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Jan Szepielak

https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9313-269X
jan.szepielak@gmail.com

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland
https://ror.org/0583g9182

Analysis of Donald Trump's political communication on social media regarding the Iran conflict: A comparative analysis with George W. Bush's narrative during the Iraq war

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Abstract

Analysis of Donald Trump's political communication on social media regarding the Iran conflict: A comparative analysis with George W. Bush's narrative during the Iraq war

This article examines Donald Trump's political communication on social media concerning the war in Iran during the first month of the conflict. The study outlines the principal elements and features of the narrative-building strategy employed by the 47th President of the United States in shaping public perceptions of the war. The research material consists of 538 posts published on Trump's Truth Social profile between February 28 and March 28, 2026, of which 64 were directly related to the topic of Iran and 8 indirectly so. Furthermore, this communication was compared with George W. Bush's narrative accompanying the Iraq War in 2003, using a coding key of fifteen narrative frames drawn from Bush's war on terror and Iraq War addresses. The analysis identifies the most significant similarities and differences between the narratives advanced by the two presidents. Both presidents were found to emphasize the morally evil nature of the enemy, the global character of the conflict, and the necessity of depriving the enemy of weapons of mass destruction. However, Trump's narrative largely abandons Bush's civilizational and humanitarian framing of the war, and in several respects advances a narrative contrary to it, most notably by favoring the destruction of the enemy state and the glorification of military action over Bush's rhetoric of reluctant war and post-war reconstruction.

Keywords: political communication, Donald Trump, George W. Bush, Truth Social, Iran conflict, social media

In the early morning hours, local time, of February 28, 2026, the United States, together with Israel, launched an invasion of Iran. President Donald Trump identified the Iranian regime as a sponsor of terrorism and a source of danger to the American people. The military operation was intended to neutralize this threat. The stated primary objective was to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. (Trump, 2026) This war is the first armed conflict to begin during Donald Trump's presidency.

This research paper analyzes Donald Trump's political communication concerning the war in Iran during its first month. The research material consists of posts published on the president's Truth Social profile during the first month of the conflict. Trump entered the political scene during the 2016 presidential

campaign, at which point social media already played a distinctive role in his political style. Trump's communication style was distinctive within contemporary political communication. It was undoubtedly one of the reasons why the 45th and currently 47th President of the United States became one of the most influential and controversial figures of the twenty-first century.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the United States has been engaged in a series of armed conflicts in the Arab world. These were waged within the framework of the so-called War on Terror, initiated by then-President George W. Bush. It was meant to be a large-scale, coordinated struggle against the new threat of terrorism. As part of it, the United States entered into war with the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003. This war exhibits a number of similarities to theconflict with the Ayatollah's regime. In both wars, the enemy is identified as a sponsor of terror. Both conflicts were aimed at depriving the enemy regime of weapons of mass destruction. For this reason, a comparative analysis of the two conflicts was considered justified. This work identifies the fundamental differences and shared features between the war-related communication of the two Republican presidents.

Donald Trump's communication style is characterized by directness and a break with the traditional decorum of political communication. This raises concerns about the degradation of the quality of public discourse (Değirmenci & Terzioğlu, 2022).

There already exist multiple in depth analyses of Donald Trump communication on social media. This study aims to widen this sphere of research by examining how does the president's style adapt to waging war in middle East. The comparison with Bush's communication from the war on terror adds an aspect of how current leader's narrative diverges from the tropes used by previous republican president in talking about conflict in Middle East.

Framing in political communication

Political communication oriented toward achieving specific goals is often based on the strategic selection and presentation of facts. This process is called framing. Framing occurs when a message indirectly creates and presents to its audience an interpretation of reality. In doing so, it emphasizes certain aspects of it while diminishing or entirely omitting others. The description of the phenomenon of framing is attributed to Erving Goffman

(Goffman, 1974). Earlier foundations for this concept can be found in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's work *The social construction of reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It describes "how groups classify their collective experiences derived from reality and then develop them over time to assign meaning to both new information and experiences" (Zaklama, 2025). Every event significant to a given community undergoes a process of narrativization, of categorization. This narrative is most often constructed in accordance with the beliefs already held by the group in question.

Goffman developed the concept of framing and laid the groundwork for the scholarly analysis of this phenomenon. According to him, individuals use frames in their everyday lives as a tool for interpreting reality. Institutions that shape public opinion, particularly the media, use frames to construct narratives consistent with their preferred perspective. Frames also serve to confer importance on particular events. In the classic approach to public opinion research, framing was most often associated with the news media (Zaklama, 2025). However, it can be found in practically every sphere in which public opinion is formed. In the contemporary media ecosystem, social media play a particularly significant role in this regard.

George W. Bush and the Iraq war

Following the unprecedented terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration undertook retaliatory action. On October 7, the first bombing raids on Afghanistan began as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Ground forces joined the conflict shortly thereafter. The war in Afghanistan ultimately lasted twenty years. The withdrawal of American forces on August 30, 2021, is considered the moment marking its end (Laub & Maizland, 2022).

