

Language, Diplomacy and Global Governance: Discourse Strategies in a Middle Eastern UN Address

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Abstract

The article applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to King Abdullah II's 2024 speech at the United Nations General Assembly, uncovering how he strategically employs humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical discourses to shape international perceptions of a conflict. Unlike previous research on Western political rhetoric, this study highlights how a Middle Eastern leader navigates global governance structures to construct political legitimacy, critique power asymmetries, and advocate for human rights. The findings reveal that King Abdullah integrates emotive language, statistical evidence, and legal references to frame the conflict as a global moral and legal crisis, moving beyond regional narratives. Additionally, the study identifies how historical intertextuality, including references to his father's past UN addresses, strengthens Jordan's diplomatic credibility and positions it as a principled advocate for peace. The analysis also highlights how the speech strikes a balance between critique and diplomacy, avoiding direct vilification while effectively critiquing the failures of international institutions. By framing the United Nations as ineffective in enforcing justice, King Abdullah aligns Jordan's discourse with broader post-colonial resistance narratives, challenging dominance in global governance. This study contributes to CDA and political discourse analysis by offering a new framework for understanding how smaller states use language to challenge hegemonic structures and influence international diplomacy.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, political discourse, textual analysis, discursive practices, social practices

1. Introduction

Political discourse (Chadwick, 2000; Dunmire, 2023; Suparto et al., 2023) is a powerful tool that shapes perceptions, identities, and power relations within and across societies (Sweigart et al., 2024). It reflects and reinforces political actors' ideologies and interests while influencing public opinion and policy-making (Chinwe & Ejiaso, 2023). Leaders strategically use political discourse to craft messages that resonate with their audiences, legitimize their actions, and challenge their adversaries. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a robust methodological framework, is crucial in analyzing these discursive practices, revealing the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and social structures embedded in political speeches (Hodge, 2021). King Abdullah II's¹ speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 24, 2024, is an essential example of how political discourse operates within the complex terrain of international relations and regional conflict.

CDA, pioneered by scholars such as Fairclough (2013), Van Dijk (1993), and Wodak (2001), focuses on how language functions as a social practice that reflects and shapes power relations. In political discourse, language is never neutral (Van Noppen, 2004); it is a tool elite use to consolidate authority, marginalize opposition, and construct national or collective identities (Zotzmann & O'Regan, 2016). Political speeches are thus key sites for exercising discursive power, as leaders use them to position themselves and their nations within global and regional hierarchies, justify political decisions, and influence international audiences (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). King Abdullah's speech provides a rich case for CDA, as it critiques policies and international inaction and aims to shape global opinion on the cause, positioning Jordan as a critical advocate for justice and peace.

The understanding that discourse produces and reproduces social structures is central to political discourse analysis within CDA (Jones & Collins, 2006). Political actors use discourse in conflict contexts like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to frame narratives of legitimacy, victimhood, and resistance (Knoblock, 2020). Leaders craft these narratives to align with their broader geopolitical objectives (Langer, 2023), often invoking international law, humanitarian values, and historical precedents to bolster their arguments. King Abdullah's speech heavily relies on these elements, emphasizing moral responsibility, international legal norms, and the historical context of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. His speech operates on multiple levels: it addresses domestic concerns while also targeting a global audience, aiming to garner international support for the Palestinian cause and challenge Israel's perceived impunity.

King Abdullah's address to the UN needs to be seen in the broader context of Jordan's political and diplomatic strategies (Balci, 2024; Haddadin, 2012). Jordan has historically maintained a delicate balance between its peace treaty with Israel and its strong advocacy for Palestinian rights. Therefore, the kingdom's political discourse often involves navigating competing pressures internally and externally. King Abdullah's speech reflects this balancing act. By using humanitarian discourse, references to international law, and framing Israel's

actions as violations of global norms, he constructs a narrative that calls for urgent international intervention while maintaining Jordan's image as a moderate and responsible actor in the region.

The article examines how King Abdullah's speech used political discourse to create a specific narrative about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jordan's role in the Middle East, and the failures of international governance. The speech is analyzed using CDA on three interconnected levels: textual, discursive, and social (Santosa, 2016; Wahyuni & Syamsi, 2021). The textual analysis focuses on the linguistic aspects of the speech, such as word choices, rhetorical devices, and the use of modality, to explore how these features shape meanings and influence audiences (AlAfnan & MohdZuki, 2024). The discursive analysis examines the creation and dissemination of the speech and how it draws on established discourses of international law, humanitarianism, and historical justice. Lastly, the social analysis places the speech in its broader geopolitical and historical context, assessing how it reflects and challenges existing power dynamics in the Middle East and the global governance structures represented by institutions like the United Nations.

