

## **Dominance and Resistance in Political Discourse: An Analysis of the Rhetoric of the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from CDA Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this research is to explore the resistance of the western hegemony in the rhetoric of the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. To achieve the said aim, the researchers used Van Dijk's model as the theoretical underpinning of this research study in order to explore the phenomena of domination, imperialism, power abuse, resistance of power and injustice both in social as well as in political context imbibed in Ahmadinejad's speeches. The results of the study reveal that the discourse producer, Ahmadinejad, has utilized positive self-representation and negative other-representation and in doing so, has represented the in-group members (Muslim world) in a positive way while the out-group members (the Western powers) in a negative tone. In addition, by using a number of other discursive strategies, including authority, generalization, evidentiality, euphemism, disclaimer, hyperbole, vagueness, presupposition, irony, polarization and victimization, Ahmadinejad has proven the Muslim world as the innocent party, whereas, the western powers have been represented as being involved in the war on terror. The main ideology behind the discourse of Ahmadinejad is the resistance of the hegemony and power of several international powerful groups in order to bring the injustice done by them in places such as the Middle East and other Muslim countries. The researchers suggest that rhetoric of resistance in politics can be significantly helpful in terms of international political diplomacies and policies for the nations of the world. in politics can be highly important for the countries of the world in terms of international political policies and diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** CDA, dominance, power abuse, resistance, discursive devices

### **Introduction**

Language does not have any inherent power, but it can be used to dispute, undermine, and change power distributions in the short and long term. In social hierarchical arrangements, language provides explicit

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methods for power differences (Wodak, 2001). Wodak (2001) argues that discourse in a given specific location restricts and controls the use of words. This control differs from person to person and is determined by a person's position in the social environment of the discursive event. Discursive power is not constant; it fluctuates depending on the role and position of the social actor as well as the discourse context. In a given context, powerful social actors dominate and influence the discourse of other social actors, but this authority may be lost if the setting changes. As a result, the dominant and subordinate social actors' relationships are built and reflected in the discourse they use.

Discourse is related to power and power is related to discourse. Gutting (2005) argues that the relationship between discourse and power is all about revealing the binary of power relations that exist between social actors in various social institutions within a larger social structure. Discourse in a power structure also reveals the social actors' struggle to build and maintain power relations (Fairclough, 1992a, 2003). Politics is one of the societal structures built on binary relationships of dominant and dominated (subordinate). The political actors are constantly fighting to attain their power objectives. They seek power in order to create their political, economic, and social identities by achieving or maintaining power positions (Hart, 2004).

The dominant and subordinate political actors' relationships are communicated through speech. As a result, speech is an important component of the power system, as it assists political actors in gaining or maintaining power. Dominant political actors use language to control others or maintain their own authority in international politics. Because dominant and subordinate ideologies are structured through language, which exposes their place in the power structure, power interactions between dominant and subordinate political groupings are discursive (Van Dijk, 1989; Fairclough, 1992). The dominant political actors' speech reflects the power they wield over the subordinate political actors, whereas the subordinate political actors' rhetoric reveals not only their subordinate status in the political system, but also their fight to resist or support the dominating powers. In this approach, political actors' rhetoric contains three dimensions of power: resistance, sustenance, and support (Fairclough, 1992a). This article introduces us to the argument and offers an historical overview of CDA, Ahmadinejad; the struggle that they are involved in by critically examining their speeches from Van Dijk's seminal insights. In doing so several ties between the CDA and other theories reflecting on social structures, social case, social activity, and discourse orders, would also be taken into consideration to understand the proper context of what Ahmadinejad is responding to through resistance.

It also shows why CDA is critical to this particular study of the speeches of Ahmadinejad and how CDA 's aims and goals align with and Ahmadinejad 's goals and aims.

### **Literature Review**

Critical Discourse Analysis, as a sub-branch of Applied Linguistics, deals with the discursive ways of enacting, maintaining, strengthening, legitimizing, and resisting of power abuse. A number of research studies have been conducted to explore the discursive exercise or resistance of power abuse have been conducted in this field. A brief review of the available literature in the field of CDA is provided below.

According to Van Dijk (2015), the CDA plays a crucial role for the discursive circumstances and components that is nothing less than valuable for the assumption and dissemination of the linguistics related to speeches or texts. This in turn enables the consideration and application of the texts' and speeches' veiled allusions to their particular purposes and environments. Van Dijk (2015) underlines the value of discursive analysis as a tool for mind control because it may be used to prepare actions. According to Van Dijk (1995), CDA opposes organizations and socio-political groups who abuse their authority in support of oppressive groups. For example, by discovering, condemning discourse and cooperating in empowering the dominated. It is stated that it is clear from Van Dijk that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) treats identities implicitly as effects of ideological work. Van Dijk continuously argued that the CDA is an approach to the critical analysis of discourses, it is not a single method, or theory. Van Dijk (2015) also argues that the role of language in the transmission of knowledge, the consolidation of hegemonic speech and the organization of institutional life have a common interest in this perspective.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of research that mainly focuses on how to implement, reproduce and resist the use of social power, dominance and inequality in the social and political context through text and speech. Critical discourse analysts take an explicit stand with such dissident research and therefore want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality. In her article, Holliday (2010) shows that Khatami 's status of Iranian national identity is the discourse of resistance at the international and regional level. This opposition is apparent in the meanings attached to the sets of values: Iranian- Islamic culture and "dialogue between civilizations," the main pillars of the Islamist-Iranian national identity discourse. As regards the Iranian-Islamic culture, Islam is obviously Iranian, and the political apparatus framework is not just a politically oriented Islam, but a political Iranian Islam. In the sense of

