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**Politics and Martyrdom in Iran: The Discursive Analysis of  
The Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's Speeches on  
Qassem Soleimani**

**Politika a Mučednictví v Iránu: Diskurzivní analýza proslovů  
Nejvyššího vůdce Alí Chameneiho na Kásima Soleimáního**

Bakalářská práce

**Vedoucí práce**  
Prof. Gokhan Bacik

Olomouc 2023

Hereby I declare that the submitted bachelor's thesis is a product of my own work with the use of listed literature and sources.

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně na základě uvedené literatury.

V Olomouci dne 27.4. 2023

Tomáš Říha

I'd like to thank Prof. Gokhan Bacik for his valuable advice, professional help and dedication, as well as his patience during the writing of this bachelor's thesis.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Topic**

The topic of this bachelor thesis is an analysis of speeches of Ali Khamenei related to the assassinated prominent politician and military leader Qassem Soleimani and the use of the state narrative of Martyrdom and heroism in Iran. Despite the role of religion seeing worldwide decline and secularism prevailing, the Islamic Republic of Iran as a deeply theocratical and religious country is actively using religious symbols, acts, laws and meanings as its everyday tool to govern. Iran became a theocratic republic in 1978 after the successful Islamic revolution, which overthrew Mohammed Reza Pahlavi a king from the royal family of the Pahlavi dynasty, replacing him with Ruhollah Khomeini who became the head of the state. Shortly after the successful revolution, the regime was threatened by other countries, especially its neighbours the Soviet Union and Iraq which deemed the revolution as an active threat to their regimes and could easily spill over to other countries. In 1980 a war between Iran and Iraq, led by infamous leader Saddam Hussein, broke out. This was a major event for the newly born Islamic government in Iran which quickly took the initiative with a declaration of martyrdom as its greatest achievement, creating a great cult of martyrs and a holy war against the invaders.

Iran has become very active and important in international politics and is viewed by Western countries as an international threat to security due to their extensive and pro-active research of nuclear weapons, its strong and growing influence in the Middle East, active involvement in conflicts, the spread of weapons and military training, especially in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Due to their strong involvement in these regions where they side with the enemy of the West. It's important to mention the importance of Qassem Soleimani, who was the head of these operations and has been assassinated at the order of US President Donald Trump. This event has sparked a massive propaganda and cult of personality of said Qassem Soleimani. Therefore, the author thinks it's important to research Iran to understand the thinking mechanism behind and to understand the Iranian rhetoric and perspective, especially from the religious side.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured into six chapters, which include an Introduction and Conclusion, as well as four main sections: Contextualization, Corpus Analysis of Ali Khamenei's speeches, and Critical Discourse Analysis and Results.

The Contextualization section serves as an introduction and summary of the research background and is divided into four subchapters. The first subchapter provides a brief overview of the political situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, focusing on the succession of the Islamic Republic and the Supreme Leader's political power with the help of literature by Ervand Abrahamian, Mark Gasiorowski & Malcolm Byrne and Mark Axworthy. The second subchapter discusses the concept of martyrdom in Shia Iranian theory, including its history and understanding within Shia Islam, which great help and explanation will provide Libor Čech and Peter Chelkowski. The third subchapter offers an overview of Qassem Soleimani, his importance, the controversy surrounding his death, and its aftermath, most information will be provided by News outlets, but also works by Alasmar Azizi. The final subchapter addresses martyrdom during the Iran-Iraq war and the establishment of the Foundation of the Martyrs, which continues to play a role in modern Iran, in which the pillar of knowledge is the work of Efraim Karsh.

The Corpus Analysis of Ali Khamenei's speeches section contains the methodology. The author has chosen to place the methodology within the Analysis section, as it seems most fitting. For the thesis, the following research questions are: 1) *What are the most prominent discursive topics and strategies used in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 2) *Who is the target audience of Ali Khamenei's Speeches* 3) *What role do Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom fulfil in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 4) *Why are Ali Khamenei's speeches important?* 5) *How important is the death of Qassem Soleimani to the current Iranian narrative?* The methodology utilized in this thesis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), utilizing a Discursive Historical Approach (DHA) introduced by Mrs Wodak. This chapter also includes subchapters on Data Collection and Sample Selection, which detail the author's selection criteria and data sources, as well as. Additional subchapters include the Role of Qassem Soleimani in the speeches, where we will find, which roles are given to Qassem Soleimani, the Role of Martyrdom in the speeches, where the same thing as Qassem Soleimani is researched, the Target Audience of the speeches, where we will look at the primary audience to whom are speeches directed to.

Third is the Critical Discourse Analysis of Ali Khamenei's speeches, which provides an in-depth explanation of the Critical Discourse method and the Historical Discourse Analysis approach with the help of works by Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough. following subchapters exploring the prominent discursive strategies employed by Ali Khamenei and the predominant discursive topics. The last subchapter examines the visual expression of the Qassem Soleimani case, underlining the research findings



The last chapter is solely focused on answering the research questions that were stated in the methodology and transformation of the data that was analyzed into coherent tables, that will show provide the results of the research.

## **2. Contextualization of the work**

To understand the topic of martyrdom and its importance in Iranian history, culture, and political situation, and we must understand its roots in early Shia Islamic history. It's all well important to understand why and what is happening related to death of Qassem Soleimani and theocratical government's decisions. It is a long and complex history in Islam, however, martyrdom is not unique or limited to Islam or even religion, it's been used by civilisations all around the world. Firstly, we need an easy definition of what martyrdom or martyr is. Martyr is very subjective topic, as opposing sides of an event will not agree, and the word is used exclusively by the side the martyr was on, because the act is viewed as noble and just. In Iran the act of self-sacrifice is even more important.

### **2.1 Political situation in Iranian Islamic Republic**

To understand the importance of Supreme Leader in Iran, it's important to elaborate on the type of government that is in the charge of Iran. Iranian government was until the 1979 a monarchy under rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The dynasty itself was in charge since the coup in 1925, where Reza Shah Pahlavi took power and begun to modernize and reform quickly, such as secularization and promotion of Western culture. After invasion of allied forces of United Kingdom and Soviet Union in 1941 Reza Shah Pahlavi was forced to abdicate and his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi took power, continuing his father's political reforms. (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 203-225; Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, p. 3, 28; Milani, 2012, p. 53-67; Steele, 2021; Ghods, 1991, p. 39)

Mohammad Reza Shah's main reforms was the White Revolution, that was launched in 1963, aimed for more modernization of Iranian economy and society, such as land reforms or nationalization of certain industries. The policies caused rapid urbanization, industrialization, and increased literacy, but also brought significant social and economic difficulties and caused discontent among the Iranian society. Such reforms caused Iran to distance from the tradition. Policies negatively influenced many parts of the society. Probably the most unhappy with the reforms were Shia clerics, who were very dissatisfied with the decision to distance from religion and tradition. But not only them, but also students, who were influenced by the leftist intellectuals opposed Shah's regime of authoritarian regime and lack of political freedom enforced by Shah's secret police called Intelligence and Security Organization of the Country (SAVAK). Urban poor and lower class, were heavily affected by the industrialization, making them lose jobs and cause socio-economic issues. (Britanica, 2022; Abrahamian, 1982, p. 118-

149, Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, p. 258; Milani, 2012, p. 355-369, Ruhollah, 1981, p. 13-22; Chehabi, 1998, p. 495-502; Castiglioni, 2011, p. 183-194)

Religious opposition was mostly carried out by prominent Shia clerics, the most known Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who criticized regime's secular policies and its closing ties with Western powers. (Ahmad 2021, p. 281) Khomeini advocated for the Islamic government concept called "Velayat-e Faqih" (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), which argued that Iran should be governed by Islamic state, where knowledgeable and just Islamic jurists were to ensure its laws and policies in harmony with the Islamic principles. Such message spread among many Iranians, especially ones that were affected by Shah's reforms, such as lower classes, who viewed religious opposition as good way to challenge Shah's regime. Khomeini was charismatic and had ability to unite opposition against the Shah and played the crucial role in mobilizing the masses. (Tony Blair Institute, 2019; Ahmad, 2021, p. 282; Abrahamian, 1982, p. 326-375); Ruhollah, 1981)

Islamic Revolution began in January 1978 with series of mass protests and demonstrations against the Shah's regime. Protests lasted for a year and were caused by various factions, such as religious groups, students, leftist organizations and together they demanded change. Shah's regime answered with repression, but that only fuelled the public outrage. When the state key institutions, such as military and bureaucracy lost loyalty, the Shah was no longer able to maintain control and fled the country in January 1979. Khomeini then returned from exile on February 1979. In March 1979 national referendum was held with overwhelming 99% of the population was in favour. (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 496-525, Hiro, 2013, p. 169, Ruhollah, 1981, p. 316; Axworthy 2019, p. 120, Ahmad, 2021, p. 278-297, Axworthy, 2008, p. 188; Homan, 1980, p. 673-677)

After the revolution, the government was officially changed to Islamic Government, with concept of Velayat-e Faqih, which was presented by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as official founder and the first Supreme Leader in charge of the state. The concept is that the Islamic state should be governed by Islamic jurists who interpret and implement Sharia law and to ensure Islamic character of the state. This concept made Supreme Leader (Rahbar-e Moazzam) as the highest-ranking political and religious authority in the country and has the ultimate control over the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government, as well as the armed forces. Supreme leader's role is to ensure continuation and spread of Islamic Revolution and its core values. Supreme Leader holds office for indefinite period and has no time limit. According to Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Supreme leader stays in

charge as long as they are able to continue their duties and principles of Islamic Republic. (Tony Blair Institute, 2019; Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.,1979, Abrahamian, 1982, p. 525; Ruhollah, 1981 p. 13-22, Axworthy 2008, p. 188)

Second most important role in the Islamic government is the President (Ra'is Jomhur). President as the highest-ranking elected official in Iran is the head of the government and responsible for implementing domestic and international policies and is elected for term of four years and can be elected twice. Although the president holds significant power in shaping Iranian policies, their authority is limited by role of the Supreme Leader and must act accordingly. (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.,1979) However, for reasons of this thesis, he's not to be included in the research, he was added to add broader visual to Islamic Government.

## **2.2 Martyrdom in Shia Iranian theory**

*„Never say that those martyred in the cause of Allah are dead—in fact, they are alive! But you do not perceive it.“ (2:154) .... „And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision“ (3:169) .... „Allah has indeed purchased from the believers their lives and wealth in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah and kill or are killed. This is a true promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran. And whose promise is truer than Allah's? So rejoice in the exchange you have made with Him. That is truly the ultimate triumph“ (9:111) Those are the texts from Quran.*

Martyrdom occupies a central place in Iranian Shia theory and practice, serving as a symbol of devotion and sacrifice in the pursuit of truth, justice, and faith. The term "*martyrdom*" (Shahada) comes from the Greek word "*martys*," (Shaheed) which means "witness." (Vocabulary, 2023) In Iranian language has the same meaning (Collins, 2023). Martyrdom as a concept is an act of willingly sacrifice of one's life or enduring suffering because of one's belief or principles. Therefore, martyr is someone who died or suffers for their belief. This idea could be religion or political cause. (Collins, 2023; Čech 2012, p. 54-55; Čech 2016, p. 137-141, Dorraj 1997, p. 519, Golz, 2019)

Martyrdom occupies a central place in Shia Islam, representing the ultimate expression of devotion and sacrifice in the pursuit of truth, justice, and faith. The concept of martyrdom has its roots in the early days of Islam when Prophet Muhammad and his followers faced

persecution and struggled to establish the new religion. (Al Islam, 2013) This idea has continued to evolve and develop within the Shia tradition, taking on particular significance due to the experiences and teachings of the Twelve Imams, who are considered the rightful successors of Prophet Muhammad. One of the most important events in the Shia tradition is the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and the third Imam, who was killed in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. His death, along with those of his family members and companions, is seen as a model of self-sacrifice and devotion to God's cause, serving as an enduring symbol of resistance against tyranny and oppression. The memory of Imam Hussein's martyrdom has been kept alive in the tradition of Shia Muslims through various religious practices, rituals, and art forms. (Dorraaj 1997, p. 439-495; Čech 137-141, Golz, 2019, Chelkowski, p. XV-XVII)

The significance of martyrdom in Shia Islam is evident in various religious practices and rituals observed by Shia Muslims. One of the most important events in the Shia calendar is the commemoration of Ashura, which marks the anniversary of Imam Hussein's martyrdom in the Battle of Karbala. During Ashura, Shia Muslims participate in mourning ceremonies, including recitations of lamentation poetry, re-enactments of the events of Karbala, and processions where participants may engage in acts of self-flagellation to express their grief and solidarity with Imam Hussein and his companions (Chelkowski, 1979, p. 2; Dorraj 1997, p. 439-495, Golz, 2019, Aghaie 2015).

