

تأطير إيران النووية: تحليل استعاري بسيط لخطاب بايدن (2021–2023)

Framing a Nuclear Iran: A Simple Metaphor Analysis of Biden's Discourse (2021–2023)

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الملخص:

يُعد تحليل الخطاب السياسي وسيلة مهمة لتشكيل الفهم المشترك للصراعات العالمية. ومن أقوى العناصر اللغوية التي يستخدمها القادة السياسيون الاستعارة. فالاستعارات تساعد المتحدثين على تقديم القضايا السياسية غير المحدودة بطرق أسهل وأكثر حساسية من الناحية العاطفية. يقدم هذا البحث الاستعارات التي يستخدمها الرئيس الأمريكي جو بايدن عندما يتحدث عن إيران وبرنامجها النووي خلال الفترة بين 2021 و2023. تم تطبيق كلتا النظريتين في هذا البحث: نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية، وعناصر تحليل الخطاب النقدي، لإظهار كيف تقدم اللغة إيران باعتبارها شيطانًا. جُمعت البيانات من النصوص الرسمية للبيت الأبيض والتصريحات العامة التي أدلى بها جو بايدن. ويكشف تحليل البيانات أن خطابات جو بايدن تستخدم غالبًا استعارات تنتمي إلى مجالات: الوصاية، والاحتواء، ومنع الصراع، والدفاع. تقدم هذه التصريحات إيران كتهديد محتمل، بينما تظهر في الوقت نفسه الولايات المتحدة كحارس للأمن العالمي. تظهر النتائج أن الاستعارة تؤدي دورًا مهمًا في التواصل والمزاج الاستراتيجي السياسي. تساهم البيانات في البحث في اللسانيات السياسية من خلال إظهار كيفية تأثير الاستعارة في الروايات السياسية الدولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب السياسي، تحليل الاستعارة، التأمين، خطابات بايدن، تحليل الخطاب النقدي.

Abstract:

PDA consider as an important way to form common thoughtful of universal conflicts. One of the most powerful linguistic elements applied by political leaders is metaphor. Metaphors helps speakers to show unlimited political issues in easier and sensitively significant techniques. This research presents the metaphors used by US president Joe Biden when he talks about Iran and its nuclear program among 2021 and 2023. Both theories are applied in this research conceptual metaphor theory and elements of CDA to show how language presents Iran as a devil. Facts were gathered from official White House transcripts and public provided by Joe Biden.

The data analysis presents that Joe Biden's conferences often use metaphors belong to guardianship, *containment*, *conflict prevention*, and *defense*. These utterances present Iran as a possible danger while at the same time showing US as a guardian of universal security. The results show that metaphor do an important role in communication and political strategic mood. The data donates to research on political linguistics by presenting how metaphor effects international political narratives.

keywords: Political Discourse, Metaphor Analysis, Securitization, Biden Speeches, Critical Discourse Analysis.

1. Introduction:

The idea of being strong is how to use language in communication. Political leaders depend on language not only to notify the community but also to form understandings of political occasions and international relationships. Through particular linguistic picks, political actors can impact how spectators recognize complex political problems and assess political choices. Among several linguistic approaches used in PD, metaphor is one of the most appropriate tools for showing intangible political notions in an accessible way.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson developed conceptual metaphor theory. Metaphors are not just stylistic ornaments but essential cognitive instruments that build human imagery (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). By mapping mental thoughts onto recognizable experiences, metaphors help individuals comprehend complex issues such as economics, politics, and international struggle.

In PD, metaphor plays a vital role in forming public opinion. Political leaders regularly use metaphorical language to build precise clarifications of international occasions. As Jonathan Charteris-Black said, political metaphors are commonly used to show political positions in techniques that maintain individual ideological views and strategic situations (Charteris-Black, 2005).

These days, Iran's nuclear program is one of the most debated issues. The U.S. and a number of international performers have stated worries about the prospective security effects of Iran's nuclear accomplishments. Within this political context, American leaders have constantly addressed the issue in public discourses and official speeches. These speeches frequently contain metaphorical vocabularies that show the problem in terms of urgency, danger, or conflict.

