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## PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND POLITICAL RHETORIC IN THE POST-BIDEN ERA CONTEXT: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF U.S. AND UKRAINIAN DISCOURSE, 2024–2025

*The presented article investigates the linguistic representation of peace negotiations in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war during the first months of Donald Trump's second presidential term (January–August 2025), a period marked by renewed attempts at diplomatic engagement and fluctuating U.S. rhetorical strategies. The research addresses the problem of how political discourse constructs legitimacy, collective identity, and normative authority in high-stakes international conflicts, focusing on the rhetorical, lexical, and metaphorical strategies employed by U.S. and Ukrainian political actors. The scope of the investigation encompasses systemic analysis of divergent discursive approaches using a multi-layered methodology, including corpus-based analysis, lexical frequency mapping, metaphor and frame analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The linguistic corpus comprises over 50 speeches, press briefings, and interviews, annotated for key lexical items, metaphorical expressions, and recurring argumentative patterns. The results obtained enable comprehensive conclusions to be drawn about the existing discursive dichotomy: the U.S. discourse emphasizes transactional and pragmatic framings of peace, often highlighting negotiation leverage, domestic political priorities, and national self-interest. By contrast, the Ukrainian discourse foregrounds ethical, legal, and normative considerations, emphasizing sovereignty, justice, moral responsibility, and international legitimacy. Lexical choices, deictic structures, and metaphorical constructions reveal how each actor legitimizes their position, mobilizes domestic and international public opinion, and shapes the perception of allies and adversaries. The study contributes to a more profound understanding of post-Biden US-Ukraine political discourse, demonstrating the constitutive role of language in framing negotiation dynamics, constructing identity, and influencing geopolitical interpretations, while highlighting the complex interplay between rhetoric, policy, and public perception.*

**Key words:** discourse, frame semantics, peace negotiations, presidential rhetoric, corpus linguistics, international communication, diplomatic language.

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## МИРНІ ПЕРЕГОВОРИ ТА ПОЛІТИЧНА РИТОРИКА В КОНТЕКСТІ ПОСТБАЙДЕНІВСЬКОЇ ЕРИ: ЛІНГВІСТИЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ АМЕРИКАНСЬКОГО Й УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ДИСКУРСУ, 2024–2025

*У представленій статті досліджено лінгвістичну репрезентацію мирних переговорів у контексті війни в Україні протягом перших восьми місяців другого президентського терміну Дональда Трампа (січень–серпень 2025 року), періоду, який характеризується поновленням спроб дипломатичного врегулювання та мінливими риторичними стратегіями США. Дослідження присвячене виявленню способів, якими політичний дискурс конструює легітимність, колективну ідентичність та нормативний авторитет у складних міжнародних конфліктах, із особливим акцентом на риторичні, лексичні та метафоричні стратегії американських та українських політичних акторів. У науковій розвідці системно проаналізовано відмінності щодо різноманітних дискурсивних підходів із використанням багаторівневої методології, що охоплює корпусний аналіз, аналіз частотності лексики, метафоричний та фреймовий аналіз, а також критичний дискурс-аналіз. Лінгвістичний корпус роботи містить понад 50 виступів, прес-брифінгів та інтерв'ю, ретельно анотованих для виявлення ключових лексичних одиниць, метафоричних конструкцій та повторюваних аргументативних патернів. Отримано результати, що уможливають вичерпні висновкування щодо наявної дискурсивної діхотомії: американський дискурс акцентує транзакційне, та прагматичне сприйняття миру, підкреслюючи переговорні переваги, внутрішні політичні пріоритети та національні інтереси, в той час як український дискурс, навпаки, фокусується на етичних, правових та нормативних аспектах, підкреслюючи суверенітет, справедливість, моральну відповідальність та міжна-*

родну легітимність. Лексичний вибір, дейктичні структури та метафоричні конструкції демонструють, як кожен актор легітимізує свою позицію, мобілізує громадську думку всередині країни та на міжнародній арені, а також формує сприйняття союзників і опонентів. Представлена робота сприяє глибшому розумінню постбайденівського політичного дискурсу США та України, демонструючи конститутивну роль мови у формуванні переговорних динамік, конструюванні ідентичності та впливі на геополітичні інтерпретації, водночас висвітлюючи складну взаємодію між риторикою, політикою та громадською думкою.

