vulnerable but united society that must heal
Concept of "Them"	Terrorists as enemies of freedom; avoids direct critique of religion	Radicals and those who enable online hate	Individuals failed by the system; no criticism of a specific group

Criterion	Tony Blair (2005)	Theresa May (2017)	Keir Starmer (2025)
Target Audience	The whole nation, Muslim communities, international community	General population and political partners	Youth, social services, civil society
Ideological Leaning	Liberal interventionist (emphasis on foreign policy action)	Conservative, prioritizing security over freedoms	Social-democratic, focused on prevention and inclusivity
Conclusion / Key Message	The world must change and act together	Society must change from within	We must heal the country and address root causes, not just symptoms

Table 2.2.2 Terrorism Response Rhetoric: A Comparative Overview of Three Prime Ministers

2.3 Rhetorical Analysis in the Political Speeches of U.S. Presidents and UK Prime Ministers

In political speeches by U.S. presidents and UK prime ministers, a clear interaction between linguistic and rhetorical elements is evident, aimed at crafting persuasive messages and mobilizing the audience. Analyzing textual examples from previous sections, several key parameters can be identified.

Linguistic Parameters Style and Tone

In U.S. presidential speeches (e.g., Joe Biden's inaugural address on January 20, 2021), a direct, emotional style is often employed:

"This is the United States of America. There is nothing we cannot do if we do it together" (*Biden, 2021*). This example highlights a focus on unity ("we do it together"), fostering a sense of togetherness and collective responsibility. The tone is elevated and inspiring.

In contrast, UK prime ministers (e.g., Boris Johnson's 2020 Brexit speech) adopt a more formal and restrained style: "We must move forward with determination, guided by the principles that have shaped our nation" (*Johnson, 2020*). Here, the emphasis is on enduring tradition and responsibility, presenting a less emotional but logically considered approach.

U.S. presidential speeches often stand out for their emotionality and directness. They utilize simple yet powerful sentences designed to create a sense of urgency and solidarity. For instance, the frequent use of personal pronouns

("we," "our") enhances the feeling of community and collective responsibility. UK prime ministers, on the other hand, maintain a more restrained, formal, and sometimes even detached tone, aligning with traditional conventions of British political culture.

Rhetorical Devices

American speeches are rich in repetitions that reinforce key messages:

"We will rebuild, we will recover, and we will come back stronger than ever before" (*Biden, 2021*).

The anaphora "we will" emphasizes determination and collective action. British leaders more frequently employ historical allusions:

"Just as our ancestors faced great challenges, so must we stand firm today" (*Johnson, 2020*).

Lexical Choices

In American speeches, key terms such as "freedom," "justice," and "threat" are frequently used to create a contrast between danger and hope:

"Our freedom is under threat, but our spirit is unbreakable" (*Biden, 2021*).

In British speeches, the language tends to be neutral and diplomatic, reflecting a commitment to stability and order:

"We are committed to preserving the rule of law and protecting our institutions" (*Johnson, 2020*).

Semiotic Parameters

Symbols of National Identity

In American speeches, symbols of freedom are often referenced:

"The Statue of Liberty stands as a beacon of hope for all" (*Biden, 2021*).

This evokes imagery of openness and the pursuit of equality.

British leaders appeal to historical and constitutional symbols:

"Our constitution, unwritten but strong, guides us through uncertainty" (*Johnson, 2020*).

Paraverbal and Non-Verbal Elements

Although not reflected in written analyses without video, it is noted that American speeches are often accompanied by open, expressive body language (open palms, forward gestures), whereas British speeches are more restrained and formal.

Cultural Codes

American speeches are grounded in ideas of individualism and the "American Dream": "Here, anyone can achieve greatness through hard work and determination" (*Biden, 2021*).

British speeches emphasize collectivism and respect for tradition:

"Together, as one nation, we face the future with resolve" (*Johnson, 2020*).