This research focuses on the discourse of Biden's prime minister about Iran's nuclear program during the period between 2021 and 2023. The research studies how metaphorical language is used in Joe Biden's speeches to build specific images of Iran and its nuclear program.

The research assumes a DA view stimulated by the effort of Van Dijk, who highlights the relationship among ideology, discourse structures, and social context (van Dijk, 1998). By combining metaphor analysis with DA,

the research aims to discover how linguistic varieties contribute to building international political issues.

The main objective of this study is to categorize the metaphors used in Joe Biden's discourse about Iran's nuclear program and to study how these metaphors contribute to framing Iran as a security threat. Through the analysis of certain speech extracts, the research aims to determine how metaphor plays a strategic communicative instrument in PD.

2. Literature Review

Research on PD has gradually taken the role of language in forming public awareness of political occasions and international relations. Specialists in DA and political linguistics claim that political language is not normal; rather, it shows an important role in building social and political actualities. One of the most extensively studied linguistic sorts in political discourse is metaphor. Metaphors allow political actors to shorten complex political problems and link them in techniques that are easier for the public to comprehend.

The theoretical establishment for modern metaphor study was recognized by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their dominant work *Metaphors We Live By*. They maintain that metaphor is not only a rhetorical method used in language but an essential cognitive instrument through which people theorize abstract thoughts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

According to their model, persons recognize complex notions by mapping them onto more familiar practices. For example, political conflict may be defined using metaphors related to competition, danger, or war. These metaphorical arrangements affect how people understand political circumstances and events.

In addition to metaphor researches, discourse analysis has delivered significant tools for investigating the relationship between language and power. Teun A. van Dijk is mostly influential in this field. Van Dijk (1998) says that discourse reveals and replicates ideological structures in people. PD thus shows a critical role in determining public understanding of political policies, actors, and international relations. By studying linguistic structures such as metaphors, lexical choices, and framing strategies, academics can reveal how political narratives are fabricated and communicated.

Likewise, Norman Fairclough says that discourse should be studied within its broader social and political setting. According to Fairclough (1995), discourse analysis must include not only the documentary features of language but also the social processes and power relations that influence communication. This viewpoint highlights the position of examining political discourses within their specific historical and political situations.

An additional theoretical viewpoint relevant to this research is securitization theory, established by specialists associated with the Copenhagen School of security studies, mainly Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. According to securitization theory, political leaders can convert political problems into matters of security by showing them as dangers that need crucial action (Buzan et al., 1998).

By means of speech acts and persuasion techniques, political actors construct specific issues as existential threats requiring the application of extraordinary political power. Within this context, metaphor functions as an instrumental part of the securitization process. Metaphors can also put warnings in people's minds, especially if they refer to danger, dispute, or urgency, and as a result strengthen the idea that this or that issue represents a big threat. Metaphors help build a story of threat when leaders invoke terms like "time bomb," "red line," or "storm" — to galvanize public opinion in support of tougher political action.

In earlier works, researchers examined metaphor across several international applications, such as election campaigns, international conflicts, and diplomatic communication. For instance, Charteris-Black (2005) investigated metaphor in political speeches of the leaders of the US and the UK, showing how metaphor complements persuasive political discourse. Also, Musolff (2016) investigated metaphor scenarios in European political discourse and elaborated on the influence of metaphoric narratives on political discussions.

Despite the growing body of research on metaphor in political discourse, relatively few studies have examined metaphor use in contemporary discussions of Iran's nuclear program, particularly within the discourse of recent American administrations. While the political issue itself has been widely discussed in international relations literature, the linguistic strategies used to frame the issue have received less attention in discourse analysis research.

2.2 Problem of the Study

This paper explores how Joe Biden uses metaphors to construct Iran as a potential threat in the realm of international security. The research aspires to highlight how political language operates as an ideological appeal that persuades the audience through culturally dominant interpretations of geopolitical issues by critically analyzing such figurative constructions.