The importance of martyrdom in Shia Islam is also reflected in the reverence given to shrines and places associated with the martyrs, particularly the shrines of the Imams and their family members. Pilgrimage to these sacred sites, such as the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, is considered a religious duty for Shia Muslims and an expression of their devotion to the martyrs and their cause. (Golz, 2019, CNN 2012, Reuters 2013, Chelkowski 1979, p. 2)

Furthermore, the concept of martyrdom has inspired countless Shia Muslims throughout history to stand up against tyranny and oppression in various political and social contexts. The example set by Imam Hussein and other martyrs in Shia Islam serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of sacrifice, devotion, and resistance in the pursuit of justice and truth. In Shia theology, martyrdom is closely linked to the doctrine of Imamah, which concerns the divinely ordained leadership of the Twelve Imams, who are considered the rightful successors of Prophet Muhammad. The Imams are seen as spiritual leaders and guardians of the true faith, and their teachings and example serve as a guide for the Shia community in matters of religious belief and practice. Martyrdom is considered one of the highest forms of worship and devotion

in Shia Islam, and those who willingly sacrifice their lives for the cause of God are promised a place in paradise. The concept of martyrdom is also closely connected to the idea of jihad, or struggle in the way of God. While the term "jihad" is often associated with violent conflict, in Shia doctrine, it encompasses a wide range of activities, including prayers, charitable giving, and peaceful resistance to oppression. According to Shia teachings, those who engage in any form of jihad and are killed are considered martyrs and are promised a place in paradise. Martyrdom also plays an important role in Shia ethics, as it embodies the ideals of self-sacrifice, altruism, and steadfastness in the face of adversity. The willingness to endure suffering and even death for the sake of one's beliefs and principles is seen as a noble and praiseworthy act, reflecting the highest virtues of faith, courage, and loyalty. The example of the martyrs in Shia Islam serves as a moral compass and a source of inspiration for the community, encouraging them to uphold their religious and ethical values in their daily lives and struggles. (Čech, 2016, p. 252-283; Golz, 2019; Chelkowski 1979, p. 12, Ayoub 2011, p. 142)

### **2.3 Background on Qassem Soleimani and overview of his death**

It is very important to mention the background of Qassem Soleimani. His overview is very important part of this Thesis as he's the central figure. Qassem Soleimani was high ranking military and political figure of the Iranian Islamic Republic, usually bestowed with title of Hajj, Sardar, or by Khamenei "living martyr" (Ostovar 2018, p. 3-4, France24, 2020,). Sometimes he is nicknamed as "Shadow Commander" by the western media due to his relatively low political figure but high influence (Azizi 2021, Teheran times 2021), not only in Iran but also around the middle east, especially Syria and Iraq, but also due to his covert operations that he carried out, after his death he also earned nickname of "Shaheed Sardar" (Sardar is military name for Commander) (Consulate of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2022). His career in Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was a long one, he has joined the IRGC in 1979, participated in suppression of Kurdish uprisings in north-western provinces of Iran and infiltrative sabotage operations in Iraq during Iraq-Iran war. (New Yorker 2013, CRS 2021, Ostovar 2018, p. 3-4). In 1997 he became leader of "Quds Forces". An elite branch of IRGC. Their field of operations is involvement in foreign operations. Their name comes from "Quds" which is Arabic name for Jerusalem and symbolize that they will liberate Jerusalem from Israel as well as entire Palestine (Ostovar 2018, p. 6). As for their profession, they carry out wide type of operations from sabotage, espionage, training and supplying foreign troops and militias, assassinations all the

way to active combat operations. They are the tool of Iranian government to support their regional partners and to spread the influence across the middle east (The New Yorker, 2013; CFR, 2023). Their function could be summarized as combination of CIA and special forces. Their operations and the command of Qassem Soleimani are key to understand the reasoning behind the assassination.

Assassination of Qassem Soleimani took place in Iraq on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, by the targeted U.S. drone “MQ-9 Reaper”, when he was traveling in convoy from the Bagdad International Airport in Iraq. He has not died alone, together with Qassem Soleimani there was Abu Mahdi al Muhandis, deputy head of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces<sup>1</sup> (CNN, 2020; The New York Times, 2020). After his assassination, he was replaced by Esmail Qaani who is less likely to be as effective as deceased predecessor (Alfoneh 2021, CRS 2021). His death had a huge impact on Iranian-US relations, but also between Iraq and US. Obviously killing someone’s top ranking military commander on foreign territory will be problematic. In response to the assassination the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei promised “severe revenge” (The Times of Israel, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020) The US predicted 3 possible outcomes – direct response, indirect response and no response (Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies 2020). This has raised high alert of what’s Iran going to do. Iranian retaliation came a week later 8<sup>th</sup> of January where IRGC carried out ballistic missile attack on US military base in Iraq; Ayn al-Asad Airbase and Erbil, with surprisingly no casualties, outside of injuries and material damage (The Guardian, 2020; The Wall Street Journal 2020).

Legality of assassination is another debate related to the topic. The legality of the subject is debated among international law experts and raises controversy. United States justified the act under Article 51 of United Nations Charter, that permits the use of force in self-defence as he was “imminent threat”. First controversy of the legality is the fact that there was no concrete or solid evidence on if criteria of “imminent threat” were fulfilled. Second is the fact that the assassination happened on Iraqi territory and therefore violates Iraq’s sovereignty. US still maintained military presence in Iraq, however, under criteria of training and advising Iraq troops and assassination simple didn’t meet the agreement between Iraq and US. Third, that the assassination itself could be in breach of Article 2(4) of United Nations Charter, that prohibits use of force. (NPR, 2020, BBC, 2020, New York Times 2020)

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<sup>1</sup> Popular Mobilization Forces is mostly Shia militia operating in Iraq and was formed to combat ISIS. The organization operates under authority of Iraqi government and is part of Iraqi armed forces. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis had strong link to Iranian government.

## 2.4 Martyrdom in Iran during Iraq Iran war

The Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from September 1980 to August 1988, was a massive and devastating conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq. The war resulted in the deaths and injuries of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians, extensive damage to both countries' infrastructure, and significant regional and international repercussions. (Karsh, 2010; Hiro, 1991, p. 205)

The Western powers, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, but also Soviet Union played an important role in supporting the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein during the war. These countries provided financial aid, military equipment, intelligence, and diplomatic support to Iraq in its efforts to counter Iran. This assistance was primarily driven by a strategic interest in containing the Iranian Revolution and preventing the spread of its influence in the region, as well as securing access to oil resources. (King, 2003; Karsh, 2010, p. 67)

The use of martyrdom and child soldiers was a notable feature of the Iran-Iraq War. Iran, in particular, mobilized thousands of volunteers, including children, to fight in the conflict, often as part of the Basij paramilitary forces. These young fighters were motivated by a strong sense of religious duty and the desire to defend their homeland, and many were indoctrinated with the belief that martyrdom would grant them immediate entry to paradise. The Iranian government promoted this concept of martyrdom through state-sponsored media, education, and religious institutions, effectively cultivating a culture of sacrifice and selflessness among its population (Zietlow, 2020). The mass use of child soldiers, that were often used as mine clearer, and the promotion of martyrdom in Iran during the war have been widely documented and criticized by international human rights organizations and the media (Karsh, 2010, p. 62-65).

It's worth mentioning that during the time, The Martyrs Foundation (*Bonyad Shahid va Omur-e Ithargaran*) was established in 1980 and is responsible for identifying and registering eligible martyrs and their families. They work in coordination with other government institutions and the military to obtain information about the deceased, their circumstances, and their families. Once a martyr has been identified, the foundation provides various forms of support to their families, including financial assistance, education, healthcare, and legal



support. However, this organization also carries controversy as in supporting terrorism and is placed on a sanction list. (Open Sanctions, 2023; Bonyads 2018; Dorraj 1997, p. 519)

### **3. Corpus Analysis of Khamenei's speeches**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

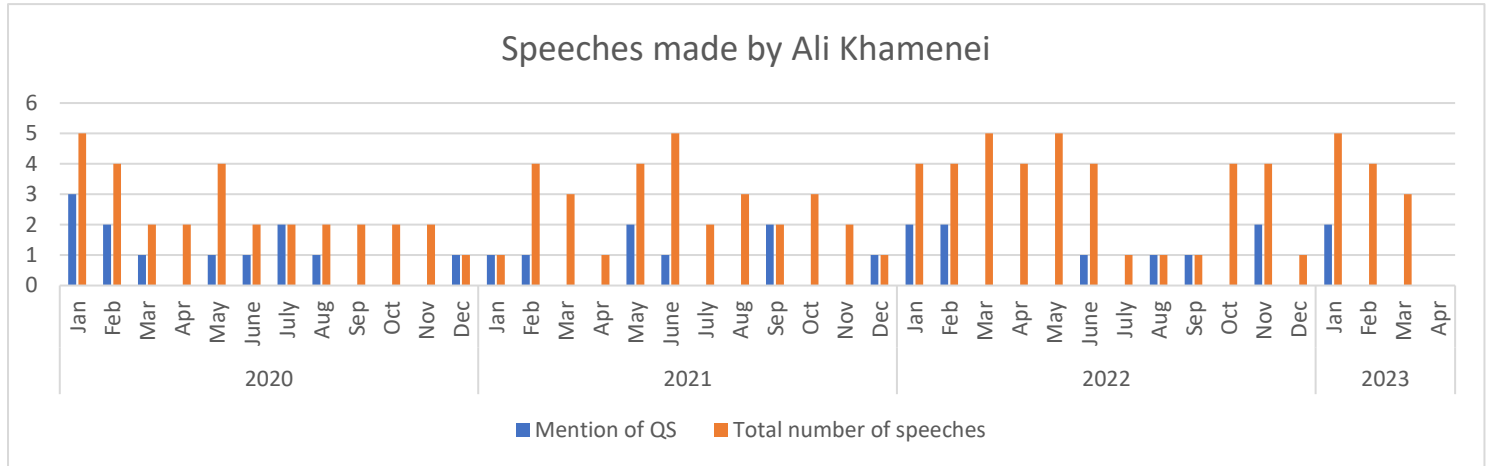
Author of this thesis has stated these research questions: 1) *What are the most prominent discursive topics and strategies used in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 2) *Who is the target audience of Ali Khamenei's Speeches* 3) *What role do Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom fulfil in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 4) *Why are Ali Khamenei's speeches important?* 5) *How important is the death of Qassem Soleimani to the current Iranian narrative?* Thesis is Critical Discourse analysis, which the main goal is to analyse use of word “martyrdom” and “martyr” as political goal of Iran and its relation to assassination of Qassem Soleimani and to identify its use in public speeches. Corpus of the information will be analysis of public speeches of the Supreme leader Ali Khamenei. This positions will be key of my analysis since he holds most of the power and is main authority in Iran who shape the public opinion. The secondary task of this thesis is, with the help of critical discourse analysis, more specifically, historical discourse analysis, to discover the main discursive strategies and topics. Goal of this thesis is not to analyse any hypothesis or to precisely answer the research questions. Nor is the goal to understand martyrdom in wider sense or behind the borders of Iran. More on data analysis in 3.2 and 3.3.

