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**“MY PREDECESSOR”: EUPHEMISM, PERIPHRAISIS, AND
STRATEGIC DISTANCING IN J. BIDEN’S 2024 STATE OF THE UNION
ADDRESS¹⁹**

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This article investigates the rhetorical strategy of systematic naming avoidance in President Joe Biden’s 2024 State of the Union Address, delivered on 7 March 2024. The study focuses on the periphrastic expression “my predecessor” used thirteen times throughout the speech while Donald Trump is never named directly as a case of strategic euphemistic distancing in American political discourse. Drawing on N. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, T. van Dijk’s theory of ideological discourse and nomination strategies, and H. P. Grice’s framework of conversational implicature, the article examines how this deliberate lexical avoidance functions simultaneously as euphemism, delegitimation, and power assertion. A qualitative analysis of the official transcript catalogues the stylistic devices operating alongside the periphrasis antithesis, anaphora, tricolon, and conceptual metaphor and shows how they collectively construct a binary ideological framework of democratic progress versus authoritarian regression. The findings reveal that the “my predecessor” construction operates at three pragmatic levels: denial of recognition, institutional subordination, and the generation of conversational implicature through the deliberate flouting of the Gricean Maxim of Manner. The genre-comparative dimension the contrast between the name-avoiding formal address and the name-using campaign rally that followed it confirms that the omission is a calculated strategy. The article contributes to research on euphemistic and periphrastic strategies in contemporary American political rhetoric.

KEYWORDS

Political discourse, euphemism, periphrasis, naming avoidance, Critical Discourse Analysis, conversational implicature, ideological square, metaphor, Biden.

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“MENING SALAFIM”: J. BAYDENNING 2024-YILGI “MAMLAKAT AHVOLI TO‘G‘RISIDA”GI MUROJAATIDA EVFEMIZM, PERIFRAZA VA STRATEGIK MASOFA SAQLASH

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ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO‘ZLAR
Ushbu maqolada Prezident Jo Baydenning 2024-yil 7-martda qilgan “Ittifoq holati to‘g‘risida”gi murojaatida ismni tizimli ravishda tilga olishdan qochish ritorik strategiyasi tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqotda nutq davomida o‘n uch marotaba qo‘llangan “mening o‘tmishdoshim” perifrasting iborasiga e‘tibor qaratilib, Donald Tramp ismining to‘g‘ridan-to‘g‘ri tilga olinmagani Amerika siyosiy diskursidagi strategik evfemistik masofalanish hodisasi sifatida ko‘rib chiqiladi. Maqolada N. Ferkloning tanqidiy diskurs tahlilining uch o‘lchamli modeli, T. van Deykning mafkuraviy diskurs va nominatsiya strategiyalari nazariyasi hamda H. P. Graysning suhbat implikaturasi konsepsiyasiga tayanib, ushbu ongli leksik qochim bir vaqtning o‘zida evfemizm, delegitimatsiya va hokimiyatni namoyon etish vazifasini qanday bajarishi tahlil qilinadi. Rasmiy stenogrammaning sifat tahlili perifraza bilan birga qo‘llangan antiteza, anafora, trikolon va konseptual metafora kabi uslubiy vositalarni aniqlab, ularning birgalikda demokratik taraqqiyot va avtoritar tanazzul kabi ikki qutbli mafkuraviy tizimni qanday shakllantirishini ko‘rsatib beradi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko‘ra, “mening o‘tmishdoshim” konstruksiyasi uchta pragmatik darajada amal qiladi: tan olishni inkor etish, institutsional bo‘ysundirish hamda Graysning uslub maksimasini qasddan buzish orqali suhbat implikaturasini hosil qilish. Ism tilga olinmagan rasmiy murojaat va undan keyin o‘tkazilgan, nom to‘g‘ridan-to‘g‘ri aytilgan saylovoldi mitingi o‘rtasidagi janriy-qiyosiy tahlil bu nomni tilga olmaslik puxta o‘ylangan strategiya ekanini tasdiqlaydi. Mazkur maqola zamonaviy Amerika siyosiy ritorikasidagi evfemistik va perifrastik strategiyalar bo‘yicha tadqiqotlarga hissa qo‘shadi.	Siyosiy diskurs, evfemizm, perifraza, ismni atashdan qochish, kritik diskurs tahlili, konversatsion implikatura, mafkuraviy kvadrat, metafora, Bayden.

