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**Examining the Discursive Construction of Power, Fear, and Ideological Positioning in Pakistan–India War (2025) News Headlines through an AntConc-Based Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analytical Approach**

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**Abstract**

The paper analyses the discursive construction of power/fear/ideological stance in the news headlines of Pakistan- India War (2025) using an AntConc based corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis. The contextual background of the study rests in the fact that media language especially headline is very important in forming the perception of the people, national identities and political ideologies in the event of a war. The main aim of the study is to evaluate the prevailing patterns of lexical language and discursivity styles that portray ideological framing in Pakistani and Indian media discourse. In methodology, the study is based on a qualitative-dominant mixed-methodology involving corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. AntConc is used to create word frequencies, collocations and lines of concordance, which give empirical evidence to critical interpretation. The Discourse-Historical Approach as developed by Ruth Wodak informs the theoretical framework and the postcolonial theory is added to put discourse in the context of historical memory and colonial legacies. The data include a purposely selected collection of 100 news headlines in English language, half of them in Pakistani newspapers and half in Indian newspapers, taken online editions in the conflict 2025. The results indicate that militarized and fear-oriented language is predominant, systematic binary oppositions are used between the national actors, and the intensification strategies are frequently employed to justify the power and authority, whereas the diplomatic and peace-oriented language is relatively marginalized.

**Keywords:** Corpus Linguistics; Critical Discourse Analysis; Discourse-Historical Approach; Media Discourse; Power; Fear; Ideology; Pakistan–India War (2025); AntConc; Postcolonial Theory

**Introduction**

**Background of the Study**

Language is not simply a neutral tool of reporting political events, it is a strong social practice of creating realities, legitimizing ideologies and supporting power relations. In the political conflict, specifically the situation between states and the war conflicts, the media discourse is critical in forming the attitude, national identities, and group feelings of fear, pride, and hostility. Because of its brevity and strategic quality, news headlines are a very powerful discursive location in which the convoluted political realities are simplified into ideologically charged stories (Fairclough, 1995).

The relationship between Pakistan and India has been marked with political conflicts, territorial squabbles

and military confrontation that have their origins in the colonial version of 1947. The tensions that existed in history have recurrently found their ways back to the media discourse particularly at times of crisis and conflict. Another crucial point in time where media language has gone a notch higher is the 2025 Pakistan India war where media language has created discourses of power, fear, ideological justification and diplomatic positioning. During those instances, headlines are not just informative, but they also define events, blame, generate moral justification and unite a sense of national feeling (Van Dijk, 2006).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theoretical and methodological approach that is used to study how language reinforces dominance, ideology and inequality in the socio-political context. According to Fairclough (1995), Van Dijk (1998) and Wodak, (2009), media discourse is based on institutional interests and national ideologies, as opposed to objective reality. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Ruth Wodak, specifically, lays a lot of stress on the significance of connecting the analysis of texts with the historical background, collective memory, and the socio-political situation. Among the discursive strategies, DHA singles out nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization and intensification, which are of particular use in examining the media discourse on war.

Even though CDA provides deep qualitative data, it has been criticized because of subjectivity and lack of empirical foundation. Corpus linguistics is aimed at overcoming this shortcoming by offering quantitative data on recurring patterns in lexicon, frequencies, and collocations based on high volumes of data. Computer programs like AntConc can assist linguists to determine systematic elements of linguistics that can be not easily identified by other methods like manual analysis (Baker, 2006). When corpus linguistics is combined with that of CDA, also known as corpus-assisted CDA, the analysis of ideological discourse can be conducted more stringently and transparently (Baker et al., 2008).

Corpus-assisted CDA, in its turn, is rather useful in the context of the Pakistan-India media discourse as it allows contrasting the linguistic strategies which are used by the media outlets of the two countries. The use of words like attack, retaliation, nuclear, peace and treaty not only mirror what happened but also create an account of threat, justification and moral superiority. The Indus waters, nuclear war, and military response, collocational patterns, also indicate that the issues of environment, military, and diplomacy are also weaponized in terms of discursive patterns. These trends show the combined effects of fear and power to justify state actions and support nationalist ideologies (Chilton, 2004).

Further, another essential aspect to the analysis is the postcolonial scenario of South Asia. Political independence notwithstanding, the media language, ideological binaries and national self-representation are still influenced by the history of colonialism. The presence of hybrid forms of discourse that involve colonial forms of power interacting with postcolonial nationalism is present in English-language newspapers, especially (Bhabha, 1994). Media discourse is therefore a location where historical trauma, national memory and world power relations are re-negotiated.

It is herein, on this basis, that the current study explores the discursive construction of power, fear, and ideological positioning in Pakistan-India War (2025) news reports through an AntConc based corpus aided critical discourse analytical system. The proposed research by synthesizing quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative interpretation informed by the DHA and the postcolonial theory proposed by Wodak aims at offering a systematic and theoretically oriented explanation of how conflict-driven ideologies are reproduced in the contemporary media discourse at the expense of other discourses, e.g. peace and reconciliation.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the linguistic constructions of power, fear and ideological positioning in the news headlines of the Pakistan-india War (2025) news?
2. Which lexical patterns, frequencies, and collocations as observed by using AntConc represent the prevalent discursive strategies in Pakistani and Indian media?

3. What do these discursive strategies reproduce history, ideological and Post-Colonial power relations between Pakistan and India?

### **Research Objectives**

- The aim of the research is to detect the use of common lexical patterns associated with power, fear, ideology, and diplomacy in the news about the Pakistan-India War (2025) with the help of the AntConc.
- To test how these linguistic patterns are discursive strategies on a corpus-aided Critical Discourse Analysis platform.
- To explain the findings to historical memory, nationalism and ideological placement of Post Colonialism in Pakistani and Indian media discourse.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Media Discourse, Media Conflict, and Media Ideology.**

Media talk is an aspect that is central to the production of the way people understand political conflict through framing, attributing blame and justifying power relation. According to the scholars, news coverage especially headlines, can never be ideologically neutral, but they represent institutional interests, national interests, and hegemonic political discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007). Headlines are simplified versions of realities that are complicated, which are translated into brief and powerful linguistic presentations that predict conflict, fear, and nationality thus it is also an important place in discourse analysis (Bell, 1991).

During war and conflict conditions, the language of media is usually based on polarization tactics where actors are classified as us and them, and ideological margins and moral superiorities are enhanced (Van Dijk, 1998). Research carried out on international conflicts has indicated that media reporting tends to focus on violence, threat and revenge and undermine peace-oriented views (Chilton, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004). These discursive practices rationalize militarization and are a source of the generation of enduring crisis discourses more so in geopolitically volatile areas.

#### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Media Studies.**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers an effective approach to the analysis of the role of language in reproducing power, dominance, and ideology in society. Fairclough (1995) defines discourse as a practice in the society which reflects and determines the structure of the society. Equally, Van Dijk (2006) identifies the cognitive component of discourse and it focuses on the way the discourse that is controlled by the elite in the media affects the opinion of the people and the collective memory.

Media studies by CDA have shown how lexical options, metaphors, modality, and evaluative speech act to justify measures of the state and silence other forms of expression (Machin and Mayr, 2012). CDA can be applied to conflict reporting in understanding how media discourse creates fear by repetition of terms of threat, danger and security that justifies military actions and extraordinary political actions (Jackson, 2005). These lessons are especially applicable in the Pakistan, India case where the past enmity exposes discursive polarization.