2.3 Aim of the Study

The study aims to:

- Identify metaphors used in Biden's speeches about Iran.
- Show how metaphors create a security frame.
- Explain how political context affects the meaning of metaphors.

2.4 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions relating to how the metaphor of Iran in the political discourse of Joe Biden is marked:

1. Which metaphorical types and conceptual frames are dominant in Biden's brand of discourse over Iran's nuclear program?
2. How do they cast Iran as a geopolitical and strategic menace, thereby securitizing it through metaphorical constructions?
3. To what degree does the political and diplomatic environment render these metaphors interpretable in certain ways, communicatively propelling them to do and be this or that, ideologically?

2.5 Significance of the Study

This paper is significant because it helps the reader recognize how language impacts political communication. It also delivers a simple model for analyzing political discourse.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

- Just focuses on Biden's speeches from 2021 to 2023.
- Just examines metaphors associated to Iran's nuclear issue.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study combines approaches from metaphor theory, discourse analysis, and securitization theory to examine the use of metaphorical language in political discourse surrounding Iran nuclear program. The theoretical model is thus based on three influential academic traditions: conceptual metaphor theory, critical discourse analysis and securitization theory.

3.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The major linguistic basis of this research is conceptual metaphor theory. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson developed the theory, proposing that metaphor is a fundamental structure of human thought, not just expressions in language. As their theory suggests, people comprehend abstract ideas by equating them with more tangible and familiar sensations (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Complex political issues, for instance, are often conceptualized metaphorically as dangers, conflicts, or journeys. How audiences comprehend the political environments that "red line," "time bomb," or "storm" describe is inherently influenced by those very words. This process is referred to as mapping between a source domain and a target domain in conceptual metaphor theory. The source domain is a concept that is used to construct the other known as the target domain, which represents the new abstract concept we want to describe.

More recently, in international relations and security issues, metaphors have often structured political discourse. Since political symbols come to mind when thinking of politics, a symbolic representation gives the audience an idea of how you want them to interpret that change; metaphorical imagery can influence how people view their leaders.

3.2 Metaphor in Political Discourse

Likewise, as Andreas Musolff shows us, metaphors in politics typically build into larger narrative frameworks termed metaphor scenarios (Musolff, 2016). They allow us to furnish audiences with bite-sized fables regarding what drives political activity: the clash of arms, the wedge or loyalty of identity, or cataclysmic breakdown. In international political theorizing,

states are frequently metaphorically depicted as players in struggle or competition and even fighting to defend their capacities for action.

Metaphorical constructions like this can have a dramatic impact on public support for international contexts, such as perceptions of security dangers, the willingness to accept diplomatic agreements, and the readiness to participate in overseas military action.

3.3 Discourse and Ideology

Discourse and ideology have a central relationship in discourse analysis research. Van Dijk (1998) argues that discourse is one of the most important processes in social and political ideology reproduction. The ideological perspectives showing these depictions of political actors and events, often in soliloquy with the underlying messages, have deeply entrenched roots in political speech.

Here, we can analyze political discourse as the way those different linguistic structures lead to meaning being constructed and negotiated in certain social contexts. One important part of this process comes from metaphor — the way that political actors are cast as dangers, friends, or victims.

Likewise, regarding the experiences of a context in discourse, Norman Fairclough asserts that "discourse is social" (Fairclough, 1995). Hence, political statements must be read in light of the social and political conditions under which they are made.

3.4 Securitization Theory

This study also employs securitization theory, developed by scholars in the Copenhagen School of security studies, such as Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. Securitization theory argues that politicians can move ordinary political issues into the remit of security by framing them as existential threats (Buzan et al., 1998).

This process is generally achieved through speech acts whereby political actors label an issue as threatening or urgent. When an issue is framed as a matter of security, governments may even use it to justify extraordinary measures.