#### **3.2 Data collection**

For this study, data were manually gathered from the official website of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, available on website “[www.khamenei.ir](http://www.khamenei.ir)”. The scope of collection focused on time frame between January 2020 to April 2023 under the section of “Speeches”, where Ali Khamenei provides fully translated Persian speeches into English language. All the speeches are complete and therefore providing the full access to Ali Khamenei's rhetoric techniques. As it is official website and all speeches are officially translated for international public, the website is also frequently referenced by official state media such as Teheran Times, Fars News Agency and Mehr News Agency, along with other foreign news outlets. The total number of speeches ranges to 111.

**Figure 1**

*The Distribution and frequencies of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's speeches*

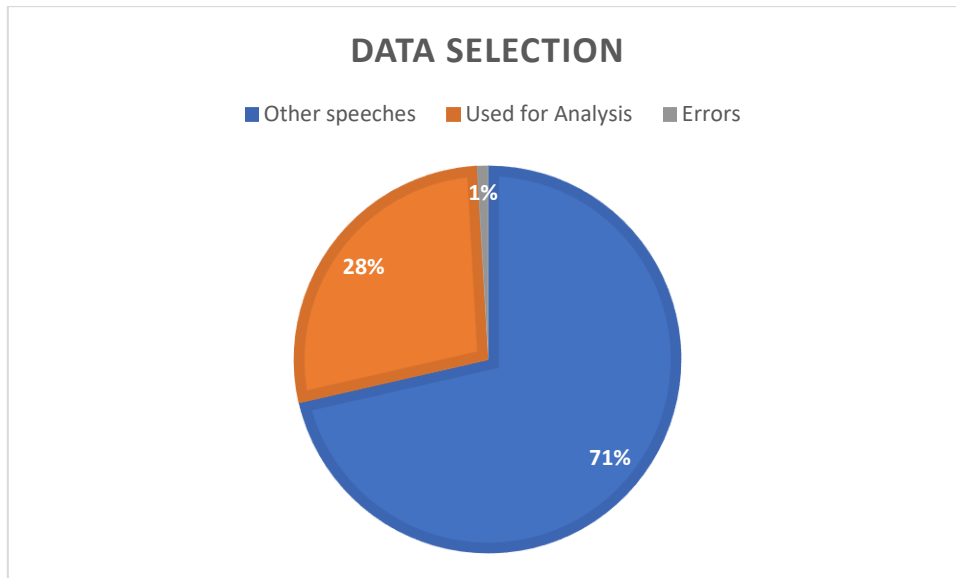


### 3.3 Sample selection

The sample selection was made from all public speeches of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that were made between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020 and 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023. As this thesis aims to research the impact of Soleimani's figure and use of martyrdom, author has decided to set following criteria for the speech: The speech must contain Qassem Soleimani or any sort of his aliases, such as Shahid Sardar. Next criteria are that it must contain the word of Martyr in any of its forms, including its Persian word Shahed. And the last criteria were, that it must be a speech and not a statement. All speeches that have not met the criteria were removed from the analysis. The selected speeches were downloaded in form of PDF and achieved on author's storage, in case of deletion of the website or removal of a speeches. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has performed in total of 111 speeches between the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Furthermore, 1 speech was marked as an error due to reason of it being a picture with a statement. After applying selected criteria, 31 speeches were further analyzed (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Distribution of data used in the thesis*



### **3.4 Importance of Ali Khamenei speeches**

Now to case of Ali Khamenei speeches, we must understand that the speeches performed by him are performed with authority, as mentioned in previous chapter, Ali Khamenei as the Supreme Leader and spiritual holds the most power in the country and his words selections and discursive topics and how they are delivered is important. Usually meaning that what he said is not a request, but it's a fact and state of the affairs. As in previous chapter, Ali Khamenei position of Supreme Leader is the most important and the most powerful position in Iran. But there is duality of his position. Firstly, his position in political sense, is an ultimate leader of Iran. He is head of executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government, as well as the armed forces and the only reason he can be recalled is inability to perform his position (Sadjapour 2022).

Secondly, Khamenei's role as a religious leader is deeply connected with his political authority. As the highest-ranking cleric and a recognized Marja' (source of emulation) in Shia Islam, he plays a crucial role in shaping religious discourse and practice in Iran. His speeches often contain religious guidance, interpretations of Islamic teachings, and moral lessons, which are intended to provide direction to the Iranian people and the Islamic world. This dual nature of his position allows Khamenei to wield considerable influence over both the political and religious spheres in Iran, emphasizing the unity of these two domains within the Islamic Republic. (Sadjapour 2022)

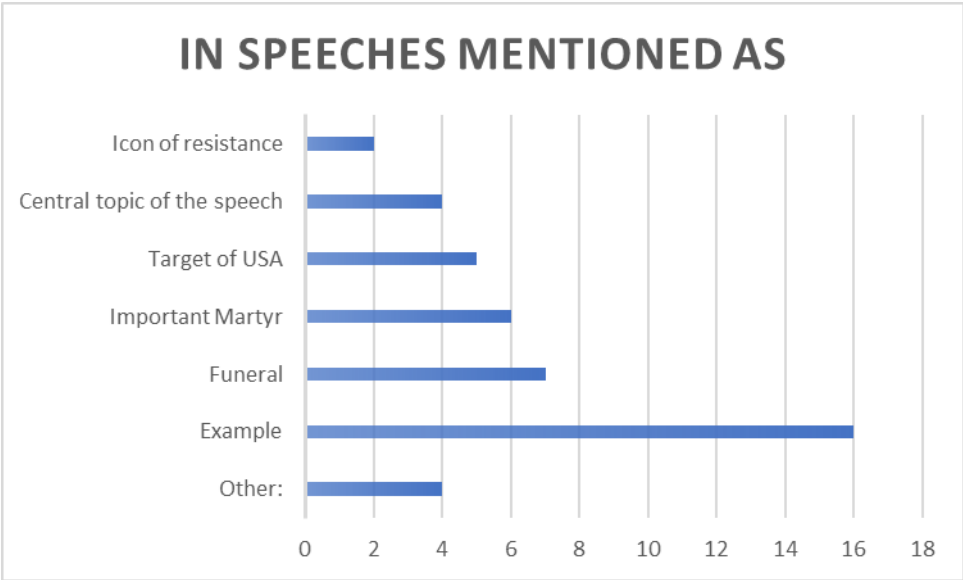
### 3.5 Role of Qassem Soleimani in the speeches

In this subchapter, we will dig into the importance of Qassem Soleimani in the context of the speeches and their examination. A thorough investigation of selected data revealed that Qassem Soleimani has a substantial presence in the speeches delivered by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In fact, he is featured in 28% of all speeches under analysis (see to Figure X and Figure Y). Our primary objective of this subchapter is to scrutinize the various ways in which Khamenei utilized Soleimani to express specific messages and agendas, and how he’s being portrayed as.

To begin with, we will present an overview of the principal categories, that have been identified by the author, which will help us more understand the role of Soleimani in these speeches. Author has decided to divide them into these categories: *Portrait Qassem Soleimani as an example. Success of Soleimani’s funeral. As a primary target of USA. As an important Martyr. Soleimani. As a central topic of the speeches. As a great loss to Iran. As a hero. As a product of Iraq-Iran war. As an icon of resistance. And other* that were not repeated at least twice. These categories were made and selected by author as the most fitting to their meaning and context.

**Figure 3**

*Frequencies of the categories selected by author to role of Qassem Soleimani*



*Note:* The numbers on the graph do not add up to the same number of 31 speeches, Soleimani could have appeared throughout the speech multiple times in different variations

### 3.5.1 Portrait of Qassem Soleimani as an example

In the analysis of speeches delivered by Ali Khamenei, the portrayal of Qassem Soleimani as example emerges as the most frequently discussed topic, with a mention frequency of 16 times. This category was selected by the author based on a subjective impression of how Soleimani is represented in these speeches. A common rhetoric running through these speeches is the depiction of Qassem Soleimani as a highly esteemed figure, possessing numerous admirable qualities that the audience is encouraged to emulate. Khamenei often highlights Soleimani's humble nature, emphasizing his dedication to the cause and his unwavering loyalty to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This serves to present Soleimani as a role model for the Iranian people, an individual whose actions and character embody the virtues and values that Khamenei wishes to promote (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches*

<p>...He was also an honest person. He was truthful. Even though he would get involved in and work on complicated political matters - and he would get good things done - at the same time, he had a pure heart and was honest, but he wasn't devious or deceitful. This is very important. Yes, this is how he was wherever he worked. These were his personal characteristics. As I mentioned, what we can gain from this is to look and bring about these qualities within ourselves if we don't have them. If we are lacking them, we should create these qualities within ourselves. We should truly have a sense of responsibility, we should truly be sincere and work for the cause of God, and we should purify our hearts and be honest. These were the qualities he possessed...</p>
<p>...This shows the character of our nation. This movement is a movement that builds the character of the nation. This is the same character from which emerge heroes such as Martyr Soleimani, Martyr Fakhrizadeh and Martyr Shahriari. This is a truth that manifests itself in various forms and shapes. Such is the character of the Iranian nation. These are truths that build character. They are both a sign of character and a force for strengthening and building the character of the Iranian nation. These were some points related to the hardships...</p>
<p>...An example of these personalities is our dear Shahid Soleimani who had a brilliant performance in the arena of diplomacy, international affairs and the like. Our friends, our pious</p>

brothers and the dear people of Iran are not fully informed yet about the scope of Shahid Soleimani's activities...

### 3.5.2 Importance of Qassem Soleimani's funeral

Funeral of Qassem Soleimani emerges as the second most frequently discussed topic, highlighting its significance in Khamenei's rhetoric. The funeral serves as a platform for Khamenei to validate and reinforce key themes such as the success of the Islamic Republic, the unity of the Iranian people, and their deep admiration for Soleimani. Khamenei's reference to Soleimani's funeral in his speeches often emphasizes the massive public turnout and the widespread outpouring of grief, which serves to underline the strength of the Iranian people's support for the Islamic Republic and its objectives. This display of unity and shared mourning is used by Khamenei to demonstrate the resilience and commitment of the Iranian population in the face of adversity, particularly in the context of ongoing regional and international tensions (See Table 2).

#### Table 2

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches*

... I need to mention this point that in the world of politics - in the policies of the Islamic Republic's system, the country's policies, and all events even slightly related to politics - there are some truths that should be considered without taking political orientations and conflicts into account. Look at the funeral of our dear, honorable Martyr Soleimani for example. Well, this was a big event. In this case, the issue of political orientations was not a concern and everyone participated. Elections are similar. In elections, the issue of political orientations is not what matters. Everyone should participate. Everyone should take part because the country's social system needs this participation and is influenced by it. I will mention some of these effects now...

... Whenever the Islamic Republic needed people to be present on the scene, they voluntarily showed up without anyone asking them to. Remember the funeral procession for Martyr Soleimani? Or the funeral procession that took place in Isfahan two or three days ago? Much can be understood from these...

... If someone wants to understand the people's orientation towards the Revolution, revolutionary activities and jihad, they must look at the burial ceremony of Shahid Qassem

Soleimani with millions of participants in it. The dismembered body of Shahid Soleimani was bid farewell by millions of people. The people commemorated and respected a revolutionary and mujahid person, who had laid down his life for the Islamic Republic, like that...

### 3.5.3 Portrait of Qassem Soleimani as an important martyr

Another category worth mentioning is the portrayal of Soleimani as an important martyr. In this category, Soleimani's presence in the text is not significant, and his name appears without having a substantial impact on the overall message of the speech. Nonetheless, his mention as a martyr serves to remind the audience of his sacrifice and dedication to the Islamic Republic of Iran. (See Table 3)

**Table 3**

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches*

...The moral and chivalrous behavior that you showed along with spirituality - naming our sports caravans after martyrs, and especially after Martyr Soleimani - is a very valuable course of action. Moreover, some athletes mentioned particular martyrs, saying that they wished to offer their medals to them. These are very valuable. Also, our athletes used the keffiyeh as a symbol of sacrifice and resistance and they prostrated on it. These are our values...