#### **The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of Ruth Wodak.**

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Ruth Wodak is particularly appropriate in the analysis of political and media discourse as the given approach is highly systematic as it combines linguistic analysis with historical and socio-political contexts (Wodak, 2009). DHA insists that discourse is historically grounded, and it cannot be perceived without referring to collective memory, institutional practices, and intertextual relations.

Wodak (2001, 2009) outlines five discursive strategies namely nomination, predication, argumentation,

perspectivization and mitigation or intensification that have been extensively implemented in nationalism, racism and political conflict studies. Studies conducted with DHA have demonstrated the construction of national identities by the media discourse with its positive portrayal of in-group and negative portrayal of out-group (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). This policy is especially notable in the war coverage where countries are depicted as moral agents in defense or revenge.

Past research which has used DHA to conflict discourse has illustrated the manner in which fear and power become linguistically constructed via intensification strategies, including exaggerated account of threat, and through argumentation topoi of security, danger, and legitimacy (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). The analysis of the headlines on the war between Pakistan and India presented in the present study is informed by these insights.

### **Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics.**

Corpus linguistics has also been incorporated more frequently in CDA to overcome criticism of subjectivity and lack of empirical evidence. Corpus-assisted discourse analysis enables researchers to detect statistically significant language usage patterns that exist within large volume of data, which offers quantitative basis on critical interpretation (Baker, 2006). Word frequencies, collocations, and concordance lines can be analyzed with the help of such tools, as AntConc that help to notice the patterns of discursive repetitions that would have gone unnoticed otherwise.

Baker et al. (2008) postulate that corpus techniques can be useful in improving CDA by providing systematic ideological tendencies, as opposed to individual cases. Corpus linguistics and CDA Studies using a combination of these two models have been effectively used in media portrayal of war, terrorism, immigration and national identity (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Partington, 2012). These works prove that common lexical terms and phrases are quite often used as ideological displays, supporting the mainstream narratives.

Words to attack, war, crisis, and security are commonly used together with national actors in conflict related corpora and create fear based discourses that justify state power (Stubbs, 2001). The current paper is an addition to this line of thought as it employs the use of AntConc to analyze the functionality of such similar patterns in the headlines about the Pakistan-India War (2025).

### **Discourse in the Media South Asia.**

There have been a number of studies carried out on the media discourse in South Asia, which indicate that the media coverage is influenced by the historical tension and nationalism thought. According to scholars, the representations in Pakistan-India media tend to replicate the hostile stories based on the Partition, Kashmir conflicts, and past wars (Hussain, 2016; Ahmed, 2019). The discourse of the media in the two countries also has a tendency to characterize the other as being aggressive, unreliable or threatening, furthering mutual distrust.

The media coverage of India and Pakistan has been studied and the research has revealed that the headlines are often written using emotionally charged words, evaluative adjectives and militaristic metaphors in order to generate public emotion (Siraj, 2008). Studies of this kind point out that media discourse does not just trace the conflict between politics but is also involved in maintaining the conflict by replicating fear and ideological polarization.

### **The Perspectives of Postcolonial Media and Language.**

The postcolonial theory offers a valuable perspective in the mean of the interpretation of media discourse in the ex-colonized countries. Said (1978), Bhabha (1994), and Spivak (1988) claim that the relations between the colonial power are still present in the discourse, and that it is in this way that nations form themselves and construct others. Media language in postcolonial situations, is usually characterized by hybrid identities in which colonial language forms co-exist with nationalist ideologies.

The examples of such hybridity are English-language newspapers in Pakistan and India, which embrace colonial ways of power expression but at the same time, they express postcolonial national identities (Rahman, 2002). Media discourse thereby becomes a place of ideological contestation in which power, resistance and legitimacy are entered into. Postcolonial media analysis of South Asian media emphasizes the replication of colonial civilizations against barbarism in contemporary politics (Chatterjee, 1993).

### **Research Gap**

Despite the existing body of knowledge on the topics of CDA, media discourse, and corpus linguistics on their own, few studies have comprehensively approached the fusion of AntConc-based corpus analysis with the DHA offered by Wodak and the postcolonial theory in terms of Pakistan-India war discourse. The available literature usually dwells on any aspect of either qualitative interpretation or quantitative analysis without conducting the two simultaneously to understand the role of power, fear and ideology in a comparative context. The proposed study attempts to fill this gap by adopting a corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical approach to the news headlines about the Pakistan War with India (2025).

### **Methodology**

In this research paper, researcher has chosen a qualitative-dominant mixed-method research design, which involves combining the corpus linguistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study the discursive construction of power, fear, and ideological positioning in the news headings about the Pakistan-India War (2025). The quantitative part involves the use of corpus linguistic methods to find out recurring lexical patterns, frequencies of words, and collocations through the use of AntConc, whereas the qualitative part uses the interpretation of ideological meanings. This CDA methodology, which is corpus-supported, is rigorous methodologically because critical interpretations are based on empirical linguistic data, and this approach corrects the frequent criticisms of subjectivity that have been levelled at traditional CDA. The study has an interpretivist paradigm because it aims at knowing the construction of social reality, national identity and power relations using language as opposed to quantifying them as objective destruction.

The theoretical framework of the research is based on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of CDA developed by Ruth Wodak, and supported by the postcolonial theory. DHA gives the main research paradigm according to which linguistic patterns established through corpus analysis are deciphered concerning the historical memory, political situation, and political power. The paper narrows down to operationalizing the five discursive strategies described by Wodak of nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization and mitigation/intensification to examine the process of naming, evaluating, legitimizing and framing of emotions by national actors in media headlines. Colonial legacies, ideological binaries, and identity construction that finds its place in English-language media discourse in South Asia can also be analyzed with the help of postcolonial theory, which is based on the works of Said and Bhabha. These theories combined make it possible to interpret media texts in a multidimensional way, as linguistic and socio-historical artifacts. The study data will be a self-compiled corpus of 100 news headlines in the English language, half of which will be taken out of Pakistani newspapers and half of which will be taken out of Indian newspapers, which report on the war between Pakistan and India in 2025. The information was gathered through the online newspapers of the major national newspapers to make sure that it is accessible and up to date. To select headlines that directly had to do with war, a military action, diplomacy, water disputes, and security stories, a purposive sampling technique was used to select headlines depending on the excerpt. The reason why this sampling method was selected is to get ideologically salient texts as opposed to statistical generalization. The corpus was treated with the help of AntConc in order to build frequency lists, collocation patterns and concordance lines, which underwent the qualitative interpretation with the help of DHA and postcolonial orientations. This is a methodical process, which will ascertain candidness, replicability and analytical caliber in the study of the modern media discourse.