**«МОЙ ПРЕДШЕСТВЕННИК»: ЭВФЕМИЗМ, ПЕРИФРАЗА
И СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОЕ ДИСТАНЦИРОВАНИЕ В ОБРАЩЕНИИ
ДЖ. БАЙДЕНА «О ПОЛОЖЕНИИ СТРАНЫ» 2024 ГОДА**

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АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
В настоящей статье исследуется риторическая стратегия систематического избегания имен в обращении президента Джо Байдена «О положении страны», с которым он выступил 7 марта 2024 года. В центре исследования – перифраза «мой предшественник», использованная в речи тринадцать раз, в то время как имя Дональда Трампа ни разу не было названо напрямую. Этот прием рассматривается как пример стратегического эвфемистического дистанцирования в американском политическом дискурсе. Опираясь на трехмерную модель критического дискурс-анализа Н. Фэркло, теорию идеологического дискурса и стратегий номинации Т. ван Дейка, а также на концепцию конверсационных импликатур Г.П. Грайса, автор статьи анализирует, как это намеренное лексическое избегание одновременно функционирует в качестве эвфемизма, средства делегитимации и утверждения власти. Качественный анализ официальной стенограммы позволил каталогизировать стилистические приемы, используемые наряду с перифразой, – антитезу, анафору, триколон и концептуальную метафору – и показать, как в совокупности они конструируют бинарную идеологическую модель, противопоставляющую демократический прогресс авторитарному регрессу. Результаты исследования показывают, что конструкция «мой предшественник» действует на трех прагматических уровнях: отказ в признании, утверждение институциональной субординации и создание конверсационной импликатуры посредством намеренного нарушения постулата способа выражения Г.П. Грайса. Жанрово-сопоставительный аспект – сопоставление официального обращения, в котором избегается упоминание имени, и последовавшего за ним предвыборного митинга, где оно уже используется, – подтверждает, что данное опущение является продуманной стратегией. Статья вносит вклад в исследование эвфемистических и перифрастических стратегий в современной американской политической риторике.	Политический дискурс, эвфемизм, перифраза, избегание имени, критический дискурс-анализ, конверсационная импликатура, идеологический квадрат, метафора, Байден.

INTRODUCTION

On 7 March 2024, President Joe Biden delivered his third State of the Union Address to a joint session of the United States Congress. The speech, lasting sixty-eight minutes and drawing 32.2 million viewers, was widely recognized as one of the most combative and rhetorically charged addresses of its kind in recent American history. Yet the speech's most discussed rhetorical feature was not what Biden said, but what he conspicuously refused to say: the name of his political rival, Donald Trump. Across the entire address, Biden referred to his predecessor thirteen times using the periphrastic construction "my predecessor" and employed additional circumlocutions such as "a former American President," "a former Republican President," and "the last administration," while never once uttering the name "Trump" or "Donald Trump."

The relevance and novelty of the present study lie precisely in this paradox. This systematic naming avoidance was demonstrably deliberate, and it is best revealed through a comparative lens. The following day, at a campaign rally in Philadelphia, Biden mentioned Trump by name at least seven times. The contrast between the two genres – the formal constitutional address that withholds the name and the campaign rally that deploys it freely – confirms that the omission in the formal speech was a calculated rhetorical choice rather than an incidental pattern. The strategy attracted immediate commentary from political analysts and media organisations, with CNN's annotated transcript characterising Trump as someone who "shall not be named" in the speech – an allusion to the Harry Potter character whose name other characters avoid speaking aloud. The cultural resonance of this comparison highlights the extent to which naming avoidance carries recognised pragmatic force: the deliberate withholding of a name communicates something the mere use of that name would not.

While previous studies have examined Biden's rhetoric broadly – including corpus-based analyses of his speeches (Amaireh N. & Rababah M., 2023), investigations of euphemistic expressions across his discourse (Humood M. & Faisal T. A., 2024), and Critical Discourse Analyses of his presidential addresses

(Rouabhia R., 2024; Fareh S. et al., 2025) – no published study has focused specifically on the “my predecessor” construction as a case of systematic periphrastic avoidance analysed through the integrated lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Gricean pragmatics, and classical rhetorical theory. This article aims to fill that gap.