... I am glad that I was able to meet with you. I ask God, the Exalted, to grant His paradise to the immaculate soul of Imam (Khomeini), to the pure souls of the martyrs, to the soul of our dear martyr - Martyr Soleimani and his companions - and to the soul of Mr. Hassanzadeh, the valuable scholar who recently passed away.....

### 3.5.4 Qassem Soleimani as a central topic of a speech

Based on the analysis of Ali Khamenei's speeches, Qassem Soleimani Out of a corpus of 31 speeches, 4 were found to be dedicated to Soleimani, which constitutes approximately 12.9% of the total speeches analyzed. This significant percentage indicates the importance of Soleimani as a subject within Khamenei's discourse.

In these speeches, Khamenei emphasizes Soleimani's contributions to the Resistance Front, his unwavering loyalty to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and his commitment to the cause.



Soleimani is presented as a martyr and role model, symbolizing the virtues and values that Khamenei wishes to promote among the Iranian people and the Islamic Ummah. The speeches dedicated to Soleimani feature a combination of all categories listed and demonstrate interconnections with other discourse topics, which will be further discussed in chapter 3.3. By invoking Soleimani's memory and celebrating his contributions, Khamenei aims to inspire a sense of national pride, unity, and commitment to the ideals for which Soleimani fought. The speeches also emphasize the importance of maintaining the Resistance Front against foreign aggression, promoting unity among Iranians and the Islamic Ummah, and following Soleimani's example in terms of humility, dedication, and perseverance. The significant percentage of speeches dedicated to Soleimani underscores his importance in shaping the national narrative and furthering Khamenei's objectives.

### 3.5.6 Portrait Qassem Soleimani as an icon of resistance

Use of Qassem Soleimani as a topic, one category that stands out is the portrayal of Soleimani as an icon of resistance and a target of the United States. In these speeches, Khamenei emphasizes Soleimani's role as a key figure in the struggle against the US's hegemonic ambitions, terrorist organizations such as ISIS or Zionist regime, highlighting his life and sacrifices in the service of Iran and the resistance movements in the Middle East. (See Table 4)

**Table 4**

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches as face of resistance*

<p>...The US's wrong calculations in their system of calculations keep continuing. The same is true at the present time. Today too, they make certain calculations about various matters. An example is the events following the martyrdom of our dear martyr, Martyr Soleimani. Look at what they thought but what happened. They thought that with the assassination of Martyr Soleimani, the great movement of Resistance that he represented and was a symbol of would be extinguished....</p>
<p>...Greetings be upon the martyrs of Resistance and the large number of the mujahids who laid down their lives on this path, in particular martyr Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, martyr Sayyid Abbas Musawi, martyr Fathi Shaqaqi, martyr Imad Moughniyah, martyr Abdul-Aziz Rantisi, martyr Abu-Mahdi al-Muhandis and finally, the most prominent personality among the</p>

martyrs of Resistance, martyr Qassem Soleimani. Even after their fruitful and blessed life, with their martyrdom, each of these personalities exerted a deep impact on the Resistance...

By targeting Soleimani, the United States aimed to undermine Iran's regional influence and weaken its support for various resistance movements in the Middle East. Khamenei argues that the US's decision to target Soleimani has only reinforced the Iranian people's resolve and further solidified their commitment to resisting American aggression and intervention in the region. Through this narrative, Khamenei highlights the broader struggle against US hegemony and the importance of steadfastly opposing its encroachment on Iran's sovereignty and the stability of the region.

### **Table 5**

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches as target of US*

...Well, western powers are known as dictatorships. Those who claim to oppose the dictatorships of the world, are themselves the most dictatorial. In the political and economic sphere, they are dictating things to the whole world. Another form of dictatorship has been added to their collection, and that is the media dictatorship. For example, one cannot mention the name of Martyr Soleimani in cyberspace because they eliminate it. In cyberspace, which is controlled by them, they cannot stand the name and photographs of Martyr Soleimani. This is how things are now....

...You Americans openly declared that you killed our fearless general. You murdered him and you were proud of it and you announced that you gave the orders! Martyr Soleimani was not just a national hero, he was the region's hero. Martyr Soleimani played a major and unparalleled role in solving the problems of several countries in the region. You martyred this great man and his companions – Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and several others. You supported those - the Zionists - who assassinated our nuclear scientists. The Zionists martyred our scientists one by one and you supported them. Not only did you fail to condemn them, but you also supported them....

### **3.5.5 Other**

In the analysis of Ali Khamenei's speeches and the elaboration on the use of Qassem Soleimani, Author had acknowledged an additional category, labelled "Other," that

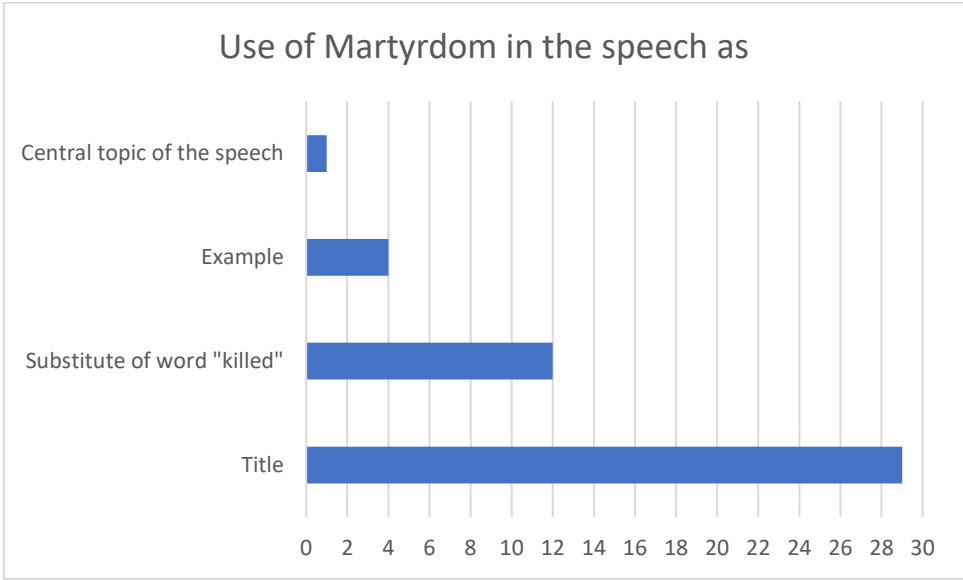
encompasses aspects of Soleimani's portrayal that did not meet the frequency threshold of at least two occurrences. This category includes the following themes: Soleimani as a national hero, the significant loss his death represented for Iran, his devotion to Imam Ali, the love and admiration he received from the people, and his role in fighting terrorism.

### 3.6 Role of Martyrdom in the speeches

The role of martyrdom in Ali Khamenei's speeches constitutes a significant aspect of this thesis. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, martyrdom holds considerable importance within the context of Iranian society and its political discourse. Throughout the analyzed speeches, the term "martyr" and its synonyms appear with notable frequency, totalling 473 instances. A closer examination of these occurrences has led the author to categorize the usage of the word "martyr" into four distinct categories: Title, Substitute for the word "killed," Example, and Speeches focused on martyrdom (See Figure 3). These categories may also overlap with topic of Qassem Soleimani, as mentioned before, he's important in these speeches and carry title of "Martyr".

**Figure 4**

*Frequencies of categories selected by author to role of Martyrdom*



*Note:* The numbers on the graph do not add up to the same number of 31 speeches, martyrdom could have appeared throughout the speech multiple times in different variations and context.

### 3.6.1 Title

The most dominant role of the word "martyr" is observed when it is employed as a title preceding an individual's name. In this capacity, Khamenei consistently utilizes the term to honor and pay tribute to individuals who have sacrificed their lives in service of Iran and its Islamic principles. By bestowing the title of martyr upon these individuals, Khamenei seeks to elevate their status within the collective memory of the Iranian people and encourage emulation of their actions and values. This could theoretically be considered as use of "Example", however, the use of title was more filling as for category.

### 3.6.2 Substitute of word "killed"

In its second most dominant role, the word "martyr" is used as a substitute for the word "killed/deceased/died..." This linguistic choice highlights the speaker's intention to frame the death of these individuals within the context of sacrifice and dedication to a greater cause. By referring to them as martyrs rather than simply as casualties, Khamenei reinforces the idea that their loss carries profound significance for the Islamic Republic and its objectives.

### Table 6

*Examples from Ali Khamenei's speeches as substitute to word "killed"*

...And when he was martyred, it was not only revolutionaries who commemorated him....
...It was from the upper echelons. [The article] contained insults to the magnanimous Imam who was living in exile in Najaf, and he had only recently lost his son who had been martyred....

### 3.6.3 Example

The third category includes instances where the term "martyr" is used as an example. In these cases, Khamenei cites specific martyrs to show virtues, values, or attributes that the Iranian people should aspire to emulate. These examples serve as a means of inspiring and mobilizing the audience, reinforcing the idea that martyrdom is a noble and revered path.

### 3.6.4 Central topic of the speech

Lastly, one speech in the analyzed corpus is primarily focused on the topic of martyrdom. In this speech, Khamenei reaches into the concept more deeply, elaborating on its significance in the Islamic tradition and its role in shaping the Iranian national identity. This

speech serves as a testament to the centrality of martyrdom in Khamenei's discourse and its function as a rhetorical tool for promoting unity and resilience among the Iranian people.

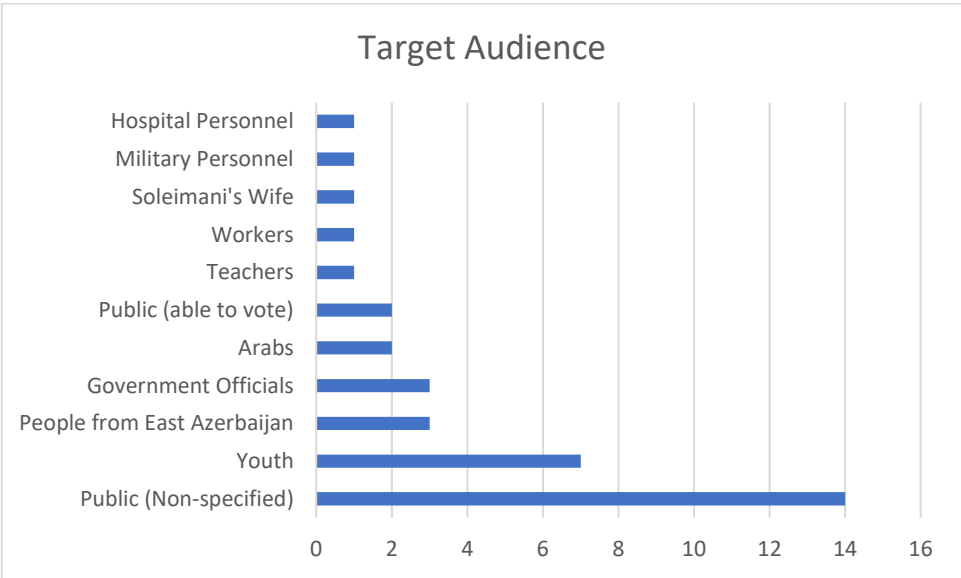
### 3.7 Target audience of the speeches

In the speeches, it's important to mention the audience that is targeted in the speeches. This information indicates that the majority of Khamenei's speeches are targeted towards the general public and the youth. Additionally, there is a focus on specific regional audiences, government officials, and various other groups. Understanding the target audience of these speeches can help provide insights into Khamenei's communication strategies, objectives, and priorities.