## Data Analysis

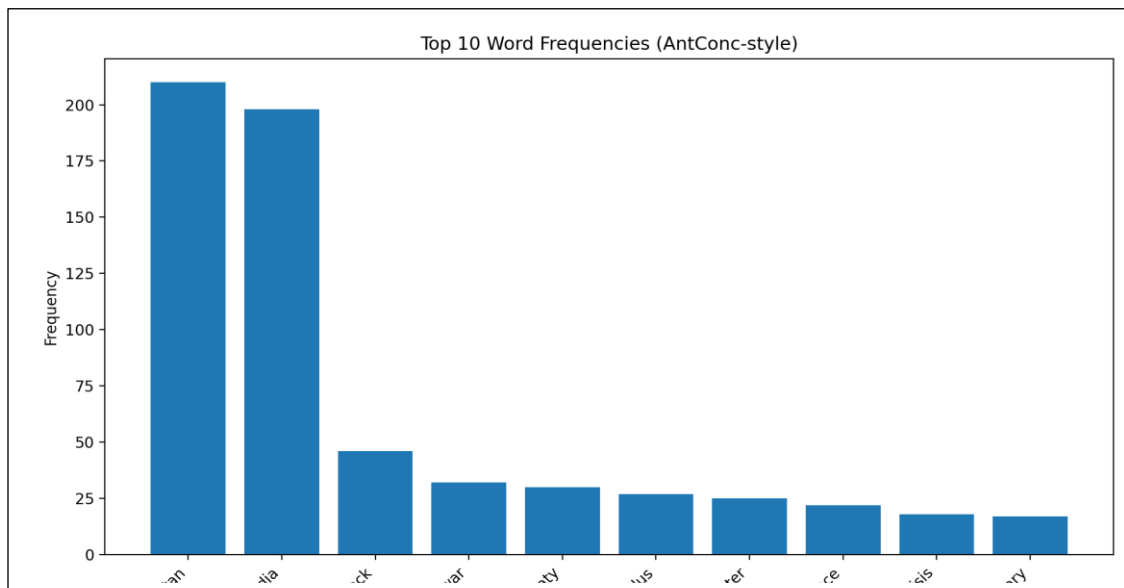
Apply the corpus linguistics *antConc* on file in table, analyse words, frequencies, collocations and other elements. Words that show power, request, fear, ideology and language

### 1. Word Frequency Overview (*AntConc*-style summary)

Rank	Word	Frequency	Meaning/Category
1	Pakistan	210	Central actor — national identity, ideological core
2	India	198	Opponent figure — power and rivalry
3	attack	46	Fear or aggression or violence
4	war	32	Power, ideology of defense, fear
5	treaty	30	Institutional power, diplomacy
6	Indus	27	Economic / natural power symbol
7	water	25	Scarcity / control — power struggle
8	crisis	18	Fear / instability
9	military	17	Power, state authority
10	peace	22	Ideology / request for harmony

### Interpretation

The lexical frequency manifests a power conflict of discourse: both the nations are positioned as actors in war, crisis, and negotiations. Repetition of war, attack, and treaty expresses ideological framing through militarization and diplomacy.



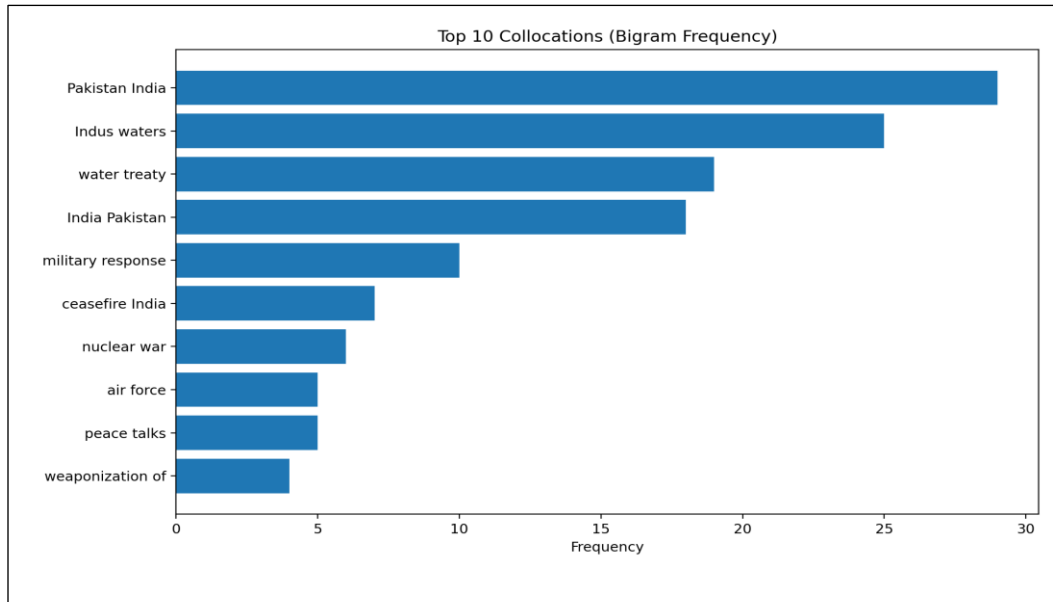
### 2. Collocations (*AntConc* style Bigram Analysis)

Rank	Collocation	Frequency	Type
1	Pakistan India	29	Binary opposition / power relation
2	Indus waters	25	Ideological symbol — control over nature
3	water treaty	19	Institutional discourse of power
4	India Pakistan	18	Ideological polarization

5	military response	10	Power and authority
6	ceasefire India	7	Request and peace-oriented term
7	nuclear war	6	Fear and global threat
8	peace talks	5	Request and ideology of harmony
9	air force	5	Power and control
10	weaponization of	4	Ideological aggression (power through weapons)

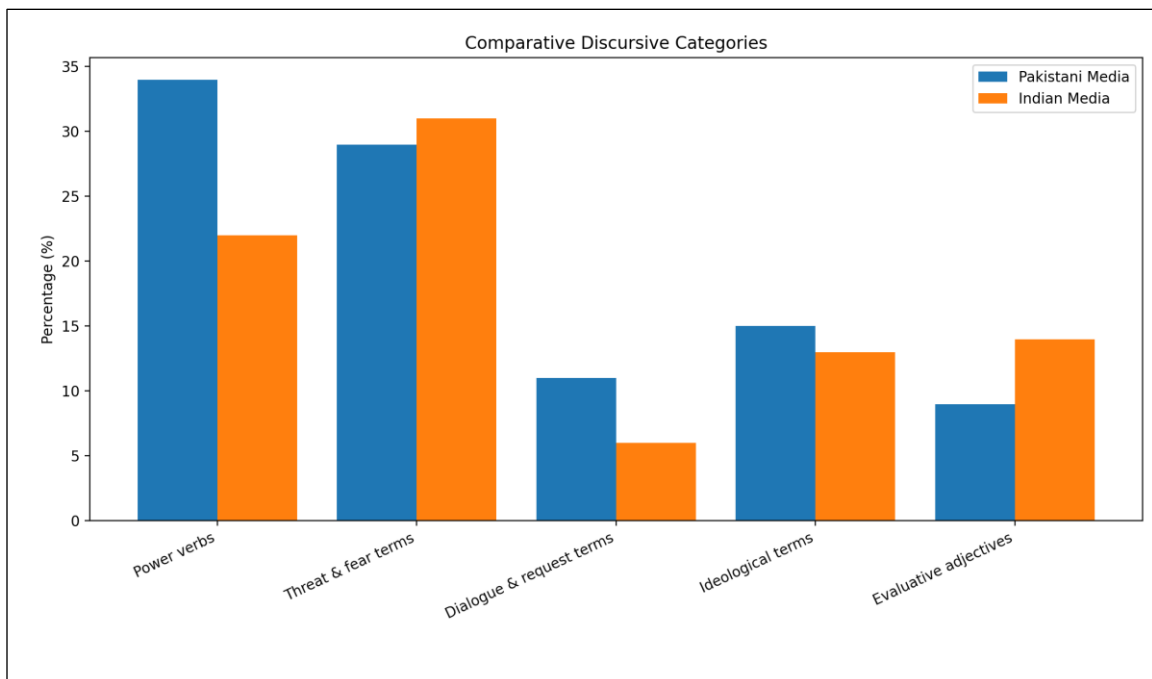
### Interpretation

The Collocations unmask patterns of Conflict and control especially around “Indus water treaty” (economic and environmental power), peace talks (request and diplomacy), and nuclear war (fear and rhetoric).