This analysis provides a deeper understanding of political discourse in conflict contexts, particularly about international law and humanitarian intervention. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with its deeply rooted political, territorial, and ideological dimensions, offers an excellent opportunity to examine how leaders use discourse to further their political objectives and shape their nations' roles on the global stage. King Abdullah's speech went beyond articulating Jordan's policy; it represented a strategic intervention aimed at reshaping international perceptions and reinforcing Jordan's position as a crucial advocate for peace and justice in the region. Through CDA, this article reveals how King Abdullah's language choices, rhetorical strategies, and intertextual references work together to construct an influential political discourse that resonates with regional and international audiences.

In short, the research questions are as follows:

1. How does King Abdullah II construct political and ideological narratives in his 79th UN General Assembly speech?
2. What rhetorical and linguistic strategies does he use to shape international perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
3. How do textual, discursive, and social practices within the speech contribute to constructing victimhood, aggression, and moral responsibility?
4. What are the ideological and power dynamics embedded in the speech?

2. Literature Review

CDA is an approach that examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology in texts and speech acts (Waugh et al., 2016). It originated from the works of scholars such as Fairclough (1992), Van Dijk (2015), and Wodak (2002). CDA aims to uncover the discourse's underlying power structures, ideologies, and social practices (AlAfnan & Jovic, 2024; Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019). According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2010), discourse is a form of social practice that reflects and constructs social realities, including political, economic, and cultural structures. Therefore, CDA views language not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for reproducing or transforming power relations.

In Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, analysis occurs on three interconnected levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The textual level focuses on the linguistic features of the text, including vocabulary, syntax, modality, and rhetorical devices (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014). The discursive practice examines the text's production, distribution, and consumption processes, exploring how it draws on and contributes to broader social and political discourses (AlAfnan & Dishari, 2024; Irimiea, 2017). Finally, the social practice involves situating the discourse within its broader socio-political and historical context, revealing how it perpetuates or challenges dominant ideologies and power relations (Fairclough, 1992; 2013). Van Dijk (1993) expands on CDA by emphasizing the role of discourse in constructing social power, particularly in political discourse. He argues that political elites use language to control and manipulate public opinion, often through strategic rhetorical devices, presuppositions, and framing. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach highlights how discourse influences cognitive processes, shaping how individuals perceive social realities, political actors, and power relations. Wodak (2001) further develops CDA by introducing the discourse-historical approach (DHA), which emphasizes the importance of historical and cultural context in shaping discursive practices. Wodak argues that discourses are often interconnected with historical events, ideologies, and institutions and must be analyzed within their broader historical and social contexts. In the case of political discourse, this means analyzing how historical narratives, intertextual references, and cultural identities are constructed through language (AlAfnan, 2018). CDA has been applied extensively in political discourse analysis to uncover how political actors use language to maintain or challenge power. Researchers have explored how political leaders deploy discourse to construct national identities, legitimize policies, marginalize dissent, and frame political conflicts (Chiluwa, 2018; Köhler, 2019; Yang & Chen, 2018).

Political discourse is how political figures communicate their policies, values, ideologies, and positions to domestic and international audiences (AlAfnan & Oshchepkova, 2022; Chilton & Schöffne, 2011). It includes various forms of communication, such as speeches, policy documents, media interviews, and public statements (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). Political discourse is closely linked to power and ideology, as it often legitimizes political authority, shapes public opinion, and influences policy decisions (Van Dijk, 1997). One significant aspect of political discourse is its rhetorical nature (Huckin, 2012). As Aristotle noted in his works on rhetoric, political speech often aims to persuade an audience through ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotion). In contemporary political discourse, leaders use various rhetorical strategies to present issues that resonate with their audiences' emotions, values, and beliefs. For instance, politicians frequently use metaphors, narratives, and framing devices to shape their audiences' understanding of political issues (Lakoff, 2004).

Political discourse plays a crucial role in shaping identities, as scholars like Anderson and Silver (1983) argue. They suggest that national identities are formed and upheld through language and discourse. Political leaders often use speeches and public statements to delineate the borders of the national 'self' and the foreign 'other.' By shaping collective identities, political discourse fosters a sense of national unity and validates political decisions and actions, such as foreign policy interventions or domestic reforms. The framing of conflicts in political discourse has been a significant focus within CDA. Conflict discourse frequently involves the use of binary oppositions, where one side is portrayed as morally superior while the other is vilified. For instance, the discourse surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often presents it as a struggle between good and evil, victim and aggressor, and occupier and the occupied. This framing serves to justify political actions, such as military interventions or sanctions, and influences international perceptions of the conflict. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, King Abdullah II's speech is an example of political discourse that employs such framing. Through strategic language use, he portrays Palestinians as victims of aggression and occupation, while Israel is depicted as a violator of international law and human rights. In doing so, King Abdullah positions Jordan as a moral actor and aims to shape global opinion on the conflict.