Outside of the predominantly *Public (Non-specific)* category is the *Youth* most dominant. Iran is relatively young nation. Over 60 % of Iranian nation are under the age of 30 and are the most politically active in the Islamic world. (United States Institute of Peace, 2010. CIA, 2023). According to Freedom house Index, Iran scores 12 out of 100 Global Freedom status and is considered not free (Freedom House, 2023). Therefore, in work of Anja Neundorf and Grigore Pop-Eleches describes, that authoritarian regime (That according to Freedom House is, despite Iranian government does not acknowledge it as a truth), targets them during their formative years, where they learn norms, values and identities through process of imitation and repetition to indoctrinate them and further carry on the narrative that they were taught and even expanding it in later years (Neunodorf & Pop-Eleches, 2020).

**Figure 5**

*Frequency of target audience performed by Ali Khamenei*



*Note:* The numbers on the graph do not add up to the same number of 31 speeches, target audience could have been multiple throughout the speech, or part of a speech could be used as a direct message to a certain group.

## **4. Critical Discourse Analysis of Public Speeches made by Ali Khamenei**

The method of analysis in this chapter is critical discourse analysis. The method will identify and explain predominant discourse topics, discursive strategies and means Ali Khamenei utilized in collected data of his speeches. The information provided about Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is based on the entry from The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, written chapter by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough is a prominent figure in the field of CDA and has contributed to its development and application in social research.

CDA is an approach that examines the relationship between language and other elements of social events and practices. It seeks to reveal non-obvious connections between language and social life, focusing on how language contributes to power dynamics, domination, and exploitation. CDA aims to enhance social justice and emancipation through language analysis (Lewis-Beck & Bryman, 2007, p. 214-216, Dijk, 1993).

The development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field can be traced back to various academic disciplines, but it has since evolved into a more systematic body of theory and research. Its main sources include functionalist linguistic traditions, Western Marxism, critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Foucault's concept of discourse, and Bakhtin's dialogical language theory. The term "critical discourse analysis" first appeared around 1985, and the field has since created various approaches. It began with critical linguistics, which applied Halliday's linguistics to analyze texts from the perspective of ideology and power. Over time, CDA has become more interdisciplinary, engaging with social theory and research, and focusing on how language figures in processes of social transformation. The field has also expanded to include cognitive psychology, historical documentation, and multimodal analysis of contemporary texts. CDA has become increasingly interdisciplinary, engaging with social theory and research, and has been applied in numerous disciplines and areas of study within social sciences. Researchers often focus on detailed linguistic analysis of texts or adopt a Foucaultian perspective on discourse without such close textual analysis. It has been influenced by various figures, namely Michael Halliday, known for his systemic functional linguistics theory. Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, from Western Marxism, who contributed to the theories

of hegemony and ideology. Jürgen Habermas, from the Frankfurt School of critical theory. Michel Foucault, who introduced the concept of discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin, who developed dialogical language theory, emphasizing heteroglossia, intertextuality, and genre. Furthermore, specific CDA researchers have also played crucial roles in the development of the field: Teun van Dijk, who incorporates cognitive psychology. Ruth Wodak, known for her discourse-historical approach. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, who focus on the multimodal character of contemporary texts (Lewis-Beck & Bryman, 2007, p. 214-216; Dijk, 1993, Wodak 2001).

An example of CDA's application is analyzing narratives of global economic change, where it helps to reveal the underlying power dynamics and policy implications of certain representations of economic change (Lewis-Beck & Bryman, 2007, p. 214-216).

#### **4.1 Discursive Historical Approach**

For this analysis, author has decided to select Discursive Historical Approach. The discourse-historical approach (DHA) is a part of critical discourse studies (CDS) as many of the discursive approaches, that investigates language use beyond the sentence level, focusing on meaning-making in various forms. It aims to reveal the role discourses play in producing non-inclusive and nonegalitarian structures within society. DHA originated from a study analyzing anti-Semitic stereotypes in the 1986 Austrian presidential campaign of Kurt Waldheim. (Wodak 2015)

During the work Wodak has evolved multiple principles that has helped her during the work. These principles can be summarized like into 10 principles (Wodak 2015).

1. The approach is interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinarity involves theory, methods, methodology, research practice, and practical application.
2. The approach is problem-oriented.
3. Various theories and methods are combined wherever integration leads to an adequate understanding and explanation of the research object.
4. The research incorporates fieldwork and ethnography (study from “inside”) where this is required for a thorough analysis and theorizing of the object under investigation.
5. The research necessarily moves recursively between theory and empirical data.
6. Numerous genres and public spaces as well as intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are studied.

7. The historical context is taken into account in interpreting texts and discourses. The historical orientation permits the reconstruction of how recontextualization functions as an important process linking texts and discourses intertextually and interdiscursively over time.
8. Categories and tools are not fixed once and for all. They must be elaborated for each analysis according to the specific problem under investigation.
9. "Grand theories" often serve as a foundation. In the specific analyses, however, „middle-range theories" frequently supply a better theoretical basis.
10. The application of results is an important target. Results should be made available to and applied by experts and should be communicated to the public.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) shares many theoretical and methodological concepts with other strands in CDS. These approaches influence each other, creating a common conceptual frame while maintaining their unique orientations. DHA is characterized by its research interest in identity construction and unjustified discrimination, a focus on historical dimensions of discourse formation, and its epistemological foundation in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and Habermas's language philosophy. A key principle of DHA is triangulation, which helps researchers minimize subjectivity by incorporating various data sources, methods, theories, and background information in their analyses. (Wodak 2015, Reisigl 2017, Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001)

Furthermore, DHA is a three-dimensional method that involves: (I) identifying specific contents or topics in a discourse, (II) investigating discursive strategies, and (III) examining linguistic means as types and context-dependent realizations. This analysis requires understanding the text producer's aim and the strategies and linguistic devices used to achieve the intended meaning. In analyzing the discursive construction and representation of "us" and "them," five key questions are considered:

1. How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically?
2. What characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes?
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?



4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated?

Based on these questions, five types of discursive strategies can be distinguished. A "strategy" refers to a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a specific social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal. Discursive strategies are found at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity. (Wodak 2015, Wodak 2009, Dijk 1991)

## 4.2 Discourse topics in Ali Khamenei Speeches that are the most associated with Qassem Soleimani

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Khamenei's speeches and the frequency of various topics, the author has opted to develop a comprehensive table. This table will not only present a more intricate classification of the topics discussed in the speeches but also simplify the process of comprehending their frequencies. By organizing the content in this manner, readers will have an easier time identifying patterns, themes, and recurring ideas within Khamenei's speeches, ultimately facilitating a more nuanced analysis of the discourse. This approach helps to reveal key insights into the speaker's intentions, priorities, and messaging strategies, contributing to a richer understanding of the subject matter.

**Table 7**

Category	Subcategory	Discursive topic	Frequency	Sub total	Total
Foreign policy	Enemies	America	19	65	78
		West	17		
		Zionists / Israel	11		
		ISIS	5		
		Arrogant powers	2		
		USSR	1		
		Imperialism	1		
		Arab states dealing with Israel	1		
		Non-Specific	8		
	Allies	Palestine	4	5	
		Syria	1		
Sanctions		6	6		
Foreign treaties	JCPOA	2	2		
Domestic policy	Economy	Housing, Security, energy	1	5	73

	High prices	1		
	Labourers	1		
	Employers	1		
	Production	1		
Government	Elections	6	15	
	Suggestion to government	4		
	Islamic republic	5		
Education		1	1	
National pride	Scientific achievements	5	17	
	Nationalism	12		
Corruption		1	1	
Unity		8	8	
Media		1	1	
Internal Enemies	Diversants/Reactionaries	2	2	
Hostile ideologies	Communism	1	4	
	Capitalism	3		
Younger generations		13	13	
Health care	Covid 19	5	6	
	Hospital personnel	1		
<b>Resistance</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Hijab	1	1	30
	Islamic teaching	9	9	
	Ramadan	1	1	
	Ali	4	4	
	Martyrdom	4	4	
	Spirituality	11	11	
<b>History</b>	Islamic Revolution	11	11	37
	Pahlavi	10	10	
	Tabriz uprising	3	3	
	Iraq-Iran war	7	7	
	Khomeini	6	6	
<b>Conspiracy against iran</b>		<b>18</b>		<b>18</b>

**Note:** Frequencies of each topics were calculated per speech and numbers do not match the same number the topic is repeated per speech. It is possible that during a speech topic was repeated multiple times and could mention wide variety of topics with different importance to them. It's important to take numbers with caution.

Upon initial examination of the table, it becomes apparent that the topics addressed in the speeches cover a wide range of subjects. To facilitate a clearer understanding, these topics have been organized into broader categories, as follows:

1. Foreign policy: This category contains discursive topics related to Iran's interactions with other nations and the global community and their relations.
2. Domestic policy: These discursive topics pertain directly to Iran's internal affairs and often target the relationships among its citizens.
3. Resistance and Conspiracy against Iran: These categories are somewhat ambiguous, as they can be applied to both internal and external contexts related to Iran.
4. Religion: This category includes all discursive topics related to religious matters, which can also be ambiguous in nature.
5. History: This category comprises historical events and narratives referenced by Khamenei, which are immutable but serve a specific purpose in his speeches.

These categories were subjectively chosen based on a thorough understanding of the text and the context in which the speeches were delivered. By organizing the topics into these larger categories, readers can more easily discern patterns and connections among the various subjects addressed in Khamenei's speeches. This method of organization provides a more structured framework for analysis, enabling a deeper comprehension of the overarching themes and messages that Khamenei seeks to convey through his discourse.

However, for this analysis, we will only focus on the specific discursive topics. After analysis of the table, we can identify these three most prominent discursive topics: America, Resistance, Conspiracy against Iran. In many cases discursive topics overlap with discursive strategies and should be considered interconnected. One topic may use multiple discursive strategies and vice versa.

### **3.2.1 America**

America is a discursive topic in Ayatollah Khamenei's speeches as it frequently appears as an opposing force or a source of criticism. The United States is depicted in various ways, including as an aggressor in several speeches, the United States is portrayed as a direct aggressor, particularly in the case of the assassination of Martyr Soleimani. Khamenei describes the US action as "cruel," "cowardly," and an act of "terrorism" that increased the Islamic nation's hatred for the US., an untrustworthy party, and a source of instability in the region. Overall, Khamenei depicts USA as the prime enemy of Iran and blames it for various problems, either internal or external (See Table 10).

**Table 8**

*Americans as creators of ISIS and other terrorist groups*

<p>...This is the battlefield. You are fighting on this field. The presence of the Basij in the country means standing up firmly to these great conspiracies. You defended the Holy Shrines [in Syria and Iraq]. You stood up to DAESH whom the US created. You fought them, you did this. You helped the courageous fighters in Lebanon in any way you could. You also helped the Palestinians, you will keep doing so and we will continue to help them....</p>
<p>...I wish to add that in the current circumstances, the US finds its interests in creating instability in the region until it manages to achieve complete domination over the region. Until then, it finds its interests in creating instability in the region. This is being acknowledged explicitly by themselves. A well-known expert in a famous American organization, “The American Enterprise Institute” – if I mention his name, those who are interested in political work will recognize him easily – said this openly. He said that they are not after creating stability in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. He does not just mention Iran, rather, he mentions Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, saying that they are not interested in stability in those countries. The main issue is not about the necessity or lack of necessity to create instability – as it is evident that there should be instability in such countries – rather the main issue is about how to create such instability. Sometimes, they cause it with DAESH and sometimes they do it with seditious moves such as the one plotted in 1388. Another is the things that they are doing in the region. So, they are after causing instability in the region....</p>
<p>... The important point that must not be ignored by the political and military elites of the Islamic world is that the policy of the U.S. and the Zionists is to transfer conflicts to behind the frontlines of the front of resistance. Staging civil wars in Syria, the military siege and constant killings in Yemen, the assassinations, the destruction, the creation of ISIS in Iraq and other similar things in some other countries in the region are all machinations to divert the attention of the resistance front and to provide opportunities for the Zionist regime. Some Muslim politicians knowingly, and some others unknowingly, have contributed to these machinations of the enemy. The main way to prevent these machinations is for the proud youth throughout the world of Islam to seriously make this demand. Young people in all</p>

Islamic countries, particularly in Arab countries, must pay attention to this advice from Imam Khomeini (r.a.), “Vent all your shouts on the U.S.” and of course, on the Zionist enemy....