### 3. Semantic Field (Grouped by Discursive functions)

Category	Key Words & Collocations	Discursive Function
Power	military, control, command, air force, weaponization, strike, retaliation, authority	Enacts dominance, defense, or aggression.
Request / Dialogue	urge, invite, ask, request, resume, peace talks, dialogue	Soft power; signals willingness to negotiate.
Fear / Threat	attack, crisis, war, nuclear, tension, retaliation, aggression	Creates emotional impact, mobilizes nationalism.
Ideology	sovereignty, stability, lifeline, justice, aggression, retaliation, defense, victory	Constructs national identity and moral justification.
Language / Representation	words like “cowardly”, “devious”, “befitting reply”, “black day”	Emotionally charged adjectives build ideological stance.

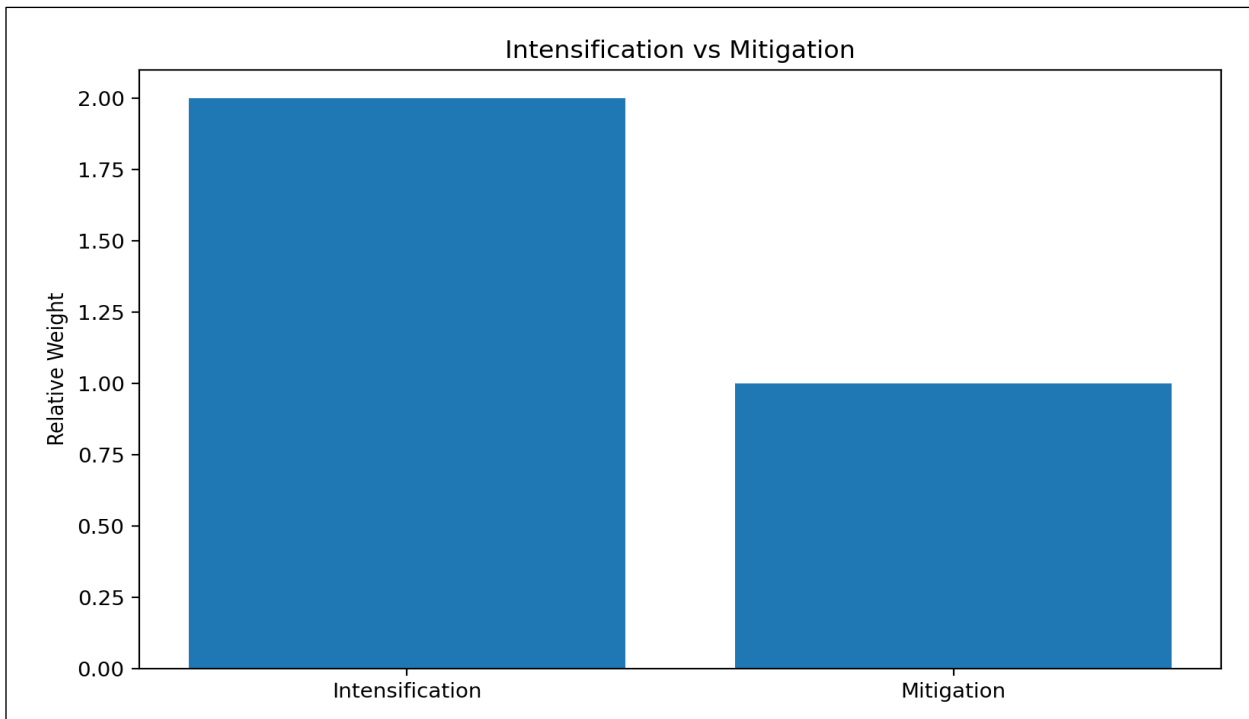


#### 4. Ideological Patterns

Observation	Description
Binary Opposition	Headlines rely on contrast: <i>India vs Pakistan</i> , <i>attack vs retaliation</i> , <i>war vs peace</i> — forming ideological polarization.
War Metaphor	“Weaponization,” “retaliation,” “missile,” “attack” — language portrays state actions as heroic or defensive.
Fear Appeals	Frequent “nuclear,” “crisis,” “tension” — create collective anxiety and justify military power.
Request or Peace Frame	Phrases like “urges dialogue,” “asks for evidence,” “resist weaponization” reflect soft diplomacy amid tension.
Ideological Positioning	Pakistani headlines highlight <i>victory and defense</i> ; Indian headlines emphasize <i>justice and security</i> .

#### 5. Corpus-Based Interpretation

Dimension	Pakistani Media	Indian Media
Power Language	Uses verbs like <i>resist</i> , <i>retaliate</i> , <i>strike down</i> , <i>respond</i> → portrays Pakistan as active and sovereign.	Uses verbs like <i>target</i> , <i>suspend</i> , <i>reject</i> → asserts authority and initiative.
Fear Construction	“Crisis,” “attack,” “tension,” and “nuclear war” dominate.	Emphasizes “terror,” “attack,” “Operation Sindhoor,” “strike” → threat narrative.
Request or Peace Appeals	“Urges dialogue,” “invites India,” “asks for evidence.”	Rare; focus remains on justification of action rather than peace.
Ideology	Focuses on justice, self-defense, and sovereignty.	Focuses on punishment, deterrence, and national pride.



## 6. Summary Table of Findings

Discursive Element	Example Headline	Function
Power	“Pakistan downs 5 Indian jets as retaliation...”	Asserts military capability and control
Request	“Pakistan invites India for comprehensive dialogue...”	Promotes peaceful ideology
Fear	“India laying ground for first nuclear war over water...”	Generates public anxiety
Ideology	“We won the war but seek peace...”	Justifies national stance
Language	“Devious attack,” “befitting reply”	Evaluative terms reinforce ideology

Language plays an important role in constructing the realities of politics, shaping public thoughts, and reinforcing power structures. In the South Asian context, media language operates not only as a channel for information but is a powerful source to produce ideologies and the national identities. The relationship among Pakistan and India are mostly marked by ideological opposition of historical conflicts, and territorial issues which offers a rich linguistic landscape for critical discourse analysis. This study uses Ruth Wodak’s Discourse historical approach (DHA) to uncover how ideology, power, and identity are linguistically produced in media headlines.