**Ключові слова:** дискурс, фреймова семантика, мирні переговори, президентська риторика, корпусна лінгвістика, міжнародна комунікація, дипломатична мова.

**Statement of the Problem.** In the wake of the U.S. presidential transition in late 2024 – early 2025, the dominant part of the linguistic discourse around peace negotiations in the Russia–Ukraine conflict underwent a marked transformation. Former President Trump’s early rhetoric – promising to broker a swift peace deal, with potential timeframe of *within 24 hours* of taking office – raised widespread societal, academic and political concern about the reshaping of peace discourse toward transactional framings that may sideline principles of sovereignty and justice (Gienger, 2024). This in its turn stood in stark contrast to President Zelenskyy’s consistent framing of *peace* as a just, sovereignty-preserving outcome, articulated through his publicly promoted «Peace Formula» and subsequent «Victory Plan» both designed to anchor negotiations in legal and normative foundations (Lytvynenko, 2024).

Since 2024, following the transition of political leadership in the United States, public rhetoric on negotiations has shifted significantly, introducing new semantic patterns and pragmatic strategies. Donald Trump’s discourse has been characterized by hyperbolic temporal markers (*in 24 hours, immediately*) and transactional metaphors (*deal, agreement*), which conceptualize *peace* as a matter of personal bargaining capacity and speed (Homolar, Scholz, 2018: 346). In contrast, Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s discourse continues to employ juridical and moral lexicon (*justice, sovereignty*), framing *peace* as a normative process grounded in international law and ethical responsibility (Rishko, 2024).

This growing asymmetry underscores a fundamental problem: the linguistic representation of *peace* as a military-political concept becomes unstable and context-dependent, reflecting broader ideological positions. While political science has examined negotiation strategies, the linguistic mechanisms – lexical choices, metaphors, evaluative markers – that structure these divergent framings remain underexplored. In the light of the provided outline, the presented article addresses the problem of a systematic in-depth discourse analysis of recent U.S. and Ukrainian presidential rhetoric that is essential for understanding how language both constrains and enables the strive for peace in the current geopolitical context.

### Analysis of recent research and publications.

The study of political discourse has long emphasized the role of legitimization strategies as a means of shaping public thought and justifying particular political choices. T. van Leeuwen’s framework remains pivotal in this case, as it identifies how political leaders rely on authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, or mythopoesis to present their positions as necessary and legitimate. This approach has been widely applied to foreign policy contexts, where competing narratives often struggle for dominance. In the context of peace negotiations, such strategies provide an analytical key to understanding the contrasting ways in which political actors frame their appeals – either as a *deal* to be struck or as a moral imperative rooted in *justice* and *rule of law* (Van Leeuwen, 2007).

A second significant line of research highlights the role of metaphor in structuring political argumentation. As J. Charteris-Black demonstrates, metaphors in political communication serve not merely as stylistic ornaments but as persuasive devices that establish ethos, evoke emotions, and construct logical narratives (Charteris-Black, 2011). Similarly, A. Musolff’s model of political metaphor analysis underscores how scenario-based metaphors – such as *journey, game, or bargaining* – are employed to reduce complexity of linguistic explications and project possible negotiation outcomes (Musolff, 2016: 45). These studies suggest that the linguistic framing of peace talks is not merely descriptive, but deeply metaphorical: one speaker may cast negotiations as a transactional game, while another presents them as a moral journey towards justice and security.