## **Table 9**

### *USA not trustworthy regarding JCPOA*

...The last point is about the Bar-Jaam [JCPOA]. Well, I have spoken recently about the Bar-Jaam and I have spoken in detail about it. We have already spoken about the Islamic Republic’s policies on the Bar-Jaam. Certain things are said and certain promises are made here and there. Today, I only wish to say this: We have heard many nice words and promises, but in practice, they have not been honored and on the contrary, they have acted against those promises. It is no use talking. It is no use giving promises. This time, only actions matter! If we see actions on the part of the other side, we will take action too. This time, the Islamic Republic will not be satisfied with hearing such and such words and promises. Things will not be like the past....

...I used to say this from the beginning. After the US left the Bar-Jaam [JCPOA], those three governments would rant and rave all the time. On that day, I said that I did not trust them and that they would not do anything because they serve American interests. Today, this has become completely clear. After the passage of one year, it has become clear that they are America’s footboys in the true sense of the word. They are America’s footboys. That is while those little governments hope that they can bring the Iranian nation to its knees. The US who was greater than you and began these measures before you and who is your master failed to bring the Iranian nation to its knees. You are too small to bring the Iranian nation to its knees!...

### **4.2.2 Resistance**

Resistance emerges as a prominent discursive topic in Ayatollah Khamenei's speeches. The notion of resistance is often used to highlight the determination and steadfastness of the Iranian people and the broader Islamic community in the face of adversities, particularly against perceived enemies such as the United States and Israel. Resistance is frequently associated with the idea of standing up against oppression and injustice. In the context of regional politics, resistance is portrayed as a unifying force that brings together different groups and nations in their struggle against foreign intervention and occupation. This is evident in the speeches

addressing the importance of the "Resistance Front," which refers to a network of allied forces in the Middle East that opposes the influence of the United States and Israel. Topic is also interconnected with religious topics and often accompanied by quotes from Quran. (See Table 13)

**Table 10**

*Examples from speeches regarding resistance*

<p>...Contrary to the downward movement of the regime, an increase in the capabilities of the camp of Resistance is a sign of a bright future: An increase in defensive and military power, self-sufficiency in building effective weapons, the self-confidence of mujahids, the increasing awareness of youth, the extension of the Resistance circle to the entire country of Palestine and beyond, the recent uprising of youth in defending Masjid al-Aqsa and the simultaneous promotion of the Palestinian nation's spirit of jihad and innocence among public opinion in many parts of the world....</p>
<p>..Fear and sorrow are two grave maladies for every nation, every crowd and every individual. Fear and grief are two grave pests, but they can be eliminated with this Quranic announcement. Also, if we show resistance, they will be eliminated as well. This is based on a Quranic ayah as well: "In the case of those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah' and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them: 'Fear you not nor grieve.'" [The Holy Quran, 41: 30]. Resistance has the same impact. If you want to be free of fear and sorrow, you should place resistance and steadfastness at the top of your agenda. If you do so, you will have neither fear nor sorrow. These are based on Quranic statements...</p>
<p>..The important point that must not be ignored by the political and military elites of the Islamic world is that the policy of the U.S. and the Zionists is to transfer conflicts to behind the frontlines of the front of resistance. Staging civil wars in Syria, the military siege and constant killings in Yemen, the assassinations, the destruction, the creation of ISIS in Iraq and other similar things in some other countries in the region are all machinations to divert the attention of the resistance front and to provide opportunities for the Zionist regime.</p>

**4.2.3 Conspiracy against Iran**

Another discursive topic is the existence of a global conspiracy against Iran. This topic summarizes all external (and internal threats) to the regime. This conspiracy is attributed to

various malevolent forces, including the United States, Israel, and other Western powers, who seek to undermine Iran's sovereignty and destabilize the region. The conspiracies encompass economic pressure through sanctions, cultural infiltration to erode Islamic values, and the creation or support of extremist groups to sow discord. By highlighting these external challenges, the narrative emphasizes the importance of resistance, self-reliance, and vigilance in order to protect Iran and counteract the machinations of its adversaries.

**Table 11**

*Examples from the speeches regarding Conspiracy against Iran*

<p>...To look at the issue from another perspective, there have been few eras like the present era in our country when our youth and teenagers were threatened by ideological and moral invasions. Of course, during the Pahlavi regime, this invasion was made by the officials of the country themselves, but today, it is made by foreigners, by the enemies and by deviant individuals...</p>
<p>...They wanted to destroy our strengths and our security. Our security is one of our country's strengths. And there is the matter of scientific education. We always take pride in the scientific progress we have made. Well, where are the sciences studied? [They are studied] in educational centers, in scientific centers, in research centers. They [the enemies] have targeted these centers so they can shut them down and stop the study of science. [They don't want] us to have security. They don't want people to study science. They don't want there to be a growth in our domestic production....</p>
<p>...Now, this is a fact. The enemy understands this reality just as we understand it. The enemy also understands that the youth today are well-aware of things. That they are focused, they are intelligent, they are capable of analyzing things. So, what does it do? The enemy is not going to remain idle. In order to neutralize the state of our youth, the enemy has started creating content targeting the minds of our younger population....</p>

In particular, the youth of Iran are portrayed as a vulnerable and targeted group within this global conspiracy against the country. Khamenei often emphasizes the importance of guiding and educating young Iranians to preserve their Islamic identity and resist cultural infiltration. By doing so, the narrative seeks to empower and inspire the youth to become active participants in the resistance against external forces, thereby ensuring the continued strength and resilience of Iran in the face of adversity but also requests professions like teachers to

safeguard them from such threat, or justifies creation of so called Establishment of of National information or „Cyberpolice“.

### 4.3 Prominent discursive strategies in Ali Khamenei’s speeches

This part of the thesis is to identify and describe predominant discursive strategies used by Ali Khamenei in his speeches of analyzed corpus. The Table 14 was taken from Wodak 2015, that are used during DHA. (Wodak 2015)

**Table 12**

*Reisgl’s and Wodak’s Discursive Strategies (Wodak 2015)*

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
<b>Nomination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events and process/action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership categorization devices, deixtics, anthroponyms, etc.</li> <li>Tropes such as metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches</li> <li>Verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions</li> </ul>
<b>Prediction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, event/process and action in positive or negative way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits</li> <li>explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns</li> <li>collocations</li> <li>explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes, euphemismus)</li> <li>allusions, evocations and presumpptions/implicatures</li> </ul>
<b>Argumentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topoi</li> <li>Fallacies</li> </ul>
<b>Perspectivization, framing or discourse representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positioning speaker’s or writer’s point of view and expressing involvement or distance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deictics</li> <li>Direct, indirect or free indirect speech</li> <li>Quotation marks, discourse markers/particles</li> <li>Metaphors</li> <li>Animating prosody</li> </ul>



<b>Intensification, mitigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or denoic status of utterances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminutives or augmentatives</li> <li>• (modal) particles, tag questions, subjunctive hesitations, vague expressions, etc.</li> <li>• Hyperboles, litotes</li> <li>• Indirect speech acts (eg., question instead of assertion)</li> <li>• Verbs of saying, feeling, thinking</li> </ul>
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## Prediction

In this discursive strategy, Ali Khamenei uses labels to describe different groups and actors. Most of the times provides binary view on the sides. Usually, the side of Iran has positively viewed labels, such as “hero”, “martyr”, “resistance” while the other side has negatively viewed labels, such as “enemy”, “coward”, “immoral” to depict them as villains. As mentioned in vocabulary before, even words such as “West”, “America”, “Zionist/Israel”, “Europe” are viewed negatively. These word usage in discursive strategy would fall under the Nomination strategy, however, after understanding the context of the whole political background and use in speeches, they fall under the strategy of Prediction.

### Table 13

*Use of prediction as discursive strategy*

<p>...Shahid Soleimani was the manifestation of this power. He used to show off Iran’s national power to the enemies of the country and the Revolution throughout the region. He was the manifestation of the spirit of national power and the people respected this....</p>
<p>...I would like to close this speech by remembering the martyrs of Quds, including Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Fathi Shaqaqi, Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi, Martyr Soleimani, the great Muslim commander and the unforgettable face of resistance, and also the great Iraqi Mujahid Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis....</p>

## Argumentation

As second prominent strategy is Argumentation –Ali Khamenei frequently employs the strategy of using Quranic references and teachings to justify various actions and decisions. By grounding his arguments in the sacred text, he seeks to establish a strong moral and religious foundation for his positions.

## Table 16

### *Using Quran to explain situations*

...According to the enemies, each one of these events is like a torch that must be extinguished. The enemies that are against you, against this nation, and against this Revolution, cannot tolerate these torches. They want to abolish them. They want to extinguish these torches. This is exactly the opposite of what is stated in the Holy Quran. The Quran commands us to remember and mention these events, “And mention Mary in the Book; when she withdrew from her family to an easterly place” (Quran 19:16). What happened for Lady Mary must not be forgotten. This should go down in history. “And mention Ibrahim in the Book” (Quran 19:41). “And mention Moses in the Book” (Quran 19:51). “And remember Our servant Job [in the Quran]” (Quran 38:41). “... and remember Our servant, David, [a man] of strength” (Quran 38:17). “And mention [Hud] the brother of ‘Ad, when he warned his people at Ahqaf” (Quran 46:21). Perhaps there are ten or more examples like this in the Quran about remembering and mentioning [these individuals]....

...The people sympathized with Imam Khomeini because of the passing away of his respectable, honorable son, Mostafa, who was truly a remarkable person. They [the regime] decided they needed to do something, [but] they acted foolishly. They created problems for themselves by publishing this article. “But Allah came at them from a place they did not expect” (Quran 59:2). They were hit hard from a place they had not expected....

## **Perspectivization**

The primary discursive strategy employed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is to portray the martyrdom and death of Qassem Soleimani as a triumph rather than a failure. Logically speaking, being assassinated might not seem like a success; however, Khamenei frames it as a sacred and honorable path that all should strive to follow. In the case of Qassem Soleimani, while the United States might view his assassination as a significant victory, the Iranian perspective differs significantly. And same could be same about other martyrs and martyrdom in total. Iran was not able to protect Qassem Soleimani, de facto on their own playground, therefore meaning that Iran is behind in technology, and that is another failure. Because enemy is better at it and is stronger.

Khamenei's portrayal of Soleimani's death as a success is further bolstered by the Argumentation strategy, which supports his claims through references to the Quran. By drawing

on sacred texts, Khamenei is able to infuse his arguments with religious authority, thereby legitimizing the idea that Soleimani's death was not a failure, but rather a noble and divine sacrifice.

In summary, Khamenei masterfully utilizes discursive strategies to present the seemingly negative event of death as a positive and triumphant occurrence of martyrdom. This reframing is achieved through the use of Perspectivization and Argumentation strategies, which together reshape the narrative and portray what might be perceived as a failure as a resounding success.

