

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Threats in Political Discourse: The Case of Former U.S. President Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address

Nyaz Saleh Hamad¹, Kurdistan Rafiq Moheddin²
English Department, Faculty of Arts, Soran University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31918/twejer.2692.01>

Published: 5/4/2026

Abstract

In times of national crisis, political leaders often use language strategically to construct threats and foster unity, yet the mechanisms through which this is achieved in political discourse remain underexplored. This study aims to analyze how former U.S. President Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address constructs threat through language. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the study analyzes the speech at textual, discursive, and social levels to uncover the linguistic and ideological strategies employed. Using a qualitative research method, the speech is treated as a primary data source and examined through close reading to identify patterns of meaning and rhetorical function. Thus, The findings reveal that emotionally charged language, historical references, and inclusive pronouns are used to heighten the sense of urgency, foster collective identity, and position unity as both moral and practical necessity. Moreover, the speech critiques political polarization and misinformation as threats to democratic values, thereby framing leadership and empathy as essential tools for national recovery. This analysis highlights the instrumental role of political discourse in shaping public consciousness, constructing social realities, and mobilizing action during moments of upheaval.

Keyword: Critical Discourse Analysis, Threat Construction, Joe Biden, Ideology, National Crisis

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Threats in Political Discourse: The Case of Former U.S. President Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address

Nyaz Saleh Hamad

English Department, Faculty of Arts, Soran University

niazsalh96@gmail.com

Asst. Prof. Dr. Kurdistan Rafiq Moheddin

English Department, Faculty of Arts, Soran University

kurdistan.mhyadin@soran.edu.iq

1.1. Introduction

In times of political uncertainty and national crisis, political leaders often rely on discourse not only to communicate policies but also to shape collective perceptions of reality. A central function of such discourse is the construction of threats, both internal and external, that can mobilize public sentiment, legitimize authority, and foster national unity.

Political discourse, as a powerful tool in shaping public opinion, policy-making, and national identity, often employs various strategies to influence and persuade. One such strategy is the use of "Threats," which can manifest overtly or subtly in political speeches (Wodak, 2015). Thus, political leaders incorporate threats into popular discourse to frame them within the political context and to advance their established agendas.

Political speeches, particularly inaugural addresses, are key moments in which leaders articulate their vision while responding to the socio-political context they inherit. In the United States, the inauguration of President Joe Biden in January 2021 marked a pivotal transition amid a backdrop of deep political polarization, a global pandemic, and the aftermath of the Capitol riots. His

address, unlike the often confrontational rhetoric of his predecessor, deals with healing and democracy, while subtly constructing threats that endanger these ideals (Biden, 2021; Peters, 2021).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the framework developed by Norman Fairclough (1992), offers a valuable lens

to analyze how such political texts construct meaning. By examining language at the textual, discursive, and social levels, CDA reveals how ideologies are embedded in discourse and how power is exercised through linguistic choices. While considerable scholarship has examined threat discourse in political contexts, often focusing on conflict, terrorism, or immigration (Demata, 2021; Jackson, 2004; Tsui, 2015), less attention has been paid to how threats are constructed in speeches intended to reconcile and unify. Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address presents a compelling case for such analysis, as it simultaneously acknowledges political division aiming to rebuild trust in democratic institutions.

This study, using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, aims to examine how Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address constructs threats within a speech intended to promote reconciliation and unity. Specifically, it investigates the linguistic strategies and discourse structures Biden employs to frame certain issues or groups as existential dangers requiring urgent collective action. The study also explores how these constructions of threat reflect broader socio-political power relations and ideological positions, while analyzing how appeals to civic identity, shared democratic values, and national morality function as counter-strategies to legitimize his administration's agenda and strengthen trust in democratic institutions. By addressing these dimensions, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of language interwoven with inclusive rhetoric in contemporary political discourse.

It is hypothesized that while inaugural speeches are typically intended to promote reconciliation and unity, Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address constructs threats through specific linguistic strategies and discourse structures that both acknowledge political division and position the defense of democratic institutions as an urgent, collective imperative. These constructions of threat are expected to reflect broader socio-political power relations and ideological commitments aimed at legitimizing his administration's agenda and reinforcing civic identity.

Thus, this paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Joe Biden employ threats in his political discourse?
2. What linguistic strategies and discourse structures are used to construct these threats? and how do these threats reflect broader socio-political power relations and ideological positions?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an interdisciplinary approach that conceptualizes language as a social practice deeply embedded in relations of power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA offers analytical tools to uncover how discourse contributes to the construction of social reality and the legitimation of political authority. Specifically, this research draws on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which examines discourse at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's dialogic perspective views discourse as inherently intertextual and shaped by prior texts and discourses, enabling it to both reproduce and transform existing power structures (Fairclough, 2003). This approach is particularly well suited to analyze inaugural speeches, which negotiate continuity and change while seeking to persuade diverse audiences.

The principal variable under investigation is threat as constructed in political discourse. In line with the hypothesis, threat is to be understood here as a rhetorical device that both acknowledges political division and frames the defense of democratic institutions as an urgent, collective imperative. This study distinguishes between different types of threat construction, including language use, which presents challenges as existential dangers requiring exceptional measures (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998), and moral or civic threats, which depict attacks on shared democratic values and national cohesion (Wodak, 2015). Biden's speech is analyzed for its use of specific linguistic strategies and discourse structures—such as evaluative language, metaphors of crisis, and the delineation of “us” versus “them”—that position threats within a broader narrative of democratic renewal.

By applying Fairclough's CDA framework to Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address, this research aims to demonstrate how the construction of threat serves not only to legitimize the administration's political agenda but also to reinforce civic identity and collective purpose. In doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how political discourse operates at the intersection of language, ideology, and power.

1.3. Literature Review

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been extensively used to examine political communication, particularly in relation to ideology and power. However, the construction of threat within U.S. political discourse, especially through Norman Fairclough's framework, remains underexplored. Recent studies have shed light on how political figures and institutions use discourse to frame perceived threats, often to legitimize specific policies or reinforce authority.

Ramazani (2024) contrasts Trump's securitization of Iran with Biden's more diplomatic stance, illustrating how leaders rhetorically construct or

deconstruct threats. Tesfa and Reisen (2024) found that genocidal rhetoric during the Tigray War dehumanized opponents, legitimizing violence. Similarly, Salah and Hattab (2023) revealed how Trump and Putin strategically used threats to assert dominance and avoid accountability.

Other scholars highlight rhetorical strategies used to construct national or ideological adversaries. Handayani and Pranoto (2023) analyzed Biden's framing of Russia, while Demata (2021) showed how Trump's tweets portrayed migrants as existential threats. Sahan and Abdulkadhim (2021) emphasized how threat speech acts reinforced power hierarchies.

Beyond presidential discourse, media and policy also play a role. Duxbury (2023) linked racialized threat narratives to incarceration trends, and Etaywe and Zappavigna (2021) exposed the ideological function of terrorist language. Ozyumenko and Larina (2020) found emotional manipulation in Western news discourse around "threat."

Global studies add further depth. For instance, Metzger (2021) explored how German political discourse framed autonomous weapons as future threats. Korppoo (2021) and Vasilieva et al. (2021) showed how Russia constructed environmental and demographic threats to justify state actions. Oren and Brummer (2020) analyzed how Japan used threats to centralize power. Also, Cavelti (2013) discussed how cybersecurity threats are metaphorically constructed to influence policy and perception.