The aim of the study is to account for the pragmatic, discursive, and rhetorical work performed by systematic naming avoidance in a single high-profile political text. The research tasks, formulated as questions, are as follows: (1) What pragmatic and discursive functions does the periphrastic expression “my predecessor” perform in the 2024 State of the Union Address? (2) How does this naming-avoidance strategy interact with other stylistic devices – antithesis, anaphora, tricolon, and metaphor – to construct an ideological binary in the speech? (3) What conversational implicatures are generated by the deliberate flouting of the Gricean Maxim of Manner through circumlocution?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Euphemism and periphrasis in political discourse. Euphemism has long been recognised as a central feature of political language. K. Allan and K. Burridge (Allan K. & Burridge K., 2006, 33) define euphemism as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, used in order to avoid possible loss of face, while E. Crespo-Fernández (Crespo-Fernández E., 2023, 827) demonstrates that euphemism in American political discourse functions as a major strategy of self-protection and positive self-presentation, achieved mostly by understatement, periphrasis, and metaphor. Periphrasis – the use of a longer, indirect expression in place of a shorter, direct one – represents a particularly significant subcategory of euphemistic substitution. G. V. Porchescu (2023) classifies political euphemisms by their formal mechanisms, identifying periphrasis, generalisation, metaphoric transfer, and metonymic transfer as the principal devices. In the context of political naming, periphrasis allows a speaker to refer unambiguously to a person while simultaneously encoding evaluative meaning through the chosen circumlocution.

The phenomenon of strategic naming avoidance in political discourse has received limited but growing scholarly attention. P. Chilton (2004) identifies “nomination strategies” – the linguistic choices speakers make in naming social actors – as a key mechanism through which political identities are constructed, contested, and delegitimised. The decision to name or not name an opponent carries ideological weight: naming grants recognition, while circumlocution can encode subordination, contempt, or institutional distancing.

Critical Discourse Analysis and nomination strategies. This study draws on two complementary CDA frameworks. N. Fairclough’s (1992; 1995) three-dimensional model analyses discourse at three interconnected levels: (1) the textual level (micro-analysis of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and rhetorical devices), (2) the level of discursive practice (how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed), and (3) the level of social practice (the broader ideological and power structures that the discourse reproduces or challenges). This model is particularly suited to the analysis of a State of the Union Address, which simultaneously functions as a constitutional duty, a policy statement, and a campaign text.

T. van Dijk’s (1997; 2006) socio-cognitive approach contributes the concept of the “ideological square,” a four-part discursive strategy in which speakers (1) emphasise the positive attributes of the in-group, (2) emphasise the negative attributes of the out-group, (3) mitigate the negative attributes of the in-group, and (4) mitigate the positive attributes of the out-group. The framework for analysing nomination and referential strategies – how social actors are linguistically constructed through naming, categorisation, and anonymisation – provides the primary analytical tool for examining the “my predecessor” construction.

Additionally, the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl M. & Wodak R., 2001) identifies five discursive strategies relevant to political rhetoric: referential/nomination (how actors are named), predication (what traits are attributed), argumentation (what topoi justify claims), perspectivisation (what point of view is adopted), and intensification/mitigation (how assertions are strengthened or softened). The naming avoidance under investigation operates primarily at the

level of nomination, but as the analysis will demonstrate, it also intersects with predication and perspectivisation.

Gricean pragmatics and strategic flouting. H. P. Grice's (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle and its attendant maxims provide a further analytical dimension. The Maxim of Manner instructs speakers to be perspicuous: to avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly. When a speaker uses "my predecessor" in place of a proper name, the speaker flouts the sub-maxim of brevity – using a longer expression where a shorter one is available and informationally equivalent – and, in doing so, generates a conversational implicature. The audience recognises the circumlocution as deliberate and infers additional meaning from the choice: that the speaker wishes to deny the referent the dignity of direct address, to subordinate the referent to an institutional category, or to signal ideological opposition. As J. Thomas (1995, 65) observes, the deliberate flouting of a maxim is a common way of generating meaning beyond what is literally said.