"dialogue between civilizations," resisting the perceived Western hegemony not only in the international system but also resisting the dominance in the discipline of international relations by the West and the Western perspectives, Khatami finally establishes certain reforms as the best and authentic way to keep Iran independent. Zeb (2015) discusses many contemporary linguistic and power problems critically integrated in the dialectics of domination and resistance and carried out through discursive practices. Her study focuses on the tense and close relationship between America and Venezuela and the implications of the partnership in the form of resistance from the former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's speeches and interviews. The Critical Discourse Research is used as analytical construe in Van Dijk's frame to examine the resistant discourse of Hugo Chávez in order to interpret it behind the hegemonic discourses of America. The study analyzes the repercussions of the ex-Venezuelan president's language of opposition to hegemonic discourse. In this study, Hugo Chavez accuses America not only of wrong but also tries to reconsider the world about the socio-political changes triggered by rhetoric about the opposition. The study confirms and responds to research questions that Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's late President, break the status quo of the US hegemonic designs. By using very powerful counter discourse in his interviews, Hugo Chavez criticizes the richest and most influential nation in the world.

Many other studies reveal resistance in Ahmadinejad's rhetoric. For instance, the classification of Van Dijk's (2005) indicators demonstrated by Rahimi and Riasati (2011) in one selected speech by Ahmadinejad reveals a shortened form of Van Dijk's theoretical underpinnings (micro and macro). Majority of the researchers who have explored the speeches of Ahmadinejad from critical discourse analytical perspective argue that Ahmadinejad utilizes rhetoric devices in his rhetoric to defend his in-group and resist the domination of out-group. For instance, in one of the articles, rhetorical devices were employed to compare the resistance in speeches of Ahmadinejad and Rouhani. In his article, Shakoury (2018) demonstrates the speech device "lexicalization" which was used by President Ahmadinejad far more than its predecessor: 230 versus 164. The first reason for President Ahmadinejad's increased use of 'lexicalization' is that politicians use lexicalization mainly to put their particular beliefs into the minds of the public. It is especially true when the speakers tend to be positive and others negatively: "positive self-presentation and negative (often inextricably combined) presentation are mainly achieved via lexicalization" (Van Dijk, 2005). With Ahmadinejad's higher utilization of the dichotomy of positive and negative self-deportation, it might be expected that he would use the 'lexicalization'

discoursing device more than Rouhani. However, his use of the dichotomy of positive self-representation and negative self-representation is far more important than that of the other instruments as well as his use of positive self-representation, which is particularly positive. President Ahmadinejad used longer words, but Rouhani was more inclined to have short sentences with fewer words; this is in line with Alexi, Tadjeddin & Kondlaji's (2018) findings who argue that Ahmadinejad's talks with the UNGA were lengthier and more prolixed in 2012. The following reason can be sought after as the dialogue between both presidents; A further contradiction of the two Presidents' comments is found in the use of long and verbose sentences used by Ahmadinejad for voicing his religious opinion on Islam and Imam Mahdi (12th Shitte Muslim Imam): "O God, speed up Imam Al-Mahdi 's arrival and provide him with health and victory and bring us his adherents and his rightful ones" (UNGA 2007 Ahmadinejad's speech); Oh , God, speed up Imam Al-Mahdi 's arrival and grant him health and victory, and make him his followers and those who show his legitimacy "(UNGA Talk 2008 Ahmadinejad). Iran's foreign policy had been even more radical than that supported by Ayatollah Khamenei since 1989, particularly when Ahmadinejad came to power. After 9/11, Iran collaborated with the US military forces in Afghanistan. However, the "axis of evils" rhetoric paved the way for further bilateral relations between the two countries and further radicalized Iranian political speech against the Americans. (Israeli, 2010). This rhetorical and aggressive speech has driven Iranian leaders to expand the military skills of the country. In this period, a revolutionary view of refuting the Holocaust, as one of Iran's main discursive struggles with the West, generated many negative responses in the west, and thus, resulted in the United Nations (26 January 2007, a resolution against Iran).

The brief review of the available literature related to the speeches of Ahmadinejad shows that the present research has not been carried out before and thus, is a very significant contribution of the existing treasure of knowledge. The review shows that analyses of the speeches of different politicians have been carried out by different scholars, however, the resistance of hegemony has not been explored as yet. The present analysis of speeches on Ahmadinejad may thus be a unique contribution of the field of critical discourse analysis

### **Research Methodology**

This research attempts to analyze the speeches of Ahmadinejad by using a qualitative research design. In international political debate, it is designed to inspect power dynamics and hegemony. It is intended to estimate the rhetoric of world leaders objectively and examine how power

and hegemonic ties are first built and then maintained. Ahmadinejad is responding to the prevailing social problems brought upon the Muslim world by the western powers. CDA theoretical framework of Van Dijk complements CDA as a methodological tool as well as by critically evaluating the political discourse that Ahmadinejad is responding to. In this qualitative analysis of the speeches of Ahmadinejad, the researcher is trying to show their resistance to the domination that is exerted by the hegemon, USA. The material for analysis therefore includes formal speeches at political rallies, interactions with social, print, and electronic media. Every interaction which provides knowledge, according to Van Dijk (2008, p.56), is language. CDA as our research methodology will help us interpret these interactions as signals of a much broader resistance to domination.