Earlier contributions include Jackson's (2004) critique of post-9/11 "super terrorism" rhetoric, Bleasdale's (2008) analysis of threat metaphors in UK asylum debates, and Tsui's (2015) identification of rhetorical continuities in U.S. counterterrorism discourse. Together, these studies demonstrate that threat discourse operates across political, cultural, and technological domains—often with significant social and ideological consequences.

Eventually, this paper explores how Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address constructs threat through language, using Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework. Unlike previous studies that focus on divisive or confrontational rhetoric, it highlights how civic threats are framed and how unity is rhetorically positioned as a response to ideological division.

1.4. Data Description

The data for this analysis is based on the inauguration speech delivered by Joe Biden, the 46th President of the United States. The speech is publicly available at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/347806. Joseph R. Biden Jr. assumed office on January 20, 2021, at a time of significant political division, a global pandemic, and widespread social unrest. This paper examines threats through the lens of Fairclough's theoretical framework. Furthermore, in addition to categorizing and identifying extracts based logical flow of ideas, this study provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the inauguration speech by former USA president Joe Biden. It is a qualitative study that implements Fairclough's framework

1.5. Data Analysis

The excerpts from former President Biden's inaugural address contains several references to threats that frame the national context and highlight the challenges facing the United States.

Analyzing these threats using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework can reveal how Biden's language functions to shape perceptions of power, identity, and societal values, while addressing national challenges. Fairclough's approach examines language as a form of social practice that can influence and reinforce power structures and ideologies. This analysis can break down Biden's language about threats according to three levels of Fairclough's model (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough's model analyzes texts by

examining their language features (micro-level), how they draw on and circulate other discourses (meso-level), and how they relate to power and ideology in society (macro-level).

Here are the primary elements of threat identified within the text.

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

Biden's deliberate word choices, such as "fragile," "crucible," "peril," and "stalks", convey a tone of urgency and vulnerability. Terms like "precious" and "hallowed" elevate the value of democracy, while "stalks" personifies COVID-19 as an ominous, ever-present danger. These rhetorical choices frame both democracy and public health as fundamental yet endangered values.

By using expressions like "democracy is precious, democracy is fragile," "violence sought to shake the Capitol's very foundations," and "peaceful transfer of power," Biden directly addresses the January 6, 2021, Capitol attack. He characterizes it as a serious disruption to democratic norms and the peaceful transition of power. His acknowledgment of democracy's "fragility" underscores the necessity of safeguarding it from internal threats.

The call for unity surfaces in lines such as "we come together as one nation under God—indivisible" and "on all of us... who seek a more perfect union." While not overtly labeled as a threat, the emphasis on unity reveals concern over political division and polarization. Biden suggests that national cohesion depends on the collective efforts of all citizens, warning of the dangers of continued fragmentation.

The COVID-19 pandemic is portrayed as both a health crisis and a societal threat. Expressions like "a once in a century virus that silently stalks the country" and "taken as many lives in one year as in all of World War Two" highlight the virus's deadly impact. By invoking such historical comparisons, Biden stresses the gravity of the crisis and the urgent need for a unified response.

Biden further reflects the nation's precarious state through expressions like "winter of peril and significant possibility" and "Few people in our nation's history have been more challenged or found a time more challenging or difficult." The juxtaposition of "peril" and "possibility" suggests both the severity of current challenges and the potential for recovery if met with collective resolve.

His use of parallelism in "much to do, much to heal, much to restore," along with metaphors like "crucible for the ages" and "winter of peril," reinforces themes of resilience and shared responsibility. These rhetorical devices encourage emotional engagement and convey a solemn, determined tone.

Finally, Biden's repeated use of collective pronouns like "we" and "our" promotes a sense of national unity. This inclusive language frames the current threats not as partisan issues, but as challenges that demand a united, communal effort.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

Biden's references to historical figures and events, such as George Washington and President Carter, highlight America's long tradition of peaceful democratic transitions and resilience in the face of crisis. This intertextual framing not only reassures the public by emphasizing continuity but also implicitly contrasts past examples of honorable leadership with the recent disruption caused by the previous administration's refusal to accept electoral defeat. In doing so, Biden signals that these actions posed a serious threat to the constitutional order and democratic norms. By invoking respected past leaders, he strengthens his call for national unity and the urgent need to defend democracy against such dangers.

Further, Biden's inaugural address exemplifies Fairclough's (1995) notion of authoritative discourse by using his institutional role to define the pandemic as an existential, non-negotiable threat demanding unified action. This authority was

immediately operationalized through executive orders mandating mask usage, reengaging with the World Health Organization, and launching a coordinated vaccination campaign (The White House, 2021). The public framing and subsequent policy measures illustrate how authoritative discourse legitimized and accelerated efforts to confront the pandemic.

In addition, the inauguration speech is both a political and media event, designed to reach a broad audience. Biden's language is crafted to resonate with different factions of the public, including those who may feel alienated. This appeal to unity seeks to bridge divides and reshape polarized attitudes, challenging the ideological boundaries reinforced by media narratives.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

Biden's framing of threats (like the Capitol violence and COVID-19) addresses underlying power dynamics, such as the tension between democratic values and authoritarian impulses, as well as public health versus misinformation. By framing these issues as existential threats, Biden aims to legitimize his agenda and influence public attitudes about governance, responsibility, and unity.

Through his emphasis on values like democracy, resilience, and unity, Biden reinforces a collective American identity rooted in democratic ideals and shared responsibility. This discursive construction of identity encourages the public to view themselves as part of a nation that has an inherent duty to protect and uphold democratic principles and to support public health measures.

Biden's language about threats seeks to influence how Americans perceive domestic and external challenges, aiming to unify diverse viewpoints around common values. This discourse attempts to reframe polarizing issues (e.g., democratic stability, public health) as matters of collective survival rather than partisan debate.

Extract 2

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

Extract 2 identifies a broad range of societal threats, including economic hardship, racial injustice, political extremism, and environmental degradation. These issues are intensified through emotive and urgent language; terms like "cry for survival," "desperate," and "no longer deferred" frame the situation as a crisis demanding immediate action. References such as "Millions of jobs have been lost" and "Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed" create a sense of scale and urgency, portraying economic instability as both widespread and deeply personal.

The pandemic is also positioned as a multidimensional threat. The phrase "the deadly virus" underscores its role in exacerbating existing crises. Similarly, "a cry for survival from the planet itself" anthropomorphizes the environment, implying that humanity's survival is intrinsically linked to ecological well-being.

The speech constructs a powerful ideological narrative by invoking American ideals alongside historical references. Phrases like "the soul of America" and the allusion to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation align the speaker with a legacy of justice, equality, and moral leadership. This positions the current struggle as a continuation of historical efforts toward civil rights, thereby legitimizing the ideological stance through national memory. It is viewed that this historical anchoring functions ideologically, linking present-day issues to past moral victories and encouraging the audience to view current action as a fulfillment of longstanding American values.

Unity emerges as a central theme, framed as both a moral necessity and a strategic response to threat. Repeated phrases like "bringing America together" and "uniting our people, uniting our nation" construct unity as a prerequisite for overcoming national challenges. This repetition, in Fairclough's framework, serves to normalize unity as the only viable solution, embedding it within the discourse as both inevitable and desirable.

The inclusive use of collective pronouns such as “we” and “our” strengthens this message, fostering a shared identity and responsibility. The call for “every American” to participate in rebuilding and reconciliation blurs the line between speaker and audience, inviting alignment with the speaker’s vision while reinforcing their leadership role.