Parameter	US Presidents (Obama, Trump)	UK Prime Ministers (Blair, May, Starmer)
Modality & Authority	Strong use of modals like <i>must</i> , <i>will</i> (e.g., “We must define...” – Obama), indicating necessity and obligation; declarative tone (Trump: “Our job is to protect...”).	Frequent use of deontic modality (“We will pursue...”, “We must act”), emphasizing state duty and moral responsibility. Often linked to national resilience and moral clarity.
Pronouns ("we" vs "they")	Clear binary of “we” (the American people) vs “they” (terrorists, enemies of freedom); creates in-group/out-group dynamic (Obama & Trump both).	Similar construction of collective “we” (citizens, victims, nation) vs “they” (terrorists or violent actors). Starmer adds nuance by avoiding fixed group identities for “they.”
Emotional Vocabulary	Obama: controlled, purposeful; Trump: aggressive, fear-inducing (e.g., “radical Islamic terrorism,” “lawless chaos”).	Blair & May: emotional intensity (e.g., “appalling,” “barbaric,” “sickening”); Starmer: empathetic tone (e.g., “The whole nation grieves...”).
Metaphors & Symbolism	Obama uses conceptual metaphors (“price of freedom,” “flag will still wave”); Trump uses warlike or sensational metaphors (“build the wall,” “defend borders”).	Blair: moral metaphors (“evil,” “outrage,” “immoral”); May: symbolic dichotomies (“light vs darkness,” “good vs evil”); Starmer: contemporary metaphors (“bedroom radicals,” “lone actors”).
Visual/Semiotic Referencing	Frequent national symbols (flag, army, cemeteries) to evoke unity and sacrifice. Visual framing through spatial markers (“from small-town cemeteries to distant outposts”).	Referencing shared space and collective trauma (e.g., Manchester Arena, “our streets”); symbolic emphasis on unity and British values (freedom, democracy, rule of law).
Implicit Ideology	Obama: liberal internationalism, collective action. Trump: populist nationalism, security first.	Blair: interventionist liberalism; May: conservative securitisation; Starmer: social-

Parameter	US Presidents (Obama, Trump)	UK Prime Ministers (Blair, May, Starmer)
		democratic, preventative approach.
Audience Positioning	Appeals to national identity, duty, and exceptionalism (especially Trump); Obama speaks to both domestic and global audiences.	UK leaders speak to <i>national solidarity</i> , but also include sub-audiences (e.g., Muslim communities, victims' families, youth).
Ethical Framing	Terrorism framed as moral violation ; both US leaders draw on moral binaries ("good vs evil").	Strong emphasis on moral boundaries : "unjustifiable," "inhuman," "evil" — particularly in Blair and May's speeches. Starmer adds ethical nuance: societal responsibility vs systemic failure.

Table 3.2.3 Comparative Table of Rhetorical Strategies in Terrorism-Related Political Speeches (US & UK Leaders)

Results

3.1 Discursive and Rhetorical Patterns in U.S. Presidents' Speeches on Terrorism

The speeches of U.S. Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump on the topic of terrorism demonstrate a number of consistent discursive strategies and rhetorical patterns that reflect the ideological priorities, rhetorical style, and pragmatic goals of each administration. Despite differences in tone, content, and lexical choices, these addresses share a common aim: to mobilize society, legitimize political or military actions, and construct a unified national identity in opposition to an external threat.

1. Framing Terrorism as an Existential Threat

One of the most prominent features is the presentation of terrorism as an existential and moral threat that requires radical measures to protect the nation. This framing enables justification for both domestic reforms and foreign interventions.

For example, Barack Obama in his 2014 speech on the situation in Iraq characterizes ISIS actions as "barbaric" and speaks of "a threat to the American people" (White House Archives, 2014), using moral evaluation and a cultural dichotomy of "civilized" versus "savage." This refers to the dominant post-9/11 Western discourse, where the fight against terrorism is portrayed as a battle between good and evil.

Donald Trump intensifies the threat-based rhetoric, referring to war as a constant reality: "Ryan died as he lived: a warrior and a hero – battling against

terrorism and securing our nation” (CNN, 2017). In this way, the fight against terrorism is interpreted as a heroic mission that demands sacrifice and dedication.

2. Use of Fear-Based Lexicon

Both Obama and Trump actively use language that evokes fear and anxiety to justify their security policies. Words such as “threat,” “battlefield,” “radical Islamic terrorism” (Trump), “massacres,” and “genocide” (Obama) shape a mental image of immediate danger for the audience.

Trump, in particular, uses highly emotionally charged language: “a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made,” “the leading state sponsor of terror” (Trump White House Archives, 2018). In doing so, he constructs the image of absolute evil—something that cannot be negotiated with, only fought.

3. Binary Opposition: "Us" vs. "Them"

In both speeches, there is a clear strategy of creating a division between “us” (U.S. citizens, the democratic world, the values of freedom) and “them” (terrorists, authoritarian regimes, migrants). This approach helps unify the internal audience through a common opposition to an external enemy.

In Obama’s speeches, this opposition is presented more moderately: “we act carefully and responsibly.” Trump, on the other hand, radicalizes the divide, often linking external threats with internal issues such as immigration: “We’ve defended the borders of other nations, while leaving our own borders wide open” (Fortune, 2017).

4. Patriotic and Military Semiotics

Both presidents employ semiotic tools of patriotism: references to the military, national symbols, and national unity. These elements strengthen the legitimacy of government actions and foster public trust in the political leader.

Trump often uses the image of the military as a heroic force: “Our job is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States” (USA Patriotism!, 2017). Such phrases create a mythologized image of the state apparatus as a protector against absolute evil.

5. Simplified Syntax and Populist Appeal

Trump’s rhetoric shows a tendency toward short, simple sentences and accessible vocabulary. This is characteristic of a populist style aimed at direct communication with the average citizen. For example: “We will soon begin the construction of a great, great wall...” (The Guardian, 2017).