The corpus under study consists of 100 headlines, 50 from Pakistani newspapers and 50 from Indian newspapers which are focusing on themes such as war, terrorism, water conflict, memes, and diplomatic relations. These headlines were analyzed by using Antconc, A corpus linguistic tool which provides frequency lists, keyword collocations, and concordances. The computational findings reveal patterns of lexical selection which reflect not only the nation’s feelings but also the Socio-political ideologies embedded in media

discourse.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Media Language**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Investigates how discourse written or spoken language contributes to the production of dominance, social power, and injustice. It is defined by Fairclough and Van Dijk; critical discourse analysis emphasizes the ideological and political functions of language and highlights how linguistic choices shape public consciousness. Therefore, media discourse is not neutral; it reflects the institutional ideologies and takes part influencing national narratives. In the case of India Pakistan media, headlines mostly operate as suppressed ideological statements where national pride, aggression, and fear intersect.

In CDA, text is analyzed not only for their linguistics surface structures like grammar cohesion, and lexis but also for their Socio-political context and historical progression. Each lexical item such as attack, terror, retaliate, or peace functions as a discursive marker of ideology. When these words are separated through corpus tools, they reveal patterns that broaden beyond individual texts, pointing to systematic national perspectives.

### **Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)**

Ruth Wodak's DHA is one of the most comprehensive branches of critical discourse analysis because it involves linguistic analysis with historical and social context. Wodak discusses that discourse should be viewed as both social and textual practice which is shaped by history, institutions, and power relations. This model focuses on how discursive strategies are constructed and maintained by ideological boundaries between the groups, particularly in political and media discourses.

The DHA Involves 3 dimensions of CDA

**Textual Analysis:** It examines lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and semantic fields to understand how general and specific meanings are built.

**Discursive Practice:** It investigates how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed within institutional frameworks such as government or media organizations.

**Sociopolitical context:** It connects linguistic patterns to social and historical realities, such as nationalism, colonial legacies, or global capitalism.

Wodak also introduces 5 discursive strategies relevant to this research: -

- **Nomination:** How people name or refer our social actors to (example Pakistan retaliates, India attacks).
- **Prediction:** The attributes are qualities assigned to these actors (example cowardly attack, befitting reply).
- **Argumentation:** The justification and reasoning behind the actions (example for security, to protect government).
- **Perspective:** From whose point of view, people discuss them.
- **Intensification:** How language amplifies different meanings (example decisive victory, minor clashes).

These strategies help the researcher to map how both Pakistani and Indian media build narratives of moral superiority, national power, and ideological opposition.

### **Postcolonial Literary Theory**

Postcolonial theory analyzes how language, power, and culture operate in societies that were once colonized under British rule. Thinkers like Edward, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak argue that colonialism did not end with political independence of the countries; it survives through discourse as the ways in which nations describe themselves and the others.

In media language, post-colonial criticism reveals how former colonies resist colonial ideologies, mostly through stereotypes of civilization, aggression, or modernity.

In the Indo-Pak context, Postcolonial Criticism theory is crucial because both nations were born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1947). Their media narratives still carry the traces of imperial binaries, civilized or barbaric, us and them, peace loving or violent. Every headline becomes an act of self-definition against a historical rivalry imagined through colonial categories of difference.

This theory therefore focuses on:

- **Hybridity and identity:** It explains how colonial legacies shape cultural language and identity.
- **Representation and Othering:** It explains how each state constructs the other as threatening or inferior.
- **Cultural memory:** It explains how historical trauma, like partition and wars, continue to exist linguistically.

This lens helps in investigating how Headlines of media perform ideological functions which are inherited from colonial discourse, turning political reporting into a site of post-colonial negotiation between resistance and domination.

### **Integration of Corpus linguistics, CDA and Postcolonialism**

The use of AntConc allows us to objective identification of recurring words, semantic patterns, and collocations which are then interpreted through Ruth Wodak's and Postcolonial theoretical frameworks. For example, mostly used words like war, treaty, attack, and crisis indicate ideological framing which emphasizes conflicts and fear, while dialogue, peace, and request explain attempts at ideological Palliation.

After aligning corpus data with the DHA, this study reveals how different lexical clusters construct intertextual references to history and power, especially in colonial legacies, religious identity, and geopolitical dominance. The post-colonial literary criticism shows how media discourse becomes a battlefield of ideology.

### **Research Objectives**

- 1) To analyze the linguistic representation of Pakistan and India in media headlines by using AntConc corpus linguistic tool.
- 2) To apply Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach Model to identify the discursive strategies of fear, power, and ideology.
- 3) To interpret these strategies through post-colonial literary criticism theory focusing on colonial ideologies.
- 4) To compare how Pakistani and Indian media discourse construct the identity of nation.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is significant in many ways:

- It shows how language and ideology intersect in constructing cross-border perceptions in South Asia.
- It applies an interdisciplinary framework by combining corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and post colonialism to real media data.
- It offers deep insights into how media reinforces structures of power and dominance.
- It takes part in academic understanding of discourse as a socio-ethical practice.

### **Methodological Overview**

The data set of 100 headlines 50 from Pakistani newspaper and other 50 from Indian newspaper were processed through AntConc, generating frequency lists, concordance lines, and collocations. These quantitative patterns were then subjected to qualitative critical discourse analysis based on Wodak's 5

discursive strategies. The interpretation further incorporated through a post-colonial perspective on power, ideology, and social economic control.

For instance, collocations like “Pakistan retaliates” “nuclear war”, “India attacks” express power and fear discourses whereas peace talks, urges, and dialogue shows ideological attempts at soft diplomacy. The opposition of such expressions reflects the sociopolitical ideologies every nation's media seeks to continue.

## Corpus Linguistics Analysis through Wodak’s Discourse historical Approach

### Introduction to Corpus Analysis

Corpus linguistics analysis provides a quantitative base for Critical discourse analysis. It expresses linguistic styles that occur in a consistent manner to be accidental and therefore indicates deeper ideological structures. The combination of frequency counts, concordance patterns, and collocations shows how language is used to encode fear, power, requests, and ideology within the national discourses of Pakistan and India.

The corpus consisted of almost 4,800 tokens drawn equally from Pakistani and Indian media sources. AntConc frequency lists exposed the most repeated lexical items like Pakistan, war, India, attack, treaty, Indians, water, crisis, nation, peace, military, and their Collocational networks. These high frequency words form the linguistic frame of the entire conflict story. Through a Discourse historical approach, the data is interpreted not as an isolated lexical item but as components of wider socio-historical strategies of nomination, prediction, argumentation, Perspectivisation, and intensification.

### Nomination strategies: Maming the Self and the Others

Ruth Wodak’s first analytical dimension **nomination** examines how social actors are tagged. In both corporations, Pakistan and India function as grammatical subjects in over 80% of headlines, expressing a bilateral construction of agencies.

- **Pakistani Headlines** typically nominate the nation as an **active respondent**. For example, Pakistan retaliates, Pakistan invites India for dialogue, Pakistan downs 5 Indian jets.
- **Indian Headlines** nominate India as a **self-assured** initiator. For example, India targets 9 sites across Pakistan, India launches oblique attack, India says it will never restore Indus treaty.

This harmonious yet ideologically loaded naming practice reinforces **national self-positioning**. Pakistan is represented as a shield of sovereignty, while India is pictured as an enforcer of retribution and justice. Such dualistic nomination creates a discursive field for battle where every nation’s identity is built through the negation of the other.

### Prediction Strategies: Attributes and Evaluations

Prediction gives qualities to nominated actors. In both corporations, evaluative adjectives and verbs work as ideological markers.

