



TRUMP AND THE IRANIAN CRISIS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC DIPLOMACY, MILITARY DETERRENCE, AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The military confrontation between the United States and Iran represents not only a geopolitical crisis but also a struggle over political communication and strategic messaging. Throughout the conflict, President Donald Trump's public statements serve as a central instrument of U.S. policy, combining military deterrence with repeated appeals for negotiation and diplomatic resolution. Meanwhile, international media presents divergent interpretations of the crisis, reflecting differing political perspectives and editorial priorities. Adopting a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic approach, this study examines how official statements, political rhetoric, and media narratives construct competing interpretations of the conflict and contribute to its political legitimization.

Keywords

Conflict; Discourse Analysis; Iran; Political Communication; Sociolinguistics; Trump

Introduction

The military confrontation between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran during June 2025 marked one of the most consequential episodes in U.S.-Iran relations since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Although the two countries have experienced decades of political hostility, economic sanctions, proxy conflicts, and intermittent military tensions, both governments have generally avoided sustained direct military engagement. The events of June 2025 therefore represent a significant escalation, with implications extending well beyond the Middle East to the broader international security environment.

The crisis was triggered when Israel launched extensive air strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, missile bases, military infrastructure, and senior commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Israeli officials justified the operation as a preemptive measure to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capability, whereas Iranian authorities condemned the attacks as an unlawful act of aggression and a serious violation of international law. Within days, the United States entered the conflict by conducting precision strikes against key Iranian nuclear facilities, including the underground enrichment complex at Fordow and installations at Natanz and Isfahan. Washington maintained that their operations were intended to degrade Iran's capacity to produce weapons-grade nuclear material and to deter further escalation. Tehran, by contrast, insisted that its nuclear program remained exclusively peaceful and characterized the U.S. strikes as violations of Iranian sovereignty.

Iran subsequently responded by launching ballistic missiles toward facilities associated with U.S. forces in the Gulf region while continuing missile and drone attacks against Israel. Although the period of direct military confrontation proved relatively brief, the crisis demonstrated how rapidly a localized conflict could evolve into a wider regional confrontation involving multiple state and non-state actors. At the same time, concerns over the security of the Strait of Hormuz generated significant volatility in global energy markets, prompting intensified diplomatic efforts by regional governments and major international powers to prevent a prolonged conflict (e.g., Jiji Tsuushin, 2026). Beyond its military dimension, however, the crisis evolved into a contest of political communication and strategic messaging. Public statements by President Donald Trump became a central element of U.S. policy, combining explicit military deterrence with repeated calls for negotiation and diplomatic resolution. These statements were interpreted differently across international media, reflecting contrasting political perspectives and editorial priorities. In Japan, major newspapers and broadcast media, together with political commentators such as Yukio Hasegawa (Hasegawa, 2026a), offered diverse assessments of U.S. strategy, Iranian

responses, and the prospects for regional stability. The interaction between political rhetoric, media framing, and expert commentary therefore became an important aspect of the conflict itself, shaping both domestic and international perceptions.

Against this background, the present study examines the U.S.-Iran confrontation from June 2025 through July 2026 by integrating military, diplomatic, political, and media perspectives. Rather than presenting a purely chronological account of military operations, the study analyzes how official statements, political discourse, and media narratives contribute to the interpretation and legitimization of the conflict. Particular attention is given to President Trump's public rhetoric, official statements issued by the governments of the United States, Iran, and Israel, and the ways in which these messages are represented and interpreted by major international news organizations and Japanese media. In addition, the study considers the views of prominent Japanese commentators in order to illustrate the diversity of public discourse surrounding the conflict.

Methodologically, this study relies exclusively on publicly accessible sources. Primary materials include official statements issued by the governments of the United States, Iran, and Israel; announcements released by the U.S. Department of Defense; and statements by the United Nations and other international organizations – including Reuters, BBC News, and leading Japanese newspapers – as well as public commentary by established political analysts (e.g. ABC News, 2026; Asahi Shinbun, 2026; Associated Press, 2026a; Axios, 2026; Reuters, 2026a; Yomiuri Shinbun, 2026). Whenever competing claims exist, the analysis distinguishes between independently verified information, official governmental positions, and assessments that remain subject to ongoing verification. This approach seeks to maintain scholarly neutrality while acknowledging the inherent uncertainties associated with rapidly evolving international crises. By combining geopolitical analysis with the examination of political discourse and media representation, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how contemporary international conflicts are shaped not only through military action but also through the strategic use of language, public communication, and competing narratives. Such an **interdisciplinary perspective** provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the complex relationship between diplomacy, deterrence, and public discourse in twenty-first-century international politics.