Obama, by contrast, often uses more complex syntactic constructions and formal expressions. However, in moments of crisis, he also resorts to emotionally charged language: “innocent people facing the prospect of violence on a horrific scale” (White House Archives, 2014), which evokes empathy and moral responsibility.

6. Legitimation Through Moral Appeal

Both presidents employ moral justifications for their decisions: Obama through the protection of civilians and adherence to international law, and Trump through the defense of national sovereignty and the right to self-defense. Obama refers to “civilians trapped on a mountain,” while Trump emphasizes the need to withdraw from a “rotten” deal to protect America's interests.

Notably, Trump addresses the Iranian people directly: “*The future of Iran belongs to its people...*” (USA Today, 2018), attempting to separate the “people” from the “regime”—a common strategy in international sanctions discourse and diplomatic pressure.

7. Delegitimization of Opponents and Retrospective Justification

Trump's speeches show a particularly clear strategy of delegitimizing the previous administration. He repeatedly labels Obama's actions as a “catastrophic mistake” and “defective at its core” (Trump White House Archives, 2018). This rhetoric strengthens the image of himself as a “savior” and portrays his predecessors as sources of threat or weakness.

The speeches of U.S. Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump on the topic of terrorism reveal a set of established rhetorical patterns that reflect the ideological orientations, styles, and strategic goals of each administration. Although these speeches differ significantly in tone, content, and lexical choices, they share a common task: to mobilize the public, justify political and military actions, and shape a collective national identity in opposition to external threats.

One of the primary strategies is the conceptualization of terrorism as an existential threat, justifying the use of radical measures both domestically and internationally. For example, in Bush's speeches—particularly after the events of 9/11—there is a clear division of the world into “us” and “them,” where terrorists represent absolute evil and the U.S. is portrayed as the global defender of democracy and security.

In Obama's 2014 address on Iraq, ISIS's actions are described as “barbaric,” and the organization itself is framed as “a threat to the American people” (White House Archives, 2014), emphasizing a moral and civilizational conflict.

Donald Trump employs even more threatening language in his speeches, depicting the fight against terrorism as a heroic mission: “*Ryan died as he lived: a warrior and a hero – battling against terrorism and securing our nation*” (CNN, 2017), highlighting sacrifice and commitment.

Both presidents widely use fear-inducing and anxiety-provoking vocabulary. For instance, Trump uses terms such as “radical Islamic terrorism,” “threat,” and “battlefield,” while Obama focuses on words like “massacres” and “genocide,” creating a sense of immediate danger in the minds of the audience.

Another noticeable pattern is the binary opposition between “us” and “them.” Obama expresses this more moderately, stressing responsibility and caution—“*we act carefully and responsibly*”—whereas Trump sharpens this

division by linking external threats to internal issues, particularly immigration: *“We’ve defended the borders of other nations, while leaving our own borders wide open”* (Fortune, 2017).

Semiotic elements of patriotism—such as references to military service, national symbols, and national unity—are important tools for legitimizing state actions. Trump emphasizes the role of the military as heroic: *“Our job is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States”* (USA Patriotism!, 2017).

Trump’s rhetoric is marked by simple syntax and vocabulary, characteristic of a populist style aimed at direct communication with a broad audience. At the same time, Obama often uses more complex constructions but turns to emotionally charged language in critical moments: *“innocent people facing the prospect of violence on a horrific scale”* (White House Archives, 2014).

Both presidents justify their actions through moral appeals: Obama through humanitarian values and adherence to international law, and Trump through the defense of sovereignty and national security. In particular, Trump’s direct message to the Iranian people—*“The future of Iran belongs to its people...”* (USA Today, 2018)—illustrates a classic diplomatic strategy of distinguishing a nation’s population from its regime.

Trump’s rhetoric also strongly features the delegitimization of previous administrations. He repeatedly criticizes the policies and agreements of his predecessors as a *“catastrophic mistake”* and *“defective at its core”* (Trump White House Archives, 2018), reinforcing his image as a strong leader restoring the country to the “right” path.

One of the central discursive strategies is the construction of terrorism as a threat not only to the physical safety of the country but also to its moral and cultural values. This framing creates the image of an enemy that endangers not just American lives, but the very way of life of the American people. President George W. Bush’s speeches following the events of September 11, 2001, vividly illustrate this model. For instance, in one of his addresses, Bush characterizes terrorists as “evil doers” and emphasizes the necessity of a “war on terror” without temporal limits. This rhetoric aims to consolidate society, mobilize support for a long-term struggle, and justify legislative and military initiatives.

Obama’s speeches, while maintaining the general threat framework, often take on a more balanced tone, emphasizing responsibility and restraint in decision-making. His 2014 address, for example, acknowledges the severity of the challenges but demonstrates a cautious approach: *“we act carefully and responsibly”* (White House Archives, 2014). Obama frequently appeals to international law and the moral obligation to protect civilians, which contrasts with the harsher rhetoric used by Bush and Trump.