On March 20, 2003, the United States launched an attack on Iraq. Its aim was to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. George Bush justified the necessity of the intervention by citing irrefutable evidence that the state had access to weapons of mass destruction and posed a genuine threat to the United States and its allies. As in the case of Afghanistan, the overthrow of the government occurred fairly quickly — on April 9. However, groups loyal to Hussein continued to fight even after the regime's collapse. Despite the country's ongoing instability, President Bush declared victory, doing so from aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (Laub et al., 2022).

The image of the president against a banner reading "Mission Accomplished" became a symbol of the shortsightedness of the administration at the time. Victory was declared in the second month of a conflict that would go on to last eight more years (The Guardian, 2013).

The Iraq conflict became an arena of humanitarian crises and sectarian violence between the Shia majority and radical Sunnis (Laub et al., 2022). Furthermore, the American side was accused of abuses and human rights violations.

In the days following the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, President Bush launched a campaign aimed at channeling intense emotions into support for retaliatory action. To this end, he employed the narrative of the so-called war on terror.

On September 21, ten days after the terrorist attack, President Bush addressed the United States Congress. This address presented the ideological and political foundations of the American strategy in the war on terror. He emphasized that the attack on the World Trade Center was not merely an act of terrorism but a declaration of war.

The war on terror was not meant to end with the neutralization of the Taliban. It was intended only as the first step in a broader campaign aimed at destroying every terrorist group with global reach. This undertaking was expected to require many years and considerable resources. Bush also stated the necessity of international involvement, since the events of September 11 were framed as an attack not merely on the United States, but on the entire civilized world. Firm and decisive action was meant to prevent the terrorists from escalating their capabilities and to forestall future, far more serious attacks.

Stephen D. Cooper and his research team, in George W. Bush, the American Press, and the Initial Framing of the War on Terror after 9/11 (Cooper et al., 2012), describe a number of narrative frames present in George Bush's statements following September 11. They identify five main motifs recurring in the president's statements:

— civilization versus barbarism — in Bush's framing, the civilized world is represented by values such as recognition of the dignity of human life, democracy, the rule of law, and progress; in contrast, barbarism is characteristic of groups that seek to destroy societies built on these values through methods of coercive force, displaying particular cruelty and employing especially inhumane means; war, in this framing, is an act of protecting civilization from an existential threat (Bush, 2001b);

- good versus evil — the perpetrators of particular evil and cruelty must be stopped and cannot be left to their own devices; the post-World War II international order (in this specific statement, the UN itself) was established in response to the Second World War, and the contemporary enemy represents an evil analogous to the crimes of that era;
- the morally evil, implacable, and murderous nature of the enemy — the adversary is characterized by a morally evil stance and conduct, is antagonistically disposed toward the speaker's side and seeks domination, intentionally inflicts suffering and benefits from it, and is described, for example, as a murderer or terrorist;
- the domestic-global, enduring nature of the war — the war is an undertaking shared by the international community; the threat is global in nature, and the response to it must therefore be a coordinated reaction by many states; furthermore, the war is not confined to a single location but encompasses actions across the entire world and affects the lives of citizens of countries worldwide; nor is it a singular conflict, but a years-long campaign aimed at defeating terrorism;
- the distinctiveness of the current war compared to previous ones — the present war differs from wars of the past and requires a different course of action (Bush, 2001b).

The above five frames were identified in the analysis of the president's address before the UN General Assembly on November 10, 2001. They form the narrative framework for the war on terror, which the Iraq War, begun in 2003, would continue. For a more complete analysis of the communication concerning this particular conflict statements made by George Bush directly related to this war — the announcement of the war on March 19, 2003, and the address delivered aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003, of that same year were also examined. This qualitative analysis made it possible to supplement the list of motifs with several narrative frames directly related to this conflict.

In the addresses analyzed, the following motifs were identified:

- the necessity of depriving the enemy of weapons of mass destruction — the conviction that the adversary has access to weapons posing a potential threat to the United States and other states, or is capable of acquiring them in the foreseeable future, and that war is necessary in order to deprive them of such weapons: "The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw

regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass destruction" (Bush, 2003a); "No terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more" (Bush, 2003b);

— acting for the good of the citizens of the state against which the war is being waged — the war is conducted for the good and liberation of a nation persecuted by a hostile regime; the war is meant to result in an improvement of their living conditions: "Helping Iraqis achieve a united, stable and free country will require our sustained commitment" (Bush, 2003a); "Today, we have greater power to free a nation by breaking a dangerous and aggressive regime" (Bush, 2003b);