The text draws sharp contrasts between American ideals and societal threats. By naming “political extremism, white supremacy, and domestic terrorism” as enemies, the discourse constructs a moral binary: unity and justice on one side, hatred and division on the other. Terms such as “anger, resentment, and hatred” emphasize the emotional weight of these divisions. This kind of binary opposition functions ideologically by simplifying complex social issues into opposing moral categories. It encourages alignment with the speaker’s position by framing alternatives as morally and socially untenable.

The extract does not only dwell on crisis; it also points to hope and possibility. Language such as “deferred no longer” and “must confront and we will defeat” frames action as both urgent and inevitable, establishing a moral imperative. The vision of America becoming “a leading force for good in the world” appeals to aspirational values, suggesting that unity is not only a response to crisis but a path to global moral leadership.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

At the interpretive level, the analysis examines how the text engages with social meanings, relationships, and ideologies to shape the audience’s understanding. This involves exploring how the text draws on cultural, historical, and ideological contexts to construct meaning.

The reference to Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation invokes a pivotal moment in U.S. history, symbolizing moral courage and unity against injustice. By drawing this parallel, the speaker implicitly suggests that today’s

threats, such as racial injustice, extremism, division, demand a similarly historic response. This interpretation creates a continuity between past and present struggles, reinforcing the idea that unity is an American ideal and moral imperative.

The frequent use of “we” and “our” encourages a sense of shared responsibility and collective identity. It suggests that addressing threats is not an individual duty but a national, collective endeavor. This strategy aligns with Fairclough’s notion of discourse as a way to position people within a particular social role or identity, in this case, as unified actors against division and injustice.

Phrases like “the soul of America” and “a cry for survival” add a moral dimension, framing the threats as attacks not only on tangible aspects of life (jobs, security) but also on fundamental values. This positioning suggests that overcoming these threats is not just necessary for practical reasons but also an ethical obligation tied to the very identity of America.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

By framing unity as essential, the text draws on and reinforces a traditional ideological value within American discourse: the idea that unity and collective identity are crucial to overcoming existential threats. Fairclough would suggest that this framing does not only propose a solution but also reinforces the power of unity as a social and political ideal in times of crisis. This positions division (in the form of extremism, racial injustice, etc.), as an opposing, disruptive force that needs to be controlled.

By labeling extremism, white supremacy, and domestic terrorism as “foes,” the text constructs a normative boundary around acceptable values within a democratic society. According to Fairclough, this is a form of social control, as it establishes and reinforces the ideology that some beliefs and behaviors (racism,

terrorism) are antithetical to societal values, while unity and justice are upheld as central and moral.

The text positions the threats as part of a “constant struggle” between American ideals and persistent societal problems like “racism, nativism, and fear.” This suggests an ongoing ideological battle within society, reflecting Fairclough’s idea that discourse not only represents but can transform society by reinforcing certain ideologies over others. By aligning the speaker’s perspective with justice, equality, and unity, the text implicitly challenges ideologies that foster division, suggesting that the resolution of these threats depends on ideological realignment toward collective ideals.

Extract 3

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

References to “civil war, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11” situate the current moment within a lineage of national crises. This historical framing signals that the present is not only perilous but potentially transformative, echoing moments when the nation’s survival and values were at stake. The phrase “our historic moment of crisis and challenge” underscores this parallel, suggesting that the decisions made now could determine the country's future trajectory. That is, such references function interdiscursively, drawing on past discourses of resilience to lend gravity and legitimacy to the current call for unity.

The speech starkly outlines the consequences of division: “without unity there is no peace, only bitterness and fury, no progress, only exhausting outrage. No nation, only a state of chaos.”. This binary construction positions unity as essential for national coherence, while its absence is linked to emotional fatigue, political paralysis, and social disintegration. These sharp contrasts, peace vs. fury, nation vs. chaos, serve to dramatize the stakes and simplify the moral landscape, a classic example of ideological framing in CDA.

Metaphors such as “Politics doesn’t have to be a raging fire destroying everything in its path” and “Every disagreement doesn’t have to be a cause for total war” depict polarization as both dangerous and unsustainable. These expressions warn that political discourse has become excessively combative, risking the collapse of constructive democratic dialogue. The imagery of fire and war invokes destruction, implying that unchecked conflict could consume foundational structures of governance and civil society.

This use of metaphor is a key discursive tool that shapes how abstract social problems are understood; here, as threats requiring urgent de-escalation.

The concern over “a culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured” introduces epistemological crisis as a societal threat. The erosion of truth is framed not just as a political issue, but as one that undermines the basis for rational public discourse. This aligns with Fairclough’s interest in the role of discourse in sustaining or subverting social norms: when truth becomes malleable, the conditions for democratic deliberation collapse.

Phrases like “stop the shouting and lower the temperature” and references to “bitterness and fury” point to the emotional exhaustion that accompanies division. The language evokes a society overwhelmed by hostility, emphasizing the psychological cost of prolonged conflict. Terms such as “outrage” and “exhausting” highlight the unsustainable nature of this atmosphere and reinforce the urgency of restoring calm and cohesion.

Repetition of the word “unity” throughout the speech operates rhetorically to anchor the text’s message, presenting it not just as a solution, but as the only viable path forward.

The warning “No nation, only a state of chaos” conveys the most extreme outcome of division; a collapse of national identity itself. This stark projection constructs unity as foundational to the concept of “nation,” implying that disunity

threatens not only social order but the very idea of America. Such framing reinforces the gravity of the crisis and urges collective action to avoid irreversible consequences.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The repeated use of “we” and “our” encourages a collective identity, framing unity as an essential component of American identity. It is interpreted as a strategy to position the audience within a shared narrative, reinforcing a sense of collective responsibility to act together to overcome the threats. This positioning suggests that unity is not only a solution but also a core American value.

By describing the moment as “our historic moment of crisis and challenge,” the text positions the current challenges as uniquely important and potentially transformative. This draws on historical precedents of unity during past crises, suggesting that similar unity is required now to avoid severe consequences.

Words like “bitterness,” “fury,” and **“respect”* frame unity as not just practical but also an ethical choice. The call to “treat each other with dignity and respect” imbues the message with a moral imperative, implying that to resist unity is to go against basic ethical values.

The warning against “a culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured” implies that threats to factual integrity endanger rational and democratic discourse. This suggests that unity is not only needed to overcome division but also to preserve truth and democracy, framing fact manipulation as a destabilizing force.

Through these interpretive elements, the text draws on cultural and ideological meanings that position unity as both a national duty and a moral imperative, encouraging the audience to interpret disunity as morally and socially harmful.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

The text's emphasis on unity reflects a deeply embedded American ideal: that solidarity is essential in times of crisis. It suggests that this discourse not only advocates for unity but also reinforces it as a core ideological value within American society, portraying it as a stabilizing force against threats that could otherwise divide or destabilize the nation.

By associating division with "bitterness and fury," "no nation," and "chaos," the text positions disunity as a threat to the very fabric of democratic society. This perspective aligns with Fairclough's idea that discourse helps regulate social norms and ideologies; here, the discourse implicitly frames certain divisive behaviors and ideologies as un-American and as endangering democratic stability.

The metaphor of politics as a "raging fire" warns against extreme polarization, which is presented as hazardous to societal coherence. The critique of "manipulated" and "manufactured" facts suggests that misrepresentation in public discourse is another serious threat. It will be interpreted as the text working to uphold values of truth and civility within the political sphere, reinforcing an ideology that regards fact-based discourse as crucial to democratic health.