Recent scholarly investigation has also pointed to the importance of integrating corpus-based methods into discourse analysis in order to capture both qualitative nuance and quantitative regularity. P. Baker stresses that keywords, collocational patterns, and concordance analyses are indispensable tools for ensuring comparability and replicability in linguistic studies of political rhetoric (Baker, 2022). In this respect, corpus analysis allows identifying not only the predominant frames but also their linguistic realizations and discursive persistence across different speakers and contexts.

The relevance of the above approaches becomes conspicuous in the most recent empirical work. As an

instance, I. Chilwa and J. Ruzaitė examine the war-time rhetoric of Putin and Zelensky, revealing systematic contrasts in agency attribution, moral evaluation, and polarization (Chilwa & Ruzaitė, 2024). Their findings demonstrate how discourse becomes a battleground in which competing visions of peace and conflict are being linguistically projected. Likewise, new research on the U.S. 2024 electoral cycle illustrates the extent to which transactional language and affective appeals dominate Trump-aligned rhetoric, while opponents lean towards the language of institutional legitimacy and coalition-building (Alqurashi, 2025; Jiménez-Preciado et al., 2025). The provided insights collectively ensure a strong theoretical and empirical basis for examining how the notion of *peace* is discursively constructed, legitimized, and contested in the most recent political communication.

**Purpose of the article.** The purpose of this article is to investigate the discursive construction of peace negotiations in the transitional period of 2024–2025, with a particular focus on the rhetorical strategies employed in new U.S. administration’s political communication. While the majority of scientific efforts has examined earlier stages of the Russo-Ukrainian war, significantly less attention has been devoted to the shifting discursive environment that emerged in the aftermath of the Biden administration and the onset of a new political dynamic in Washington. This period is characterized not only by intensified battlefield developments but also by competing verbal framings of peace initiatives, often oscillating between transactional bargaining, moral obligation, outright pressure and controversial geopolitical necessity.

By applying the tools of critical discourse analysis, the study seeks to uncover how linguistic mechanisms – metaphor, legitimation, and evaluative framing – function in legitimizing or delegitimizing peace efforts. Particular attention is paid to the interplay between continuity and rupture in U.S. rhetorical strategies: on the one hand, the enduring appeal to American leadership and national interest; on the other, the introduction of new registers that reflect populist, transactional, and polarizing communicative patterns. The article thus aims to bridge the gap between linguistic science and political reality, demonstrating how language both reflects and shapes the trajectory of attempted, but largely unsuccessful, peace negotiations during this period.

In order to substantiate these distinctions, the article also draws on empirical evidence that highlights Ukraine’s moral framing of peace proposals as fair and law-based. For instance, in June 2024, presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak firmly asserted that any peace plan must be *fair and based in international*

*law*, directly linking Ukraine’s linguistic positioning to principles of normative legitimacy and rejecting transactional peace offers tied to military concessions or foreign aid conditions. This statement exemplifies how Ukrainian peace discourse deliberately invokes legal and ethical registers, establishing a contrast with more transactional or deal-enforcing framings. By tracing such discursive moments, the article aims to show how language shapes not only public perception but also the field of diplomatic possibility during critical negotiation windows.

**Outline of the main material of the study.** The presented study focuses on a specialized corpus comprising public statements, speeches, and interviews by U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from January 2024 to August 2025. The U.S. corpus includes official speeches, press briefings, social media posts, and interviews by D. Trump, Secretary of State M. Rubio and other related authorities, where peace negotiations or ceasefire proposals are explicitly mentioned. The Ukrainian corpus comprises speeches and interviews by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and senior advisers, including the Peace Formula-related communications and public addresses to international bodies, speeches at international forums, and interviews with global media outlets during the same period. The selection criteria prioritize instances where both leaders discuss peace negotiations, ceasefire initiatives, or related diplomatic efforts. This approach ensures a focused analysis of their rhetorical strategies concerning peace discourse.