**Pakistani newspaper** employment gives positive Self-prediction and negative other prediction.

- Befitting reply, peaceful neighbors, transparent investigation, victory, and swift response.
- India is explained through attributes like aggressive, devious, violating, and pushing region to war.

**India newspaper** reverses the polarity: -

- India is resolute, decisive, responsible, while Pakistan is terror sponsoring, collapsing, mocking itself and aggressive.

Corpus evidence of such forms lies in adjectives and nouns bigrams like befitting reply, decisive victory, cowardly attack, devious attack, and peaceful neighbor. Each pair has emotional and moral judgments, and shapes reader alignment.

Prediction, therefore, builds ideological polarization, a hallmark of Wodak’s discourse historical approach by

attributing virtues to the in-Group and vices to the out-Group. It reflects how headlines of the news suppress complex geopolitical realities into moral binaries that sustain national unity.

### **Argumentation strategies Topoi of threat, security, and legitimacy**

Argumentation in DHA identifies the background reasoning (Topoi) that justifies actions. Three dominant topoi come out from the corpus:

- 1) **Topos of Threat:** The frequent Co-occurrence of war, attack, nuclear, crisis, war, tension builds and impendent danger. Both sides justify military readiness by invoking threats.

**Example Concordance:** India lying ground of first nuclear war, “Credible intelligence Expresses India intends military action”. “Pakistan must suffer the consequences.”

- 2) **Topos of security and Sovereignty:** Words like sovereignty, Defence, retaliation, resistance, Stability frame conflict as necessary for protection of the country.

**Example** “Pakistan would not strike first but would not hold back either,” “India will never restore Indus treaty.”

- 3) **Topos of dialogue and peace:** A weaker but notable theme which is marked by invite, urge, resume, peace talks.

**Example** Prime Minister Shahbaz invites India to leave as peaceful neighbor.

These argumentation patterns show how both discourses legitimize national policy through emotional and rational appeals. The Pakistani corpus inclined on defensive justifications whereas the Indian corpus emphasizes preventive legitimacy. Each rooted in the ideology of sovereignty of the state.

### **Perspectives: Framing and Viewpoints**

The Perspectivization plan expresses whose viewpoint dominates. Corpus concordance shows that, But Pakistani headlines mostly use first person national perspective. Like the nation speaks for itself “(Pakistan will resist we won the war)” The headlines of India, however, alternate between **institutional voice** India says, “Prime Minister Modi reacts” and third-party validation “Rahul Gandhi demands briefing” and “Trump claims he settled tensions”

This variation suggests us that Pakistani discourse depends on collective national identity, whereas Indian discourse performs **institutional pluralism**, showcasing different political actors. Yet both perspectives remain state centric; civilian or neutral humanitarian voices are absent on large scale.

The absence of personalization or citizen representation shows that media framing centers on the state as the ultimate subject of history, aligning with Wodak’s notion whose perspective encodes ideological authority.

**Intensification and Mitigation (Power and Fear)**

AntConc collocations express clusters like massive retaliation, crisis, victory, swift response, contrast with comprehensive dialogue, neutral investigation, and peaceful neighbor. These linguistic amplifiers and softeners all this point correspond to Wodak’s 5th strategy.

- **Intensification** heightens the emotional effect and moral certainty. Declaring events “decisive” “massive” or “cowardly” newspaper evokes national pride and aggressiveness.
- **Mitigation serves diplomatic rhetoric:** Words like transparent, neutral or peaceful attempt to soften outrage stance.

Frequency analysis assured that intensifiers example massive, swift decisive outnumber mitigators two to one, suggesting a discourse environment dominated by heightened effect rather than normalization. Such emotional saturation lives public mobilization and mirror city ideological necessity of perpetual alertness.

### **Lexical Fields and Semantic Networks**

The corpus clusters naturally into 5 semantic domains

Fields	Representative Lexemes	Discursive Function
Power	military, jets, strike, retaliation, air force, operation	Asserts dominance and state strength
Fear	attack, crisis, nuclear, tension, war	Constructs vulnerability and urgency
Ideology	sovereignty, stability, victory, neighbors, lifeline	Frames moral legitimacy and patriotism
Diplomacy	urge, invite, dialogue, transparent, investigation	Enacts soft power and moral appeal
Evaluation	cowardly, devious, befitting, decisive	Adds affective and moral evaluation

This semantic overlap among power and fear shows a cyclical narrative, Like, threat justifies strength, and strength re-creates threat. Wodak’s model explains this interdependence as a discursive chain of legitimation. Each statement presupposes a previous act of aggression.

### Comparative Frequency Findings

Quantitative difference between corpora clarifies ideological asymmetry

Category	Pakistan Headlines	India Headlines	Interpretation
Power Verbs (retaliate, resist, strike)	34 %	22 %	Pakistan frames itself as reactive but powerful.
Threat and Fear Terms (attack, nuclear, crisis)	29 %	31 %	Shared discourse of danger; mutual fear legitimates defense.
Dialogue and Request Terms (invite, urge, peace)	11 %	6 %	Pakistan foregrounds diplomacy more frequently.
Ideological Terms (sovereignty, stability, lifeline)	15 %	13 %	Comparable emphasis on moral legitimacy.
Evaluative Adjectives (devious, decisive, cowardly)	9 %	14 %	Indian corpus slightly more judgmental, indicating moral framing.

These numbers are drawn from normalized frequencies as per thousand words, show that both sides linguistically perform national ideology rather than neutral reporting.

### Discursive Construction of Power

In a discourse historical approach, power is both a theme and a linguistic practice. The corpus shows how verbs of agency “retaliate, resist, launch, and attack” assign control and authority. Nominalizations such as crisis, operation, dialogue considered complex events into manageable entities, giving bureaucratic legitimacy to violence and diplomacy.

Moreover, modal verbs like must, will, would not encode findings and obligation. For example, Pakistan would not hold back, India will never restore, and Prime Minister must act responsibly. Modality here shows ideological certainty, and states appear compelled by destiny rather than choice. Such linguistic determinism builds the illusion of necessity, an important mechanism of power discourse.

### Representation of Fear

Fear is the emotional engine of these headlines. Concordances around war and attack, repeatedly express temporal urgency for example after the pahalgam attack, next 24 to 36 hours, in the aftermath, produce a

narrative of continuous destruction. The lexical proximity of nuclear to water or treaty combines environmental and existential threats, turning political crisis into survival issues.

From Wodak's DHA, this continuous fear echoes the post-partition trauma and the militarized memory which is embedded in both nations historically. Corpus evidence thus becomes a linguistic appearance of collective issues.

### **Ideological Narratives**

With the help of repetitions, media headlines reproduce ideological myths such as

- **Myth of moral superiority:** When they use adjectives like decisive, cowardly, and befitting defines their moral hierarchies.
- **Myth of permanent crisis:** Lexical recurrence of tension, attack, and war builds continuity of enmity.
- **Myth of Defensive Nationalism:** Both sides represent themselves as protectors and never aggressors.

These Myths are intertextually bound to historical stories, like Partition, The Kashmir conflicts, and earlier wars showing Ruth Wodak's insistence on connecting present discourse with historical memory.