By emphasizing the power of collective action with statements like "we have never, ever, ever, ever failed in America when we've acted together," the text taps into American cultural narratives of resilience and unity. Fairclough's theory would view this as a way to empower the audience, using past triumphs to reinforce confidence in unity as the path forward, thereby promoting a social response that aligns with democratic ideals.

In this final level, the text not only promotes unity as a response to threats but also positions unity as essential to the nation's identity and future. This analysis shows how the discourse reinforces specific values, truth, civility, and collective

identity, that counter the threats of division and chaos, suggesting that these values are necessary to navigate current challenges.

Extract 4

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

The phrase “Here we stand” serves a rhetorical purpose, evoking pivotal moments in American history such as the Civil War and the civil rights movement. It situates the present as a continuation of those historical tests, calling for renewed national resolve. Similarly, “disagreement must not lead to disunion” employs modal necessity to warn against the fracturing of democratic unity, setting a normative boundary for political conduct.

The description of the Capitol attackers as a “riotous mob” carries strong negative connotation, delegitimizing the actors and constructing them as a threat to democratic stability. This is reinforced by “use violence to silence the will of the people”, which frames their actions as antithetical to democratic values. The emphatic repetition in “not today, not tomorrow, not ever” heightens the resolve to reject such violence, asserting institutional strength and resilience.

The contrast between “the right to dissent peacefully” and violent insurrection constructs a clear binary: legitimate civic engagement versus destructive extremism. The recurrence of “disagreement must not lead to disunion” strengthens the idea that healthy dissent is vital, but only within the bounds of democratic respect and order.

The inclusive pledge “I will fight for those who did not support me as for those who did” conveys a unifying political ethos, countering the threat of alienation and affirming a commitment to represent the whole electorate. This line reframes political opposition as part of a functioning democracy rather than a sign of division.

The direct address in “Don’t tell me things can’t change” challenges resignation and fatalism. The speaker uses negation to motivate action, presenting unity and progress as both necessary and achievable, while warning against the dangers of stagnation or regression.

The use of emotionally charged metaphors, such as “riotous mob” and “silence the will of the people”, constructs threats as violent, chaotic, and illegitimate. These choices frame democracy as something under siege, requiring active defense. Meanwhile, the repetition of key phrases, like “not today, not tomorrow, not ever,” reinforces urgency and moral clarity, positioning the speaker as a guardian of national values.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The speaker draws on the established genre of presidential inauguration speeches, which traditionally aim to unify the nation and affirm democratic values. This speech follows that convention but heightens its urgency by referencing recent historical events, such as the January 6th Capitol riot, thus grounding the message in a moment of crisis.

Inter textual references to the Civil War, the suffragette movement, and Dr. King’s dream provide moral grounding by linking present challenges to earlier struggles for justice and equality. These allusions situate the current moment within a historical continuum in which democracy remains vulnerable and requires active defense. It is a key feature, as the speaker weaves together civil rights rhetoric, reformist discourse, and liberal democratic ideals. Invoking these milestones embeds the speech within a lineage of moral and social progress, positioning the speaker in a broader political tradition that rejects complacency and frames the pursuit of justice as an ongoing national endeavor.

Quotations like “Here we stand” and the use of inclusive pronouns such as “we” foster a sense of collective identity. This discursive strategy aligns with

reconciliation-oriented rhetoric often seen in transitional leadership moments, aiming to bridge campaign divides and mobilize a shared sense of purpose.

The line “just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people” echoes mainstream media and political discourse surrounding the insurrection, reinforcing the speaker’s alignment with democratic norms. The phrase constructs violence as a direct threat to democracy rather than an expression of systemic unrest, reaffirming hegemonic understandings of political order and legitimacy.

The speech also engages in symbolic acts of inclusion. When the speaker states, “to all those who did not support us, let me say this... Hear us out as we move forward,” it functions both as an invitation to dialogue and a reaffirmation that dissent, while natural in a democracy, must not endanger unity. This reflects liberal democratic discourse that values debate within defined boundaries.

By invoking historical struggles and explicitly rejecting violence, the speaker casts threats to democracy and national unity not merely as political challenges, but as existential threats to American identity. The ideology of unity, civility, and peaceful discourse is reinforced as essential to national resilience.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

The speech reflects broader societal concerns about polarization, democratic fragility, and the erosion of civic trust in the United States. It draws on dominant ideologies that associate national unity with democratic stability, presenting disunity and political violence as existential threats to the nation's core values.

The line “disagreement must not lead to disunion” reinforces the idea that democracy requires active maintenance through peaceful dissent and institutional norms. By highlighting “the right to dissent peacefully,” the speaker affirms that while disagreement is essential to democracy, it must remain within the bounds of civility and legality.

In a political climate marked by populist and extremist pressures, the text's framing works to delegitimize radical dissent. Phrases like "riotous mob" and "use violence to silence the will of the people" portray violent actors as threats to the democratic order, implicitly aligning civic responsibility with restraint and procedural legitimacy. This reflects dominant narratives that equate law and order with democratic preservation.

The repeated assertion "not today, not tomorrow, not ever" underscores an uncompromising stance against political violence. It positions extremism as fundamentally incompatible with democratic values, suggesting that any tolerance for such acts risks a breakdown of national cohesion.

By referencing historic movements like the Civil War and the suffragette struggle, the speaker taps into a shared cultural memory of overcoming adversity through collective moral effort. These allusions respond to contemporary social tensions, particularly those tied to racial injustice and political unrest, and call for a renewed ethical commitment to unity.

The promise to serve "all Americans" and "fight for those who did not support me as for those who did" enacts a politics of reconciliation. It reflects a vision of leadership grounded not only in policy but in the symbolic work of national healing and cohesion.

Overall, the discourse situates the threats of division, violence, and misinformation as ideological and systemic challenges to the democratic project. By emphasizing unity, peaceful disagreement, and respect for institutions, the speaker reaffirms a hegemonic vision of democracy that relies on inclusion and the defense of foundational norms to resist regression and instability.

Extract 5

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

At this level, the linguistic features of the text are examined, such as vocabulary, rhetorical devices, and grammatical structures, to uncover how the speaker constructs the threat.

References to “jobs, healthcare, mortgages” ground the speech in everyday concerns, portraying economic insecurity as a source of collective anxiety. By invoking tangible, relatable issues, the speaker connects personal hardship to the broader theme of social fragmentation.

The contrast between “truth” and “lies”, particularly in “lies told for power and for profit”, uses morally charged language to underscore the threat of misinformation. The imperative “defend the truth and defeat the lies” expresses a shared ethical responsibility, suggesting that preserving democratic integrity requires active, collective vigilance.

The metaphor “uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal” frames political polarization as an internal conflict. The term “uncivil” deliberately subverts the historical notion of a “civil” war, signaling a breakdown not only of unity but of basic civility and democratic discourse. The phrase “distrusting those who don’t look like you, or worship the way you do, who don’t get their news from the same source” captures the deepening cultural divides within society. By listing markers of identity, race, religion, media habits, the speaker highlights how distrust and difference fuel social fragmentation.

Repetition functions as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize urgency and commitment. Lines like “we must end this uncivil war” and “stand in their shoes” reinforce key appeals to empathy and reconciliation, urging listeners to reject entrenched division.

The speaker’s inclusive phrasing, “We as Americans”, constructs a collective national identity, while appeals to “leaders who are pledged to honour our

Constitution” draw boundaries around legitimate authority. This dual strategy both unites the audience and holds power accountable to shared democratic principles.