#### *CDA and Van Dijk's Theoretical Framework*

The Van Dijk's (2005) CDA model serves as the theoretical underpinning of this investigation (2005). He claims that CDA is a type of analytical discourse analysis that focuses on topics like violence, dominance, and social power disparities that are introduced, repeated, and resisted in the social and political context through text (McGregor, 2003). Critical discourse analysts adopt a clear stance as an unorthodox study, explores social injustice, and ultimately rejects it (van Dijk, 2004). Memory and social cognition as components of the connective bridge between context and discourse. The relationship between the discourse structure and the social structure is not direct but rather indirect and involves a type of interface known as social cognition (Van Dijk, 2002a). According to Van Dijk, cognitive processes enable the most meaningful semantic depictions to be preserved.

The Van Dijk CDA model is a discourse analytical study approach that focuses on how violence, dominance, and injustice are introduced, duplicated, and resisted by text and chat in the social and political context of social power, as indicated below.

Presupposition, Generalization, Polarization, Actor Description, Victimization, Disclaimers, Irony, Euphemism, Hyperbole, Authority, Evidentiality and Vagueness.

#### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The speech selected for this research was delivered by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, to the UNGA in New York in the 61st Annual Session of the UNGA on 19th September, 2006. As usual, he started his speech by praising Almighty Allah and then immediately started opposing the aggression and domination of the US and the defense

of the oppressed people in the World, particularly the suppression of the people of Iran by the hands of the US. In doing so, he polarized all the humans or nations of the world into two groups, i.e. the oppressors and the oppressed. Oppressor, according to him, are those who are expanding their control around the globe by occupying the homelands of other nations through the use of weapons and threats and collecting wealth by controlling all the resources such as oil and gas. On the other hand, there live the oppressed people who are living a miserable life of poverty, sufferings, insecurity and danger and are bombarded and murdered in the streets and homes of their own homelands. What adds to the agony is that when these oppressed nations seek justice, none of the organizations defends their rights and protects them from the acts of the oppression and aggression of the oppressors, not even the *seat of global justice*, i.e. the UNGA. To elaborate his stance, Ahmadinejad talks about the following three major points of injustice of the United States. The basic illegitimate acts of the US and the common severe issues of the oppressed Muslim countries highlighted by him in this speech are discussed in the following three points. The very first issue which he resists very explicitly is the unlimited expansion of chemical and nuclear weapons by the US. The sole aim of these weapons is not to spread peace and democracy, rather to threaten and coerce other nations. He opines that peace and tranquility are better achieved if a system based on wisdom, justice and ethics is implemented as compared to using the chemical, nuclear and biological weapons and spreading hatred, tension and animosity among people. However, the powerful nations (including the US) are not content with their own rights and have been suppressing the other weak nations, thus depriving them of their due rights, and yet these powerful nations are not put to any accountability by the international community.

The second problem which he strongly opposes in this speech is the warmongering attitude of the US and their occupation of (Muslim) countries. For instance, Iraq has remained under the occupation of the US for more than three years and hundreds of people get killed in cold blood on daily basis. Though the National Assembly of Iraq is well-established but all their efforts to maintain security and stability in the country have been in vain because the occupiers who have been promoting insecurity and instability in Iraq are themselves the permanent members of the security council. Consequently, the Iraqi people have no place for seeking refuge and no one to seek justice from.

The situation of Palestine is rather much worse than that of Iraq. The Palestinian people have been suffering since the Second World War when the unprecedented tragedy of the history took place in Palestine. In doing so, the Zionists occupied the land of Palestine forcefully and

aggressively, and millions of the Palestinians were displaced from their own homeland and many of them died after living in refugee camps for years, dreaming to get back to their homeland till their last breath. Since the Second World War, it has been occupied by the so-called champions of democracy, including the central sacred place of Muslims, *Al-Qods Al Sharif*, and whoever raises any voice against these so-called champions of democracy, his/her voice is silenced through the instrument of coercion, pressure, threat and division. Worse yet, even presently, the innocent Palestinians are being bombarded and their young children who have nothing to do with wars are murdered in their own homes and members of the Palestinian parliament and ministers are incarcerated and abducted, but none of the authorities of the Security Council even think about helping this suppressed nation.

Along with Iraq and Palestine, the situation of Lebanon is also thought-provoking. He elaborates further that about 1.5 million of the innocent citizens of Lebanon were made homeless but the Security Council did not pay any attention to this brutality. Keeping in view these tragic situations in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon, Ahmadinejad opines that the Security Council were well aware of these brutalities but they did not provide any security to the said countries against the occupiers and aggressors because the occupiers themselves are the permanent and prominent part of the Security Council.