To exemplify both corpus stances, it is expedient to cite M. Rubio’s stance from his remarks to press as of April 18, 2025, which stated, *If they’re serious about peace – either side, or both – we want to help. If it’s not going to happen, then we’re just going to move on*, illustrating the transactional and deal-brokering approach to peace negotiations (The Washington Post, 2025). On the other hand, President Zelenskyy reiterated on declared, *the Russo-Ukrainian war can only end with the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and the prevention of future Russian aggression*, emphasizing normative and legal principles. It is illustrative that in terms of corpus extension, Trump and his team’s peace-related track clusters mostly around peak diplomatic windows (April–June 2025), while Zelenskyy maintains a steady frequency across 2024–2025, often synchronized with international forums like the UN or European Council. Further to it, Trump primarily addresses U.S. media outlets and social media audiences, while Zelenskyy addresses international diplomatic bodies and Ukrainian parliament, highlighting differences in communicative strategy and framing.



To understand the construction of *peace*, the first step involves identifying and analyzing key lexical items in both leaders' discourse. Analysis begins with a systematic identification of key lexical items related to peace negotiations, such as *peace*, *ceasefire*, *deal*, *settlement*, and *sovereignty*, along with their Ukrainian equivalents. These terms are extracted from the corpus using concordance tools. By analyzing the frequency, collocational patterns and semantic prosody of these terms, the study reveals how each leader frames the concept of *peace*.

For instance, in analyzing the term *peace*, there has been observed its co-occurrence with terms such as *deal* and *quickly* in Trump's discourse, suggesting a transactional and circumventing approach to peace. In contrast, Zelenskyy's use of *peace* most often collocates with terms like *justice*, *international law* and *territorial integrity* indicating a normative and rather principled stance.

Quantitative measures, such as frequency counts and collocational strength are employed to assess the prominence and associations of these terms within each leader's discourse. This analysis provides insights into how lexical choices construct divergent conceptualizations of peace.

A comparative lexical analysis of the January–June 2024 corpora highlights both quantitative differences and distinct semantic orientations in the discourse of Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy. In Trump's corpus, the word *peace* appears 27 times, with a notable tendency to co-occur with *deal* on 15 occasions. By contrast, in Zelenskyy's corpus, *peace* appears 34 times, most frequently collocating with *justice* (18 instances). These distributions underscore divergent rhetorical emphases. Trump's collocational patterns – such as *peace* + *deal*, *peace* + *quickly*, and *peace* + *solution* – suggest a framing of *peace* as a transactional achievement, aligning with a logic of immediate resolution. Zelenskyy, however, situates peace within an ethical and juridical framework, evident in recurring combinations like *peace* + *sovereignty*, *peace* + *law*, and *peace* + *international community*. The semantic prosody further sharpens this contrast: while Trump presents peace as a strategic opportunity or pragmatic outcome, Zelenskyy consistently frames it as a principled goal rooted in moral and legal norms. This difference is exemplified in the recurrent linkage of *peace* with *deal* in Trump's discourse, which foregrounds immediacy and transactional logic, whereas Zelenskyy's associations emphasize normative, legal, and communal dimensions of peace.

Building on these lexical observations, the analysis also examines the metaphorical and scenario-based frames that structure each leader's rhetoric. Building

upon Musolff's and Charteris-Black's frameworks, this study conducts a metaphor and frame analysis to uncover the underlying conceptual metaphors in the discourse. Key metaphors such as *peace as a deal*, *peace as a journey* and *peace as a moral imperative* are identified and analyzed for their ideological implications.

For example, Trump's metaphorical framing of *peace as a deal* emphasizes negotiation and compromise, aligning with a transactional worldview. Conversely, Zelenskyy's portrayal of *peace as a moral imperative* underscores ethical considerations and legal principles, reflecting a more justice-oriented perspective. Such expressions as *strike a deal quickly* invoke a *game* or *bargaining* frame, emphasizing competition, risk, and immediate gain, on the Trump team's side. Such framing postulates *peace* as something contingent, fleeting, and subject to strategic bargaining. Inversely, Zelenskyy's principal frame that *justice must guide negotiations* consistently draws on metaphors that frame *peace* as an ethical and legal journey, guided by justice and international law. The second dominant frame being a *journey* or *path* hence foregrounds normative progression, moral purpose, and equitable outcome. This metaphorical orientation constructs peace as a long-term, principled process rather than a short-term solution. Eventually, these metaphors structure perception and legitimation: Trump's discourse emphasizes negotiation and compromise, while Zelenskyy's rhetoric clearly underscores ethical and normative dimensions.