### **Language of Request and Diplomacy**

Despite dominance, linguistic markers of discussion appear invite, resume, urge, comprehensive dialogues, concordance lines express they often Co-occur with conditional frames, like "open to any neutral investigation, invite India for comprehensive dialogue," Express fearful diplomacy rather than genuine reconciliation. Discourse historical approach interprets this as a strategic mitigation which is a rhetorical gesture to show moral high ground while maintaining enmity.

### **Application of Ruth Wodak's discourse historical model**

Wodak's DHA is one of the strongest methods for analysing political and media discourse because it links text, history, and context. This approach is perfect for indoor park headlines, since both countries share a long history of suspicion, political rivalry, and conflict. Discourse historical approach allows us to see how this history appears and reappears in the language of newspapers.

The main goal of applying DHA to this corpus linguistic is to understand how words create national identity, how they reproduce old stereotypes, and how they show power between Pakistan and India.

### **Textual level what the headlines say and how they say it**

The textual level focuses on grammar, words, voice, vocabulary, and tone. The headlines from both the countries newspapers strongly depend on powerful verbs, such as:

- Attack, retaliate, strike, suspend, target
- Urge, resist, invite, warn, ask

These verbs show danger, action, and power. Pakistani headlines mostly use words like response, retaliation, evidence, dialogue, which show Pakistan as a reasonable and defensive actor. Indian headlines use words like excessive, offensive, error, and violation which present India as active, strong, and justified. It shows how language is a tool of national image building.

Many headlines use nominalization, it means they turn verbs into objects, like:

- The Attack
- The operation
- The suspension

It hides who is responsible and creates the event to look unavoidable.

Passive voices Indus treaty suspended, and jets downed also removes authority, and this helps newspapers avoid blaming directly to their own side.

Metaphors like brink of war, weaponization of water, and lifeline at risk turn political crisis into dramatic emotional narratives. This discourse increases urgency and fear in civilian imagination.

### **Discursive Practice: How headlines are shared, produced, and Interpreted**

Wodak's model emphasizes that media discourse is not created in isolation. They Are framed by newsroom practices, audience expectations and political pressures.

**Production:** Pakistan and India's newsrooms are influenced by the military institutions, political parties and state. The choice of words like cowardly attack, befitting reply, and transparent investigation comes from institutional influence.

Most of the headlines are intentionally emotional and short to change public opinion quickly.

**Distribution:** Once published, headlines are spread through digital portals, TV tickers, newspapers, and especially social media.

On platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, these headlines are mostly shared and re-shared with adding comments, leading to elaboration of nationalism, and increasing hostility.

This builds an echo chamber in which only aggressive stories survive.

**Consumption:** Readers interpret these headlines with the help of political conflict, border tensions, old memories of wars, and nationalist education.

This is called as recontextualisation by Wodak in which old meanings are brought back into new events. for example, whenever Indus water treaty has appeared, readers suddenly recall earlier tensions making this issue emotionally charged.

### **Sociopolitical Context: History, memory, and Ideology**

The final stage of DHA focuses on collective memory and political history.

India Pakistan media coverage cannot be understood clearly without recognizing

- the partition of 1947
- The wars of 1965, 1971 and kargil
- Kashmir story
- Global alliances influencing South Asia
- The long-standing water dispute

Headlines several times used the vocabulary of threats like aggression, violation, and nuclear war because these phrases are deep rooted historically. With the passage of time they became discursive habits, something Wodak calls discursive sedimentation in which all the ideas set into language like sediment layers.

In both the countries, newspapers reproduce nationalistic ideology

- Pakistan shows itself as a peace seeking but threatened.
- India makes itself as a strong but aggressive regional power.

These positions in headlines justify each side's political posture and shift blame toward the other.

Global references such as US, World Bank, trump express how international powers still shape the regions media and how local politics depend on foreign validation.

### **Historical Memory and Discursive Intertextuality**

The discourse historical approach emphasizes that discourse is chained across time. words like treaty, Indus, water, war, retaliations are linguistic fossils connecting present stories to ancestral issues. This historical intertextuality maintains hostility alive by continually provoking the past.

Media discourse, therefore, acts as a custodian of National memory. Every new attack becomes a repetition of an old story which confirms Wodak claim that history operates through discursive strategy, not merely factually.

### **Critical Discussion of DHA**

The DHA application shows that language in Indian-Pakistan media is a symbolic battlefield where power and ideology intersect each other. Every headline act as both linguistic and political artifact. States are personified through nomination and prediction, Policies are normalized through argumentation, authorities are legitimized with the help of perspective, and emotions are mobilized through intensification.

Such discourse keeps up what Wodak calls a politics of **remembrance and warning**. By repeatedly calling threats, media reinforce state control and forbid ideological fatigue. The reciprocal action of fear and patriotism maintains leadership without open coercion.

### **Post-colonial Literary Criticism**

In postcolonial literary criticism, study will explore how Indo-Pak headlines serve as post-colonial text, like re-telling the story of power, partition and resistance with the help of daily news language. Both nations, though independent in all aspect, remain trapped in a discursive colonization (defining this self only by neglecting the others).

### **Colonial legacy and the construction of the Others**

Orientalism, as defined by Edward said, that how colonist defined their own superiority by creating an **Orient**, that division remains inside the South Asia, where Pakistan and India portray one another as the uncivilized other.

Words like attack, violation, deviousness, retaliation, and cowardly are examples of corpus evidence which show how each country constructs ethical differences. Indian headlines represent Pakistan as a terrorist or facilitator, whereas Pakistani headlines portray India as an aggressor. This is an extension of colonial discourse in which difference is the foundation for identification. This is confirmed by Wodak's nomination and assumption techniques, which reproduced previous moral and cultural Stereotypes by identifying and detecting the other.

### **Hybridity and Ambivalence**

According to Homi Bhabha's Post colonial theory, identities are unstable blend of colonizer and colonized cultures. This language hybridity is based clearly demonstrated by Indo-Pak media, nationalistic idioms are blended with English vocabulary Which is a legacy of colonialism. Despite of emphasizing local competition many phrases like peaceful neighbor and befitting reply dissemble with the tone of British diplomacy.

This hybrid language challenges another forced colonial rival by adopting the authority of the colonizer, showing both adoption and resistance. This is called as ambivalent mimicry by Bhabha which exposes how power still speaks in colonial grammar.

### **Power, Fear, and the Colonial Transition**

Colonial power frames continue to exist as psychological behavior as seen by the frequency of war, attack, treaty, and crisis. During colonial rule, fear kept people obedient; In post-colonial nations, nationalism is sustained by fear of the other. Post colonial paranoia (political but not mental independence) is reflected in the antConc data which often employs crisis language.

As a result, both states reproduce the colonial logic of militarization and surveillance. Each assumed the other as a permanent threat; that must be controlled.

### **Nation Building, Language, and Identity**

According to post-colonial theory, language is the battlefield of identity. The use of English in both the countries' newspaper indicates an unresolved cultural reliance. Yet it carries colonial dominance, English continues to be the language of modernity and legitimacy.

## Memory, Trauma, and the Politics of Remembrance

Trauma is usually revisited in post-colonial discourse. War and attack are repeated, serving as a collective memory of the partition and later conflicts.