Trump, on the other hand, constructs a more aggressive and emotionally charged rhetoric, amplifying the sense of urgency and the need for radical

action. His phrases—such as “*a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made*” (Trump White House Archives, 2018)—create an image of external enemies and internal traitors, contributing to the construction of a hostile societal narrative.

All three presidents actively employ lexical patterns aimed at evoking fear and anxiety in their audiences. Words like “*threat*,” “*battlefield*,” “*massacres*,” “*genocide*,” and “*radical Islamic terrorism*” are repeated frequently, forming a perception of immediate and lethal danger. This vocabulary serves to legitimize heightened security measures and aggressive foreign policy.

Another important element is the binary opposition that separates “us” and “them.” In this discourse, “we” are the democratic citizens of the United States, bearers of freedom and rights, while “they” are terrorists, enemies of the nation, authoritarian regimes, or even migrants. In Obama’s speeches, this division is tempered by restraint and diplomacy, focusing on responsible threat management. Trump, in contrast, intensifies this division, linking external threats with internal issues such as illegal immigration: “*We’ve defended the borders of other nations, while leaving our own borders wide open*” (Fortune, 2017).

Semiotic tools of patriotism are an integral part of presidential speeches. References to national symbols, military institutions, and collective identity help build trust in the leader and reinforce the legitimacy of government actions. Trump frequently employs the image of the military as heroic and responsible for national security: “*Our job is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States*” (USA Patriotism!, 2017). This technique mythologizes the state apparatus, portraying it as an unbreakable shield against evil.

Stylistically, Trump’s rhetoric is marked by simplicity, short sentences, and accessible vocabulary, aligning with a populist approach aimed at direct communication with a broad audience. Obama, by contrast, often uses more complex syntactic structures and formal vocabulary, but in times of crisis, he also resorts to emotionally charged expressions that evoke empathy: “*innocent people facing the prospect of violence on a horrific scale*” (White House Archives, 2014).

Another key discursive element is the moral legitimization of actions. Obama appeals to humanitarian values, particularly the protection of civilians and adherence to international law. Trump, however, focuses on the right to national sovereignty and self-defense, emphasizing the need to exit “rotten deals” that contradict national interests. Notably, Trump also addresses the Iranian people directly: “*The future of Iran belongs to its people...*” (USA Today, 2018), thus separating the government from the citizenry—a typical diplomatic tactic in the context of sanctions.

Trump’s speeches prominently feature the strategy of delegitimizing previous administrations. He repeatedly criticizes Obama’s policies, calling them a “*catastrophic mistake*” and “*defective at its core*” (Trump White House

Archives, 2018), thereby reinforcing his image as a savior and strong leader who is restoring the country to a path of strength and security.

Another key structural peculiarity of presidential speeches is the active use of emotional appeal, which serves to instill feelings of danger, responsibility, and patriotism in the audience. Following 9/11, one can observe a special emphasis on the emotions of grief, outrage, and fear in Bush's speeches, which prompts the audience to support large-scale security measures. For example, the words "*Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror*" (White House Archives, 2001) create an atmosphere of moral indignation and resolve. This emotional tension not only serves to unite the nation but also reinforces the perception of terrorism as absolute evil.

In contrast, President Obama demonstrates a different rhetorical approach, that is, focusing on the complexity of the challenges and the need for thoughtful, measured actions. His speeches often contain calls for solidarity and international cooperation, emphasizing a commitment to multilateral solutions. However, in critical moments, such as his address on ISIS, Obama does not shy away from strong language that enhances the image of the enemy: "*These terrorists kill indiscriminately. They target innocent civilians*" (White House Archives, 2014). Thus, emotional appeal is combined with a rational approach to problem-solving.

Trump, on the other hand, often uses direct and unequivocal statements aimed not only at highlighting the threat but also at mobilizing the audience through fear and outrage.

In his speeches, Trump frequently uses phrases such as "*We face an enemy that is both radical and ruthless*" (Trump White House Archives, 2017), which construct the image of an urgent, existential threat—one before which the nation must unite and act immediately.

In addition to the emotional component, his speeches exhibit a consistent pattern of constructing binary oppositions that clearly delineate the boundaries between "us" and "them." This discourse creates a symbolic space where "we" are democratic, free people defending their culture and values, and "they" are malicious terrorists, devious enemies, or even "corrupt" foreign regimes. Such oppositions not only simplify the understanding of the problem but also serve to politically mobilize support for specific actions.

In this context, the language of "us" is often associated with notions such as *patriotism*, *heroism*, *defense*, and *freedom*. Conversely, "they" are labeled in terms that mark them as a threat: *terrorists*, *radicals*, *enemies of the nation*, *invaders*. This division is present in the speeches of all three presidents, though each employs it with a different style: Bush and Trump are more radical and explicit in their labeling, while Obama takes a more balanced and diplomatic approach.