— separating the enemy from Islam as a whole, reference to the good of the Arab world — emphasizing that the criminal actions of the enemy are not representative of the Islamic religion or of Arab culture as a whole, condemning Islamophobia; improving the situation in the Middle East is presented as one of the goals of the military action: "We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization, and for the faiths they practice" (Bush, 2003a); "We are committed to freedom in Afghanistan, Iraq and in a peaceful Palestine" (Bush, 2003b);

— a declared commitment to post-war reconstruction — the United States and its allies will be involved in rebuilding the state after the conclusion of the conflict, or during it, encompassing both assistance in rebuilding destroyed infrastructure and efforts toward democratization and the improvement of living standards: "We are helping to rebuild Iraq, where a dictator built palaces for himself instead of hospitals and schools" (Bush, 2003b); "And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by and for the Iraqi people" (Bush, 2003b);

— praise for US soldiers — paying respect to American soldiers taking part in the war, emphasizing their virtues and sacrifice: "The people you liberate will witness the honorable and decent spirit of the American military" (Bush, 2003a); "When I look at the members of the United States military, I see the best of our country and I am honored to be your commander in chief" (Bush, 2003b);

— the difficult necessity of war, absence of occupation — the war is necessary for the good of the United States and the whole world; it is waged

more out of duty than ambition or desire for gain; a declared intention to leave the defeated state once operations conclude: "Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly — yet our purpose is sure" (Bush, 2003a); "The use of force has always been, and remains, our last resort" (Bush, 2003b); "Other nations in history have fought in foreign lands and remained to occupy and exploit. Americans, following a battle, want nothing more than to return home" (Bush, 2003b);

— protection of civilians — military operations are conducted with the intention of causing the least possible harm to civilians: "I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm" (Bush, 2003a); "With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians" (Bush, 2003b); "No device of man can remove the tragedy from war, yet it is a great advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent" (Bush, 2003b).

The concept of the War on Terror and Bush's rhetoric met with criticism from some intellectuals as well as sections of the public.Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida wrote about the contradictions inherent to waging a war in the name of helping the citizens of the enemy state: "The precautionary mustering of relief workers, relief services, and relief goods dressed itself in the rash rhetoric of alleviation of suffering yet to be inflicted; the planned reconstruction of cities and administrations yet to be ruined" (Habermas & Derrida, 2003). In her 2005 book, Chantal Mouffe criticizes the Bush administration's politics and narratives for serving the United States' hegemonic position while being presented as righteous action undertaken for the benefit of the democratic world. The United States monopolizes and uses the abstract ideas of "humanity" and "civilization" to frame any action against them as anti-human. Mouffe also highlights the unilateral nature of U. S. actions during the war on terror. In a unipolar world where the US is the sole global hegemon, multilateralism is just an illusion maintained by the greatest power which has the freedom to act regardless of the opinion of other nations (Mouffe, 2005).

Mouffe also criticizes Bush's moralization of politics. She presents it as a way of manufacturing one's own moral superiority as well as delegitimizing the enemy. "When opponents are defined not in political but in moral terms, they cannot be envisaged as an 'adversary' but only as an 'enemy'. With the

'evil them' no agonistic debate is possible; they must be eradicated. Moreover, as they are often considered as the expression of some kind of 'moral disease', one should not even try to provide an explanation for their emergence and success" (Mouffe, 2005).

Donald Trump and social media

The proliferation of social media over the past decade has caused much of daily life, as well as the public sphere, to shift into the digital dimension. New media have made digital communication dynamic, interactive, and participatory (Alaghbary, 2021). The same is true of political communication and diplomacy. Platforms operating on the principle of participatory culture have opened up a new space for political discourse. Diplomacy and politics are no longer a monologue, but a structure in which interaction with non-governmental actors is integrated. New media communication is instantaneous. It allows every user to interact with politicians (Değirmenci & Terzioğlu, 2022). The methods of traditional politics and diplomacy are becoming ineffective in the new, dynamic space of the internet. The pace of change is accelerated within the digital space.

Social media have been recognized by politicians as a valuable tool for conducting politics. Online communication strategies can determine the success or failure of candidates and parties. One of the first instances of large-scale use of new media in political communication was Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. He used Facebook and Twitter to reach American youth. This allowed him to build a group of active online supporters promoting his candidacy. Obama's success demonstrated the potential of social media in campaign activities and permanently introduced politics onto digital platforms (Alaghbary, 2021).

The open, concise, and direct character of communication on social media has caused political communication to largely abandon its traditional decorum. Politicians no longer need to organize official appearances in traditional media in order to reach audiences. They can publish a post on social media at any moment, and it will instantly reach a mass of users (Kuś, 2020). Emblematic of this phenomenon is Donald Trump's communication. During the 2016 presidential campaign, it stood out as remarkably spontaneous and informal. This represented a certain novelty against the backdrop of Barack

Obama's professional, diplomatic tone of communication. Some of Trump's posts could even be considered vulgar or lacking in decorum. These traits did not deter potential voters — quite the opposite: they were regarded as an expression of sincerity and transparency rarely found in the world of politics. Additionally, their controversial character helped them spread more effectively online (Posada, 2025).