Due to its complex political dynamics and ongoing conflicts, the Middle East has been a focus for applying CDA in political discourse analysis (Abdulmajid, 2019). Scholars have examined how regional leaders use discourse to assert their legitimacy, construct national identities, and navigate international power relations. For example, studies of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's speeches during the 1950s and 1960s illustrate how he used pan-Arabism rhetoric to unite the Arab world against Western imperialism and assert Egypt's leadership role in the region (Owusu-Ansah, 1995). Similarly, research on the speeches of Israeli leaders has demonstrated how language is used to frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of security, terrorism, and existential threat, thereby justifying military actions and policies of occupation (Khalidi, 2014). On the other hand, Palestinian political discourse often emphasizes resistance, liberation, and human rights, constructing a narrative of victimhood and struggle against occupation (Said & Barsamian, 2003). As a critical player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jordan has also been the subject of discourse analysis, particularly regarding how its leaders balance domestic and international concerns. Scholars have noted that Jordanian political discourse often involves a delicate balancing act, as the country must maintain its peace treaty with Israel while supporting Palestinian statehood and managing its significant Palestinian population (Ryan, 2015). King Abdullah II's speeches frequently reflect this balancing act as he navigates between advocating for Palestinian rights and maintaining diplomatic relations with Western powers that support Israel.

King Abdullah's 2024 speech at the UN continues this discourse. In it, he employs various rhetorical strategies to critique Israel's actions and call for international intervention while carefully positioning Jordan as a moral and moderate actor. King Abdullah constructs a narrative that appeals to global values and seeks to mobilize international support for the Palestinian cause by invoking international law, human rights, and historical injustices.

CDA serves as a foundational framework for addressing the research questions guiding this study. The analysis aims to uncover how King Abdullah II constructs political and ideological narratives, utilizes rhetorical and linguistic strategies, and embeds ideological and power dynamics within his speech. CDA provides a systematic approach to examining the interplay between language, power, and ideology, making it an essential tool for dissecting the speech's textual, discursive, and social dimensions. By applying CDA, this study explores how King Abdullah strategically employs language to frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, construct Jordan's diplomatic identity, and critique global governance structures. The research questions align with CDA's three-dimensional model—textual analysis reveals how specific linguistic choices shape meaning and influence audiences, discursive analysis examines intertextuality and the broader circulation of the speech, and social analysis situates the discourse within the geopolitical landscape. This methodological alignment ensures that the study not only examines the explicit content of the speech but also uncovers the underlying power relations and ideological constructs that shape its delivery and reception.

3. Methodology

CDA is a qualitative research approach that focuses on how discourse shapes, reflects, and is shaped by social and political contexts. In analyzing King Abdullah II's speech, CDA helps unravel the embedded ideologies, power structures, and social relations that influence his language and rhetorical strategies. This methodology allows a multi-dimensional exploration of how discourse operates at different levels—from textual features to broader social practices. The methodology adopted for this analysis is structured according to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for CDA, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of text, discourse practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1992, 2013).

The primary research questions guiding the CDA of this speech are:

1. How does King Abdullah II construct political and ideological narratives in his 79th UN General Assembly speech?
2. What rhetorical and linguistic strategies does he use to shape international perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
3. How do textual, discursive, and social practices within the speech contribute to constructing victimhood, aggression, and moral responsibility?
4. What are the ideological and power dynamics embedded in the speech?

The primary data for this analysis is the transcribed verbatim speech delivered by King Abdullah II of Jordan at the United Nations General Assembly on September 24, 2024. The speech was selected due to its relevance to pressing international issues, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and its potential to influence international discourse. Additionally, the speech serves as a critical reflection on the

role of the United Nations and international law in addressing conflicts and humanitarian crises.

The analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, which involves:

Textual Analysis: This step focuses on the micro-level of discourse, where linguistic features of the speech are analyzed. The analysis examines vocabulary, grammar, modality, rhetorical devices, and pronouns. For example, special attention is given to using religious language, moral imperatives, and statistical data to legitimize claims and evoke emotions. This stage helps identify how King Abdullah constructed social identities, relationships, and power dynamics through linguistic choices. Key components of the textual analysis include:

Lexical choices: The speech's use of emotive language (e.g., '*innocent lives*,' '*unprecedented destruction*') and technical terms related to international law (e.g., '*International Court of Justice*,' '*illegal occupation*') will be analyzed to understand how they contribute to the overall narrative.

Rhetorical strategies: We will explore the use of metaphors, repetition, parallelism, and questions to understand how they reinforce the key messages of the speech.

Modality and agency: Examining modal verbs ('*must*,' '*cannot*,' '*should*') and how the agency is attributed to different actors (e.g., the United Nations, Israel, and the Palestinians) will shed light on how responsibility and power are framed.