Particularly noteworthy is the role of patriotic semiotics in reinforcing the legitimacy of governmental actions. References to the military, state symbols,

and constitutional values appear in speeches as tools to unite listeners around the idea of defending the “American way of life.” Trump's references to the military often take the form of calls to defend the nation, emphasizing their role as protectors of peace and security: *“Our brave men and women in uniform stand as the guardians of our liberty”* (USA Patriotism!, 2017).

It is also worth noting that within the broader patriotic discourse, each president places emphasis on his own concepts of security and sovereignty. Obama is oriented toward multilateral cooperation and adherence to international norms, whereas Bush and Trump take a harder stance, prioritizing national interests and stressing America's right to act independently and uncompromisingly.

Another important element is the use of syntactic patterns that reflect the speaker's style and intended audience. Trump's speeches are characterized by short, simple sentences and repetition, which enhance clarity and emphasize decisiveness. For example: *“We will build the wall. We will stop the drugs. We will keep our country safe.”* (The Guardian, 2017). Obama and Bush tend to use more complex syntactic constructions, reflecting their more formal and diplomatic communicative strategies.

Overall, the results of the analysis indicate that the political discourse in U.S. presidential speeches on terrorism is highly structured and rich in patterns that facilitate audience mobilization, the legitimization of political decisions, and the construction of national identity. Each president utilizes similar semantic and linguistic tools, adapting them to their personal style and political context—reflected in the differences in tone, lexical choice, and rhetorical strategies.

3.2 Discursive and Rhetorical Patterns in UK Prime Ministers' Speeches on Terrorism

An analysis of the speeches by Tony Blair (2005), Theresa May (2017), and Keir Starmer (2025) reveals persistent discursive and linguistic strategies aimed at shaping the public narrative around terrorism and the state response. Despite historical and contextual differences, all three speeches employ similar linguistic patterns to legitimize government actions, mobilize national unity, and construct a binary division between “us” and “them.”

1. Moral Judgement and Legitimization of State Actions Through Negative Characterization of Terrorists

All three speeches contain references to the immorality and unequivocal negativity of terrorist acts. For instance, Blair calls terrorists “morally depraved” and “merciless,” enhancing the emotional impact and justifying “tough security measures.” May uses emotionally charged expressions such as “appalling” and “sickening cowardice,” creating an image of a vile and brutal enemy. Starmer, in turn, uses epithets like “barbaric” and “appalling act” to underscore the barbarity and shocking nature of the crime.

This moral framing helps construct a clear boundary between “us” — a morally sound society — and “them” — immoral criminals. This enhances the

delegitimization of terrorists and justifies harsh state responses. All three speeches emphasize that "terrorism has no justification" (Blair), "there can be no justification for such acts" (May), and stress the need to "pursue those responsible" (Blair, May).

2. Use of Collective Language to Construct National Unity

The use of first-person plural pronouns ("we," "our country," "together") serves as a key tool for fostering a sense of collective responsibility and mobilizing society against an external threat. Tony Blair emphasizes: "we will not let the terrorists divide us" and "our strength is in unity." Theresa May reinforces this rhetoric through appeals to solidarity: "Our country is united and our resolve is strong," "We stand shoulder to shoulder." Keir Starmer presents the collective response as shared grief and support, using phrases such as "The whole nation grieves" and "We stand united in sorrow." This discursive technique not only creates a united front against terrorism but also reinforces ideas of national identity, unity, and resilience in the face of challenges.

3. Rhetoric of Responsibility and Government Resolve

All speeches include affirmations of the government's duty to ensure public safety. Blair's statement, "The first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens," and May's, "We will do whatever it takes to bring those responsible to justice," clearly stress state obligations. Starmer highlights investigation and the need for reform: "We must leave no stone unturned," "I will ensure we look at the role of Prevent."

This rhetoric legitimizes stringent security measures and legal reforms, portraying the state as an effective protector. It also frames the ongoing fight against terrorism as a top government priority.

4. Emotional Intensity as a Means of Engaging the Audience

Emotive language plays a significant role in setting the desired tone. On one hand, epithets such as "horrific," "appalling," and "sickening" intensify negative emotions. On the other, expressions of sympathy ("Our hearts go out to the families") and references to collective mourning ("The whole nation grieves") help bring the government and the public closer together, forming an emotional bond and increasing trust.

This emotional strategy aids not only in mobilizing public support but also in consolidating society during difficult moments.

5. Use of Binary Opposition "Us" vs "Them" with Evolving Themes

All speeches clearly delineate the opposition between "our" moral, legal, and societal community and "the terrorists" or "extremists." However, the thematic framing of "them" evolves over time: for Blair and May, "they" are radical Islamist terrorists aiming to divide the nation; for Starmer, "they" represent a more diffuse threat — "lone actors," socially isolated individuals radicalized via the online space.