Imperatives such as “end this uncivil war” and “open our souls instead of hardening our hearts” combine metaphor with emotional appeal. These calls to action frame unity not just as a political objective but as a moral and affective commitment—requiring openness and compassion in the face of fear and division.

Finally, the line “a people was a multitude defined by the common objects of their love” offers a poetic vision of national identity rooted in shared civic values: “opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honour, and truth.” This language elevates the discourse, presenting unity as more than consensus—it becomes a reaffirmation of the nation’s ethical foundations.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The economic references in the speech, such as “jobs, healthcare, mortgages”, resonate with populist discourse, emphasizing material insecurity without assigning blame. Instead, this language humanizes the experience of loss and uses it to foster empathy and national solidarity.

The speaker directly engages with contemporary concerns over “fake news” and misinformation by highlighting “lies told for power and for profit.” This phrase implicates powerful actors in the deliberate distortion of truth, framing disinformation as a strategic threat to democratic integrity. The imperative to “defend the truth and defeat the lies” reinforces the speaker’s position as a defender of democratic norms, where truth is essential to accountability and collective decision-making.

The metaphor of an “uncivil war” is central to the speech’s critique of political polarization. Unlike traditional conflict framed as external, this metaphor captures internal division as corrosive and destabilizing. The paired oppositions,

“red versus blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal”, reflect the ideological and geographic segmentation of American society. These binaries, common in partisan media, are reframed not as natural oppositions but as symptoms of a deeper crisis threatening national unity.

The warning against “distrusting those who don’t look like you, or worship the way you do” draws attention to identity-based suspicion, exposing how racial, religious, and cultural biases erode social trust. The speaker situates this distrust as a catalyst for fragmentation, emphasizing that overcoming prejudice is key to restoring civic cohesion.

The reference to differing news sources underlines the fractured nature of public discourse. By pointing to how media ecosystems shape conflicting realities, the speech underscores the danger of epistemic disunity where shared facts dissolve and undermine the possibility of productive dialogue.

Overall, the discourse constructs threats not merely as political disagreements, but as profound social and ideological ruptures. From economic anxiety to media fragmentation, the speaker’s language reveals a society in need of reconciliation grounded in shared truth, empathy, and a renewed democratic commitment.

1. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

This level of analysis explores how the discourse engages with broader social structures, ideologies, and power dynamics.

The text reflects an ideology that emphasizes shared American values such as “opportunity, security, liberty, dignity, respect, honour, and truth.” These values are framed as foundational to national identity, with the speaker positioning them as unifying forces. The central threat is the erosion of these values through lies, division, or mistrust, which could destabilize both the nation's identity and its democratic health.

The speaker argues that America's identity is dynamic, continually shaped by “common objects of their love” the shared values that unite citizens. The danger lies in failing to uphold these values, potentially leading to a fractured American identity.

By describing leaders as “pledged to honour our Constitution”, the text emphasizes the duty of those in power to safeguard the nation from threats. This reinforces an ideological belief in the critical role of leadership in preserving democratic integrity. Leaders who do not “defend the truth and defeat the lies” are depicted as neglecting their responsibility.

The appeal for leaders to “open our souls instead of hardening our hearts” and foster empathy highlights an ideal of leadership rooted in humility and unity. This position opposes authoritarian or divisive leadership styles, advocating for collective action to confront societal challenges.

The discourse promotes a democratic ideology that values inclusivity, mutual respect, and dialogue. The threat of division, fueled by ideological or social differences, is framed as undermining these ideals. By urging Americans to empathize with one another and understand differing perspectives, the speaker reinforces the belief that democracy thrives when citizens collaborate, regardless of their differences.

The warning against retreating into “competing factions” and the call for “tolerance and humility” underscore these virtues as essential for maintaining a healthy democracy. The rejection of division and appeal for unity reflect the ideological belief that a cohesive citizenry is vital to the success and stability of democracy.

Economic instability is portrayed as a structural condition that amplifies social division. It demonstrates how precarity breeds populist anger, fuels mistrust in institutions, and increases vulnerability to extremist ideologies. The

text reflects broader societal anxieties in a post-truth era, where misinformation destabilizes democratic norms and erodes trust in institutions. It critiques the commercialization of truth and advocates for a return to shared facts in public discourse.

The discourse critiques a political climate marked by deep ideological polarization and social fragmentation, pointing out that such division hinders cooperation, participation, and mutual understanding, ultimately threatening the functioning of democratic governance.

Extract 6

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

The metaphor of a "dark winter" is used to frame the pandemic as a period of uncertainty and danger. This language implies a harsh, difficult time ahead, invoking feelings of fear and anxiety. The use of the word "dark" signals the unknown and the severity of the crisis, positioning it as a significant threat.

The phrase "Deadliest period of the virus" directly highlights the grave threat of the pandemic, invoking fear and urgency. It frames the situation as critical and emphasizes the risk of mass illness and death.

In the expression "We must set aside politics and finally face this pandemic as one nation" Here, "set aside politics" is a call to overcome partisan division. The rhetoric suggests that political disagreements are preventing progress and the collective effort needed to combat the pandemic. This highlights political polarization as a social threat.

The repetition of these "One nation, one nation" and "Together, together" phrases serve to stress the need for unity. It highlights the threat of division, signaling that without collective action, the country cannot overcome the pandemic or other national challenges.

The use of inclusive language in "My fellow Americans", establishes a sense of solidarity and collective identity. It creates an "us vs. them" dynamic, where the speaker aligns with the audience as a collective force, positioning external threats (the pandemic, political division, and global challenges) as shared concerns for all citizens.

The phrase "The world is watching" introduces external observers, positioning the United States under global scrutiny. This adds pressure on the nation to act responsibly and highlights the threat to the country's global reputation.

The invocation of the Bible "As the Bible says, 'Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning'" is an appeal to religious authority and a source of comfort. This rhetorical strategy aims to alleviate fear and promote hope while also grounding the appeal in a common cultural reference that may resonate with the audience.

Eventually, this statement "The world is watching" appeals to the emotional response of patriotism, invoking the idea that America's global standing is at stake.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The pandemic is framed as a collective crisis "one nation", meaning that it is a national emergency that requires a unified response. The text constructs the pandemic as not just a public health threat but also a social and political one, suggesting that disunity or political division will only worsen the crisis.

Further, the metaphor of a "dark winter" conveys not just physical danger but also the potential emotional and psychological toll of the pandemic. This evokes a sense of hopelessness and hardship, portraying the pandemic as a profound threat to the nation's wellbeing.

In addition, the speaker warns that politics and partisan divisions will undermine the country's ability to face the pandemic effectively. By urging that

politics be set aside, the discourse constructs political fragmentation as an obstacle to overcoming national threats. The threat here is not just the disease itself, but the inability to unite the country to address it, with political gridlock framing the situation as one of intense vulnerability.

The call for unity, “one nation” and “together”, also addresses the ideological divide within the country. It suggests that failure to unite along shared values could worsen the crisis, highlighting the importance of national solidarity as a response to the pandemic.

Moreover, "The world is watching" emphasizes the importance of America's image on the world stage. The threat here is to the nation's global credibility. The discourse constructs America as needing to demonstrate strong leadership, not just domestically but also internationally, to maintain its status as a leading global power.

By suggesting that America must repair alliances and engage with the world, the discourse links internal unity with external power. This underscores a broader geopolitical threat: if America falters in its internal cohesion, it risks undermining its influence abroad.