Research methodology

The empirical section of this article analyzes Donald Trump's political communication on social media from the first month of the war in Iran. It juxtaposes the posts under discussion with George Bush's communication concerning the war on terror. It identifies the respects in which these two war narratives converge, as well as the most significant points of divergence between them. The analysis of Bush's narrative draws on both his statements made shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks — which outline the program of the broadly conceived war on terror — and statements directly related to the Iraq War (Bush, 2003a; 2003b). The coding key is based on the set of narrative frames identified by S. D. Cooper's research team (Cooper et al., 2012), as well as a number of frames developed through the author's own independent analysis of the president's statements.

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- Donald Trump's manner of communicating about the war in Iran differs significantly from George Bush's manner of communicating about the Iraq War and the war on terror in relation to invoking universal values to justify the war actions;
- Donald Trump puts less emphais than Bush on international cooperation, rather choosing to signify USA's power and independence in the war;
- Donald Trump's communication about the war is inconsistent and breaks with traditional diplomatic norms.

Research questions posed in the study:

- What characterizes Donald Trump's manner of speaking and constructing the narrative about the war in Iran?
- What are the main shared features and differences between Donald Trump's and George Bush's communication about war?

The object of this analysis is Donald Trump's posts published during the first four weeks of the war (February 28–March 28, 2026) on the Truth Social platform. The initial research design also envisaged analyzing publications from the X profile. However, no content was published there during the period under study. The archived collection of Trump's posts on the Roll Call website was used as the source of research material (Roll Call, n.d.-a). Where publications with identical content were repeated, they were counted as separate units within the analysis. Posts marked as deleted were not taken into account, as they generally corresponded to publications with identical or minimally altered content.

In order to analyze the content of Donald Trump's communication and answer the research questions posed, a coding key was developed. It is divided into three parts:

— Questions 1–3: Subject matter and formal properties of the material;
— Questions 4–26: Comparative analysis of Trump's and Bush's communication.

The first question of the coding key concerns whether the topic of Iran appears in the post under discussion. It determines whether the post concerns the war in Iran or not, and the degree to which its content is related to the topic. This relationship may be indirect or direct. An indirect relationship is exhibited by content that addresses matters related to Iran without explicit reference to the war, as well as publications that do not refer to the war itself but whose subject matter implies a certain degree of connection to it.

The second question in the key concerns the presence of supplementary material attached to a post — links or audiovisual material. If a publication was accompanied by such material, that material itself was not subject to analysis. Posts to which links were attached were excluded from the analysis for the questions in sections 2, 4, and 5. An exception was made when the text of the post commented on or expanded upon the attached material. Shared material may be a source of additional knowledge about Trump's political communication style. However, for the purposes of this study, a decision was made to focus exclusively on the president's own words.

The final section of the study juxtaposes Trump's posts with the typical narrative frames identified in the theoretical section regarding George Bush's war-related communication. The posts are analyzed for the presence of the motifs described there. Publications that do not replicate the previous Republican president's narrative occur in two forms. The first is the simple absence

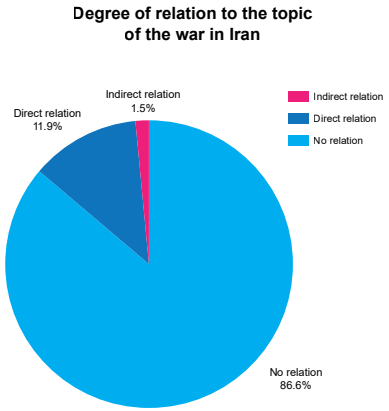
of a given motif. The second is based on the presence of a narrative contrary to the one presented. In this case, Trump does not merely fail to draw on a given way of talking about the war, but explicitly creates a new approach that contradicts it. For each of the frames in the fifth section of the coding key, a corresponding opposing frame of negation has been assigned:

- civilization versus barbarism ≠ affirmation of the enemy's cruelty;
- good versus evil ≠ pointing to the amoral character of the war;
- the morally evil, implacable, and murderous nature of the enemy ≠ portraying the enemy as morally neutral or good;
- the domestic-global, enduring nature of the war ≠ pointing to the absence of a need for international cooperation;
- the distinctiveness of the current war compared to previous ones ≠ portraying the war as lacking any distinctiveness;
- the necessity of depriving the enemy of weapons of mass destruction ≠ acceptance of the enemy's possession of such weapons;
- acting for the good of the citizens of the state against which the war is being waged ≠ acting to the detriment of the citizens of the state against which the war is being waged;
- separating the enemy from Islam as a whole, reference to the good of the Arab world ≠ equating the enemy with the whole of Islam, promotion of Islamophobia;
- a declared commitment to post-war reconstruction ≠ declarations of the destruction of the state or its infrastructure;
- praise for soldiers ≠ criticism of one's own soldiers;
- the difficult necessity of war, absence of occupation ≠ glorifying military action, taking pleasure in it;
- protection of civilians ≠ aggression against civilians.

