Syrian-Lebanese Relations: A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis of Bashar Al-Assad's Speeches and Interviews

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the recent body of work which combines Critical Discourse Analysis with the methodological framework of Corpus Linguistics to analyse Syria's relations with other countries, in particular Lebanon, in the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's speeches and interviews from July 2000 when Al-Assad came to power to December 2016. It shows how this combination of approaches can play an important role in demonstrating how Al-Assad makes use of language to affect the text receivers' points of view. Following Wodak (2009) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), the researcher divided the data, which is in Arabic, into two main corpora, based on the historical background of Syrian-Lebanese relations, covering the periods (i) 2000-2010, characterised by the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon (2000-2004) and their subsequent withdrawal (2005-2010), and (ii) 2011-2016, characterised by the Syrian uprisings which have begun in 2011. The analysis reveals that Lebanon is portrayed as a subordinate state and that the Syrian regime intervenes in the Lebanese internal affairs, even though Al-Assad has frequently denied such a claim.

Keywords: Bashar Al-Assad, Corpus Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Lebanon, Presidential Speeches, Syria, the Arab Spring.

1. Introduction

Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, known in Arabic as *Al-Sham* (the Levant), is located in Western Asia on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It borders Turkey to the north, Jordan to the south, Occupied Palestine (Israel) to the southwest, Iraq to the east, and Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The Syrian regime is a Republican presidential system, and the current Syrian President is Bashar al-Assad, who was elected in July 2000 and then re-elected in 2007 and 2014. In this paper, the researcher combines aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with some of the methodologies typical of Corpus Linguistics (CL) to investigate the way that *Lebanon* is discursively constructed in Bashar Al-Assad's speeches and interviews between 2000 and 2016.

Different scholars have conducted several studies on presidential speeches (see Abu Hatab, 2013; Alemi, Tajeddin, & Rajabi Kondlaji, 2018; Lirola, 2017; Liu & Lei, 2018). For example, Abu Hatab (2013) investigated the speeches of four Arab Spring countries' president, and examined the styles they followed in order to establish new identities after the outbreak of protests in Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt and Libya. Abu Hatab found that the presidents changed their styles and created new identities to gain public support.

Most of the previous studies used a relatively small amount of data, and examined a limited number of speeches. Therefore, one of the research gaps that this study fills is analyzing a large number of speeches, and working on a large amount of data to examine the discursive strategies Al-Assad follows to talk about other countries especially Lebanon.

Also, the majority of the previous studies followed a CDA approach, and analyzed fragments rather than full texts. This is perceived as a major weakness of CDA. In addition, CDA analysts are accused of being subjective (Koller & Mautner, 2004; Stubbs, 1997). Carrying out this study on a relatively large corpus is considered worthwhile as it increases the researcher's objectivity (Partington, 2006).

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This study also contributes to the corpus-assisted discourse studies on Arabic texts by examining the patterns that Assad used in his speeches and interviews before and after the Arab Spring.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) grew rapidly during the last decade of the 20th century as a continuation of critical linguists' work in the 1970s. This paradigm has attracted many scholars, especially those who are interested in investigating the relationship between language, power, ideology and society. Often, CDA scholars undertake close qualitative analyses of single or small collections of texts, while also taking into account the social, political, and historical contexts most relevant to the texts' production and comprehension. Corpus Linguistics (CL) is traditionally concerned with the quantitative analyses of very large quantities of text, much of which is conducted computationally and (at least partially) automatically, and this has drawn criticism from CDA researchers who argue that CL is an unsuitable way to study texts if the social, political and/or historical context is to be taken into account (Mautner, 2007; Widdowson, 2000). CDA's approaches have also been criticised by proponents of CL, who argue that the data typically examined in such work is a result of 'cherry picking' (Koller & Mautner, 2004; Stubbs, 1997) rather than an objective analysis.