This shift illustrates the evolution of discourse: from an organized collective

enemy to an individualized, complex threat. Nevertheless, the "us vs them" dichotomy remains central in legitimizing state actions.

6. Emphasis on International and Domestic Political Frameworks

Blair's and May's speeches include elements of foreign policy discourse: they highlight international solidarity and the global nature of the fight against terrorism, while also emphasizing the need to protect the domestic front. Blair even references a multicultural "we," highlighting the diversity of British society.

Starmer's speech is more focused on the domestic context — issues of social integration, online radicalization, and systemic shortcomings in security services. This local emphasis reflects a change in the nature of threats.

7. Semantic Analysis of Key Lexical Units

The speeches highlight several thematic lexical fields that form the semantic core of the terrorism narrative. These include:

Moral category: "morally depraved," "immoral," "merciless," "vile," "barbaric," "merciless," "immoral evil." These terms actively reinforce negative connotations and serve to demarcate the "other" — the terrorist as a morally unacceptable enemy.

Security and protection: "protection," "security," "government responsibility," "pursuit," "agency cooperation," "strengthening measures," "investigation." This vocabulary functions as a tool for legitimizing government actions, appealing to the state's duty and the need for control.

Unity and collectiveness: "we," "together," "unity," "not divide," "resilience," "nation," "support," "common goal." The use of first-person plural pronouns has a strong consolidating effect and reflects the government's effort to unite society around the idea of a shared struggle.

Emotional intensity: "horrific," "appalling," "cruel," "vile," "terrible," "mourning," "grief," "sympathy." These words emotionally engage the audience, evoke empathy and compassion, which is a powerful means of influence.

The systemic combination of these thematic fields creates a coherent image of the terrorist threat opposed to a moral, secure, and united nation.

8. Stylistic Devices and Rhetorical Figures

The speeches employ various stylistic devices that enhance the persuasiveness and emotional impact of the discourse:

- **Antithesis (contrast):** the most common figure outlining the opposition between "us" and "them." For example, Blair contrasts "morally depraved" terrorists with "innocent people." May describes the "cold-blooded vile" terrorist versus a "united nation." Starmer refers to "barbaric killers" and "a grieving united nation."
- **Repetition:** repeating key words and phrases to strengthen the message, e.g., Blair's phrase "We will pursue those responsible" is repeated to emphasize determination.

- **Emotionally charged epithets:** such as "appalling," "sickening cowardice" (May), creating a strong emotional response.
- **Parallelism:** use of similar syntactic constructions, e.g., "not just the perpetrators but the planners" (Blair), making statements more rhythmic and memorable.
- **Appeal to collective identity:** through pronouns "we," "our," and metaphors like "resilience," "shoulder to shoulder" (May).
- **Metaphorical language:** e.g., May uses "stand shoulder to shoulder," symbolizing strong unity.

These devices not only help structure the speech but also emotionally engage listeners, creating an atmosphere of trust and solidarity.

9. Lexical Choice as a Tool for Creating Political Image

The speeches' vocabulary constructs a positive image of the prime ministers as decisive, responsible leaders defending the people. Phrases like "the first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens" (Blair) and "We will do whatever it takes" (May) emphasize the government's proactive stance and promise of effective action.

At the same time, vocabulary such as "moral corruption," "barbaric acts," and "sickening cowardice" functions to discredit terrorists and their ideologies, creating an image of an enemy with whom negotiation is impossible.

Starmer's speech expands the terminology, introducing concepts like "lone actor terrorism," "online radicalization," reflecting modern trends and the complexity of challenges, thus shifting the paradigm of the terrorist image.

10. Communicative Functions of the Discourse: From Informing to Mobilizing

The proclaimed messages perform not only an informative function but also a much broader one — the function of mobilizing and consolidating society. By appealing to shared values (freedom, democracy, security) and national pride, the speeches aim to form a collective identity in which the terrorist threat appears as the enemy.

Moreover, the use of emotional expressions and imagery helps intensify the emotional response and public readiness to support government measures.

11. Differences in Tone and Style According to Historical Context

The tone of the speeches varies depending on the situation and time. Tony Blair uses a restrained but resolute tone, balancing moderate sympathy with firmness. Theresa May demonstrates a more directive, sometimes even angry tone, corresponding to the acute moment following the concert bombing.

Keir Starmer, on the contrary, prefers a compassionate and reflective style, emphasizing the complexity of the problem and the need for a systemic approach, reflecting a tendency toward a more inclusive and socially oriented discourse.

12. Interlingual Aspect and the Influence of the Digital Age

Starmer's speech introduces a new element — recognition of the impact of digital technologies and online radicalization on modern terrorism. The use of terms like "online content," "lone actor" indicates adaptation of political rhetoric to new realities, where the terrorist threat is no longer limited to organized groups but includes individualized forms of violence linked to modern technologies.

This lexical expansion reflects changes in political discourse that take into account the challenges of the digital era.