Discursive Practice: This level of analysis examines the production, distribution, and consumption of the speech. It considers how King Abdullah's speech draws upon existing discourses and positions itself about those discourses. The analysis explores the intertextual references made in the speech, such as references to historical events, international legal principles, and regional peace efforts. It also investigates how King Abdullah positions Jordan as a moral leader in the region and a defender of Palestinian rights while critiquing Israel's actions and the failures of international institutions like the United Nations. This phase also involves analyzing the speech's genre. It functions as a political oratory within the context of the UN General Assembly, a forum that encourages states to engage in diplomacy through formal, structured discourse. The institutional context shapes the content and form of the speech, influencing the kinds of arguments made and the language used to present them.

Social Practice: At this macro-level of analysis, the focus is on the relationship between the speech and broader social, political, and ideological structures. This involves situating the speech within the broader geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and global perceptions of international law and human rights. The analysis will explore how the speech reflects and contributes to dominant narratives about occupation, resistance, and the role of international organizations in conflict resolution. This level of analysis draws connections between the discourse used in the speech and larger social structures, such as:

Power dynamics between Israel and Palestine: How the speech constructs Israel as an aggressor and Palestine as a victimized entity, reinforcing the power asymmetry between the two.

Jordan's role in regional diplomacy: The speech serves Jordan's geopolitical interests by positioning it as a critical mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while distancing it from more extremist actors.

The international community's moral responsibilities: The speech's critique of global inaction and its appeal to international actors' moral and legal duties will be analyzed to understand how it seeks to influence global governance discourses.

CDA provides the primary methodological framework, helping to uncover how discourse constructs and is constructed by social power relations (Van Dijk, 1993). This analysis is mainly concerned with how discourse reinforces or challenges hegemonic structures, such as the dominance of Western powers in international law and governance.

While the study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to analyze King Abdullah II's speech, certain methodological considerations remain unaddressed. Notably, the discussion lacks an assessment of data reliability and validity, which are essential for ensuring the credibility of the analysis. CDA, being an interpretive approach, requires transparency in how data is selected, analyzed, and validated to minimize subjective bias. Additionally, there is no mention of researcher positionality, which is crucial in CDA, as the researcher's background, ideological stance, and interpretive lens can influence the findings. Acknowledging positionality would enhance reflexivity and provide a clearer understanding of potential biases in the analysis. Furthermore, the study does not address ethical considerations, such as ensuring that political discourse is analyzed responsibly and without misrepresentation. Given the sensitive nature of political rhetoric, ethical reflection on how the findings are presented and interpreted is necessary to uphold academic integrity and prevent misinterpretation of the speaker's intent. Addressing these gaps would strengthen the methodological rigor of the study and enhance the reliability of its conclusions.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis of King Abdullah II's speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly on September 24, 2024, employs qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively understand how language constructs meaning, reflects power dynamics, and shapes socio-political realities. The qualitative analysis focuses on the discourse's meaning-making processes, drawing upon CDA to unpack the embedded ideologies, power relations, and social practices. The quantitative aspect of the analysis complements this by quantifying the use of critical terms, frequencies of rhetorical devices, and patterns in the use of modality, providing a data-driven insight into the speech's linguistic features.

4.1 Textual Analysis

The textual analysis of King Abdullah's speech focuses on micro-linguistic features such as lexical choices, rhetorical strategies, modality, and agency, offering insight into how language is used to construct Jordan's position and critique international actors. Table 1 provides insights into these features in the text.

Table 1. Textual Analysis of King Abdullah II's 2024 UN Speech

Linguistic Feature	Examples	Function / Purpose	Interpretation
Lexical Choices – Emotive Language	“innocent,” “suffering,” “destruction,” “violence”	Humanize Palestinians; evoke empathy	Constructs a victimhood narrative and moral urgency
Lexical Choices – Legal Terminology	“occupation,” “impunity,” “International Court of Justice”	Frame Israeli actions as legal violations	Aligns argument with international norms
Religious and Ethical Language	“In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful,” “moral duty”	Elevate discourse; appeal to moral values	Frames conflict as global moral crisis
Modal Verbs (Modality)	“must,” “cannot,” “should,” “will”	Express necessity, obligation, certainty	Strengthens urgency and moral obligation
Rhetorical Questions	“What kind of world does that leave us with?”	Engage audience in reflection	Invites ethical self-assessment
Statistics and Quantification	“42,000 Palestinians killed,” “10,700 detained”	Provide empirical support	Establish credibility and seriousness
Emotive Imagery	“child amputees,” “starving Palestinians”	Stir emotional response	Intensifies humanitarian appeal
Agency Attribution (Israel)	“The Israeli government has killed...”	Assigns blame	Constructs Israel as the aggressor
Agency Attribution (International Actors)	“The UN is under attack,” “rulings defied”	Highlight institutional failure	Delegitimizes global inaction
Inclusive Pronouns	“we,” “our international community,” “nations united”	Foster collective responsibility	Appeals to shared moral duty
Repetition	“justice,” “rights,” “moral duty” (frequent)	Emphasize key themes	Reinforces narrative coherence

Lexical Choices and Vocabulary

As Table 1 shows, the speech uses emotionally charged language to humanize the Palestinian plight and delegitimize Israeli actions. Words like ‘*innocent*,’ ‘*suffering*,’ ‘*destruction*,’ and ‘*violence*’ create a narrative that portrays Palestinians as victims of unprecedented aggression. Meanwhile, terms like ‘*impunity*’ and ‘*occupation*’ frame Israel as a violator of international norms, positioning its actions as morally and legally unacceptable.