Research results

During the period analyzed, Donald Trump's Truth Social profile published 538 posts, of which 64 posts were directly related to the topic of Iran, and 8 indirectly so. Fewer than one-fifth of the published posts concerned the war in Iran. This suggests that the topic of the ongoing war does not stand out as a particularly prominent issue in the president's political communication. It is interspersed among other topics, mainly relating to domestic politics.

Figure 1. Degree of relation of Donald Trump's Truth Social posts to the topic of the war in Iran (N = 538): no relation = 86.6%; direct relation = 11.9%; indirect relation = 1.5%. Own elaboration.

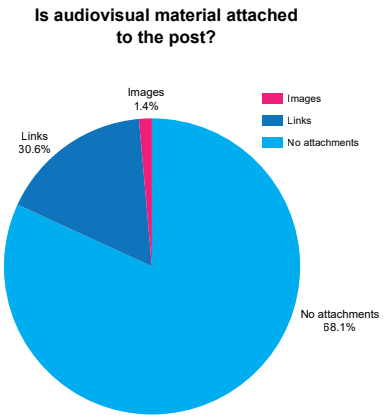


Posts indirectly related to the war in Iran addressed, for example, the situation of the Iranian women's football team, which faced the threat of reprisals after failing to sing their national anthem during a match in Australia. Trump appealed to the authorities to grant them asylum, since their lives could be endangered upon returning to their homeland (Shalala, 2026). The remaining indirect connections to the topic of Iran consisted of publications concerning operations to evacuate civilians from endangered areas of the Middle East or mentions of the war in posts on the defense industry and domestic security.

In successive weeks of the first month of the war, 261, 93, 77, and 107 posts were published, respectively. The largest share of content on the topic of Iran occurred in the third week — 25.9% — and the smallest in the fourth week — 8%. The considerably higher number of posts in the first week is largely due to the primary elections held in a number of states during that period (Chughtai et al., 2026). A large portion of the posts was devoted to the Republican Party campaign and the announcement of politicians who had been elected.

In the remainder of the study, when presenting percentage results, only the proportions within content related to the war in Iran are presented, omitting all posts unrelated to this topic.

Figure 2. Audiovisual material accompanying posts related to the war in Iran: no material = 68.1%; link = 30.6%; image = 1.4%. Own elaboration.

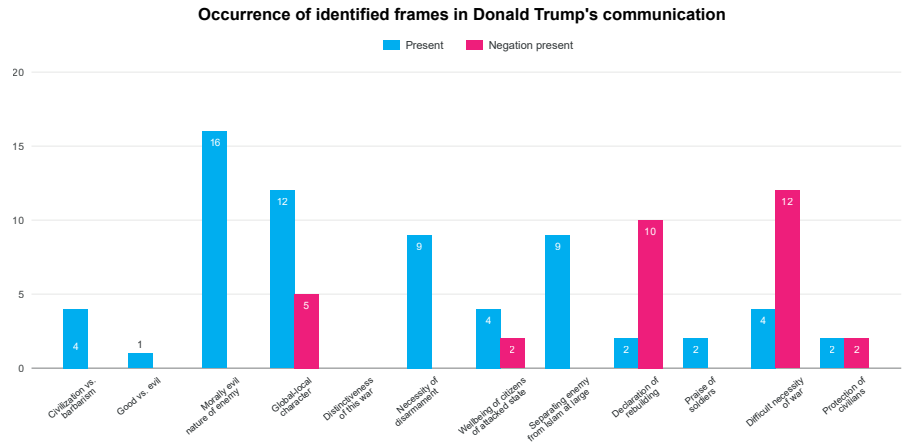


Among the posts concerning Iran, the majority (49) were not accompanied by any additional audiovisual content. 22 posts were accompanied by links. Beyond the link itself, the content of these posts most often consisted of a restatement of the linked article's title or abrief comment on it. The only post with a graphic was a screenshot from Drew Pavlou's X account, concerning the case of the Iranian women's football team in Australia. As a comment, Trump attached to it the single-word appeal "ASYLUM!".

The chart above presents the frequency with which motifs analogous to the identified elements of George Bush's narrative appear in Donald Trump's communication, as well as the aspects in which the current president advances a narrative antithetical to that of his predecessor. On this basis, these frames can be divided into three groups: motifs shared by both presidents, motifs that Trump does not replicate, and elements in which a narrative contrary to Bush's rhetoric predominates.

Within this typology, the second category consists of those frames that appeared in fewer than 10% of the research material — that is, in seven or fewer posts. The third category includes all elements in which frames of negation predominated. One particular case also occurred — protection of civilians — in which the occurrence of the base frame and its negation was equal. This will be considered separately.