The last and a comparatively severe problem discussed by Ahmadinejad in this speech is the violation of the rights of the Muslim members of the Security Council and the abuse of the international community at the hands of the oppressors. All the nuclear activities of Iran are kept under a very strict check and balance by the IAEA inspectors while there are some governments who freely benefit from and abuse the nuclear technology, starting from the production of the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons to the very use of those weapons against humanity, but the Council does not issue them any warning because those governments themselves are the permanent members of the Council. This victimization of justice at the hands of force and aggression and the biasness of the Security Council has led to the reduction of the credibility and effectiveness of the Council and, resultantly, it does not have the ability to maintain security in the world.

Keeping in view all the aforementioned global issues and the weaknesses of the Security Council, Ahmadinejad suggests that the entire structure of the working method of the Security Council needs to be reformed. In doing so, the UN General Assembly should assure a permanent membership of the Security Council to the representatives of the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and



the African Continent, so that they may represent their own nations and may protect the rights and lives of their people against the oppressors. To him, the citizens of Africa, Asia, Europe and America are all equal and all the 6 billion humans of the earth are the equal creatures of God, so all must be dealt under the same yard stick of justice, equality, peace, social ethics and democracy implemented by the International Community and it is possible only and only if the present structures of the Security Council are rescued by the Assembly.

### **Analysis of Ahmadinejad's Speech through Van Dijk's CDA Model**

#### **1. Actor Description**

The way a person describes another person, place, thing or event shows the attitude of the person towards the other person, place, thing or event. In this speech, Ahmadinejad describes his in-group member, i.e. the Muslim nations; in a positive way while the out-group members, i.e. the Western countries, in a negative way. Following is the discussion of the positive traits of the Muslim countries and negative traits of the Western nations as highlighted by Ahmadinejad in this speech.

#### **A. Positive Self-Representation**

Being the representative of the Muslim world, particularly of Iran, Ahmadinejad describes the Muslim nations in a very positive way, focusing on the positive traits of the Muslim countries and representing them as the champions of peace. In the beginning of this speech, he thanks Almighty Allah for granting him an opportunity to address the UN General Assembly on behalf of the great nation of Iran. He represents the "great nation of Iran as a member of the IAEA which is committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty" (Ahmadinejad, 2006). Being a brave leader, he wants the Muslim leaders to raise their voice for the rights and betterment of the Muslim nations. In this speech, he is very happy for and appreciates the courageous presence of the Muslim representatives in different internationally organized gatherings and for the *brave expression* of their opinions about the issues of the world, particularly of the Muslim nations.

Similarly, he describes the Muslims of the world in a very positive way. To him, Muslims are the people who are *guided and disciplined by their divine nature, they seek God, perfection, virtue, and beauty intrinsically* (Ahmadinejad, 2006), and these are the personality traits which make a person look for peace, security, justice, tranquility, love and betterment in a given society.

In addition, Ahmadinejad describes all the humans of the world as equal inhabitants with equal privileges, rights freedom and thus, resists the occupation of one nation (the oppressed) by the hands of another (the

oppressors). To emphasize the equality of human beings, he describes humans and all the nations of the world in the following words:

All people are created in the image of God and need to be treated with respect and dignity. Every nation and state have a right to peace, development, and security. Nobody is better than anyone else. No person or state has the right to claim special advantages for oneself, ignore the rights of others, or portray themselves as the world community by pressure and coercion. Asia, Africa, Europe, and America all have equal rights as citizens. The planet's more than 6 billion people are all on par and deserving of respect. The two cornerstones of sustaining global peace, stability, and calm are justice and the defence of human dignity. (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In the above quote from the speech, Ahmadinejad describes all the *“6 billion inhabitants of the world, no matter whether they are from Asia, Africa, Europe or America, as God’s creature bearing equal rights, equal privileges, and equal respect and so, no nation is superior or has the right to suppress or occupy another nations”* (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

## **B. Negative Other-Representation**

In order to resist the dominance of the US, Zionest Israel and other Western powers and their occupation of the Muslim nations as well as the occupation of the Security Council by the Western powers, Ahmadinejad portrays the western powers and the Security Council in a negativelight. The speech is primarily concerned with the three issues, including the unlimited expansion of chemical and nuclear weapons by the US, the warmongering attitude of the US and the occupation and misuse of the Security Council. Since the US uses these weapons as a threat to exert control over other nations, including Iran, Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, and many others, Ahmadinejad claims that the US has been developing its nuclear, chemical, and biological arms beyond bounds. He refers to these weapons as the instruments of coercion and threat against other peoples and governments (Ahmadinejad, 2006). They are the *“occupiers”* and *“aggressors”*, because they have occupied Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Palestine, Africa and Lebanon etc. forcefully by killing millions of innocent people in the said countries. In Palestine particularly, the Israel military people have occupied *Al-Qods Al-Sharif* and have established their regime there, and their regime has been established through *“a constant source of threat and insecurity in the Middle East region”* and has been used as a tool used to divide, oppress, and put pressure on the local population (Ahmadinejad, 2006). He opines that the US people do not want to establish peace in the region of Palestine because the members of the parliament are subject to imprisonment by the *“so-called champions of democracy”* and are not let to govern the region with peace

and security. But the major objection of Ahmadinejad in this speech is on the control and hijacking of the Security Council at the hands of these occupiers. He uses the phrase “*an instrument of threat and coercion*” for the Security Council because some of the Security Council’s permanent members are also involved in the international conflict and they use the council to occupy the lands and other sources of the oppressed countries. Just as in Lebanon, the Security Council gave the invaders a chance to accomplish their military goals. While for so many days, the Security Council watched helplessly and left millions of the innocent Lebanese people helpless (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

## **2. Authority**

In order to support their arguments and demonstrate that the members of their In-group are innocent and the members of their Out-group are mistaken, speakers often cite various superior or higher authorities in their speeches. Ahmadinejad cites a number of authorities in this address to defend the members of his In-group (Muslims) and to criticize the members of his Out-group (the US). Below is a quick discussion of the many authorities Ahmadinejad referred to in this speech.