Trump's Negative Representation of the Iranian Leadership: Moralization, Dehumanization, and Threat Construction

President Donald Trump's discourse toward Iran has frequently relied on **strongly negative** evaluative expressions. Rather than limiting his criticism to Iranian policies or diplomatic positions, Trump often characterizes the Iranian leadership through moral, psychological, and security-based frames (e.g., Kyodo News, 2026). This rhetorical strategy constructs Iran not simply as a political rival but as an irrational and dangerous adversary.

1. Dehumanization and Moral Condemnation

In remarks at the NATO summit in Ankara on July 8, 2026, Trump used highly derogatory expressions when referring to Iranian leaders (e.g., New York Post, 2026). He stated:

“They're scum. They're sick people. They're led by sick people.”

He further described them as:

“vicious, violent people.”

The word “scum” is one of the strongest forms of personal insult in English, suggesting people who are morally worthless or contemptible. By applying this term to Iran's leadership, Trump moves beyond policy criticism and engages in a form of moral delegitimization. The phrase “sick people” simply suggests that the problem is not merely political disagreement but an alleged abnormality in the character or mentality of the actors.

2. Construction of Irrationality

Trump also stated:

“There's something wrong with them. They're cuckoo.”

The expression “cuckoo,” meaning irrational or mentally unstable in informal English, functions rhetorically to deny the opponent's rationality. Within political discourse, portraying an adversary as irrational serves to justify a more confrontational approach because negotiation with such an actor is presented as unreliable or impossible.

3. *Accusation of Dishonesty*

Trump additionally characterized Iranian leaders as:

“liars” and “cheats.”

These expressions attack the credibility and trustworthiness of the Iranian government. Instead of focusing only on specific disagreements over diplomacy or security policy, the rhetoric attributes negative moral qualities to the actors themselves, thereby reinforcing a broader narrative of deception and bad faith.

4. *Demonization of Qasem Soleimani*

Trump’s rhetoric against Iran has also included highly negative descriptions of Iranian military figures. After the U.S. strike that killed Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, Trump described Soleimani as:

“the Iranian Regime’s most ruthless butcher”
“a monster”

Trump’s language framed Soleimani not as a conventional military official but as an exceptional evil figure whose elimination was presented as necessary for security.

Rhetorical Patterns in Trump’s Iran Discourse

Trump’s language toward Iran demonstrates several recurring rhetorical strategies:

Rhetorical strategy	Examples	Discourse Function
Dehumanization	“scum,” “monster”	Reduces the opponent’s moral status
Pathologization	“sick people,” “cuckoo”	Represents the opponent as irrational
Threat Construction	“vicious,” “violent”	Frames Iran as a security danger
Moral Accusation	“liars,” “cheats”	Undermines credibility and legitimacy

From a discourse analytic perspective, these expressions illustrate what may be called enemy construction: the transformation of a political opponent into a morally illegitimate and threatening actor. Trump’s rhetoric relies heavily on evaluative language that combines moral judgement, emotional intensity, and security framing.

Compared with President Trump’s frequent public statements, official comments from Iran have been relatively less visible in the international media (e.g., 2026a). Iranian leaders have consistently condemned U.S. military actions as illegal, emphasized Iran’s right to self-defense, and vowed to defend the country’s sovereignty. At the same time, ongoing domestic political tensions and leadership challenges have limited the government’s public communication, contributing to the relative scarcity of official statements.

More specifically, Iran’s current political situation is characterized by internal complexity and considerable instability. Many analysts argue that hardline factions—particularly those within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—continue to wield substantial influence over the country’s decision-making process (e.g., Institute for the Study of War [ISW], 2026). According to this view, even senior political figures such as Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf have only limited capacity to challenge the existing power structure and are often portrayed as lacking independent authority. Consequently, Iran’s domestic and foreign policies are widely believed to remain heavily influenced by the IRGC and other conservative power centers.