Metaphor can aid in the process of securitization. Through using rhetorical devices depicting political scenarios in terms of hazards,

emergencies, and warfare, political authorities reiterate the problem as threatening a situation.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research assumes a qualitative research intention based on discourse analysis. Qualitative devices are suitable for observing the meanings and tasks of language in political statements. The research focuses specifically on metaphorical terminologies used in political discourse and their role in framing Iran's nuclear program.

4.2 Data Collection

The data for this research is a collection of selected speeches and public statements delivered by Joe Biden between 2021-2023. All presidential statements were found in publicly available transcripts from the White House public archives.

The extracts were then isolated to statements that deal directly with the issue of Iran's nuclear program and statements on U.S. policy regarding Iran itself. Only fragments that contained metaphorical expressions were selected for the analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis took place in several steps.

In the first place, metaphorical expressions regarding Iran's nuclear program were searched in speeches. Special emphasis was placed on metaphors that relate to danger, immediacy, borders and shields.

Second, each metaphorical expression was coded with a type of metaphor based on conceptual metaphor theory.

Third, the selected metaphors were studied in relation to their political and discursive environment (van Dijk, 1998). The second step focused on analyzing the role of metaphors in the presentation of Iran as a potential threat to security.

Lastly, the metaphorical language was examined in relation to how it completes security and highlights urgency, danger or conflict regarding Iran's nuclear developments.

4.4 Analytical Model

The analytical model the study employs analyzes each excerpt in terms of four central elements:

Text: the original statement which contains a metaphor

Metaphor Type — the conceptual metaphor identified in the statement

48 Context — the political context in which the statement was made

Securitization Effect (explaining how this metaphor also helps to frame a narrative of security)

This framework enables the research to address systematically the mechanisms of metaphorical language in political discourse.

5. Data Analysis

This section focuses on some of the statements made by Joe Biden about Iran's nuclear program and regional security. This analysis examines the use of metaphorical expressions that position Iran's nuclear behavior in stories of danger, urgency, and global accountability.

Metaphor interpretation is guided by the principles set forth in conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The discourse interpretation also relies on the contributions of Teun A. van Dijk with his studies on language, ideology, and political functions (van Dijk, 1998).

Extract A

Text: His administration, as well as Israel's, has opposed what Iran is proposing and called it "not in any way helpful".

Context: During a White House press briefing on Iran's decision to raise the levels of uranium enrichment amid negotiations over the nuclear agreement, the president made this statement.

Interpretation: The statement characterized Iran's nuclear activity as all but a canard to any diplomatic negotiations. While the language may seem

diplomatic, calling Iranian actions "not helpful" of course means they have a negative impact on international stability.

Extract B

Text: "The one thing that is a fact: Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch".

Context: This was during a meeting at the White House in June 2021 with Israeli president Reuven Rivlin.

Interpretation: The phrase 'on my watch' reminds us that the president, as it were, is standing guard. It casts the United States as the arbiter who governs nonproliferation.

Securitization Effect: It turns the metaphor into a perception that keeping Iran from getting nuclear weapons is a top national security priority.

Extract 7

Text: "We are intent on preventing any path that could lead Iran to a nuclear weapon".

Metaphor Type: PATH metaphor.

Context: Such statements pop up in diplomatic efforts to curb nuclear proliferation.

Interpretation: They view the nuclear development trajectory as a road. So, in the illustration, you have Iran progressing down this highway toward a nuclear weapon, and you have the United States trying to beat back or close that road.

Securitization Effect: The metaphor suggests that positioning nuclear development as a menacing road is essential, and certainly, a roadblock must be placed at the gates to thwart Iran's advances even further.

Extract 8

Text: "Assure Iran knows, heedless of its nuclear exploits, the world is watching".

Metaphor Type: SURVEILLANCE metaphor.

Context: This sort of statement is often heard in matters of compliance, international monitoring, and nuclear inspections.

Interpretation: This is a metaphor of the watching world — which invokes the idea of an outside international community that exists to observe Iran's behavior. This picture gives an image of accountability and scrutiny.