G. Lakoff's (2004) framing theory complements this pragmatic analysis. Lakoff argues that political communication operates through cognitive frames activated by specific linguistic choices, warning against adopting an opponent's preferred vocabulary because such language evokes a frame the speaker does not want (Lakoff G., 2004, 3). By refusing to say "Trump," Biden refuses to activate the brand-recognition frame that Trump has cultivated throughout his public career, instead activating a frame of institutional succession in which Trump is merely a prior occupant of Biden's current office.

METHODS

The primary data source for this study is the official transcript of President Biden's 2024 State of the Union Address, delivered on 7 March 2024. The transcript was obtained from the official record and cross-referenced with versions published by major news organisations to ensure accuracy. Where Biden's delivered remarks departed from the prepared text (ad-libs), the as-delivered version was used. The speech comprises approximately 6,850 words.

The methodological approach is qualitative textual analysis situated within the CDA tradition, with a built-in genre-comparative component: the name-avoiding formal address is read against the name-using campaign rally delivered the following day. The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, all instances of naming and circumlocutory reference to Donald Trump are identified and catalogued, including the thirteen uses of “my predecessor,” other periphrastic constructions (“a former American President,” “a former Republican President,” “the last administration”), and pronominal references (“he,” “him”) without named antecedents. Second, each instance is analysed for its pragmatic function, its position within the speech’s thematic structure, and the rhetorical devices that accompany it. Third, the broader inventory of stylistic devices – antithesis, anaphora, tricolon, and metaphor – is examined for its interaction with the naming-avoidance strategy. Fourth, the findings are interpreted through N. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, T. van Dijk’s ideological square, and Gricean implicature theory.

RESULTS

The “my predecessor” periphrasis: distribution and pragmatic function.

The thirteen instances of “my predecessor” are distributed across the speech’s major thematic sections: foreign policy and national security, democratic norms and the events of January 6th, reproductive rights, pandemic response, economic policy, healthcare, immigration and border security, gun violence, and American identity. This distribution is significant: the periphrasis is not confined to a single topic but functions as a structural thread unifying the entire address. Each major policy section is anchored by a contrastive reference to “my predecessor,” establishing a binary framework in which every issue is presented as a choice between Biden’s approach and that of his unnamed opponent.

The construction “my predecessor” merits close linguistic analysis. The possessive determiner “my” is particularly revealing. It does not merely designate the person who held the office previously; it asserts Biden’s current ownership of that office and, by implication, relegates Trump to a completed past. The effect is one of institutional subordination: Trump is linguistically positioned not as a rival

or equal but as someone whose tenure has ended and whose relevance is defined solely by his relationship to Biden's present authority. The noun "predecessor" reinforces temporal displacement – it literally means "one who came before" – while suppressing all other aspects of Trump's public identity: celebrity, brand, party leader, indicted former president.

Biden's additional circumlocutions perform complementary functions. "A former Republican President" activates partisan framing, reminding the audience that Trump's policies represent the Republican Party's positions. "A former American President," used in the context of Trump's comments about Putin, ironically emphasises Trump's American identity precisely at the moment Biden accuses him of betraying American interests. The use of "he" without a named antecedent is pragmatically distinctive: the audience must supply the referent from context, creating a form of forced complicity in which listeners actively participate in the identification process.

Antithesis as structural backbone. The "my predecessor" periphrasis functions within a pervasive antithetical framework that organises the entire speech. The address systematically constructs binary oppositions between Biden's policies and those of his predecessor, between democratic values and authoritarian impulses, and between progress and regression. The most striking antithetical sequence occurs in the speech's opening minutes, where Biden juxtaposes two presidential statements to foreign leaders: Ronald Reagan's celebrated imperative to the Soviet leader and Trump's reported instruction to Putin. The contrast between a command to dismantle oppression and an invitation to act without restraint establishes the moral framework for the entire address.

Biden deploys structural antithesis throughout the economic sections through systematic reversal constructions. The repeated "instead of X, Y" pattern creates a rhetorical before-and-after: instead of importing foreign products and exporting jobs, the nation is now exporting products and creating jobs; instead of factories closing, they are reopening; instead of towns left behind, communities are moving forward. These antitheses operate at both the syntactic level (parallel clause structure

with reversed semantic content) and the ideological level (constructing a narrative of decline-and-recovery in which Biden is the agent of restoration).