Some observers therefore contend that unless these hardline factions are brought under greater political control or significant divisions emerge within the ruling establishment, Iran is unlikely to pursue the political direction favored by the United States. This assessment has attracted increasing attention among scholars and analysts of Iranian politics.

Why Trump Appears to Shift Back Toward Military Pressure on Iran: Background, Causes, and Possible Effects

During the course of the conflict thus far, President Donald Trump’s approach toward Iran appears to fluctuate between military escalation and diplomatic restraint. After the failure of a limited military operation and the uncertainty surrounding its effectiveness, Trump seems temporarily reluctant to continue a broader military campaign. However, Iran’s subsequent responses, which Trump and his advisers view as reckless and unacceptable, appear to push his administration back toward a more confrontational posture.

1. *Background: Between Military action and Strategic Restraint*

Trump’s current foreign policy toward Iran has generally combined two competing objectives:

Maximum pressure on the Iranian regime

Avoidance of a prolonged and costly war

Although Trump has repeatedly threatened military action, he has also expressed concern about becoming involved in another large-scale Middle East conflict. His strategy has often been described as seeking to achieve political goals through pressure rather than through a long-term occupation or ground war.

2. *The Perceived Failure of Limited Military Action*

A key factor influencing Trump's calculations are the perceived limited success of prior military operations. If a strike fails to produce a decisive outcome, leaders face a strategic dilemma.

Continuing military action may require greater escalation.
Stopping may create the impression of weakness.

For Trump, who places strong emphasis on projecting strength and credibility, an incomplete military outcome could create political pressure to demonstrate that the United States remains dominant.

3. *Iran's Response and the Return to a Hard-Line Position*

Iran's retaliatory actions are interpreted by Trump and many U.S. officials as evidence that Tehran is unwilling to compromise. From Wahington's perspective, Iran's response suggests several concerns:

The Iranian leadership is attempting to test U.S. resolve.
Diplomatic pressure alone may not change Iran's behavior.
Failure to respond forcefully could encourage further attacks.

As a result, military pressure becomes once again viewed as a tool to restore deterrence.

4. *Strategic Reasons Behind Renewed Military Pressure*

Several factors may explain Trump's renewed willingness to consider military action:

- (1) **Restoration of Deterrence**
The United States seeks to convince Iran that attacks against American forces or allies will produce serious consequences.
- (2) **Protection of U.S. Credibility**
A major concern in international politics is the credibility of threats. If a country issues warnings but does not act, adversaries may conclude that those threats are not serious.
- (3) **Domestic Political Considerations**
Trump's political identity has been strongly associated with strength, nationalism, and a willingness to confront perceived enemies. Appearing weak toward Iran could create political cost among his supporters.
- (4) **Pressure from Regional Allies**
Countries such as Israel and some Gulf states have long argued that Iran represents a major regional threat. Their security concerns influence U.S. policy calculations.
- (5) **Possible Effects and Risks**
A renewed military campaign could produce several consequences.

Possible Advantages

Weakening Iran's military capabilities
Increasing pressure on the Iranian leadership
Strengthening U.S. deterrence in the Middle East
Reassuring regional allies

Possible Risks

A wider regional war
Attacks on U.S. bases and allies
Disruption of global energy markets
Increased anti-American sentiment
Strengthening hard line elements inside Iran

Trump's current Iran policy can be understood as a cycle:

Threats – Limited military action – Temporary restraint – Iranian retaliation – Renewed pressure

The central tension in Trump's approach is the balance between demonstrating strength and avoiding a major war. His rhetoric emphasizes toughness and punishment, while his strategic challenge is preventing escalation beyond his political and military objectives.

From a discourse-analysis perspective, Trump's language toward Iran frames the conflict not only as a security issue but also as a major struggle between a legitimate actor and an unacceptable adversary. This rhetorical framing can make compromise more difficult because it defines the opponent as **fundamentally irrational or illegitimate**. Donald Trump's discourse toward Iran exhibits a consistent rhetorical pattern that extends beyond policy agreement. Rather than merely criticizing the Iranian government's actions, his language frequently constructs Iran and its leadership as an existential threat, thereby providing a discursive framework for the justification of coercive policies.

Three interrelated rhetorical stages can be identified.