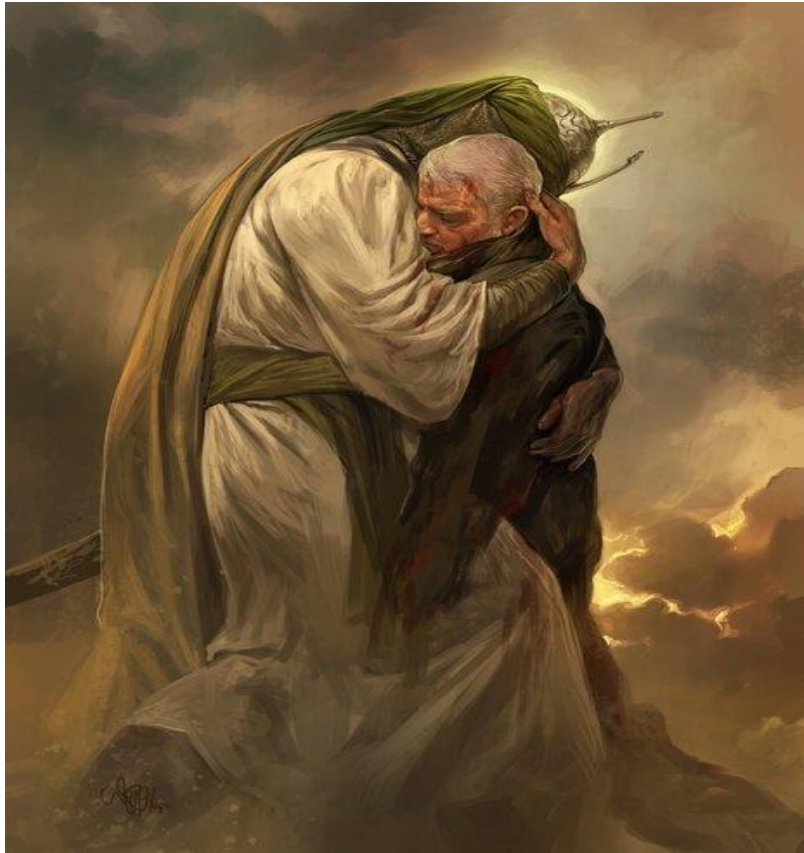
#### **4.4 Visual expression of Qassem Soleimani's case**

In this section, we will look into the visual expressions of Qassem Soleimani as part of Tehran's depictionary landscape. These pictures and murals reflect the dynamic nature of Iran's political events and trends, as well as the changing perceptions of martyrdom and heroism. The images of Soleimani play a significant role in fostering national unity and redefining the concept of martyrdom for a new generation. By examining these visual representations, we aim to better understand the subtle interplay between hard and soft propaganda and the role that everyday nationalism plays in shaping the public's perception of political figures such as Soleimani. (Schwarz, 2021; Walsh, 2022; Schwartz, 2022)

These pictures effectively underline and support author's claims on the perception of Ali Khamenei's case. Most of the pictures taken were selected, because they were propagandized on Khamenei's own page, or are very famous internationally.

## Figure 6

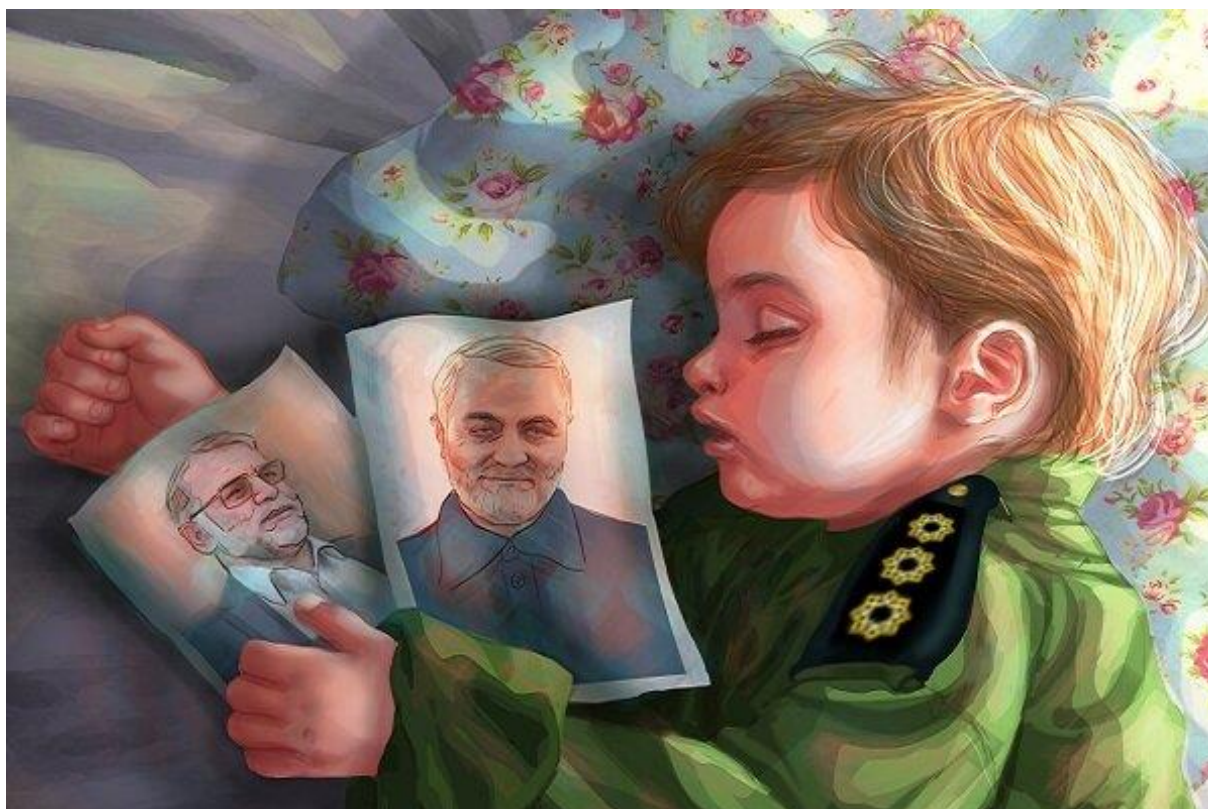
*The Apocalyptic Companion of Aba Abdillah (Khamenei.ir 2020a)*



This picture is very meaningful for Iranian Shia religion and became very famous in regard of Qassem Soleimani by Imam Husayn. In the picture we see a close-up focus on damaged body of Qassem Soleimani and Imam Husayn ibn Ali, wrapping his hands around the said Qassem Soleimani dressed in what it seems is a military uniform. In the picture, the background be can't clearly identified, but either it's the heaven (Jannah), however, it's unlikely as the heaven would be symbolized more happily and with brighter colours, or the explosion, which was the cause of his death as it embraces the feel of mourning, sadness, and death. It's clear that we can see the reinforcement of an idea of *martyrdom* as a central theme in Shia Islam and to depict Qassem Soleimani as a national hero and victim of the foreign imperialism, embrace the resistance against oppression and to continue fight for the Shia cause, and celebrates the bravery and sacrifice in service of Islam and the Iranian nation.

**Figure 7**

*تو، بهترین بابایی (Mehr News, 2023)*



Here we've got yet another poster. This time it's a bit more different than before and after. In this poster we can see a child lying in the, what seems to be a bed, and holding pictures of Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al Mohandes. The child is wearing IRGC uniform. From what we could explain is a simple indoctrination of children, that once they grow up, they should be the same as Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al Mohandes and become a martyr and do a service to Iranian Islamic Republic.

## Figure 8

*Jan-Fada* (Teheran News, 2022)

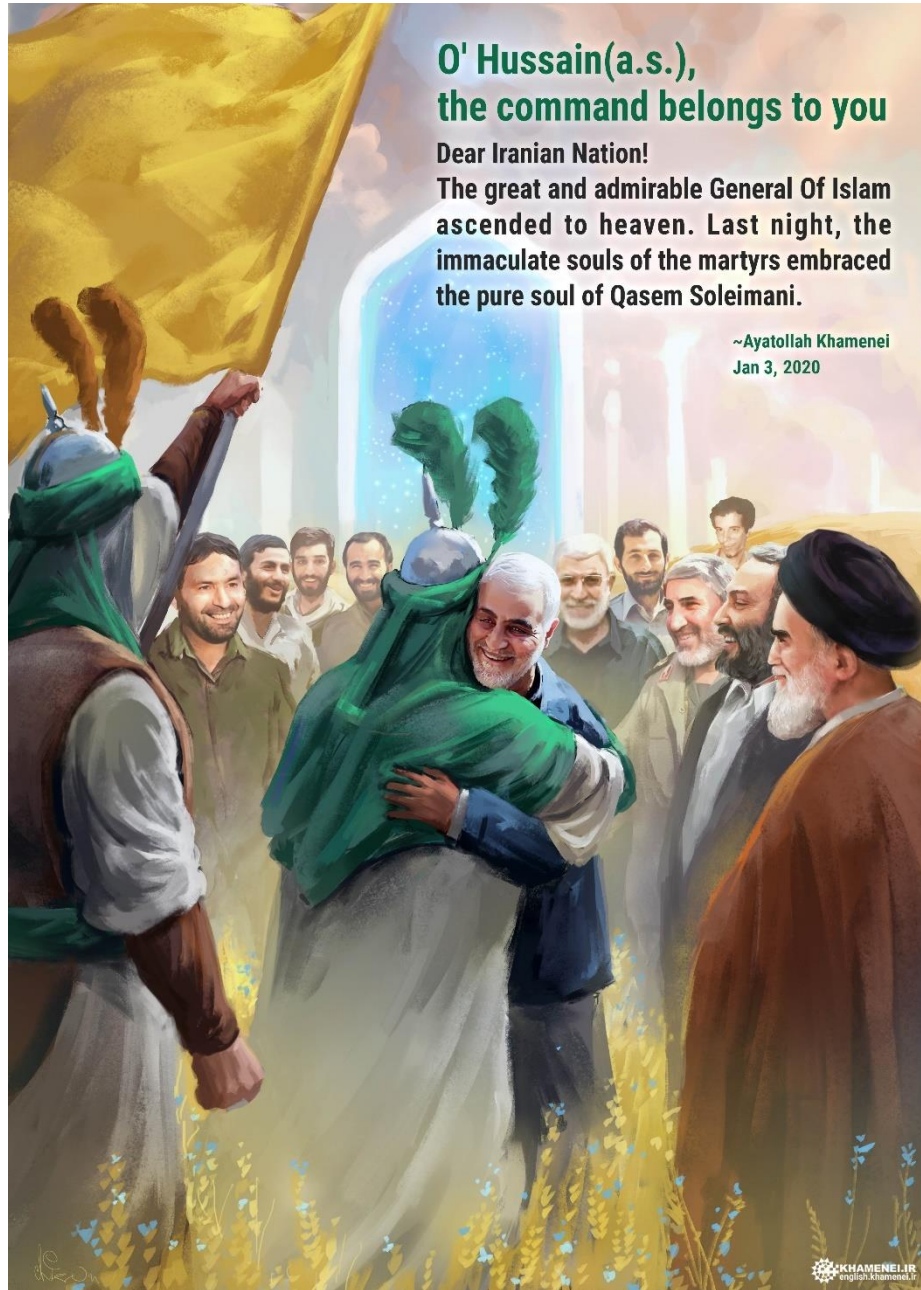


Here's a billboard from Teheran with name "The Dedicated". On the picture on the right, we can see the face of Qassem Soleimani by author Ruhollamin. But we can see many more famous people. Author claims that people on the picture Mirza Kuchak Khan, Rais-Ali Delvari, Sattar Khan, Bibi Maryam, Alimardan Khan, Farangis. But also, Kurdish Peshmerga, Baluchi tribes. The picture is different from all others we've seen so far. The people in the picture are not portraits of famous martyrs of Islamic Republic or holy figures but more of a resistant fighters. The picture also doesn't carry any religious signs, outside of the women wearing black outfit, which is traditionally used during funerals and mourns. The author himself says *"Many brave men and women sacrificed their lives throughout contemporary history to safeguard our geographical boundaries and sovereignty, and now, they are the iconic heroes of Iran"* and *„Hajji Qassem follows a line of brave men and women such as Bibi Maryam, Mirza Kuchak Khan, Alimardan Khan, Rais-Ali Delvari, Farangis, Kurdish Peshmerga, brave Baluchi tribes and the martyrs of the Sacred Defense, and their remembrance will last forever,"* (Teheran Times 2022)

Text above the flag says "If there wasn't Iran, I'd not be alive" apparently a citation of famous Persian poet Ferdowsi (Teheran times 2022). This picture is not exactly martyrdom themed poster, but more like nationalist expression. Show of Kurds and Baluchi tribes is also supposed to symbolize unity inside the Iran which is not demographically united.