Figure 3. Frequency of George W. Bush-era narrative frames — and their negations — identified in Donald Trump's communication about the war in Iran (number of posts). Own elaboration.



Motifs shared by both presidents:

— the morally evil nature of the enemy (16 posts, 0 negations);
— the domestic-global, enduring character of the war (12 posts, 5 negations);
— the necessity of depriving the enemy of weapons (9 posts, 0 negations);
— separating the enemy from Islam as a whole, reference to the good of the Arab world (9 posts, 0 negations).

Motifs not replicated by Trump:

— acting for the good of the citizens of the attacked state (4 posts, 2 negations),
— civilization versus barbarism (4 posts, 0 negations);
— praise for soldiers (2 posts, 0 negations);
— good versus evil (1 post, 0 negations);
— the distinctiveness of this war compared to previous ones (0 posts, 0 negations).

Motifs in which frames of negation predominate:

— the difficult necessity of war (4 posts, 12 negations);
— a declared commitment to post-war reconstruction (2 posts, 10 negations).

Donald Trump repeatedly emphasizes the moral evil of the Iranian regime. This is the most frequently occurring motif among the posts examined.

Crimes — both those already committed and those anticipated in the future — serve as the justification for declaring war on the regime. The enemy is portrayed as willing to commit crimes against its own citizens as well as to employ violence abroad. In a post concerning the death of Iran's leader, Trump writes: "This is not only Justice for the people of Iran, but for all Great Americans, and those people from many Countries throughout the World, that have been killed or mutilated by Khamenei and his gang of bloodthirsty THUGS" (Trump, 2026a). Terrorism is identified as a particular threat. In the president's idiolect, the phrase "Iran's Terrorist Regime" functions as a fixed collocation. This manner of speaking about the enemy in the Middle East is a legacy of the war on terror narrative. The Ayatollah's rule is described in a manner similar to the way the Taliban or the Hussein regime were described in Bush's addresses: "In Afghanistan we see al Qaeda's vision for the world. Afghanistan's people have been brutalized, many are starving and many have fled" (Bush, 2001a).

Also significant is the description of the scale of the enemy's evil. Iran is not simply one of many wicked regimes. It is presented as a key, exceptionally evil actor, surpassing others both in the scale of the crimes it commits and in the threat it poses to the world. In a post from March 12, Trump even calls Iran an "evil empire." The phrase "evil empire" evokes a clear association with antagonistic forces known from popular culture, such as Star Wars. The main attributes associated with these fictional groups are military might and an unambiguous, total orientation toward doing evil. Their destruction is, as a rule, something unequivocally positive.

Another significant motif preserved from the War on Terror is the global character of the conflict. The war is not merely an isolated confrontation between two states, but has a wide-reaching impact on the entire world — its economy, stability, and balance of power. By entering the war, the United States acts for the benefit of the entire world, protecting it from the threat.

A significant divergence from Bush's narrative occurs here, however, concerning the approach to international cooperation. The previous Republican president strongly emphasized the need for international cooperation, with particular emphasis on NATO. Trump also speaks of cooperation on several occasions, yet frequently points to the self-sufficiency of the United States. He states that he is capable of winning the war alone (indeed, that he has already won it), and that allied support is not necessary to achieve this. These posts also containexpressions of contempt toward allied states and NATO,

pointing to their uselessness. This constitutes a fundamental difference from Bush's rhetoric. The current conflict has significant global repercussions, yet the United States will win it on its own. This is not, however, a uniform or consistent presentation of the situation, since Trump also criticizes other states for their unwillingness to help and to engage in the conflict.

Depriving the enemy of weapons of mass destruction was one of the main arguments George Bush used in favor of the attack on Iraq. In his address aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, he stated: "Any outlaw regime that has ties to terrorist groups and seeks or possesses weapons of mass destruction is a grave danger to the civilized world and will be confronted" (Bush, 2003b). In the case of Trump's narrative, the goal is to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. When combined with the described moral evil of the adversary, this reinforces the sense of urgency surrounding this war — the longer the invasion is postponed, the closer the immoral regime comes to realizing its destructive potential.

In his posts about the war in Iran, Trump refers to the good of the Arab world. This, however, takes a different, more limited form compared to Bush's addresses. In describing the war in Iran, Trump usually speaks of prosperity and peace in the Middle East only in slogan-like terms. Most often, he mentions it as a general goal of waging the war. He frequently places it in direct juxtaposition with peace in the world: "Iran will NEVER have a nuclear weapon, nor will it have the ability to threaten the United States of America, the Middle East or, for that matter, the World!" (Trump, 2026f). This stands in contrast to Bush's rhetoric, which devoted entire segments of his addresses to warning against Islamophobia. He emphasized that the enemies constitute a marginal group within Islam and do not represent the religion as a whole. The Ayatollah, whom Trump described as one of the worst people in history (Trump, 2026a), was, in addition to being the head of state, also a religious leader. Such statements may contribute to anti-Islamic sentiment, particularly in the absence of the distinctions between the Iranian regime and Islam more broadly that characterized Bush's rhetoric.