In this speech, Ahmadinejad cites some religious authorities. He makes a reference to the power of the Almighty Allah right at the opening of his discourse. He firmly believes that Almighty Allah is the greatest force and that everything in the universe operates in accordance with His will. In this speech, he praises Almighty Allah for granting him the opportunity to represent the Muslim world, particularly Iran and to speak up for the rights of the Muslim world. In addition, he expresses his gratitude to Allah for arousing a sense of awareness of their due rights in the Muslims and for giving him the courage to join such international events and express his opinions about the rights of Muslims and to resist the oppression of the oppressors with courage and bravery. After expressing his gratitude to Almighty Allah, by stating that Allah, the Almighty, orders His creatures to promote goodness, piety and virtue rather than evil and corruption, he draws attention to the authority of Allah to spread the message of peace across the world. Then, in an effort to challenge the dominance and oppression of one group (Westerners) over another (Muslims), he asserts that the Almighty did not create human beings in order for them to transgress against and oppress others. In order to give a message of peace and to prove peace and justice over war and suppression, He mentions the names of Almighty Allah's holy prophets and asserts that all of them guided humanity to practice justice, affection and brotherhood (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In addition to the religious authority, he mentions the

government of Iraq and the National and International Assembly of Iraq as authorities that Iraq has established a lawful government and has been trying to eradicate insecurity in the region, but some overt as well as covert forces (the Western intelligence agencies) are trying to resist the efforts for security and peace in the region to be restored. He accuses America of injustice by saying that the continuation of foreign forces in Iraq is justified by the escalation of conflicts and the rise of terrorism. One of the major concerns of this speech is the lack of respect for the rights of the Muslim members of the General Assembly. Ahmadinejad claims that it is not the Muslim world, but the Western countries who have been using and excessively spreading their chemical, biological and nuclear weapons but still the Muslim countries are accused of it and the Western powers are given a green card regarding such activities. He mentions the IAEA and the NPT (whose aim is to keep the spread of nuclear weapons under control) as authorities to prove that Iran has never made an unfair attempt to spread their nuclear weapons and thus, he resists if Iran is accused of being involved in such activities. He says that The Islamic Republic of Iran is a signatory to the NPT and an IAEA member. All of our nuclear operations are open, peaceful, and monitored by IAEA inspectors (Ahmadinejad, 2006), but still Iran is unlawfully accused of being involved in the unfair extension of the said weapons.

### 3. Evidentiality

The world only believes in evidence—whether genuine or fake, opines Zeb (2015). In discourses, the producers of discourse provide various evidences in order to prove their arguments in favor of their in-group members and against their opponents. According to Athar (2018), evidences can be either in the form of information or in the form of examples, facts and figures, and such type of evidences may be collected from various authorities, institutions, or history. In this speech, Ahmadinejad has provided various evidences, particularly in the form of facts and figures, to reject the power abuse by the US. Some of the most valid evidentialities provided by him are briefly discussed below.

The very foundation and structure of this speech lie on evidentiality because this speech is all about the hegemony of the US and other Western powers and in order to prove the hegemony of the US, Ahmadinejad discusses three major issues which provide the base for this speech. He says; “*a quick look at a few of the most important worldwide problems might help to further highlight the issue*” and goes on to discuss the following three issues as evidentialities: the unchecked

development of nuclear and chemical weapons, the colonization of nations, and the disregard for the rights of those who belong to the world community (Ahmadinejad, 2006). Through these three evidences, Ahmadinejad tries to prove the US an oppressor and an enemy to human rights.

He provides certain evidences to resist the occupation of the Muslim countries by the US. For instance, Iraq and other countries have been under the US occupation for “*the last three years*”. In Palestine, “*the takeover of Al-Qods Al Sharif, the bombing of civilians in their own houses, and the kidnapping of parents' children in their own streets and alleyways*”. About Iraq, he argues that “*hundreds of people get killed in cold blood everyday*” (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

Similarly, speaking about the brutalities inflicted by the US in Palestine, he gives evidences from the past, i.e. *the Second World War* in which the occupation of Palestine was brought about by assault, conflicts, and the forced relocation of millions of its citizens. As a result, refugees continued to live in makeshift camps for too long, and many of them died while waiting for the day when they might return to their homeland. About Lebanon, he holds that the Lebanese were subjected to a bombardment of bombs and fire for 33 exhausting days, and 1.5 million of them lost their homes. But we saw that several Western states prevented the Security Council from even requesting a ceasefire. (Ahmadinejad, 2006)

Apart from this, he provides evidences to resist the hijacking of the Security Council at the hands of the Western Powers. He regards the existing global system as imbalanced because there are some powers who have grabbed the control of the Security Council and they are taking decisions about the *-180 countries* which is deemed by him an act of complete injustice.