The invocation of the Bible “Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning” frames the challenges faced by the nation as temporary, suggesting a moral framework of hope and recovery. It is an attempt to alleviate anxiety and present the future as one where the crisis will be overcome. The threat here is the emotional toll the crisis may take, and the text frames religious faith as a means to cope with the fears that the pandemic might invoke.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

At this level, we analyze how the discourse reflects or challenges broader societal ideologies and power structures.

The repeated calls for unity and the emphasis on “one nation” reflect a nationalist ideology that centers on the idea of a united, cohesive national identity. The speaker presents unity as not only a moral imperative but as the necessary condition for overcoming national challenges (such as the pandemic, political division, and global challenges).

The threat posed by division is framed as not just a political issue but as a moral one, with calls to set aside partisan differences and to embrace collective action. This mirrors a social contract ideology in which individuals are urged to act in the interest of the collective good.

By urging Americans to "set aside politics," the text critiques partisan politics as a threat to national well-being. The threat of political fragmentation is positioned as something that can destabilize the nation and prevent it from acting effectively in a time of crisis. This supports an ideology of consensus democracy, where collaboration and compromise are central to the success of the nation.

The appeal to America’s global standing and the idea of “leading by example” reflect a belief in American exceptionalism; the idea that the U.S. has a special role to play in the world affairs. The threat to the nation's global position, due to internal instability or failure to act decisively, signals a crisis in national power. The text suggests that the country’s power on the global stage is contingent not just on military strength but on moral leadership and unity.

Extract 7

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

The speaker uses inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our" to position themselves as part of the collective experience. This rhetorical device seeks to unify the audience and create a sense of solidarity. For example, the speaker uses "we" when referring to the nation’s crises "We face them all at once" and the actions needed to address these crises "We will rise to the occasion". The

collective pronoun implies shared responsibility and collective action, strengthening the urgency of responding to threats together.

The use of rhetorical questions like "Will we rise to the occasion?" "encourage reflection and creates a sense of moral and national obligation, emphasizing the severity of the crises and the need for immediate action. This technique involves the audience emotionally, prompting them to consider their role in addressing the threat.

The text makes use of hyperbole phrases such as "one of the greatest responsibilities we've had" and "raging virus", which amplify the severity of the threats. This exaggerated language makes the challenges seem even more pressing, stimulating anxiety and a sense of urgency in the audience.

The speaker contrasts the positive notion of "rising to the occasion" and "healing a broken land" with the negative threats like systemic racism, the virus, and environmental crisis. This contrast creates a dichotomy between the potential for unity and recovery versus the peril of division and failure.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The speaker references historical and cultural texts like the Bible "Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning" and the song "American Anthem". These references invoke a sense of historical continuity and moral authority, linking the present crises with previous challenges and framing the nation's struggles as part of a broader, almost timeless narrative of resilience. By doing so, the speaker positions the audience within a shared tradition of overcoming adversity, thus adding legitimacy to the call for collective action.

The speech is crafted to resonate with American national identity and values. The speaker directly addresses Americans, invoking common experiences "moms, dads, sons, daughters, friends" and unifying goals "the American story," "the

American dream". This encourages a collective emotional response, creating a sense of inclusivity and responsibility among the listeners.

The speaker's references to "rising to the occasion" and "meeting our obligations" imply that individuals and the nation as a whole are being called to respond to the threats in a proactive way. The production of this text is aimed at galvanizing political and social action, and the reception of this message will likely involve individuals perceiving themselves as part of the solution.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

The text constructs a crisis narrative by listing multiple threats, virus, systemic racism, economic instability, climate change, that are simultaneously affecting the nation. This framing of the nation as under siege suggests that the current social order is in jeopardy. The threats are not presented as isolated incidents but rather as interconnected crises that demand immediate attention and action. The implication is that failure to address these issues could lead to irreparable harm to the nation, resulting in deepened divisions and decline.

The speaker contrasts the threat of national disintegration (through "uncivil war", political polarization, and the "raging virus" with the ideal of unity. The call to set aside politics and confront the crises "as one nation" suggests a need for reconciliation and the overcoming of partisan divides. The text constructs an ideological binary: if Americans do not act in unity, they will fail and face a fractured future; if they do, they will fulfill the promise of the American ideal and restore national strength. This highlights the importance of unity as a core value that must be preserved to overcome such threats.

The speaker's position as a leader gives them the authority to call for unity and action. By positioning themselves as a moral figure, the speaker implicitly critiques other leadership figures or institutions that may be contributing to division or inaction. There is an underlying ideological claim that leadership, in

this moment of crisis, must be characterized by boldness, humility, and a commitment to the nation's collective well-being, rather than political self-interest or divisiveness.

The text invokes the idea of American exceptionalism, particularly through the reference to "the American story" and "the next great chapter in history." By framing the current challenges as part of a grand narrative of American resilience, the speaker positions the nation as uniquely capable of overcoming these threats. This ideological perspective aligns with the belief that America, despite its faults, has the power to heal itself and emerge stronger, framing the resolution of these crises as both a moral and national imperative.

Extract 8

1. Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)

At the textual level, the specific words and phrases used to convey the threats are examined, as well as how they contribute to constructing a particular reality.

The speaker uses repetition to emphasize key themes, such as "hope, not fear," "unity, not division," "light, not darkness." This contrast highlights the urgency of overcoming negative elements (fear, division, darkness) that are presented as threats to the nation's future.

Further, "Not of personal interest but of public good" is a phrase designed to show that the speaker will act in the interest of all citizens, not in pursuit of personal gain, which implicitly contrasts with a possible self-interested or corrupt leadership that threatens the nation's well-being.

The text is full of collective language, including "together," "we," "our," and "us," signaling that the threats are not individual but collective. The threats to democracy, unity, and truth require unified action.

The idea of "writing an American story" suggests a shared future, emphasizing that the actions of the current generation are being witnessed and will affect future

generations, further underlining the historical responsibility the speaker places on the audience.

Words like “darkness” and “fear” create a strong metaphor for the unknown and dangerous forces threatening the nation. The contrast of light/dark, fear/hope constructs a sense of a battle between opposing forces, positioning democracy and unity as positive forces in conflict with negative ones.

By invoking "hope," "unity," "truth," "justice," and "light," the speaker frames the threats as challenges to fundamental American values. This serves to heighten the moral stakes, suggesting that failure to meet these challenges would result in the collapse of these core values.

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)

The text is addressing a nation in crisis. By invoking religious and historical references e.g., “I promise you, we will get through this together” and “the work and prayers of centuries have brought us to this day”, the speaker taps into shared national and cultural experiences. This reinforces a sense of collective responsibility.

The use of "we" and "our" serves to include the audience in the crisis and the solution, making them co-authors of the future narrative of the nation. It positions the people not just as passive listeners but as active participants in addressing the threats.

The speech uses political framing by highlighting the threats to democracy, liberty, and unity in opposition to division and misinformation. The threats are framed as coming from internal sources (e.g., systemic racism, political polarization, misinformation), rather than external enemies, although global leadership is also implied as a concern. This suggests the need for internal reform to meet the external expectations of global power.

The notion of "truth and justice" being in peril implies an ideological battle with the forces of misinformation and injustice. By framing these values as under threat, the speaker positions their leadership and policies as ****moral imperatives**** that aim to protect and restore such ideals.

The speaker repeatedly mentions honor and duty to "defend the Constitution" and "give all" for public service, emphasizing their ethical commitment to serve the nation rather than their own interests. This rhetorical strategy appeals to the legitimacy of the speaker's authority, reinforcing their position as a moral leader during a national crisis.