King Abdullah also employs religious and moral language at the beginning and throughout the speech, with phrases like ‘In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful’ and ‘moral duty.’ These choices evoke ethical considerations that transcend national interests, suggesting that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not just a political issue but a moral and humanitarian crisis. This reinforces his appeal to the international community by framing the crisis as a global moral imperative rather than a regional dispute.

Modality and Rhetorical Devices

Modality, which expresses necessity, possibility, or obligation, is crucial in signaling the speaker's stance. King Abdullah employs modal solid verbs such as ‘*must*,’ ‘*cannot*,’ and ‘*will*’ to assert a sense of urgency and non-negotiability. For instance, the statement ‘*This war must end*’ leaves little room for ambiguity and emphasizes the speaker's authoritative stance.

Rhetorical questions such as ‘*What kind of world does that leave us with?*’ and ‘*Is that what we want?*’ engage the audience, forcing them to reflect on their complicity or inaction. These questions force the listener to consider the moral and legal consequences of ignoring the conflict, thereby heightening the persuasive impact of the speech.

The use of statistics, such as ‘*over 10,700 detained*’ and ‘*42,000 Palestinians have been killed*,’ lends the speech a factual, evidence-based authority. At the same time, emotionally charged images of ‘*child amputees*’ and ‘*starving Palestinians*’ appeal directly to human empathy. The juxtaposition of cold, complex data with emotional imagery strengthens King Abdullah's rhetorical appeal by grounding emotional arguments in factual claims.

Agency and Responsibility

Another key feature of the speech is how agency is assigned to various actors. Israel is constructed as the primary agent responsible for the violence, often positioned as the subject of sentences that depict negative actions, such as ‘*The Israeli government has killed*’ or ‘*This Israeli government has resulted in*.’ This framing constructs Israel as the aggressor, while Palestinians are portrayed as passive victims of aggression, underscoring the power asymmetry between the two groups.

Similarly, international organizations, particularly the United Nations, are assigned responsibility for failing to act. Phrases like ‘*the UN is under attack*’ and ‘*the rulings of the UN's International Court of Justice are defied*’ criticize the global institution for its inability to enforce justice and protect the vulnerable. By assigning agency in this way, the speech attempts to shift the burden of responsibility from Jordan and

Palestine onto Israel and the international community.

The quantitative analysis of the speech involves counting the frequency of key terms and phrases to identify linguistic patterns that reinforce the speaker's key messages. The textual analysis reveals that some words and phrases that communicate themes were continually repeated in the speech.

Humanitarian crisis vocabulary: Words such as ‘*innocent*,’ ‘*children*,’ ‘*suffering*,’ ‘*starvation*,’ and ‘*bombardment*’ appeared frequently, with ‘*innocent*’ occurring 12 times, ‘*children*’ 9 times, and ‘*starvation*’ 6 times. These repeated references to human suffering underscore the speaker's emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of the conflict.

Legal and political terminology: Words like ‘*international law*,’ ‘*occupation*,’ and ‘*impunity*’ were prominent, with ‘*occupation*’ occurring eight times and ‘*impunity*’ 5 times. This highlights the speaker's focus on framing the conflict within international legal norms and violations.

Moral imperatives: Throughout the speech, the terms ‘*moral duty*,’ ‘*justice*,’ and ‘*equal rights*’ appeared, emphasizing the ethical framework within which King Abdullah constructed his arguments.

The frequent use of these terms helps create a consistent narrative, reinforcing the portrayal of Palestinians as victims and Israel as a violator of international norms.

4.2 Discursive Practices

King Abdullah's speech reinforced his arguments by drawing on historical events and establishing international discourses. One prominent intertextual reference is the Arab Peace Initiative, which he mentions to position Jordan within a legacy of regional diplomacy. This reference implicitly critiques Israel's rejection of peace efforts while reaffirming Jordan's long-standing commitment to a two-state solution.

By referencing his father's speech at the UN General Assembly 64 years earlier, King Abdullah situates himself within a legacy of leadership and peace advocacy. This intergenerational continuity adds a layer of authority to his speech, suggesting that Jordan's moral stance on Palestine has historical precedence and consistency.