The speech's culminating antithesis addresses the question of Biden's age – arguably the most significant political vulnerability he faced in early 2024. Biden reframes the age debate from physical capacity to ideological vision: the issue is not how old politicians are, but how old their ideas are. He then attributes to his unnamed opponent a vision defined by resentment, revenge, and retribution – an alliterative tricolon that characterises Trump's worldview as backward-looking and destructive – before contrasting it with his own forward-oriented vision. The antithesis transforms a potential weakness (advanced age) into a rhetorical advantage (experience and wisdom versus outdated grievance).

Anaphora, tricolon, and rhythmic patterning. Biden's speech employs several anaphoric sequences that reinforce the binary ideological framework. The most prominent is the "I see a future" anaphora in the peroration, where Biden envisions a future defined by defending democracy, restoring reproductive rights, ensuring middle-class opportunity, and environmental stewardship. This anaphoric sequence contrasts implicitly with the predecessor's record on each of these issues, creating a parallel structure in which every positive aspiration is the inverse of an attributed failure.

A second significant anaphoric pattern appears in the immigration section, where Biden uses a negative anaphora beginning with "I will not": he will not demonise immigrants, will not separate families, and will not ban people based on faith. Each clause implicitly attributes the rejected action to his predecessor, constructing a series of negated predications that function as indirect accusations. This negative self-presentation as other-criticism exemplifies van Dijk's ideological square: by emphasising what he will not do, Biden simultaneously emphasises what his predecessor did.

Tricolon – the grouping of ideas in threes for rhythmic and mnemonic effect – pervades the speech. The most widely quoted tricolon frames the predecessor's response to Putin's threats as outrageous, dangerous, and unacceptable. This

ascending tricolon moves from moral judgment to threat assessment to categorical rejection, with each term increasing in severity. The alliterative tricolon of resentment, revenge, and retribution, attributed to the predecessor's vision for America, employs initial /r/ repetition to create phonetic cohesion and mnemonic salience, while the semantic progression from emotion (resentment) to action (revenge) to systemic outcome (retribution) constructs a narrative of escalating threat.

Metaphor and conceptual framing. The speech's metaphorical architecture reinforces the naming-avoidance strategy by constructing conceptual frames in which Biden's predecessor is positioned as a threat to the body politic. The dominant conceptual metaphor is DEMOCRACY AS A BODY UNDER PHYSICAL ATTACK: Biden describes the events of 6 January 2021 as placing a dagger at the throat of American democracy. This metaphor transforms abstract political processes into embodied violence, making the threat visceral and immediate. The predecessor is implicitly cast as the agent of this violence through the immediately preceding "my predecessor" reference.

A second major metaphorical pattern is POLITICS AS DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT: Biden positions himself as showing the way forward while attributing to his predecessor a desire to take the country backward. This orientational metaphor (Lakoff G. & Johnson M., 1980) maps moral value onto spatial direction: FORWARD IS GOOD; BACKWARD IS BAD. The metaphor gained explicit campaign form later in 2024 when Vice President Kamala Harris adopted the slogan "We're Not Going Back" – a direct inversion of the predecessor's own nostalgic temporal framing in "Make America Great Again."

The speech's extended opening analogy constitutes what J. Charteris-Black (2011) would classify as a political myth constructed through metaphor. Biden explicitly parallels the current geopolitical moment with January 1941, when President Roosevelt addressed Congress as authoritarian regimes threatened Europe. By framing the current moment as equivalent to a moment universally recognised as a crisis of democracy, Biden constructs a historical analogy in which his predecessor's deference to Putin is mapped onto the appeasement of dictators – a

devastating characterisation that gains rhetorical power precisely because the predecessor is not named, allowing the parallel to operate through implication rather than direct accusation.

DISCUSSION

Analysed through N. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the "my predecessor" periphrasis operates at all three levels. At the textual level, the construction represents a marked lexical choice: a periphrastic expression used in place of an available proper name, accompanied by systematic antithesis, anaphora, and metaphor. At the level of discursive practice, the speech functions simultaneously as a constitutional obligation (the annual address to Congress), a policy statement, and a campaign text – a generic hybridity that explains why the naming avoidance operates differently from typical political attack rhetoric. In a campaign speech, opponents are named to be attacked; in a State of the Union, the institutional register calls for a different approach, and Biden exploits this generic expectation to embed campaign-style attack within presidential formality. This is precisely where the genre-comparative reading becomes analytically decisive: the same speaker, addressing the same opponent within twenty-four hours, names him freely at a rally but withholds the name in the formal chamber. At the level of social practice, the naming avoidance reproduces a power relationship in which the sitting president controls the terms of reference, defining his rival not as an independent political actor but as a subordinate former occupant of the office Biden currently holds.