First, Iran is represented as a threat. Trump repeatedly portrays Iran as a major danger to regional and international security, particularly through references to its nuclear ambitions, support for militant organizations, and hostility toward the United States and its allies. Such discourse emphasizes urgency and legitimizes the need for a strong response.

Second, Iranian leaders are characterized as irrational and morally illegitimate actors. Expressions such as "scum," "sick people," "cuckoo," "liars," and "cheats" portray the leadership not simply as political adversaries but as actors lacking rationality, credibility, and moral legitimacy. This rhetorical strategy shifts the focus from policy disagreement to moral judgment and psychological characterization.

Third, U.S. military and diplomatic pressure is framed as a necessary act of defense. Once Iran has been discursively constructed as both dangerous and irrational, strong American responses – including military preparedness, economic sanctions, and explicit threats – can be presented as defensive rather than aggressive measures. In this sense, Trump's discourse exemplifies a form of *coercive diplomacy*, in which military capability and diplomatic pressure operate simultaneously.

From a discourse-analytic perspective, Trump's rhetoric may also be understood as a process of rhetorical escalation. His communication often follows a sequence in which increasingly severe language functions as strategic signaling before or alongside policy implementation:

Threat Framing – Moralization – Dehumanization – Strategic Signaling – Military Pressure

This sequence illustrates how political language can shape public perceptions of international conflict and contribute to the legitimization of coercive foreign policy.

Unlike President Barack Obama, whose discourse toward Iran frequently emphasized diplomacy, engagement, and multilateral cooperation, Trump relies more heavily on confrontation, deterrence, and the projection of strength. These contrasting linguistic choices reflect not only different policy preferences but also fundamentally different political worldviews regarding the role of the United States in international affairs.

Rather than viewing these expressions as isolated remarks, they may be interpreted as components of a broader expansive strategy through which political leaders define enemies, construct threats, and justify subsequent policy actions.

Recent Developments in the U.S. – Iran Conflict

The United States recently launched strikes against Iranian energy facilities. In response, Iran expanded its military operations by targeting U.S. and allied interests in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, Kuwait, and Oman. According to this interpretation, the conflict has widened geographically beyond the initial battlefield.

Although a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed on June 17, Iran reportedly resumed military operations on June 25, only eight days later. The rapid return to hostilities suggests that any ceasefire or diplomatic understanding was short-lived and that the conflict may be entering a prolonged phase. CNN correspondents embedded aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln* have reported U.S. naval operations to intercept Iranian missiles (e.g., 2026a). These interceptions indicate that Iran has retained significant missile capabilities despite repeated U.S. and allied strikes. According to political commentator Hasegawa, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also become more actively involved in military operations against Iran, suggesting that the conflict is increasingly taking on a regional character. President Trump has been frequently criticized by his

opponents as practicing “TACO” (“Trump Always Chickens Out”), implying that he ultimately avoids military confrontation. However, recent developments have led some observers to argue that, although Trump often delays the use of force and emphasizes negotiations, he is willing to authorize substantial military action when he concludes that it is strategically necessary. According to reports, U.S. forces have launched approximately 140 missiles against Iranian targets during the most recent campaign.

How Japanese Media Are Reporting the Renewed Iran War

According to major Japanese newspapers and television networks, the renewed conflict between the United States and Iran is generally portrayed as a collapse of the recent peace agreement and the beginning of another prolonged phase of the war.

1. *The Peace Agreement Effectively Collapsed*

Japanese media generally argue that the ceasefire agreement reached in mid-June has effectively broken down. Although the agreement was intended to halt hostilities and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, large-scale military operations resumed only eight days after the memorandum was signed. This rapid deterioration is widely viewed as evidence that the agreement was fragile from the outset.

2. *Japanese Media Expect the Conflict to Continue*

Major Japanese newspapers and television broadcasters- including NHK, Yomiuri Shinbun, Asahi Shinbun, and TV Asahi – generally emphasize that the conflict is unlikely to end soon (e.g., Asahi Shinbun, 2026; Yomiuri Shinbun, 2026; NHK, 2026). Their analyses point out that:

The ceasefire collapsed within days;
Neither Washington nor Tehran has made fundamental concessions;
Military pressure has once again replaced diplomacy; and
The conflict is increasingly viewed as a prolonged confrontation rather than a short term crisis.