The presented research also examines how these metaphors function to legitimize or delegitimize peace initiatives. By mapping the metaphorical scenarios and their associated values, the study reveals how language shapes the perception of peace and the feasibility of negotiations. Drawing on van Leeuwen's framework, the study analyzes the legitimation strategies employed by both leaders. These strategies include authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis, which are examined to understand how each leader justifies their approach to peace negotiations (Van Leeuwen, 2007). For instance, during periods of intensified conflict, both leaders' discourse may reflect heightened urgency and differing priorities. Trump's rhetoric largely focuses on immediate outcomes and strategic gains, while Zelenskyy's discourse emphasizes long-term principles and international norms.

In Trump's discourse, legitimation often stems from personal authority and pragmatic considerations, such as economic interests, national security concerns and deal-making efficiency. In contrast, Zelenskyy's legitimation is rooted in moral evaluation, empha-

sizing adherence to international law, human rights, and territorial sovereignty. The study employs a corpus-assisted approach to identify and categorize instances of these legitimization strategies, providing empirical evidence of how each leader constructs the legitimacy of their peace proposals.

A closer look at legitimization strategies uncovers stark contrasts between American and Ukrainian rhetoric. In early 2025, U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance often invoked the discourse of mediation, using terms like *broker*, *deal* and *compromise* in framing the U.S. as an indispensable peace-maker. To exemplify, in early 2025 Vance stressed during Congress budget hearings and approval that *The American people will not tolerate another endless war and neither will I*, suggesting that legitimacy comes from pragmatic conflict resolution (Brookes, 2024). Conversely, Zelenskyy repeatedly employed a strategy of moral legitimization. In his March 2025 press briefing in Kyiv, he declared that true peace cannot exist without justice. Here, *peace* is not framed as a bargain but as an outcome grounded in accountability and historical truth. These opposing strategies – transactional pragmatism versus ethical universalism – demonstrate how different political actors use discourse to legitimize their positions, shaping not only policy but also the perception of what constitutes a *just* outcome. By integrating discourse analysis with geopolitical events, it is examined how language not only reflects but also influences the trajectory of peace negotiations and public perception.

The study concludes with a comparative analysis conducted to contrast the discursive strategies of Trump and Zelenskyy. This involves examining differences in lexical choices, metaphorical framing, and legitimization strategies, and how these elements align with each leader's political ideology and objectives. The analysis reveals that Trump's discourse often prioritizes national and financial interest, framing *peace* as a negotiable commodity. In contrast, Zelenskyy's discourse emphasizes ethical imperatives and international legitimacy, portraying *peace* as a moral obligation.

Placing these findings in a broader context highlights the discursive nature of geopolitical contestation. The year 2025 demonstrates a discursive divergence in which U.S. rhetoric, particularly under Trump, increasingly framed Ukraine as an external burden, while Ukraine worked to reinforce its position as central to European security. For instance, Trump's repeated assertions that allies were *not paying their fair share* constructed a narrative of exploitation, while Zelenskyy's claim that *Ukraine stands for all free nations* and serves as a *shield of Europe* and

*the free world* emphasized solidarity and shared sacrifice. The conflicting frames – burden versus shield, deal versus justice – do not merely reflect political disagreements but actively shape the field of possible action. By situating these strategies within both U.S. domestic debates and Ukraine's international diplomacy, the analysis demonstrates how discourse operates as a key arena in the struggle for legitimacy and influence.