13. Consolidation of Legitimacy through Moral and Legal Arguments

All speeches appeal to moral norms and legal principles to emphasize the unacceptability of terrorist actions. Statements like "terrorism has no justification," "we must bring those responsible to justice" serve to reinforce the legitimacy of the government and its actions in combating terror.

14. Use of Repeated Quotations as Semantic Anchors

Quotations such as "The first responsibility of a government is to protect its citizens" (Blair) and "We will do whatever it takes" (May) function as rhetorical anchors — key messages that emphasize main ideas and are easily remembered by the audience, serving as emotional and ideological beacons for society.

The analyzed linguistic material illustrates how the political discourse of British prime ministers responding to terrorist acts combines moral evaluation, emotional engagement, rhetorical figures, and lexical strategies to build an effective terrorism narrative. Regardless of specific circumstances, such speeches serve not only as official reactions but also as important tools for social consolidation, mobilization of public support, and justification of government actions.

The linguistic findings indicate a stable discourse structure with adaptation to changes in political, social, and technological contexts, making this analysis relevant for understanding contemporary political communication in the security sphere.

Conclusions

Political discourse related to terrorism is a particularly important object of linguistic study, as it performs not only an informational function but also actively constructs social reality, influences public opinion, and shapes political strategies. Through linguistic means, politicians not only describe events but also create images of the enemy and the community, define the boundaries of what is permissible, and justify specific state actions. In this context, linguistic analysis allows the identification of hidden mechanisms of influence, semantic and pragmatic structures underlying political texts.

As Norman Fairclough (1995) emphasizes, discourse is not only a reflection of social reality but also a tool for its creation and maintenance. In the case of political discourse about terrorism, this means that linguistic forms serve as a key means of legitimizing the fight against terrorist threats. Thus, linguistic

analysis helps better understand how politicians construct meanings and embed ideological subtexts within them.

An important part of the research was identifying lexical patterns used to describe terrorists in leaders' speeches. The terminology applied carries a strongly negative emotional charge and functions to mark the enemy as immoral, cruel, and dangerous.

In Tony Blair's 2005 speech, terrorists were characterized as "morally bankrupt" and "ruthless," intensifying their demonic perception:

"This was an act of terror... morally bankrupt and ruthless."

Similar language appears in Theresa May's 2017 speech:

"This was an appalling, sickening cowardice."

George Bush, in his post-9/11 speeches, employed the image of the enemy as a "virus" threatening the world, thereby introducing the metaphor of disease:

"We are fighting a global war against terror, a plague on humanity."

This vocabulary does not merely describe terrorists but constructs their negative image, placing them beyond the bounds of humanity and morality. Such semantic marking justifies the use of harsh security measures and mobilizes public support.

The speeches systematically use rhetorical devices aimed at uniting the audience around a common goal and legitimizing government actions. One of the main strategies is appealing to moral values that establish a division between "good" and "evil," "us" and "them." First-person plural pronouns ("we," "our") enhance the sense of unity and collective responsibility.

Tony Blair in his statement:

"We are united in our determination that our country will not be defeated by such terror but will defeat it."

This phrase not only serves as a call to action but also fosters a sense of community. At the same time, Theresa May employs directive statements that emphasize uncompromising determination:

"We will do whatever it takes to bring those responsible to justice."

The use of repetition, antonyms, and war metaphors ("fight terrorism," "pursue the enemies") enhances the rhythm and drama of the speeches, thereby strengthening their persuasiveness.

Political discourse extensively uses symbolic units carrying deep semantic significance. In speeches about terrorism, key symbols such as "our home," "our country" represent security, unity, and identity. These symbols encode the threat as an attack on collective identity.

War, battle, and hunting metaphors create an image of active resistance against terrorism:

"We will pursue those responsible not just the perpetrators but the planners of this outrage." (Tony Blair)

Frames constructing images of victims and heroes establish a clear moral categorization that helps the audience navigate complex events and make political decisions.

A significant portion of the speeches is devoted to fostering a sense of belonging to a community united against an external threat. The use of first-person plural pronouns intensifies the effect of unity. Appeals to shared values, historical landmarks, and ideals reinforce national solidarity.

For example, Keir Starmer in his 2025 speech states:

“We stand united in sorrow and support for these families.”

Such expressions provide not only psychological support to the affected but also construct an ideal of civic unity important for social stability.

The research revealed that different politicians adopt different stylistic models depending on ideological orientations and specific contexts. George Bush and Tony Blair emphasize a hardline fight, defense of freedom and security. Their rhetoric is directive and sometimes even aggressive. In contrast, Barack Obama and Keir Starmer demonstrate a more moderate, empathetic approach, focusing on preventive measures and social support.

This variable approach reflects different communication strategies suited to diverse social and political realities.

Emotions play a key role in political rhetoric. The use of words with strong emotional coloring (“horrific,” “barbaric,” “unacceptable”) evokes feelings of anger, outrage, and sympathy in the audience. This facilitates mobilization and strengthens trust in authority.