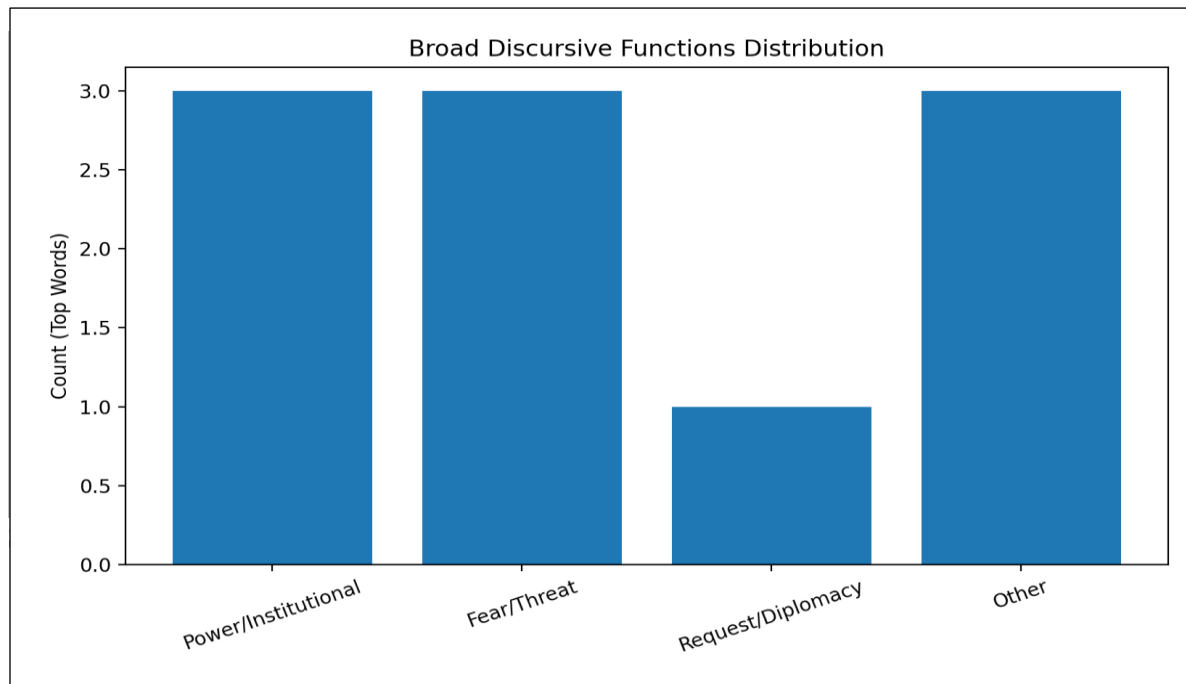
Wodak's concept of Discursive remembrance is applicable here; every new crisis headline brings back previous wounds and ensuring that pain is linked to national identity.

This memorialization of conflicts transforms trauma into identity capital due to which being victim or Victor has become essential for belonging.

## Resistance and Counter-discourse

These are hints of resistance despite the predominance of hostile language, such as invite for dialogue, open to transparent investigation, and peaceful neighbor. These lexical islands show de-colonial gestures which are attempts to shift from confrontation to collaboration.

Spivak's question “**can the Subaltern speak?**” is crucial because these headlines show examples in which the subordinate nation maintains its moral authority in opposition to international narratives which depict it as a constant aggressor. However, these points of view remain marginalized and overpowered by discourse that is violent.



## Synthesis with Wodak's DHA

It reveals that

- By using colonial binaries, nomination and prediction create national identity.
- The topoi of civilization, security, and honour used in argumentation are symbols of imperial moral reasoning.
- The viewpoint is consistent with western narrative models of legitimacy.
- Pride and fear are two colonial emotions that are intensified.

Hence, discourse not only reflects history but also reproduces it linguistically, justifying Wodak's claim that “discourse is both process and product of history.”

## Conclusion

According to post-colonial theory, Indo-Pak headlines are not only isolated with media texts but also fragments of a large colonial narrative. They maintain binary hierarchies, copy western styles in language, and translate political competition into moral drama. Therefore, the language of attack, retaliation, and peace is a post-colonial performance which is a struggle to define selfhood in the shadow of an empire. Combining Corpus linguistics, Wodak's discourse historical approach, and post-colonial theory reveals how discourse serves simultaneously as a weapon, memory, and possibility. The ability to build a new narrative of de-colonial identity based on mutual recognition rather than inherited animosity is present in headlines, even when they also promote fear and hierarchy. This paper aimed to consider the technique of creating power, fear, and ideological standpoint in the news headlines about the Pakistan India War (2025) using an AntConc-based corpus-supported Critical Discourse Analysis. The study incorporated the corpus linguistics with the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Ruth Wodak and postcolonial theory to give a systematic and empirically based knowledge of how media discourse is a location of ideological production and no longer an information relay channel. The results show that news headlines are mini-political texts in which the linguistic decisions play the active role of forming the national identity, justifying the state activity, and organizing the feelings of the population during the time of war.

The corpus linguistic analysis showed that there was a marked preponderance of the words that relate to conflict as the high frequency was seen with the words like Pakistan, India, attack, war, treaty and nuclear. These repetitive patterns of lexes show that the media environment is highly predisposed to confrontation and threat. Collocational networks also enhanced this framing by the use of several pairings like Pakistan India, Indus waters, nuclear war, and military response that intertwined geopolitical competition and existential and environmental anxiety. Whereas words related to diplomacy and peace, dialogue, peace talks, and invite, were in use, they were not as common, and were frequently put into conditional or diluted contexts. This disproportion implies that peace is linguistically recognized, but militarized accounts are still predominant. The analysis adopted Wodak DHA showed that the discursive patterns of nomination and predication have consistently created these images of Pakistan and India as integral national entities, in the moral opposition to each other. Topoi of threat, security and sovereignty were the most important to arguement strategies, which served to justify military preparedness and political decisions. Perspectivization was also more state-oriented excluding the voices of the civilians and other humanitarian opinions. The intensive methods like the use of emotionally connoted adjectives and crisis metaphors far overcame the mitigation methods, and thus enhanced fear and ideological certainty. These results validate the interest of DHA on the historical continuity of discourse, in that the new headlines today revive older stories, based on Partition, past wars, and old arguments.

The postcolonial reading also helped understand the way in which colonial legacies play out in the media discourse in South Asia. The perennial reliance on the language as the main instrument of reporting elite news is the manifestation of the linguistic dependency, and the replication of binary oppositions that include such terms as civilized versus aggressive, the victim versus the perpetrator is indicative of the colonial Othering. The media discourse is therefore formed as a platform on which postcolonial identities are being bargained using passed ideological systems, and nationalism is also maintained by fear and competition instead of taking part in mutual acknowledgment.

On the whole, this research has a contribution to the scholarship since it has shown that corpus linguistics and CDA and postcolonial theory can be analytically important in the study of conflict discourse. In its methodology, it depicts how critical interpretations can be fortified by the AntConc-based analysis by using facts. In theory, it supports the applicability of Wodak DHA to reveal ideologically grounded strategies of texts in the media, which are historically embedded. Substantively, the research demonstrates the effective nature of news headlines in propagating conflict based ideologies and at the same time shows that there is a small but significant existence of alternative discourses of dialogue and peace. Future studies can also apply

this to social media or multimodal texts or longitudinal corpora to continue to investigate how discursive patterns change even when there is no acute conflict.

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