3. Social Practice (Macro-Level)

The speaker's repeated pledges to defend democracy and the Constitution put them in a position of moral and political authority. Their authority is bolstered by the appeal to shared national values, such as liberty, justice, and democracy, which frames their actions as necessary and virtuous. This makes the threat seem all the more urgent, as it calls upon the moral duty of all citizens to defend these ideals.

The reference to the American story and the desire to write a new chapter in history appeals to a collective identity. The speaker is positioning themselves as the leader who will guide America through a historical moment of crisis. This reinforces the nationalistic and patriotic sentiment that defines American identity and directs it toward overcoming these threats.

The idea of "unity" and "healing" is framed as a response to division, which implies that current social and political challenges are rooted in the past and can be overcome through collective effort. This could be interpreted as an attempt to unite the nation under a single, coherent identity, with the threat being disunity, which could further tear apart the fabric of the nation.

The text also places historical significance on the present moment. By invoking “forbearers” and the “American story,” the speaker calls upon a shared history to justify the urgency of the current challenges. The future legacy that they are trying to secure emphasizes how the present generation is responsible for passing along values and prosperity to future generations, positioning this moment as crucial to the continuation of the American project.

The speaker portrays the crises facing the nation as not just practical but also moral and ethical challenges. The “duty” to face these issues highlights the moral responsibility of every American citizen. The threat is not only to political stability but to the very soul of the nation, making it a moral imperative for people to act.

1.6. Discussion of The Findings

It is found that language and rhetoric in political speeches construct a sense of urgency, moral responsibility, and the need for national unity in the face of crisis. Across the various levels of analysis, several key themes emerge:

The use of emotionally charged language and metaphors is prevalent throughout the above extracts, with phrases like "fragile," "peril," and "raging virus" emphasizing the severity of the crises. This language not only heightens the perceived threat but also frames the situation as one requiring immediate collective action. Historical references and metaphors, such as comparisons to past national struggles, further underline the urgency of the moment, portraying the challenges as both critical and transformative.

Further, the speech often employs collective pronouns like "we" and "our," fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This unifying language positions the nation's struggles as collective endeavors, emphasizing unity as both a moral and practical necessity. Historical and cultural references, such as invoking past struggles or figures, link current challenges to a larger narrative of national

resilience. The rhetorical strategies promote unity not just as a response to immediate crises but as an enduring American value that must transcend political divides.

On a societal level, the speech seems to critique political polarization and misinformation, framing them as existential threats to the nation's core values. This framing constructs an ideology in which democracy, civility, and unity are presented as inherently virtuous and morally superior, thereby legitimizing the speaker's authority and delegitimizing opposing positions that are portrayed as divisive or dangerous. By repeatedly emphasizing unity as a moral imperative, the discourse reinforces the idea that consensus and national solidarity are the only acceptable responses to crisis, implicitly marginalizing dissent or alternative visions of governance.

The invocation of democracy and civility is not ideologically neutral; rather, it functions to maintain existing power relations by presenting the current political order as the rightful embodiment of American identity and values. References to empathy and respect, while seemingly inclusive, also frame civic engagement within a narrow conception of acceptable behavior—one that privileges moderation and incremental reform over more radical or confrontational forms of political action. This serves to contain potential challenges to institutional legitimacy by defining what counts as constructive participation.

Moreover, the speech situates leadership, embodied in the figure of the president, as essential to resolving national crises, reinforcing the ideology that effective change must occur within established hierarchies of power. By positioning misinformation and extremism as the primary threats, the discourse implicitly endorses greater control over information and the policing of public narratives, thereby reproducing structures of authority over knowledge

production. In this way, the text does not merely describe social problems but actively constructs an ideological framework that legitimizes the speaker's agenda, consolidates dominant norms, and limits the scope of political imagination. Overall, these discussions highlight how political discourse uses language to construct threats and call for unity in times of crisis, while also critiquing the forces that undermine democracy and cohesion.

All in all, these findings clearly align with the hypothesis and effectively answer the research questions by demonstrating that Biden's inaugural address constructs threats through deliberate linguistic strategies such as emotionally charged vocabulary, historical allusions, and collective pronouns that frame polarization, misinformation, and the pandemic as existential dangers requiring unified action. This discourse not only acknowledges deep political divisions but also positions the defense of democracy as an urgent moral imperative, thereby legitimizing the administration's agenda. Moreover, the analysis shows how these rhetorical choices embed and reproduce ideologies that equate civility and moderation with national virtue, marginalize dissenting perspectives, and reinforce established power structures by presenting leadership as the rightful custodian of democratic values. Together, these elements confirm that the speech operates as both a call for unity and a vehicle for maintaining dominant socio-political relations, fully supporting the study's initial expectations.

In this way, the discourse does not merely describe social problems; it actively constructs an ideological framework that legitimizes the speaker's agenda, consolidates dominant norms, and limits the scope of political imagination. Overall, these dynamics demonstrate how political language both maintains and reinforce existing power structures, while framing threats and unity as central to the preservation of democracy itself.

1.7. Conclusion

The current study has examined how threat is constructed through political rhetoric in former U.S. President Joe Biden's 2021 Inaugural Address, using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The analysis reveals that political language is not merely descriptive, but actively shapes public perception and mobilizes social action. Through emotionally charged vocabulary, historical allusions, and collective pronouns, the speech constructs a heightened sense of urgency and shared moral responsibility. These rhetorical strategies are central to framing contemporary crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political polarization, and the erosion of democratic norms, as threats requiring unified national response.

At the textual level, the use of metaphors and evocative language amplifies the perceived severity of the moment, while intertextual references connect present challenges to a broader historical narrative of American resilience. On the discursive level, inclusive language fosters a collective identity and encourages solidarity across ideological divides. At the social level, the discourse critiques systemic issues like misinformation and partisanship, framing them as existential threats to democratic values and national cohesion. In doing so, the speech not only calls for unity as a strategic response but elevates it to the level of moral imperative.

Ultimately, this analysis underscores the powerful role of political rhetoric in shaping how societies understand and respond to crises. Biden's inaugural address exemplifies how language can be strategically employed to construct threats and advocate for unity, reinforcing the idea that discourse is not only reflective of social realities but also instrumental in constructing and transforming them.

References

- Biden, J.R., 2021. Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. The White House. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/> [Accessed 30 June 2025].
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O. and de Wilde, J., 1998. Security: A new framework for analysis. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Cavelty, M.D., 2013. From cyber-bombs to political fallout: Threat representations in the cyber-security discourse. *International Studies Review*, 15(1), pp.105–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12000>
- Demata, M., 2021. ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ in Donald Trump’s political discourse: The construction of migrants as threats. *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 38, pp.73–88. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i22390359v38p73>
- Duxbury, S., 2023. A threatening tone: Racial narratives and incarceration in the United States. *Criminology*, 61(2), pp.269–301. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12235>
- Etaywe, A. and Zappavigna, M., 2021. Threatening communication in terrorist discourse: A critical discourse analysis approach. *Discourse & Society*, 32(3), pp.267–289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926521992423>
- Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N., 1995. *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N., 2003. *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Handayani, F. and Pranoto, B.E., 2023. Inclusion and exclusion strategies in Biden’s speech on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), pp.201–216.