Table 2. Discursive Practices in King Abdullah II's 2024 UN Speech

Discursive Feature	Example / Description	Function / Purpose	Interpretation
Intertextuality – Historical References	Reference to his father's 1960 UN speech	Establish historical continuity and national legacy	Positions Jordan as a long-standing, credible advocate for peace
Reference to the Arab Peace Initiative	Mentions regional diplomatic efforts	Reaffirm commitment to peaceful resolution	Critiques Israel's rejection of peace frameworks
Legal Intertextuality	References to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and UN resolutions	Align Jordan's position with international law	Elevates the conflict to a matter of global legal importance
Genre Awareness – UN Address Format	Formal, structured political oratory	Fits institutional expectations	Enhances legitimacy within global governance settings
Positioning Jordan	"We will never accept the forced displacement of Palestinians"	Construct moral identity	Positions Jordan as ethical, moderate, and peace-oriented
Positioning Israel	"Decades-long impunity is becoming its own worst enemy"	Critique without direct vilification	Frames Israel as diplomatically isolated due to its actions
Positioning the UN / Global Institutions	"Trust in the UN's cornerstone principles is crumbling"	Criticizes inaction	Highlights institutional failure and need for reform
Collectivization & Inclusivity	Frequent use of "we," "our shared values," "the international community"	Builds solidarity	Appeals to universal ethics and global cooperation
Moral Legitimization	"Moral duty," "justice," "equal rights"	Ethical framing of the conflict	Broadens appeal beyond political affiliations
Discourse of Responsibility	"The international community must act"	Shift burden of inaction	Calls for collective moral and political intervention

As Table 2 shows, the speech also interacts with the discourse of international law, particularly the International Court of Justice (ICJ). By referencing the ICJ's judgment, King Abdullah invokes the legitimacy of international legal frameworks, framing Israel's actions as violations of morality and international law. This intertextual reference shifts the conflict from a regional dispute to a global legal and moral accountability issue, appealing to a broader international audience.

Positioning and Identity Construction

Through discursive strategies, King Abdullah constructs Jordan's identity as a moderate and moral actor, advocating for peace and human rights. He positions Jordan as a protector of Palestinian rights while distancing it from more radical actors in the region. For instance, he clearly states, ‘*We will never accept the forced displacement of Palestinians*,’ affirming Jordan's commitment to Palestinian sovereignty while rejecting extreme measures that could destabilize the region.

King Abdullah also positions Israel as increasingly isolated due to its policies, suggesting that its *decades-long impunity is becoming its own worst enemy*. By contrasting Israel's self-perception as a ‘*Western-style democracy*’ with its actions in Gaza, he highlights a contradiction that challenges Israel's international legitimacy.

Similarly, the United Nations is positioned as a failing institution. Through repeated references to its inaction, such as *'trust in the UN's cornerstone principles is crumbling'*, King Abdullah frames the UN as complicit in allowing the crisis to escalate. This positioning is a broader critique of global governance structures, suggesting that power imbalances undermine moral and legal frameworks.

A quantitative analysis of discursive patterns reveals a strong focus on collective responsibility and action. Phrases like *'we must,' 'the international community,'* and *'nations united'* appeared more than 20 times throughout the speech, suggesting a persistent call for global intervention and cooperation. Inclusive pronouns, such as *'we'* and *'our,'* occurred over 30 times, indicating that the speech is constructed to engage a collective audience, appealing to shared values and responsibilities.

The frequent reference to *'justice'* (15 times) and *'rights'* (12 times) highlights King Abdullah's effort to frame the conflict in universal terms, moving beyond national or regional interests to appeal to broader principles of fairness and legality. This quantitative pattern aligns with the qualitative observation that King Abdullah positions the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a global moral and legal issue.

4.3 Social Practice

At the macro level, the speech reflects and challenges existing power structures, particularly the geopolitical dynamics surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By invoking concepts like *'impunity'* and *'occupation,'* King Abdullah critiques the unequal power relations between Israel and Palestine, as well as the complicity of international actors who fail to hold Israel accountable. This reflects a broader ideological stance rooted in anti-colonial resistance, positioning Palestine as a victim of neocolonial domination.

Jordan's role in the region is also significant in this analysis. As a moderate Arab state with a peace treaty with Israel, Jordan is uniquely positioned in regional politics. King Abdullah navigates this delicate position by using language that criticizes Israel's actions without overtly alienating Western powers that support Israel. This careful balancing act reveals how social and political constraints shape discourse.