One of the significant differences between George Bush's and Donald Trump's communication is the degree to which they speak of striving to improve the situation in the attacked country. Both Iraq and Iran were totalitarian regimes that violated human rights. In Bush's addresses, U. S. intervention is beneficial for the population — it is a moment of liberation: "We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that

country to its own people" (Bush, 2003a). Trump appeals to a similar rhetoric on several occasions — a post-war Iran is meant to have a freer society and a stronger economy. However, this is not nearly as emphasized. Years of American involvement in the Middle East that failed to bring the anticipated benefits have compromised, in the public consciousness, the image of the United States as a promoter of democracy.

The same holds true for the two frames that describe the war as a clash of values — civilization versus barbarism, and good versus evil. Trump emphasizes the significant threat posed by Iran and states that he is waging war for the sake of peace. Rarely, however, does he situate this struggle within the broader axiological context, as George Bush did. Iran is presented as a serious threat. In Trump's narrative, however, it is not an existential danger to civilization as such. Nor does he situate this war within a broader historical context, unlike Bush, who sought in the war on terror a struggle for peace and the world order established after the Second World War: "This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight" (Bush, 2001a). The war in Iran does not replicate this narrative. It is, rather, a clash between two powers, of which one — the United States — surpasses the other in both strength and morality.

Bush, in his addresses, frequently pays tribute to American soldiers, praising them for their sacrifice, devotion to the nation, and nobility. Donald Trump, in his posts, rarely reaches for similar words of approval. This may reflect the different emphases of his wartime communication. Trump instead tends to emphasize technical and tactical dominance of American forces: "(...) [Khamenei] was unable to avoid our Intelligence and Highly Sophisticated Tracking Systems (...)" (Trump, 2026a). He rarely speaks of soldiers as individuals, instead describing the military collectively. It is presented as acting on behalf of the entire nation, or even of Trump himself. This can be inferred from his tendency to use first-person pronouns — "we," "I" — when describing military operations.

The only motif from Bush's statements that finds no counterpart in Donald Trump's communication is the distinctiveness of this war compared to previous ones. The attacks of September 11, 2001, were an unprecedented event. They are often cited as marking the end of an era of peace and optimism following the end of the Cold War. Al-Qaeda's terrorism was also a new threat, one that required the adoption of new methods of combat. Nor was

it known whether it would be only the first of a wave of attacks. All these factors combined to make the war on terror, declared soon after the attack, exceptional in both scale and manner of conduct. Two and a half decades after these events, the American nation has grown accustomed to the new reality and has become convinced of the ineffectiveness of the broader project of the fight against terrorism. Wars in the Middle East that lasted longer than anticipated, along with numerous errors and controversies, have compromised this concept in the eyes of the public. Trump may avoid speaking of the war as a distinctive new kind of conflict, since such narratives may be met with public distrust. This may also be related to an emphasis on the efficiency and effectiveness of military operations, along with frequent assertions that the war has already been won. This may serve to counter fears of another long and costly war in the Middle East.

One of the frames analyzed appeared in the research material exactly as often as its corresponding frame of negation. This was the frame of protection of civilians. Combining both categories yields a total of 4 posts. This is fewer than 10% of all posts examined. Civilian safety was therefore not a prominent theme in Trump's communication. Concern for civilians manifests in Trump's communication when he speaks of halting particular military actions that could harm the civilian population, whether through direct harm or damage to critical infrastructure. The decision is framed as an ethical choice: "(...) for reasons of decency, I have chosen NOT to wipe out the Oil Infrastructure on the Island" (Trump, 2026f). In one of his posts, Trump issues an ultimatum threatening attacks on such a scale that the subsequent reconstruction of the state would be impossible: "(...) Death, Fire, and Fury will reign upon them — But I hope, and pray, that it does not happen!" (Trump, 2026e).

One of the two motifs displaying a clear predominance of the frame of negation was the declared commitment to post-war reconstruction. Its opposite was identified as declarations of destroying the enemy state. Alongside actions typical of wartime conditions — namely, the elimination ofthe adversary's military capability — Trump also speaks of the destruction of civilian infrastructure and even of the elimination of the state as such. "We are totally destroying the terrorist regime of Iran, militarily, economically, and otherwise (...)" (Trump, 2026g). "Today, Iran will be hit very hard! We are seriously considering complete destruction and certain death, because of Iran's bad behavior, for areas and groups not previously considered targets" (Trump, 2026d). This stands in contrast to humanitarian assurances

of rebuilding a democratic state after the overthrow of the regime. It also differs from the rhetoric of occupation, in which the goal is to subjugate the enemy state. Bush presented himself as the leader of the democratic world, overthrowing totalitarian governments and spreading liberal values. Trump, by contrast, positions himself as a strong and resolute hegemon, capable of utterly annihilating his enemies. Although the vision of Iran's destruction predominates, the material analyzed also included isolated posts that spoke of rebuilding the country after the war.