- Jackson, R., 2004. Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Korppoo, A., 2021. Russian climate diplomacy: Contradiction as a discursive strategy. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 68(4), pp.294–305.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1926257>
- Metzger, M., 2021. Security and autonomy: Securitization of lethal autonomous weapons in German discourse. *Security Dialogue*, 52(6), pp.492–510.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106211037997>
- Oren, I. and Brummer, K., 2020. Threat and centralization: Security narratives under Abe Shinzo. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 21(2), pp.118–136.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109920000035>
- Ozyumenko, V. and Larina, T., 2020. Discourse of threat in the media: A cross-cultural perspective. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 24(1), pp.160–181.
<https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9182-2020-24-1-160-181>
- Peters, J.W., 2021. Biden urges unity in a capital riven by crisis. *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/20/us/politics/biden-inauguration-speech.html> [Accessed 30 June 2025].
- Ramazani, M., 2024. Language of threat: A discourse study of U.S. presidential speeches on Iran's nuclear issue. *Journal of Language and Politics*.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.22057.ram>
- Sahan, A. and Abdulkadhim, R., 2021. The linguistic representation of threats in political discourse. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 26(3), pp.75–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/12345678.2021.1883231>
- Salah, M. and Hattab, R., 2023. Critical discourse analysis of threat in Trump's and Putin's speeches. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 22(1), pp.44–62.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.22015.sal>

- Tesfa, T. and Reisen, H., 2024. Negative stereotyping and the creation of a threat in the Tigray War. *Conflict and Society*, 10(1), pp.33–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25772504.2024.1855127>
- Tsui, L., 2015. The legacy of fear: Reagan's and Clinton's counterterrorism discourse and its implications for the post-9/11 era. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 8(2), pp.197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2015.1053706>
- Vasilieva, E. et al., 2021. Demographic threat in Russian political discourse. *Russian Politics & Law*, 59(2), pp.123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10611940.2021.1927279>
- Wodak, R., 2015. *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. London: Sage.
- Wodak, R. and Meyer, M., 2009. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- Woods, J. and Arthur, J., 2014. A threat to the national family: Immigration and the discourse of threat in post-9/11 U.S. politics. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 7(1), pp.103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2014.874497>

شیکردنەوێ گوتاری ڕەخنەیی ھەرەشەکان لە گوتاری سیاسیی: وتاری دەستبەکاربوونی سەرۆکی
پیشووی ئەمریکا جۆ بایدن لە ساڵی ۲۰۲۱ بەنموونە

نیاز صالح ھەمەد

یاریدەدەر پڕۆفیسۆر دکتۆر کوردستان رەفیع موحەدین

پوختە

لە کاتی قەیرانی نەتەوھیبدا، سەرکردە سیاسییەکان زۆر جار زمان بەکار دەھێنن بۆ دروستکردنی ھەرەشە و پەرەپێدانی یەكگرتن، بەلام ئەو میکانیزمانە یەك لە گوتاری سیاسیدا بەدەست دەھێنرێت ھێشتا نەدۆزراوەتەو. نامانجی ئەم توێژینەوێە شیکردنەوێە چۆنیەتی دروستکردنی ھەرەشەلەلایەن سەرۆکی پیشووی ئەمریکا جۆ بایدن لە ساڵی 2021 لە ڕێگەی زمانەوێە. بە پشتبەستن بە چوارچێوەی سێ ڕەھەندی ئورمان فەیرکلۆف، توێژینەوێە و تارەكە لە ئاستی تێکست، گفتووگویی و کۆمەلایەتیدا شیدەکاتەوێە بۆ ئاشکراکردنی ستراتیجی زمانەوانی و ئایدیۆلۆژی بەکارھێنراو. بەکارھێنانی میتۆدی توێژینەوێە چۆنایەتی، و تارەكە وەك سەرچاوەیەکی داتایی مامەلەیی لەگەڵدا دەکرێت و لە ڕێگەی خۆیندنەوێە و وردەوێە لێکدەدرێتەوێە بۆ دیاریکردنی شێوازەکانی مانا و ئەرکی ڕەوانبێژی..

دەرەنجامەکان ئەوێە دەرەخەن كە زمانی بارگای سۆزداری، سەرچاوەی میژووویی و جێناوێە گشتگیرەکان بەکار دەھێنرێن بۆ بەرزکردنەوێە ھەستی بەپەلمیی، پەرەپێدانی ناسنامەیی کۆمەلایەتی، و دروستبوونی یەكریزی وەك پێویستیەکی ئەخلاقی و کرداری. ھەرەھا و تارەكە ڕەخنە لە جەمسەرگیری سیاسی و زانیاری ھەلە دەگرێت وەك ھەرەشە بۆ بەھا دیموکراسیەکان، بەم شێوێە سەرکردایەتی و ھاوسۆزی وەك ئامرازێکی گرنگ بۆ بوژاندنەوێە نەتەوێەیی دادەنرێت. ئەم شیکردنەوێە تیشك دەخاتە سەر ڕۆلی ئامرازی گوتاری سیاسیی لە شێوێە ھۆشیاری گشتی، بنیاتنانی واقعی کۆمەلایەتی، و جۆلانندی کردار لە کاتی ھەلچووندا.

وشەسەرەکی یەکان:

شیکردنەوێە گوتاری ڕەخنەیی، بنیاتنانی ھەرەشەکان، جۆ بایدن، ئایدیۆلۆژیا، و قەیرانی نەتەوێەیی

تحليل خطاب نقدي للتهديدات في الخطاب السياسي: خطاب التنصيب للرئيس الأمريكي السابق جو بايدن لعام 2021 أنموذج

نياز صالح حمد

الأستاذ المساعد الدكتور كردستان رفيق محي الدين

تحليل خطاب نقدي للتهديدات في الخطاب السياسي: خطاب التنصيب للرئيس الأمريكي السابق جو بايدن لعام 2021 أنموذج

الملخص

في أوقات الأزمات الوطنية، غالبًا ما يستخدم القادة السياسيون اللغة بشكل استراتيجي لبناء التهديدات وتعزيز الوحدة، ومع ذلك لا تزال الآليات التي يتم من خلالها تحقيق ذلك في الخطاب السياسي غير مستكشفة بشكل كافٍ. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل كيفية بناء الرئيس الأمريكي السابق جو بايدن لفكرة التهديد من خلال اللغة في خطابه التنصبي لعام 2021. واستنادًا إلى الإطار الثلاثي الأبعاد لنورمان فيركلاف، تقوم الدراسة بتحليل الخطاب على المستويات النصية والخطابية والاجتماعية للكشف عن الاستراتيجيات اللغوية والأيدولوجية المستخدمة. وباستخدام منهج بحثي نوعي، يُعامل مع الخطاب كمصدر بيانات أساسي ويُفحص من خلال القراءة الدقيقة لتحديد أنماط المعنى والوظيفة البلاغية.

تكشف النتائج أن اللغة المشحونة بالعاطفة، والإشارات التاريخية، والضمانات الشاملة تُستخدم لتعزيز الشعور بالإلحاح، وتعزيز الهوية الجماعية، وتقديم الوحدة كضرورة أخلاقية وعملية في آن واحد. إضافة إلى ذلك، ينتقد الخطاب الاستقطاب السياسي والمعلومات المضللة بوصفها تهديدات للقيم الديمقراطية، مما يضع القيادة والتعاطف كأدوات أساسية للتعافي الوطني. وتُبرز هذه التحليل الدور الحيوي للخطاب السياسي في تشكيل الوعي الجمعي، وبناء الواقع الاجتماعي، وتحفيز الفعل في لحظات الاضطراب.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

التحليل النقدي للخطاب، بناء التهديد، جو بايدن، الأيدولوجيا، والأزمة