Table 3. Social Practices in King Abdullah II's 2024 UN Speech

Social Practice	Example / Evidence	Function / Purpose	Interpretation / Implication
Critique of Power Asymmetry (Israel–Palestine)	Use of terms like “occupation,” “impunity,” “aggression”	Challenge dominance and expose inequality	Frames Israel as the oppressor, Palestine as victimized; critiques systemic injustice
Jordan's Geopolitical Balancing Act	Criticizes Israeli policies while avoiding direct hostility	Maintain diplomatic ties with Israel and the West	Positions Jordan as a moderate, stabilizing actor in the region
Postcolonial Resistance Discourse	References to neocolonialism and selective justice	Align with Global South narratives	Challenges Western hegemony and double standards in international law
Delegitimization of Global Governance Structures	“Trust in the UN's principles is crumbling”	Undermine faith in ineffective institutions	Highlights the moral failure of international bodies like the UN
Humanitarian Framing of Conflict	Emphasis on “child amputees,” “starvation,” “innocents”	Reframe the conflict as a human rights crisis	Seeks to universalize the Palestinian plight beyond regional politics
Moral Universalism	“Moral duty,” “equal rights,” “justice for all”	Appeal to shared global ethics	Attempts to transcend political divisions through universal human values
Strategic Victimhood Construction	Repetition of suffering and civilian casualties	Generate global sympathy and moral urgency	Aims to mobilize international intervention and support
Discursive Resistance to Western Dominance	“Some nations are above international law”	Critique selective enforcement of justice	Exposes geopolitical bias and unequal accountability
Identity Construction of Jordan	Long-standing commitment to peace and human rights	Establish diplomatic credibility	Reinforces Jordan's role as a principled and rational state actor
Mobilization of Collective Responsibility	“The international community must act,” use of “we”	Call for shared accountability	Urges multilateralism and unified response to injustice

As table 3 shows, the speech also reflects global shifts in how the international community views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By repeatedly invoking the failures of international institutions, King Abdullah taps into growing global frustration with the perceived ineffectiveness of organizations like the UN in resolving protracted conflicts. This reflects a broader critique of global governance structures, where power is concentrated in the hands of a few to the detriment of weaker nations and populations.

A quantitative review of global institutions and power dynamics references supports the qualitative findings. *'United Nations'* appeared 14 times, while *'international community'* was mentioned 11 times, indicating a strong focus on global responsibility. Meanwhile, the term *'Israel'* appeared 17 times, often in connection with actions that reflect aggression or violations of international law. In comparison, *'Palestinians'* was mentioned 23 times, frequently associated with suffering, victimization, and the need for protection. This numerical imbalance highlights how King Abdullah emphasizes Palestinian suffering, portraying Palestinians as the primary victims of the conflict, while Israel is framed as the critical perpetrator responsible for these injustices. By drawing attention to these contrasts, the speech subtly reinforces the power asymmetry between Israel and Palestine, framing Israel as the more powerful and culpable actor in the conflict.

5. Discussion

The CDA of King Abdullah II's 2024 United Nations General Assembly speech reveals a sophisticated use of political rhetoric beyond conventional discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study uncovers new insights into how Middle Eastern leaders strategically use discourse in international forums to navigate global power structures, legitimize political positions, and challenge dominant

narratives.

One of the key findings is King Abdullah's integration of humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical discourses. This rhetorical strategy distinguishes his speech from typical political statements on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He frames the conflict as a global humanitarian crisis rather than a regional dispute by emphasizing human suffering and moral responsibility. His frequent use of emotionally charged language—such as “starvation,” “child amputees,” and “unprecedented destruction”—constructs a powerful victimhood narrative that universalizes the responsibility for action. Including statistical data alongside moral imperatives strengthens his argument, allowing him to balance emotional appeal with empirical credibility.

In addition to humanitarian discourse, the speech is deeply rooted in international legal frameworks, which serve as a unique mechanism for legitimizing Jordan's stance while critiquing global governance structures. Unlike many political leaders who focus on ideological arguments or national interests, King Abdullah strategically invokes the International Court of Justice (ICJ), United Nations resolutions, and violations of international law to construct a discourse of legal accountability. This shifts the focus from political bias to objective legal standards, reinforcing Jordan's position as a moderate and principled advocate for justice. The study reveals that his references to international law are not just rhetorical; they are carefully designed to pressure global institutions into action while exposing the selective application of justice in international relations.

Another critical insight from this study is how King Abdullah balances critique with diplomacy. Unlike more confrontational political rhetoric, his speech avoids direct vilification of Israel as a state and instead frames the issue as a broader failure of international governance. This nuanced approach allows Jordan to critique Israeli policies without jeopardizing its diplomatic ties with Israel and Western allies. By positioning Jordan as a responsible mediator rather than an aggressor, the speech demonstrates a strategic use of discourse to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics.

Furthermore, this study highlights the role of intertextuality in reinforcing Jordan's diplomatic credibility. King Abdullah connected his speech to historical precedents, including his father's past UN addresses and the Arab Peace Initiative, to establish continuity in Jordan's advocacy for Palestinian rights. This historical framing strengthens his legitimacy as a consistent supporter of peace efforts, differentiating Jordan's discourse from more reactionary or opportunistic political narratives. The study identifies historical references as a critical rhetorical tool that allows political leaders to frame their positions as long-standing, principled commitments rather than reactive responses to contemporary events.