3. *Renewed Tensions over the Strait of Hormuz*

Japanese media have also focused on Iran’s renewed declaration concerning the Strait of Hormuz. Reports indicate that Iran announced another closure of the Strait and warned that unauthorized vessels would not be permitted to pass. At the same time, U.S. Central Command stated commercial maritime traffic continues despite Iran’s declaration, illustrating the conflicting claims made by both sides.

4. *Economic Concerns for Japan*

Japanese news coverage places particular emphasis on the economic consequences for Japan. Because Japan depends heavily on crude oil imports from the Middle East, renewed instability in the Strait of Hormuz has raised serious concerns regarding energy security, oil prices, LNG supplies, shipping routes, and inflation. Japanese media therefore frame the conflict not only as a military crisis but also as a major economic challenge for Japan.

The following section examines the views expressed by several major Japanese newspapers. First, Yomiuri Shinbun, which is the largest newspaper circulation in Japan, presents the following view. Yomiuri reports that the ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran had become increasingly fragile and warned that the renewed military operations could destabilize the Middle East (e.g., Yomiuri Shinbun, 2026). The newspaper also emphasized Japan’s dependence on the Strait of Hormuz for its energy imports and the potential impact on the Japanese economy. Second, Asahi Shinbun has focused on the humanitarian consequences of the renewed conflict, stressing the rapid collapse of the ceasefire agreement and the increasing risk of a prolonged military confrontation (e.g., Asahi Shinbun, 2026). It also reported growing concerns over regional stability and civilian casualties. According to NHK, Japan’s public broadcaster, although active hostilities had temporarily subsided, negotiations between the United States and Iran failed to produce a durable peace agreement. NHK analysts warned that military confrontation could resume unless a comprehensive diplomatic settlement was reached (NHK, 2026).

Some other viewpoints from media specialists provide additional insight. For example, Yukio Hasegawa is considered a prominent Japanese journalist and political commentator specializing in international politics, economics, and public policy. He served as Deputy Editorial Writer of the Tokyo Shinbun until his retirement from the Chuunichi Shibun Group in 2018. A graduate of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) with a master’s degree in international public policy, Hasegawa has become widely known for his analyses of Japanese politics, international security, and economic affairs. Through his YouTube channel, he provides regular commentary on the Iran conflict and other major international developments (e.g., Hasegawa, 2026b). His comments are widely followed by scholars, journalists, policymakers, and members of the general public. Furthermore, another Middle East specialist, Akari Iiyama, has presented a critical interpretation of Iran–Japan relations in her writings (e.g., Iiyama, 2026a; Iiyama, 2026b). Contrary to the discourse that portrays

Iran as a traditional friendly country for Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2026), Iiyama argues that Japan should adopt a more cautious approach toward Iran. In particular, she questions Japan's continued reliance on Iranian oil imports and opposes providing further financial resources to the Iranian government. Furthermore, Iiyama argues that Iran is fundamentally a **theocratic state** governed by Islamic religious authority. She maintains that Iran ultimately seeks to establish global rule based on its religious ideology, asserting that this objective is explicitly stated in the Iranian Constitution. According to her interpretation, Israel is regarded as the "Little Satan" and the United States as the "Great Satan." Consequently, she portrays Iran as an exceptionally dangerous state, arguing that it poses an even greater threat than countries such as China, Russia, and North Korea. Another important specialist is Koichi Tanaka of Keio University. Tanaka is a well-known Japanese expert on the Middle East. He frequently appears on television programs in the media as a commentator on regional conflicts, Iran, and international security issues. Although their perspectives differ, all of these commentators express concern about the growing instability surrounding Iran and emphasize the importance of carefully monitoring developments in the region. Their analyses have contributed to public debate in Japan regarding Middle East security and Japan's foreign policy.

As suggested by the Japanese media reports discussed above, the Iran-U.S. conflict appears to be entering a prolonged phase. Regardless of whether this development reflects the strategic intentions of either Iran or the United States, the current pattern of military escalation suggests that the conflict is unlikely to end in the near future. President Donald Trump appears to have moved beyond relying solely on diplomatic negotiations and economic pressure. Instead, his recent actions indicate an increasing willingness to employ military force as an instrument of foreign policy. This shift may signal the beginning of a more sustained military campaign rather than a series of isolated retaliatory strikes. Iran, for its part, has also demonstrated little willingness to yield to U.S. demands. Even after the state funeral for Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian leaders have continued to emphasize resistance rather than compromise. Through the use of missiles, drones, and other military capabilities, Iran has reportedly expanded its attacks against U.S. military facilities and interests in the Gulf region, suggesting that the conflict may continue to widen both geographically and strategically.