Securitization Effect: The metaphor underscores the notion that while Iran should be allowed to enjoy nuclear amenities, closer international scrutiny is necessary since its nuclear actions could indeed threaten global peace.

Extract 9

Text: "We will not let Iran develop the capability to produce nuclear weapons".

Metaphor Type: POSITION metaphor.

Context: Political discourse involving strategic advantage.

Interpretation: A foothold means a stable position or base. With respect to this, Iran's advancing nuclear program is viewed as an incremental strategic gain.

Securitization Effect: This metaphor posits nuclear capability as an existential threat that must be preemptively prevented, lest it become entrenched.

Extract 10

Text: "A nuclear Iran would be a destabilizing factor for the Middle East".

Metaphor Type: SHADOW metaphor.

Context: The shadow metaphor is prevalent in political discourse, representing risks or uncertainty.

Interpretation: The metaphor is equally compelling — it paints Iran as a looming shadow of nuclear capability over regional stability. The fact that it is a shadow suggests an afterlife of uncertainty, fear, and permanence.

Securitization Effect: This metaphor bolsters the belief that Iran's nuclear advancement would ultimately threaten the entire region.

Extract 11

Text: "We are still trying to hold the door open for diplomacy".

Metaphor Type: DOOR metaphor.

Context: Such metaphors about opening or closing doors — national or diplomatic opportunities — are common.

Interpretation: This metaphor presents diplomacy as a door, communicating with the other side. Also, the door to diplomatic solutions remains open.

Securitization Effect: The metaphor highlights diplomacy while still giving the sense of urgency of a closing door in the case that talks fail.

Extract 12

Text: "The international community has to be very clear with no nuclear proliferation".

Metaphor Type: LINE metaphor.

Context: We routinely hear this metaphor invoked when discussing international norms and legal limits.

Interpretation: This metaphor views global rules as a discrete line dividing the world between right and wrong conduct.

Securitization Effect: The metaphor implies that nuclear proliferation is crossing a line – and as such, lends credibility to preemptive action against that threat.

Analytical Summary

The long analysis of the data finds out some recurrent conceptual metaphors appearing in Biden's discourse:

Danger and Crisis Metaphors

Examples: shadow, fire, danger

These metaphors frame Iran's nuclear program as a dangerous nuisance or ticking time bomb.

Boundary Metaphors

Examples: red line, threshold, line

Boundary metaphors conceptualize international norms as boundaries which Iran must not transgress.

Movement Metaphors

Examples: path, move closer

These metaphors conceptualize nuclear development as a path to a perilous ending.

Protection Metaphors

Examples: shield, protect allies These resonate with the US as a provider of security for regional stability.

These repetitive metaphorical structures contribute to a larger narrative in which Iran's nuclear energy program is framed as a threat to the international order. Replacing allusion with the specifics of a political predicament transmutes a complicated, real-world question into an easy narrative about peril, boundaries, and defense.

This is an ideological and political position towards discourse analysis. The discourse may therefore be structured to have a more positive framing of political events, and this is not without effects on public representation (van Dijk, 1998). Here, the metaphors used to address Iran's nuclear program enable higher urgency of response on the international calendar, ultimately allowing collusion.

6. Discussion

This research examines the role of metaphor in the construction of narratives associated with Iran's nuclear development initiative as featured in political communication. The findings show that Joe Biden tends to underline markers and visuals in his nuclear talks about Iran using the frameworks of danger, movement, border, and protection. These metaphorical patterns assist in scaffolding the case as an international security challenge.

The recurrence of the storm, shadow, and fire metaphors in context with danger suggests a more common wonder in political theory — tending to use images combining crisis and instability for geopolitical issues. Such perception happens because political metaphors are not only a conceptual vehicle but also an effective carrier of discursive story (Charteris-Black, 2005). This way, these metaphors urge audiences to see Iran's nuclear development in the articulation of a threat-and-obligation re-framing.