However, over the 20 years or so, there has been an explosion of work which has combined aspects of these two approaches into a mutually beneficial 'methodological synergy' (Baker et al., 2008). Baker et al. (2008) and Baker (2012) argue that the most fruitful approach is to combine CL's quantitative and CDA's qualitative approaches and use them cyclically, such that claims arising from one analytical position are testable with the tools of the other. This avoids the unhelpful argument concerning whether a qualitative or quantitative analysis is 'best', and acknowledges that there are insights to be gleaned from a combined approach.

The researcher follows a combination of approaches in this paper, which proceeds as follows. In the next section, the researcher gives a brief introduction of the study's context by providing some information about Bashar Al-Assad, the Arab Spring and Syrian uprisings, and the underlying Syria-Lebanon plot line. After that, the researcher discusses some of the recent work, which has combined CDA with CL techniques, and discusses the benefits of this unity. The researcher then outlines the methodology, including how he compiled the corpus of Bashar Al-Assad's speeches, before outlining the study findings.

2. Investigating the context

2.1. Bashar Al-Assad

Bashar Al-Assad, born on September 11th 1965, is, at the time of writing, the president of the Syrian Arab Republic. He took over the presidency based on a public referendum in 2000 after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, who ruled the country between 1970 and 2000 (Ziadeh, 2011).

2.2. The Arab Spring & Syrian uprisings

The latest protests in the Arab region are considered to be among the most important events that the world has seen in the last two decades (Haider, 2016a). The terms "the Arab revolutions", "the Arab Spring", "the Arab awakening", and "the Arab Uprisings" refer to related events, namely the massive protest movements that began in some Arab countries, mainly, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria in late 2010 and which are on-going (Haider, 2016b). Influenced by the Tunisian uprisings on December 18th, 2010, the Syrian protests began in 2011 against the Syrian ruling regime's repression and suppression of freedoms (Haider, 2016a). Security forces and Syrian intelligence departments faced the demonstrations with live bullets, and their response was bloody, and the Syrian army tanks stormed several cities, committing huge massacres between 31 July and 4 August 2011(Bakri, 2011) and 19 and 20 December 2011 (BBC, 2012).

2.3. Syria-Lebanon plot line

Syria has a great interest in Lebanon, which it considers a natural geographical extension for its lands, as Lebanon is geographically close to the centre of the western part of Syria and is its southern window on the Mediterranean Sea. Since Syria's and Lebanon's independence from the French mandate in 1943, the relationships between these two

countries witnessed several changes. For example, the increased political activities in the Lebanese arena after the 1967 war, and the presence of the Palestinian Military in Lebanon after September War 1970 were among the reasons that drove the Syrian troops to enter Lebanon under Arabic and international cover in 1976 (Sorby, 2011). In 1991, Syria and Lebanon signed cooperation treaties in the political and economic fields and in 2005, under international pressure; Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon as it was accused of assassinating Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri (Safa, 2006). Although the relations between Syria and Lebanon seemed to be stable, there were no full diplomatic relations between them and the Syrian regime lacked any real intention to establish relations, arguably considering Lebanon as a part of its historic territory (Black, 2008a). For more than 40 years, Syria kept a hand and eye out on Lebanon claiming that all the coups that took place in Syria between 1949 and 1970 had been planned and got the logistic support from Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon (Aljazeera, 2013). In several occasions, Al-Assad denies interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs, and when has been asked about some issues that are related to Lebanon, his answer was "that's an internal Lebanese affair".

This paper examines how Lebanon is directly and indirectly portrayed through Al-Assad's language. The researcher addresses the following questions: (1) what are the most frequent countries that tend to recur in Al-Assad's speeches and interviews? And (2) are there any differences between the ways Al-Assad refers to Lebanon before and during the Syrian uprisings?

3. Combining CDA and CL

To answer the questions outlined above, the researcher uses a combination of approaches from CDA and CL. There are different approaches researchers can follow to carry out discourse analysis; one of them is to use corpus linguistic techniques to discursively analyze texts or communicative events. Flowerdew (1997) paid some attention to the benefits of combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The combination has since developed rapidly. The combination between CDA and CL has been described as a 'natural match' (Hardt-Mautner, 1995), and a 'useful methodological synergy' (Baker et al., 2008) to show that the combined effect of the interaction between the two is greater than the sum of their individual effect (Haider, 2016a).