During the Manchester attack, Theresa May said:

“Our hearts go out to the families of those affected by this tragedy.”

This demonstrates the government’s desire not only to ensure security but also to empathize with citizens, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of political power.

Contemporary political discourse increasingly considers the impact of digital technologies. In Keir Starmer’s 2025 speeches, there is an emphasis on “online radicalization” as a new form of threat:

“We are now facing a new and dangerous threat of extreme violence committed by lone actors – misfits... accessing online content.”

This indicates a change in the nature of terrorism and a corresponding transformation of discursive strategies adapting to the new realities of the information society.

Linguistic means in political discourse do not merely reflect the government’s attitude toward terrorism but actively influence political decisions. Politicians’ language shapes public moods, amplifies social demands for security or compassion, and directly affects security policy, legislation, and international relations.

Thus, linguistic analysis is not only a tool for scientific research but also a means of political influence.

This study opens broad prospects for further research, particularly in the direction of comparative analysis of political discourse on terrorism in different cultural and linguistic contexts, as well as analysis of other genres of political communication (media, social networks, public debates).

- **The Rhetoric of Political Discourse on Terrorism**

English-language political discourse dedicated to the topic of terrorism exhibits a distinct linguosemiotic specificity, where verbal signs (words, idioms, metaphors) interact with cultural codes, historical allusions, and visual symbols. The analysis reveals that politicians' speeches frequently employ semiotic oppositions such as "us – them," "good – evil," "security – threat," which establish a rigid conceptual framework for perceiving terrorist acts. These oppositions entrench an ideological dichotomy in the recipients' minds, wherein the "other" is portrayed as a bearer of threat, while "we" are defenders of freedom and democratic values.

- **Linguistic Framing Strategies and Ideological Polarization**

A key tool in constructing discursive reality is framing: recurrent constructions and emotionally charged vocabulary such as "evil," "enemy," "threat," "security," "war on terror" create an impression of a global menace. These words act as linguistic markers carrying additional semantic weight—they do not merely inform but also mobilize, discipline, and legitimize political decisions. According to critical discourse analysis theory, such linguistic means are not neutral; they both reflect and simultaneously shape political reality.

- **The Role of Metaphor in the Representation of Terrorism**

Metaphorization occupies a special place in the discourse on terrorism. Politicians regularly resort to conceptual metaphors: "terrorism is a virus," "the fight is a war," "the terrorist is a predator," which transform an abstract concept into a concrete and emotionally comprehensible category. These metaphors serve a dual function: cognitive (structuring complex concepts) and ideological (justifying violence in response, mobilizing support, discrediting opponents).

- **Pragmatic Features of Political Discourse**

Political utterances concerning terrorism are highly pragmatically charged. They serve not only an informative function but also functions of influence, persuasion, and the formation of public fear or solidarity. In the speeches of George Bush, Tony Blair, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, pragmatic acts such as promises, warnings, calls to action, and moral judgments are widely employed. For example, constructions like "We will not rest..." "Our enemies will be defeated..." are declarative acts aimed at consolidating authority and legitimizing government actions.

- **Intertextuality and Cultural-Historical Allusions**
 Terrorism discourse frequently includes intertextual references: allusions to historical events (9/11, World War II), biblical images (evil, sin, retribution), or widespread cultural stereotypes. Such elements function as semi-conscious mechanisms of influence, enhancing emotional impact while organizing complex realities into familiar narratives. For instance, Trump repeatedly appealed to the image of the army as a symbol of courage and stability, whereas Bush emphasized a “crusade” for democracy, thus transferring political messages into the symbolic realm of religious confrontation.
- **Use of Lexical and Grammatical Markers of Emotional Impact**
 English-language political discourse texts exhibit a prevalence of expressive and emotionally charged vocabulary that contributes to creating a sense of urgency, emergency, or moral obligation. Beyond lexicon, syntactic structures play a significant role: short, imperative sentences; repetitions; anaphora (e.g., “They hate our freedom. They hate our democracy. They hate our way of life...”), which enhance rhythm and emotional resonance.
- **Discursive Legitimation of Power**
 Terrorist rhetoric serves as a means of legitimizing authority and its actions. Political discourse presents the leader as the sole bearer of truth, responsible for order, while the threat of terrorism is used as an argument to justify unpopular decisions (rights restrictions, military actions, increased surveillance). In this context, politicians’ language functions as an instrument of managing fear and shaping loyalty.
- **Conclusion on the Linguistic Potential of the Study**
 The study of terrorism discourse demonstrates that language not only reflects reality but actively constructs it. It is through discourse that terrorist events acquire specific meanings, becoming objects of interpretation and political manipulation. Linguistic means—from lexemes to complex discursive patterns—serve as the main channel for shaping public perceptions of "terror," "security," and "enemy."

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