#### 4. Generalization

In the production of discourse, the discourse producers take specific and minor instances of bad things practiced by the *-others* (out-group) and generalize them. In the same way, they make generalizations on the basis of specific instances of the good things done by the *-US* (In-group). Some of the examples of generalization used by Ahmadinejad in this speech are discussed and critically analyzed below.

The main objective of Ahmadinejad behind this speech is to prove that the present-day world is going to the worst situation of injustice, chaos, wars, blood shedding occupation of some nations by the hands of others. To intensify the situation, in the very beginning of this speech, he opines that and “*what afflicts humanity today is certainly not compatible with human dignity*”. Being the creatures of Almighty Allah, human

beings were not created to transgress against others and oppress them. These statements generalize the present-day situation of the world, as if there is no peace at all (Ahmadinejad, 2006)

As has been mentioned earlier in the analysis of this speech, Ahmadinejad resists the US dominance and the biased and uncontrolled expansion and production of the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons by the Western powers. About the Western dominance, he opines that they believe that they are the lords and rulers of the whole globe, and that other countries are subordinate to them in the global order. (Ahmadinejad, 2006), thus generalizing the idea that the entire world is in the control of the Western countries such as US, UK and the Zionists, etc. With regard to the Nuclear weapons, he puts a question into the consideration of the Assembly's members and says; "*how much longer must the world's population endure the horror of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons?*". In this question, he has talked about the *people of the world*, not only of the people of Iran or the Muslim world because he wants to generalize the unbiased and unjust production of the said weapons by the US and the use of those weapons for killing humanity, just as the US, in collaboration with the UK, had once detonated the deadly weapons over the two cities of Japan, namely Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on 6th and 9th August, 1945.

Ahmadinejad prefers peace and justice over wars and oppression. He states that "*people throughout the world are seeking justice and are ready to sacrifice their precious lives to get justice*" (Ahmadinejad, 2006). Through this generalized opinion, he gives a suggestion to the General Assembly that the "*Western powers*" should ensure and people's right to life and through peace and justice in the world and should try to win the minds and hearts of the people through promoting peace, compassion and justice rather than using the biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

## 5. Euphemism

According to Van Dijk (1998), the producers of discourses sometimes euphemize words in order to avoid the discrimination and negative opinions against the marginalized group and to show more politeness. In this speech, Ahmadinejad has not used any euphemistic strategy because it is full of harsh criticism, satirical remarks, and ironical questions about the US dominance and the role and responsibilities of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.

## 6. Disclaimer

Disclaimer is an indicator used by the producers of discourses to disclaim or disown some wrong deed, usually done by the out-group

members. By using this discursive strategy, the orators put the responsibility of the wrong things and deeds on the shoulders of the opponents and try to prove that they have nothing to do with those wrong things and wrong deeds. The various disclaimers used by Ahmadinejad used in this speech are as follows. Ahmadinejad, in the very beginning of the speech, makes an attempt to prove that the religion of Almighty Allah, i.e. Islam, has nothing to do with power abuse, oppression and transgression. He argues that did not create anyone to commit crimes against and oppress other people, and thus, makes the audience know that Islam is very much against illegal and unlawful acts such as oppression, occupation and suppression of other nations. He goes on to say that mankind today is unquestionably inconsistent with human dignity (Ahmadinejad, 2006), and since the Muslims and their religion are concerned with human dignity, so the suppression, wars, chaos and injustice in the world are not due to them, rather due to the Western people.

The laws and regulations for the extension and use of the nuclear weapons have never been violated by Iran. Ahmadinejad disclaims the violation of such international rules and regulations as he opines that “all of our nuclear operations are open, peaceful, and monitored by IAEA inspectors.” (Ahmadinejad, 2006) and puts the blame of violation on the shoulders of the US and Zionists by saying that the governments who profit from the fuel cycle and nuclear energy have objections on Iran ‘s legal rights.

## 7. Hyperbole

Exaggerating or overestimating the positive deeds of one's in-group and the negative deeds of one's out-group is known as hyperbole. The main function is to enhance meaning. In this speech, Ahmadinejad exaggerates many points in order to prove the out-group member wrong. For instance, he says that none of the international organization such as the Security Council defends the rights of the suppressed nations or opposes the acts of oppression and aggression, and resultantly, the oppressed nations have no one to seek justice from. Similarly, he argues that

*“Nothing suggests that the oppressors have the required political will to remove the roots of instability.”* (Ahmadinejad, 2006). Apart from this, the way he resists the expansion of the nuclear weapons by the US and the US hegemony in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and other Muslim countries is also full of exaggeration because he wants to show the real face of the US to the world.

## 8. Vagueness

According to Van Dijk (1998), the producers of discourses use vague statements in their discourses to hide the politically incorrect or contextually inappropriate points. In this speech, Ahmadinejad has used only one instance of vagueness. While speaking about and resisting the brutality of the Zionists in Palestine, he comes up with a vague statement and worst of all, this administration has received unjustified, widespread support (Ahmadinejad, 2006). He is actually stressing the point that it's not only the Zionists who are oppressing the innocent Palestinians, rather all the Western countries. He calls it an *"unwarranted support"* because the Security Council does not issue any warrant order to the oppressors for seizing the brutality brought by them in Palestine, but it may be politically incorrect and contextually inappropriate if he explicitly claims that the Security Council is not making an attempt to stop the oppressors from making the innocent Palestinians suffer, that is why, he makes the statement vague.