**Figure 9**

*O' Hussain(a.s.), the command belongs to you* (Khamenei.ir, 2020b)



This picture is also very interesting to look at. When we look at the picture, we can see crowd of a people, but these people are not just anyone, all these people were selected very carefully are very important to Iranian Islamic Republic, everyone there was declared martyr and people part of the Iranian media coverage. It contains high symbolism and has multiple

layers. To take it apart, it's best to start in the front. The centre of the attention is our important figure of this thesis Qassem Soleimani, the newest declared martyr being welcomed in heaven. He's likely being hugged by the Imam Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam, Prophet Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law and symbol of Shia Islam. Now there's more people to see and to understand who they are and why are they on the picture. The most iconic and recognizable is Ruhollah Khomeini, as said before in this thesis, the first Supreme leader and founder of Islamic republic of Iran. The most important figure on the picture in relation to the Iranian Islamic Republic and that explains his position on the picture, however, his presence on the picture is highly political and symbolic due to his rank and meaning to Islamic Republic. To the left of Ruhollah Khomeini, Qassem Soleimani and Imam Ali, we're most likely to see Imam Huseyn, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, the third Imam of the Shia and he's important and known for his martyrdom at Battle of Karbala in 680 AD where he and his followers were massacred by the Umayyad army. Both Imam Ali and Imam Huseyn faces.<sup>2</sup> Now about the people in the back from left to right. Hassan Tehrani Moghadam, IRGC member, important figure in Iranian ballistic missile program, sometimes referred as "Father of Missile industry" he has died in military explosion 2011, Mohammad Ebrahim Hemmat, important commander of IRGC, died during Iran-Iraq war. Mohsen Hojaji, very famous IRGC member who was captured by the ISIS<sup>3</sup> in Syria and was decapitated live on video in 2017. Hossein Kharrazi, IRGC commander who died during Iraq-Iran war. Abu Mahdi al Mohandes, a very important figure in the picture, as mentioned before, he and Qassem Soleimani sat in the same vehicle when the drone strike happened. Mehdi Bakeri, IRGC commander who was killed during Iraq-Iran war. Ahmad Kazemi, high ranking IRGC official, died during a plane crash. Hasan Bagheri, another IRGC commander who died during Iran-Iraq war. Imad Mughniyeh, the last person in the back, was a high-ranking Hezbollah member. (Stack Exchange, 2020) As you have probably noticed, most of the people in the picture were members of the IRGC or closely related to it.

Second most noticeable part of the picture is the text: "O Hussain (a.s), command belongs to you. Dear Iranian Nation! The great and admirable General of Islam ascended to heaven. Last night, the *immaculate* souls of *martyrs* embraced the pure soul of Qassem Soleimani. – Ayatollah Khamenei". Here we can see textual and visual combination of poster

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<sup>2</sup> We usually can't see ancient warrior faces due to wide Islamic teaching and cultural practices that forbid depiction of Prophet Mohammed, his family, his companions, or other prophets due to idolatry. We could see a similarity with Christianity and its 2nd commandment in Bible, however we can't find precise ban on depictions in Quran. (McManus, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), radical Islamist terrorist organization that has terrorized Middle East between years 2014 and 2020, they are still active during the work on this thesis. (Boehm 2023)



that supports Martyrdom and where Supreme Leader say that martyrs are heading straight to heaven and that died for the right cause and to inspire the nation to join their ranks and that the Hussain ibn Ali should be their inspiration.

## 5. Results of the search

Based on the evidence and data presented in previous chapters, this research has arrived at the following conclusions in response to the research questions. To interpret graph from analysis better, the data will be translated into the tables.

*Why are Ayatollahs Ali Khamenei speeches important?*

Ali Hosseini Khamenei is an important figure in Iran and the wider Islamic world due to his role as the Supreme Leader of Iran, his influence on Iran's political landscape, and his impact on regional and global politics. As the Supreme Leader, he holds significant power over Iran's government and is considered the ultimate authority in the country. His speeches are important for several reasons, including their reflection of Iran's official stance on various issues, their influence on domestic and international audiences, and their impact on policy and decision-making processes.

*What roles do Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom fulfil in Ali Khamenei's speeches?*

Unfortunately, there isn't an easy answer to these questions, as they both play multiple roles in the speeches. Their use varies a lot, however, we've been able to identify the most dominant uses.

**Table 17**

*Soleimani used in speeches transformed in table*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequencies</i>	<i>% of corpus</i>
<i>Icon of resistance</i>	2	5%
<i>Other</i>	4	9%
<i>Central topic of the speech</i>	4	9%
<i>Target of USA</i>	5	11%
<i>Important Martyr</i>	6	14%
<i>Funeral</i>	7	16%
<i>Example</i>	16	36%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>

In case of Qassem Soleimani, the dominant role in the speeches is portrait him as an example. Soleimani is frequently portrayed as a highly esteemed figure, possessing numerous

admirable qualities that the audience is encouraged to emulate. Khamenei often highlights Soleimani's humble nature, dedication to the cause, and unwavering loyalty to the Islamic Republic of Iran, presenting him as a role model for the Iranian people.

**Table 18**

*Use of martyrdom in the speeches transformed into table*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequencies</i>	<i>% of corpus</i>
<i>Central topic of the speech</i>	1	2%
<i>Example</i>	4	9%
<i>Substitute of word "killed"</i>	12	26%
<i>Title</i>	29	63%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>

The use of martyrdom in the speeches is dominated using martyrdom as honorary title. In Khamenei's speeches, the "martyr" title is used to honor those who have died for Iran and its Islamic principles. This title elevates their status in society.

*Who is the target audience of Ali Khamenei’s speeches*

Just as in case of Martyrdom, and Soleimani, the target audience of the speeches were not simple to answer. As the table shows (See Table 19), the most dominant audience for the speeches is Public (non-specified). This public, as stated before, is vague and author couldn't precisely identify it, nor do the speeches have any specifics that help in identification.

**Table 19**

*Target Audience transformed into table*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequencies</i>	<i>% of corpus</i>
<i>Teachers</i>	1	2%
<i>Workers</i>	1	2%
<i>Soleimani's Wife</i>	1	2%
<i>Military Personnel</i>	1	2%
<i>Hospital Personnel</i>	1	2%
<i>Arabs</i>	2	7%
<i>Public (able to vote)</i>	2	7%

<i>People from East Azerbaijan</i>	3	9%
<i>Government Officials</i>	3	9%
<i>Youth</i>	7	19%
<i>Public (Non-specified)</i>	14	39%
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

*What are the most prominent discursive topics and strategies used in Ali Khamenei speeches?*

In Ali Khamenei's speeches, he often employs discursive strategies like prediction, argumentation, and perspectivization. He uses labels to create a binary view of Iran and its adversaries, establishing a clear distinction between them. Khamenei also grounds his arguments in Quranic references, adding religious and moral authority to his positions. By employing perspectivization, he reinterprets events such as martyrdoms as triumphs rather than failures. The discursive topics were identified as *America*, where the United States is perceived negatively and is usually depicted as the cause of all wrongs. Secondary most prominent discursive topic is *Resistance*, where resistance is viewed as noble and just cause to and way to free from oppression. Third prominent discursive topic is *Conspiracy against Iran*, the topic where Khamenei portrays threat from all sides, especially Zionist regime or in combination with America, and these enemies are looking for any weakness and opportunity to overthrow the regime, as well as to destroy Iran, but not only from the outside, but from the inside too.

*How important is death of Qassem Soleimani to current Iranian narrative?*

The death of Qassem Soleimani is highly significant to the current Iranian narrative, as evidenced by the dataset used for this analysis. In the period between January 2020 and April 2023, Soleimani was mentioned in 28% of all speeches delivered by Ali Khamenei. This considerable prominence in Khamenei's discourse demonstrates the central role Soleimani plays in shaping contemporary Iranian narratives.

## 6. Conclusion

The topic of this bachelor thesis was an analysis of the speeches of Ali Khamenei. The analyses were performed on a corpus of 31 Speeches after the death of Qassem Soleimani. Qassem Soleimani as a prominent military, but also a political leader was an important figure in Middle Eastern affairs and for the foreign policy of Iran. His name became extremely famous after his assassination on the 3rd of January 2020, when news outlets were filled with him as well as Iranian statements, especially from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who promised severe revenge. News has regularly filled headlines of the looming war between Iran and the USA.

The aim of the thesis was a detailed analysis of the speeches of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the use of his death as a narrative, as well as in combination with martyrdom. The secondary task of this thesis was with the help of critical discourse analysis, more specifically, historical discourse analysis, to discover the main discursive strategies and topics. To accomplish this task, the following research questions were set: 1) *What are the most prominent discursive topics and strategies used in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 2) *Who is the target audience of Ali Khamenei's Speeches* 3) *What role do Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom fulfil in Ali Khamenei's speeches* 4) *Why are Ali Khamenei's speeches important?* 5) *How important is the death of Qassem Soleimani to the current Iranian narrative?*

While this was achieved, there are boundaries to the research. The most distinguished boundary is the individuality and subject understanding and analysis of the speeches performed by Ali Khamenei. Despite the very extensive and detailed explanation provided by Wodak, the personal categorization and understanding of the text will differ from another researchers, especially ones more experienced in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. Despite the use of data that was analyzed, the filtration and data selection could have created wrong statements and verdicts about the discursive strategies, that Wodak proposed and were identified as the most prominent ones.

Another issue of this thesis is that we cannot compare results to other works. Despite the author's extensive attempts and searches, the author was not able to identify works that would be focused on the same topic of research, the method of Historical Discourse analysis is solid, however, its flaws are that this method is highly subjective and may lead into misleading conclusions, especially for inexperienced researcher. The last issue author has encountered is a highly time-consuming effort. The method requires going very deeply into the texts and

analysing, de facto, sentences, meaning that on the bigger corpus, it can take a very long time to get through, which was this thesis's case.

Despite these limitations, the study provided insights into the narratives of Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom, as well as the discursive strategies and topics used by Ali Khamenei. It is anticipated that these narratives will continue to play a significant role in Iranian politics and foreign policy for some time. Further research, employing a variety of methodologies and considering diverse perspectives, could help to deepen the understanding of this topic and its implications for regional and global politics.

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## **Abstract/Abstrakt**

### **Abstract**

Three years ago, Qassem Soleimani was assassinated by a drone on the order of former president Donald J. Trump. The thesis aims to analyze the speeches of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and how the narrative of Qassem Soleimani is used in speeches as well as the role of martyrdom. Furthermore, this thesis helps to uncover the prominent discursive strategies and discursive topics that accompany the Qassem Soleimani

To achieve this, the work utilized the method of Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically the use of Historical Discourse Analysis. Corpus that was used to analyze were speeches directly performed by Ali Khamenei, where he mentioned said Qassem Soleimani and martyrdom.

The result of this thesis is a complex elaboration of the texts to better understand the strategies and topics that are used by Ali Khamenei.

**Key words:** Qassem Soleimani, Martyrdom, Martyr, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive Historical Analysis, Iran, Ali Khamenei



## **Abstrakt**

Před třemi lety byl Kásim Suleimání zavražděn dronem na příkaz bývalého prezidenta Donalda J. Trumpa. Cílem práce je analyzovat projevy ajatolláha Alího Chameneího, jak je v projevech využíváno vyprávění Kásima Solejmáního a také role mučednictví. Dále tato práce pomáhá odhalit prominentní diskurzivní strategie a diskurzivní témata, která provázejí Kásima Soleimáního

K dosažení tohoto cíle byla v práci využita metoda kritické diskurzivní analýzy, konkrétně využití historické diskurzivní analýzy. Korpus, který byl použit k analýze, byly projevy přímo přednesené Alím Chameneím, kde zmínil řečeného Kásima Solejmáního a mučednictví.

Výsledkem této práce je komplexní zpracování textů pro lepší pochopení strategií a témat, které Alí Chameneí používá.

**Klíčová slova:** Kásim Soleimání, Mučednictví, Mučedník, Kritická Diskurzivní Analýza, Diskurzivně Historická Analýza, Írán, Alí Chameneí

## **Appendix**

Name of the appendix: CorpusAnalysisAliKhamenei.docx