Another frame that finds its negation in Trump's communication is the difficult necessity of war. The president's narrative repeatedly does not present the conflict as an unfortunate necessity required nonetheless to maintain global order. Some of his posts even glorify the act of war and the destruction of the enemy. The president uses affective, highly emotive language to describe military operations. American forces do not merely achieve their operational objectives in Iran — they decimate and annihilate the enemy. In describing dominance over the enemy, Trump does not shy away from brutality. He states that Iran is being "beat to HELL" (Trump, 2026d). He also speaks of "finishing off" what remains of it (Trump, 2026l). In his descriptions, the president on several occasions portrays the war against Iran as an act of merciless justice. A particularly vivid example of this is a post from March 13, in which the pathos-laden language of describing the war reaches its peak. Its language approaches a literary register and evokes apocalyptic imagery of judgment:

> The Iranian navy is gone. Their Air Force no longer exists, missiles, drones, and everything else are being decimated, and their leaders have been wiped off the face of the earth. We have unmatched firepower, unlimited ammunition, and plenty of time — Watch what happens today to these deranged bastards. They have been killing innocent people all over the world for 47 years, and now I, the 47th President of the United States of America, am killing them. What a great honor it is to do so! (Trump, 2026g).

Conclusions

The analysis of Donald Trump's social media posts from the first month of the war in Iran, supported the research hypotheses. The president's manner of communicating about the war in Iran differs significantly from the manner

of communicating about the Iraq War and the war on terror used by George Bush. Certain points of convergence exist between the two. Both presidents emphasize the global significance of the war and clearly stress the morally evil character of the adversary. The goal of both wars was identified as depriving the enemy of weapons of mass destruction and neutralizing the threat that the hostile regime poses to the rest of the world. Even where certain motifs are shared by both leaders, Trump often presents a different approach to them. The 47th President emphasizes the global character of the war, yet, unlike Bush, stresses the self-sufficiency of the United States in conducting the conflict. He also devotes less attention to the welfare of the Middle East, referring to it only in slogan-like terms.

Trump's wartime communication presents many points of divergence from Bush's narrative. The latter speaks of war on an axiological plane. It is a struggle of good against evil, a battle for the future of civilization. Bush's narrative positions the United States as a liberator, bringing democratic values to a state dominated by a totalitarian regime, while emphasizing the honorable and noble character of the American soldiers who bring about this change. Trump rarely speaks of war in analogous terms. The invasion of Iran is described as necessary for the preservation of world order. However, the president more often appeals to interests than to universal values. He expresses appreciation for the military more in terms of its effectiveness than of its moral formation. More than a quarter-century after the declaration of the war on terror, claims about the democratization of totalitarian regimes and the conduct of an entirely new kind of war against terrorism have lost public credibility. This is why Trump does not replicate them in his communication.

Trump's communication also exhibits aspects in which it diametrically departs from the rhetoric presented by Bush. Bush emphasized the difficult necessity of war and ultimately emphasized the reconstruction of Iraq. Trump, by contrast, writes of the utter destruction of Iran and glorifies military action.

The war on terror, initially presented as a noble campaign to protect civilization, ultimately became a deeply controversial episode for the United States. The Iraq War, waged within its framework, brought with it numerous errors and controversies. It has been linked in scholarly and public debate to a range of subsequent regional and international problems. The war in Iran, still ongoing at the time of writing this article, raises legitimate concerns about further destabilization of the situation in the Middle East and the

world. These concerns are reinforced by Donald Trump's inconsistent, affective political communication, characterized by polarizing and conflict-oriented rhetoric on both the domestic and international stage.

Appendix: Coding key

1. Publication date
2. Degree of connection to the topic of the war in Iran:
   a) 0 — no connection
   b) 1 — direct connection
   c) 2 — indirect connection
3. Is audiovisual material attached to the post?
   a) 0 — no
   b) 1 — yes, link
   c) 2 — yes, image
   d) 3 — yes, video
4. Civilization versus barbarism frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
5. Good versus evil frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
6. Morally evil nature of the enemy frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
7. Global-local character of the war frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
8. Distinctiveness of the current war compared to previous ones frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation

9. Deprivation of the enemy's weapons frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
10. Acting for the good of the attacked state's citizens frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
11. Separation of the enemy from Islam as a whole frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
12. Declared commitment to post-war reconstruction frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
13. Praise for soldiers frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
14. Difficult necessity of war frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation
15. Protection of civilians frame:
   a) 0 — absent
   b) 1 — present
   c) 2 — frame of negation

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