It also indicates how frequently boundary metaphors are used, such as red line or threshold and line in the sand. These provide international norms

and treaties with metaphorical walls that cannot be crossed. We have what is called a conceptual metaphor theory by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which indicates that vagueness (and/or borders) in metaphysical terms are mapped to movement (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When it comes to nuclear policy, these metaphors denounce what Iran is doing as being more akin to closing (or speeding) toward internationally recognized borders.

Another area where movement metaphors are frequent is in the discourse of those we analyzed. Approaches like creeping, establishing a beachhead, or charting a course treat nuclear development as the sequential stages of reaching an end point. This metaphorical construction lends itself to the view of Iran's nuclear program as a slow walk down a course that can ultimately lead somewhere dangerous. Similar patterns have also been noted in political discourse studies, where international conflicts are often construed as metaphors of movement or competition (Musolff, 2016).

One other notable pattern identified during the analysis is the use of protection metaphors, which conceptually frame the United States as a surety for regional stability and its allies. The descriptions of defense of allies or partners form a story about the United States acting as a guardian against possible aggressiveness. This framing has been part of legitimizing various political or diplomatic actions to offset perceived threats.

From a discourse analytic approach, these metaphors mirror more macro narratives of ideological and political opinion. Political discourse reproduces ideological opinions and points of view that are aligned as to what position social and political actors take (van Dijk, 1998). In this sense, the use of figurative language helps to frame Iran as a possible threat to world order whilst also portraying America as a bastion of stability in international relations.

The results of this study correlate with the basics of the securitization theory written by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. Securitization theory states that political leaders can assert a political issue as security through means such as presenting it as an existential threat requiring emergency measures (Buzan et al., 1998). The metaphors found in Biden's discourse facilitate this process by underlining risk, urgency, and consequences of nuclear proliferation.

7. Conclusion

This study is about metaphor in Joe Biden's political discourse on the Iranian nuclear program from 2021 to 2023. It analyzes selected presidential metaphorical patterns for characterizing Iran's nuclear activities.

We see how Biden frequently invokes grounds of risk, limits in movement, and safety. The metaphors range from describing Iran's nuclear program as a spectre and a danger to world or regional peace. These create a story where the issue is deemed serious and politically relevant.

The thesis further demonstrates the critical role metaphor plays in the process of securitization. The framing of Iranian nuclear activities with metaphors of crisis or peril embeds a sense of urgency regarding the importance of this problem and pressures audiences to understand it in terms of national security (Starr, 2009: 249).

On a grander scale, this research underscores the role of language in diplomacy. Political leaders turn to metaphorical framing for simplification and shaping perceptions about international events.

This study expands on previous work on discourse by showing how metaphor is a critical tool in political communication. It also offers a basic analytical model that students and researchers investigating metaphor in political discourse might find helpful.

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Appendix A

Dataset: Biden’s Iran-Related Discourse (White House Transcripts)

Corpus of Selected Biden Statements on Iran (2021–2023)

No.	Date	Speech/Event	Authentic Quotation	Discursive Frame / Metaphor Potential
1	28 June 2021	Meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (White House)	“What I can say to you is that Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch.”	Security containment metaphor (“on my watch”)
2	28 June 2021	Meeting with Rivlin	“Today we’re going to be discussing a broad range of challenges, including Iran.”	Agenda-setting discourse
3	2021 (Oval Office remarks)	Meeting with Israeli leadership	“My commitment to Israel is ironclad.”	Metaphor of solidity/strength
4	2021	Same meeting	“This includes an unwavering commitment to your self-defense.”	Defense framing
5	2022	Campaign speech, California	“Don’t worry, we’re gonna free Iran — they’re going to free themselves soon.”	Liberation metaphor
6	2021	Foreign policy remarks	“The United States remains determined to prevent Iran from	Prevention frame

			acquiring nuclear weapons.”	
7	2023	Press interaction about regional conflict	“We will make sure we respond with our allies.”	Alliance discourse
8	Various diplomatic remarks	Iran nuclear negotiations context	“We’ll see whether Iran is serious about returning to talks.”	Negotiation / testing sincerity frame