Van Dijk's ideological square is enacted with particular clarity in this speech. Biden's positive self-presentation (fifteen million jobs created, the greatest comeback story, defending freedom abroad) is paired with negative other-presentation (failed the most basic duty to care, bowed down to a Russian leader, determined to overturn reproductive rights). Crucially, the "my predecessor" construction itself performs the fourth operation of the ideological square – mitigating the out-group's positive qualities – by reducing Trump's complex public identity to a single institutional category. The name "Trump" carries brand

recognition, celebrity status, and a dedicated political following; the phrase “my predecessor” strips all of this away, leaving only the fact of temporal succession.

From a Gricean perspective, the periphrasis represents a deliberate flouting of the Maxim of Manner. The audience recognises that Biden could say “Trump” – a shorter, more direct expression – but chooses not to. This flouting generates at least three conversational implicatures: (1) that Trump does not deserve the dignity or recognition of being named in the presidential address; (2) that Biden wishes to frame the contrast as institutional (president versus predecessor) rather than personal (Biden versus Trump); and (3) that the act of not-naming is itself a form of diminishment, a refusal to grant the attention that Trump, as a public figure, is understood to crave. The pragmatic effect is paradoxical: by not naming Trump, Biden makes the absence of the name more noticeable than its presence would be, transforming the circumlocution into the speech’s most memorable rhetorical feature.

The interaction between the naming avoidance and the speech’s other stylistic devices deserves emphasis. The antithetical framework would function differently if Biden named Trump directly: the contrasts would read as personal attacks rather than institutional comparisons. The anaphoric sequences gain cumulative force from the repeated “my predecessor” marker, which functions almost as a refrain – each recurrence reminding the audience both of the referent and of the deliberate choice not to name him. The metaphorical framing of democracy under threat is more effective when the threatening agent is designated by circumlocution, because the indirection creates interpretive space for the audience to recognise the gravity of the accusation.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that Biden’s systematic use of “my predecessor” in the 2024 State of the Union Address represents a sophisticated rhetorical strategy operating at the intersection of euphemism, periphrasis, and political power assertion. The thirteen-fold repetition of this construction, combined with complete avoidance of the name “Trump,” constitutes a case of deliberate naming avoidance that performs multiple pragmatic functions simultaneously: denial of recognition,

stitutional subordination, and the generation of conversational implicature through the flouting of the Gricean Maxim of Manner.

The analysis has shown that the naming avoidance does not operate in isolation but interacts with a broader system of stylistic devices – antithesis, anaphora, tricolon, and conceptual metaphor – to construct a binary ideological framework. This framework, consistent with van Dijk’s ideological square, systematically presents Biden’s record positively and his predecessor’s negatively, while the circumlocutory naming itself performs the often-overlooked fourth operation of the square: mitigating the out-group’s positive qualities by reducing a complex political identity to a temporal institutional category. The genre-comparative evidence – free naming at the rally, strict avoidance in the chamber – establishes the intentionality of the strategy.

These findings contribute to the scholarly understanding of euphemistic strategies in contemporary American political discourse in several ways. First, they demonstrate that periphrasis in political speech can function not merely as face-saving or softening but as an aggressive rhetorical tool – a means of diminishment through indirection. Second, they illustrate how the generic conventions of the State of the Union Address create unique conditions for the deployment of naming avoidance, allowing campaign-level attack to be embedded within presidential formality. Third, they suggest that Gricean pragmatics, when integrated with CDA and classical rhetorical analysis, offers a productive framework for understanding the multi-layered communicative effects of political circumlocution.

Future research might examine whether the “my predecessor” strategy has been adopted by other political actors in subsequent speeches, compare naming patterns across different genres of political communication (campaign speeches, press conferences, social media), or conduct corpus-based quantitative analysis of naming and circumlocution frequencies in State of the Union Addresses across administrations and, comparatively, across heads of state in different political cultures. The 2024 address, with its unusually combative tone and systematic rhetorical architecture, provides a rich and underexplored text for linguistic investigation.

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