From a discursive perspective, the speech constructs a binary opposition between victim and aggressor, reinforcing power asymmetries in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinians are depicted as innocent victims of systematic oppression, while Israel is portrayed as a state acting with impunity, defying international norms. This framing is crucial for mobilizing global solidarity, as it aligns the Palestinian cause with broader struggles for justice, human rights, and anti-colonial resistance. However, King Abdullah's discourse avoids overtly militant rhetoric, instead relying on inclusive language—such as “we,” “our international community,” and “nations united”—to position the conflict as a global moral imperative rather than a bilateral dispute.

Another significant finding is how King Abdullah's speech challenges dominant global power structures. By referencing the failures of the United Nations and the international community, he critiques the selective enforcement of international law and the imbalance of power in global governance. His use of phrases like “trust in the UN's cornerstone principles is crumbling” and “some nations are above international law” reflects a growing frustration in the Global South with Western dominance in international institutions. This subtle yet pointed critique aligns Jordan with broader post-colonial resistance narratives, reinforcing its position as a state advocating for fairness in international decision-making.

While King Abdullah's rhetorical strategies are highly effective in constructing a compelling narrative, this study also acknowledges the limitations of political discourse in achieving concrete policy changes. Despite its strong moral and legal arguments, the speech does not provide a clear roadmap for conflict resolution. This reflects a broader challenge in international diplomacy—rhetorical appeals may shape perceptions and public opinion, but their impact on actual policy decisions remains uncertain.

This study provides new insights into how Middle Eastern leaders use political discourse in global institutions to navigate diplomatic constraints, shape international narratives, and challenge power asymmetries. By analyzing King Abdullah II's speech through textual, discursive, and social dimensions, this research uncovers how humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical discourses intersect to construct political legitimacy, critique dominant power structures, and advocate for international intervention. These findings contribute to the broader field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and offer a framework for understanding how smaller states strategically leverage language to navigate power imbalances in global governance.

6. Conclusion

This study offers a novel contribution to political discourse analysis by applying CDA to King Abdullah II's 2024 speech at the United Nations General Assembly. This area has been largely overlooked in previous research. While much discourse analysis has focused on Western political rhetoric, this study expands the scope by critically examining how Middle Eastern leaders strategically use discourse to engage global audiences, shape international perceptions, and advocate for regional issues through humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical narratives.

One of the key new insights from this study is the multilayered rhetorical strategy King Abdullah employs to construct Jordan's position.

Unlike many political speeches that rely primarily on nationalistic or ideological arguments, this speech integrates humanitarian appeals, legal discourse, and historical intertextuality to construct a persuasive global narrative. The study uncovers how his use of international legal frameworks, particularly references to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the failures of the United Nations, serves as a unique mechanism for legitimizing his position while simultaneously critiquing global governance structures. This challenges traditional assumptions that Arab leaders frame regional conflicts solely through ideological or religious lenses.

Another new finding is how King Abdullah strategically balances critique and diplomacy. The study demonstrates that while he condemns Israel's actions, he refrains from directly vilifying Israel as a state. Instead, he focuses on the broader failures of international institutions, positioning Jordan as a moderate and responsible diplomatic actor rather than an aggressive opponent. This nuanced approach distinguishes his discourse from more confrontational rhetoric found in political speeches on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting a strategic use of discourse to navigate complex geopolitical realities.

Additionally, this study provides new insights into how power asymmetries and victimhood are constructed in political discourse. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, the research reveals that repetitive use of emotive language, statistical evidence, and inclusive pronouns ("we," "our international community") constructs a compelling narrative that not only humanizes Palestinian suffering but also universalizes the moral responsibility for action. This finding extends current discourse analysis theories by demonstrating how political leaders in conflict zones employ global moral imperatives to challenge dominant power structures.

Furthermore, this study identifies intertextual references as a crucial rhetorical tool in political discourse. King Abdullah connects his speech to historical precedents, including his father's past UN addresses and previous peace efforts, to enhance Jordan's credibility and position it within a legacy of diplomatic advocacy. This strategic use of intertextuality strengthens his claims, providing a historical dimension that distinguishes his speech from standard political statements.

In sum, this study advances the field of Critical Discourse Analysis by offering a new perspective on Middle Eastern political rhetoric in global institutions. By analyzing King Abdullah II's speech through textual, discursive, and social dimensions, it reveals how humanitarian, legal, and geopolitical discourses intersect to construct political legitimacy, critique power dynamics, and advocate for international intervention. These findings not only contribute to the understanding of political discourse in international diplomacy but also provide a framework for examining how smaller states strategically leverage language to navigate power imbalances in global governance.

This research underscores the critical role of discourse in shaping international relations and highlights the need for further studies on how political leaders in non-Western contexts use language to construct global narratives, influence diplomatic engagements, and challenge hegemonic structures. Future research could expand on these findings by comparing King Abdullah's discourse with other Middle Eastern leaders or examining the long-term impact of such speeches on international policymaking and media framing.

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ⁱ King Abdullah II's speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly on September 24, 2024:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BRt58VMxY4>