## 9. Presupposition

The discourse producers sometimes assume that something is already known to the audience and thus, they usually highlight the negative face of their out-group members. For example, at the start of this speech, Ahmadinejad asserts that the world's people, particularly the younger generations and the vibrant youth, have legitimate demands, such as rejecting violence and domination and standing up for the oppressed. They yearn for a world devoid of decadence, aggression, and injustice and overflowing with love and compassion (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In the above statement, the Iranian president has presupposed the very basic idea and the central concern of the entire speech. By saying that the people of the world have the legitimate demand to reject the aggression and domination, he actually presupposes that there are some nations in the present-day world who have become the aggressors and are dominating the other nations. Similarly, *demand for the defense of the oppressed* presupposes that there are some suppressed nations in the world who are helpless and need to be defended and the statement *"the younger generations who hope for a future devoid of violence and injustice"* (Ahmadinejad, 2006) presupposes the idea that the world is not free from aggression and injustice.

Similarly, by saying that *"The opposition is worried that exposing the truth will undercut the justification for this dictatorship."* (Ahmadinejad, 2006), the president assumes that the audience are well aware that there exist some hidden facts which, if exposed, would ruin the



cause of existence of the opponents' regime. Furthermore, it is said in the speech that "a review of the preceding historical realities" would let us know that aggression and oppression has victimized justice, thus the idea is presupposed that there do exist some harsh realities in the history, such as the brutalities, oppression and suppression brought by the oppressors upon the Muslim world. Moreover, speaking about the reformation of the order of the Security Council, he says that "the resulting balance would hopefully prevent further trampling of the rights of nations" (Ahmadinejad, 2006), thus presupposes that the Security Council has violated the rights of the nations for a long period of time.

## 10. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech and a discursive device in which the intended meaning of an expression is totally different than its literal meaning. In discourses, ironies are used to put emphasis on a point and to make a discourse more argumentative. It is worth noting that irony can be both explicit and implicit, but in both cases, they have a substantial effect on the meaning and credibility of a discourse. In the speech currently under investigation, Ahmadinejad uses several instances of irony in order to resist the US hegemony, but most of the ironies are in interrogative form, that means, in the form of rhetorical questions. Some of those examples are listed below:

i. *Is the creation and storage of these lethal weapons intended to advance democracy and peace? the development and stockpiling of these deadly weapons designed to promote peace and democracy?* (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In this example, by making use of an irony, he puts to question the purpose behind the production of the nuclear weapons by the US and opines peace and democracy can never be promoted with through the nuclear war or through threatening other nations using the chemical and nuclear weapons.

ii. *Can any United Nations member allow such a catastrophe taking place in their own country?* (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In the given ironical expressions, he is trying to make the oppressors stand in the shoes of the oppressed and encourage the audience to imagine if they themselves can bear the brutalities brought by them upon the innocent and helpless people of Palestine, thereby making the oppressors realize that they have ruined the lives of millions of innocent people in Palestine through their inhumane acts.

iii. *but neither a government nor the Security Council can provide them with any assistance or safety. Why?* (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

Again, in this implicit irony, Ahmadinejad criticizes the role and

ineffectiveness of the Security Council and argues that during the brutality brought upon Palestine by the oppressors, none of the organizations who are responsible for making peace in the world could make an attempt to stop the oppressors. He ironically terms the council as “*the so-called champions of democracy*” because apparently the council claims to be maintaining peace in the world, but when it comes to the oppression and occupation of the Muslim countries, the council does not play any role to stop the oppression and occupation.

iv. *Is the Security Council, which is responsible for sustaining international security, not dealing with a catastrophe of historic proportions?* (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

In this ironical statement about the role and functioning of the Security Council, Ahmadinejad resists the aloofness of the council that even if a Muslim country is being bombarded by the oppressors, the council does not even call for a cease fire, which is a complete and clear biasness and partiality of the council in the support of the oppressors because some of the oppressors themselves are the permanent members of the council.

## **11. Polarization**

Polarization is a discursive strategy which is used by the producers of discourses for separating the In-group members (US) from the out-group members (THEM). Through this strategy, the discourse producers either polarize people in to two binaries or ideas. Some of the binaries created by Ahmadinejad in this speech are briefly discussed below.

### **i. Oppression vs. Human Dignity**

According to Ahmadinejad, the subjugation of some of the nations by the hands of the others is completely against the norms of humanity. He opines that “*what afflicts humanity today is certainly not compatible with human dignity*” (Ahmadinejad, 2006). On the one hand, the world is experiencing conflict, wars and the oppression of the innocent people, such as Palestinians, Iraqis and the Lebanese people, by the hands of the aggressors, while on the other hand, there is humanity and human dignity, and according to Ahmadinejad, both these phenomena cannot exist together.