**Conclusions.** The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that the lexical notion of *peace* is explicated not as a neutral or universally comprehensible concept in political communication, but one that is actively constructed through divergent discursive linguistic strategies. By examining presidential rhetoric in the United States and Ukraine from January 2024 to August 2025, the study has shown how language operates simultaneously as a descriptive tool and as a constitutive force that shapes public expectations, diplomatic trajectories, and the very conditions of legitimacy surrounding negotiations.

The corpus analysis revealed significant asymmetries in lexical preferences and collocational patterns. Trump team's discourse consistently paired the concept of *peace* with terms such as *deal*, *quickly*, *compromise* and *solution*, foregrounding immediacy, transactionalism, and personal authority. Zelenskyy, by contrast, linked *peace* to *justice*, *sovereignty*, *integrity* and *international law*, producing a normative and juridical conceptualization. These linguistic choices are not accidental but reveal fundamentally different visions of what peace should entail: a negotiable outcome versus a just and law-bound process.

Metaphor and frame analysis further deepened these contrasts. Trump's framing of *peace* as a *deal* or a *game* positioned negotiations within a competitive, transactional, and time-sensitive scenario. Zelenskyy's framing of *peace* as a *journey* or *path* underscored gradual progress, legal obligations, and moral responsibility. These metaphorical repertoires, as Musolff has argued, do not merely provide stylistic variation but project entire scenarios of possible negotiations outcomes (Musolff, 2016). In Trump's discourse, peace is achieved through decisive bargaining; in Zelenskyy's, through long-term adherence to principles of territorial integrity and justice.

Equally significant are the legitimization strategies employed by both leaders. Drawing on van Leeuwen's typology, the study identified Trump's reliance on authorization and rationalization, as when he appealed to his personal negotiating ability or to the need for swift efficiency (Van Leeuwen, 2007). Zelenskyy, conversely, consistently deployed moral evaluation and juridical rationalization, grounding his claims in

international law and ethical imperatives. This divergence highlights how peace is legitimized differently: for Trump, through appeals to personal authority and expedience; for Zelenskyy, through appeals to shared norms, morality, and legality.

The contextual integration of these findings demonstrates that discourse is highly responsive to political events but also maintains ideological consistency. Trump's urgency-laden rhetoric intensified during moments of battlefield escalation, whereas Zelenskyy maintained a steady emphasis on justice and sovereignty, even under severe military pressure. Such discursive consistency reflects the strategic necessity for Ukraine to preserve international legitimacy, while the variability in U.S. discourse mirrors shifting domestic and geopolitical calculations.

Comparative synthesis thus reveals two incompatible discursive constructions of peace. On the U.S. side, through the implementation of a specific set of linguistic units, peace is discursively outlined as a swiftly attainable settlement, contingent on negotiation skills and willingness to compromise. On the Ukrainian side, *peace* is linguistically constructed as inseparable from justice, sovereignty, and adherence to law, and therefore not subject to expedient bargaining. This incompatibility underscores the role of lan-

guage in constraining the space of negotiation: rhetorical framings shape what can be said, imagined, and ultimately pursued in diplomatic practice.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to political linguistics by demonstrating the importance of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis in capturing both quantitative regularities and qualitative nuances in political communication. By combining lexical, metaphorical, and legitimation analyses, it highlights how competing discourses on peace negotiations embody ideological conflicts between deal-making and principle, pragmatism and law, transactionalism and justice.

Overall, *peace* in contemporary U.S. and Ukrainian presidential rhetoric emerges not as a shared objective but as a contested concept, discursively constructed in ways that reflect and reproduce power asymmetries. For Trump and his team, *peace* is a commodity to be negotiated quickly; for Zelenskyy, it is a principled journey guided by justice, sovereignty and territorial integrity. These divergent discourses not only influence public perceptions and international legitimacy but also shape the very conditions under which negotiations are imagined as possible. In this sense, language is not secondary to diplomacy but becomes a pivotal point of the struggle over its meaning, scope, and outcomes.

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