From a longer-term perspective, one possible avenue for political stabilization might involve encouraging broader political participation by ethnic minorities within Iran, including the Kurdish population, as a counterbalance to the dominant influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). According to Hasegawa (Hasegawa, 2026a), the Kurdish population in Iran may eventually come to power by taking advantage of a future civil war. However, it is not clear which scholar Hasegawa is relying on in making this claim. Such a possibility remains **highly speculative** and would require profound political and constitutional changes within Iran. It should therefore be regarded only as one possible long-term scenario rather than an immediate policy option. Overall, the available evidence suggests that the Iran-U.S. conflict is likely to become increasingly protracted. While the precise trajectory of the conflict remains uncertain, the continuing cycle of military retaliation, political confrontation, and mutual distrust indicates that a rapid or comprehensive resolution appears unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Concluding remarks

As a summary of this paper, it may be argued that political language does not merely describe international reality; rather, it actively constructs and reshapes that reality. The evolving discourse surrounding the U.S.-Iran conflict illustrates how political leaders, media organizations, and public intellectuals frame the same series of events in markedly different ways. President Donald Trump's increasingly forceful rhetoric, together with his apparent shift from emphasizing diplomatic negotiations to demonstrating military resolve, has become a central focus of both international and Japanese media coverage (e.g., Associated Press, 2026b). This change in discourse has influenced not only perceptions of U.S. foreign policy but also broader public expectations regarding the possibility of regional escalation.

At the same time, Japanese commentators have offered diverse interpretations of Iran's internal political structure and its implications for future diplomacy. For example, Hasegawa argues that meaningful negotiations with Iran remain difficult because real political influence continues to reside with hardline elements, particularly within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), rather than with elected political leaders alone. Whether or not this assessment proves entirely accurate, it reflects a broader analytical perspective that views Iran's decision-making process as being shaped by multiple competing centers of power. Such interpretations have been echoed, to varying degrees, in media reports and policy analyses published both in Japan and abroad.

The analysis presented in this paper demonstrates that media narratives extend beyond the simple reporting of facts. Through lexical choices, patterns of repetition, metaphorical expressions, and evaluative framing, news organizations participate in constructing competing interpretations of international events. Consequently, the linguistic representation of the U.S. -Iran conflict becomes an important arena in which political legitimacy, national interests, and public opinion are continuously negotiated.

Therefore, from a sociolinguistic perspective, therefore, the language of international politics should be understood not simply as a reflection of political reality but as one of the principal mechanisms through which that reality is created, interpreted, and constructed. The U.S.-Iran conflict thus provides a compelling case study demonstrating that political discourse itself constitutes an essential component of international relations, shaping both governmental decision-making and public understanding across national boundaries (e.g., Van Dijk, 2008; Wodak, 2021).

Finally, one episode from the 2026 FIFA World Cup trophy ceremony illustrates Trump's exceptional capacity for self-presentation. During the ceremony honoring the victorious Spanish national team, Trump was met with boos from sections of the crowd (e.g., Reuters, 2026b). Such a reaction may be understood in light of the political and economic tensions that have at times characterized relations between the United States and Spain. Nevertheless, Trump attended the ceremony at the invitation of FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Despite the likelihood of criticism and the hostile reception from some spectators, Trump chose to appear at the event. His decision can be interpreted as reflecting a strong desire for self-promotion and an effort to project himself as a global leader. In this sense, the episode serves as another illustration of his extraordinary ability to construct and project a powerful public image.

Indeed, few contemporary politicians have demonstrated such a remarkable capacity to present themselves so forcefully on the world stage, even in settings that extend well beyond the sphere of politics, such as international sporting events. From this perspective, Trump's appearance at the World Cup trophy ceremony suggests that successful political leadership is not only a matter of policy and governance but also of cultivating an exceptionally strong and memorable public image.

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