### **ii. Rich Exploiters vs. Poor Exploited People**

As a result of conflicts and wars, the nations of the world are polarized into two groups; the rich as exploiters and the poor as exploited people. He says: “some are quickly extending their dominance, gaining more riches, and seizing control of all the resources by inciting

conflict and violence, while others experience the ensuing poverty, pain, and misery.” (Ahmadinejad, 2006). To him, there are two type nations in the world and wars and conflict have completely different effects on them. On the one hand, there are the exploiters who are the producers of the wars and conflicts and through the wars, they are expanding their rulership, collecting wealth and keeping all the resources in their control. On the other hand, there are nations who are the victims of those conflicts and wars. To them, the wars bring poverty, misery and sufferings, such as the poor and innocent people of Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq. On another occasion in the same speech, he argues that “*some seek to rule the world relying on threats and weapons, while others live in danger and constant insecurity*” (Ahmadinejad, 2006), and thus, creates a binary between the warmongers and the victims of the wars. Hegoes on to make this binary rather further explicit and says:

“Others are subjected to daily bombardment in their own homes; their children are murdered in the streets and alleys of their own country, and their homes are reduced to ruins while some people occupy the homeland of others thousands of kilometers from their borders, meddle in their affairs, and control their oil and other resources and strategic routes.”. (Ahmadinejad, 2006)

### **iii. IAEA and NPT’s Rules; Favor for the United States vs Disfavor for Iran**

Ahmadinejad condemns and rather resists the partial and biased rules and regulation of the IAEA and NPT. These organizations are keeping a watchful eye on all the nuclear activities of Iran and are even violating the legal rights of the government of Iran while the US and other non-Muslim oppressors are given a free choice of producing and even using the chemical and nuclear weapons, which, according to Ahmadinejad, is a clear biasness and injustice on part of these organizations.

### **iv. The Security Council’s Rules; Favor for the Westerners vs Disfavor for Muslim**

The UN Security Council is an international organization which is responsible for maintaining peace and security in the world, but the role which this organization has been playing is very partial and biased. It favors the westerners, particularly, the people of the US and does not take into consideration the problems of the Muslim countries such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine into consideration. The organization claims to maintain justice, peace and security in the globe but when it comes to the oppression and exploitation of the Muslim countries by the hands of the

United States and the Zionists, the Council turns a deaf ear to the problems of the Muslim nations. The reason behind this partiality and biasness, according to Ahmadinejad, is that some of many of the permanent members of the council belong to the western countries who themselves are the chief oppressors, as a result, the Council fails to take any action against the brutalities brought by these western nations on the innocent and peaceful citizens of the Muslim countries.

#### **v. The Bitter Events of Present vs The Sweet Events of Future**

He draws a clear line between the bitter and tough era of wars the world has been going through and the expected and desired era of peace and justice in the future by saying that “Together, we can destroy the causes of unpleasant illnesses and diseases so that our countries might experience the sweetness of a brighter future.” (Ahmadinejad, 2006). This polarization shows that instead of supporting bitter events such as conflicts and wars, he is in favor of peace and is still hopeful for the sweet and better events. Such bitter time can be eradicated and the better and sweet events can be achieved only through the promotion of spirituality, values and justice.

### **12. Victimization**

Victimization is a discursive strategy in which the discourse producers present their in- group members as the victims of the wrong deeds performed by the out-group members. In this speech, Ahmadinejad presents the Muslim nations as the victims of the brutality brought upon them by the western nations such as the US and the Zionists. Few instances of victimization highlighted by him in this speech include: in Palestine, *the occupation of its land through war, bombardment of its inhabitants in their own homes and murdering the innocent children in their own streets, the imprisonment or besieging million of its citizens and turning them into refugees, the occupation of Al-Qods Al-Sharif, and the illegal abduction of the ministers and members of its parliament*; in Lebanon, *keeping the people under the barrage of fire and bombs for thirty- three long days and displacement of about 1.5 million people*; and in Iran, *the violation of the legally recognized rights by the IAEA and NPT*, and so on (Ahmadinejad, 2006).

### **Findings and Conclusions**

In this research, the researchers explored the rhetoric of the Iranian president Ahmadinejad from the perspective of discourse, power and resistance. In this regard, a number of discursive strategies used by Ahmadinejad in his rhetoric were highlighted and it was found that

Ahmadinejad resists the hegemony of the US in a very significant way. As discussed in the analysis above, he has represented the Muslim world in a very positive way while the western powers, in a very negative tone. In addition, he has mentioned several authorities in order to prove his views stance in favor of the ingroup members and against the outgroup ones. Furthermore, he has given evidences, disclaimed the wrong doings done by the western powers, and has generalized and exaggerated the good deeds done by the ingroup members and the wrong doings done by the outgroup members to polarize between the two groups. The aim of using all these discursive strategies was to prove the Muslim world as victims by the hands of the western powers and to make the real face of the western powers explicit to the masses.

Ahmadinejad's speech underwent a critical discourse analysis that employed the hegemony in some way. He said that at the moment, a front against hegemony and imperialism was forming. He also underlined the need for all free nations and citizens seeking justice to unite in opposition to the prevailing structure and way of thinking. In order to illustrate the third concept—that discourse constitutes culture and society—CDA analyses how political connections are performed and contested within and around speech. This study looked at how productive people may be against the might of the USA. Since then, Ahmadinejad has made an effort to return to the fundamental principles and combative political approach of the early Islamic revolution.

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