Combining both approaches has been advocated as a way of downplaying the criticisms that each faces individually. CL is a quantitative approach that is being used or applied to process large collections of texts which are characterised to be representative. This approach helps in having a relatively greater distance between the researcher and the data. CL also adopts some statistical tools to give generalizable descriptions of the investigated data that are, in most cases, decontextualized, and maybe put the findings at risk. Conversely, CDA is a qualitative research approach that depends on making a close reading for some fragments, which are related to the topic under investigation, and this helps the researchers to achieve deep analysis and thick explanation. In using CDA, data are analysed within the social and political contexts. This means that using these two extremes in one study may make the findings of the study broader and robust. In the same vein, Baker (2010) states that a corpus-based analysis of discourse or ideology is useful since it contributes to improving and boosting small-scale qualitative analysis rather than neglecting or replacing it.

3.1. Discourse historical approach (DHA) and Syrian-Lebanese relations

Wodak's discourse historical approach focuses on the historical context to explain and interpret texts. Discourse, according to Wodak and Ludwig (1999), is always connected with other events that are happening at the same time or have happened before. Wodak (2009) emphasizes the idea of considering **wider contexts** of discourse, and this includes the actual use of language (text), the relationship between texts, genres, and discourses, the institutional context of discourse, and the social, political, and historical contexts. It is then the role of the researcher to recognize the operation of power across these levels. Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) does not only concentrate on the immediate context of the communicative event within its present state of occurrence, but also takes into account its historical continuum and development.

Following this approach, the data in focus in this paper are divided into two sub-corpora. The first consists of Bashar

Al-Assad's speeches and interviews between 2000-2010, which the researcher refers to as the *Pre-uprising period*, and which is further split into two parts: (a) 2000-2004, a period characterised by the presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon, and (b) 2005-2010, a period during which the Syrian troops withdrew following the assassination of the Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. The second sub-corpus, which the researcher calls the *Uprising period*, covers the years 2011-2016, beginning with the outbreak of the Syrian uprisings which are still on-going.

3.2. Corpus linguistics techniques

Although the analytical techniques of corpus linguistics are wide ranging, certain practices are common across many different studies, for example: examining word and cluster frequencies, examining concordance lines, keyword analysis and collocation analysis. Word frequencies are a cornerstone of corpus linguistics, and are important for corpus-assisted discourse studies as CDA has been criticized for its focus on unusual language, rather than more usual or very highly frequent occurrences (O'Halloran, 2000). A study of word frequency can provide an objective way of gauging the salience of certain concepts in a corpus (Haider, 2017). Of course, concepts are not just represented by single words but also by clusters of words, and so it is important to also consider the frequency of multi-word units or clusters. This provides information about the context in which the words in question appear. A very common way to analyse context is to use a concordance, which presents given words along with the immediately surrounding words. Baker et al. (2008, p. 279) remark that concordances have 'proven to be the single CL tool that discourse analysts seem to feel comfortable using', and it is the place where CL and CDA most obviously overlap in their approaches. It is rare, if not impossible, to find a corpus based discourse analysis without the use of this tool.

Collocation refers to the words that are usually observed together or in close proximity in naturally occurring language. By co-occurring regularly, typical collocations are often said to shed light on the discourse prosody of a text (Stubbs, 2001), which in turn can reveal attitudes within the discourse context.

A keyword analysis reveals the words which occur more or less regularly in a given (set of) texts than would be expected by chance. Keywords are useful since they provide the researcher with the relative frequencies between corpora or sub-corpora.

4. Methodology

4.1. Corpus building & data source

The total corpus consists of 1,445,117 words. The data were collected from http://www.presidentassad.net; a website that has considerable information about the Al-Assad family, including the current President Bashar Al-Assad, late President Hafez Al-Assad, and Asma' Al-Akhras (Bashar Al-Assad's wife). The web site is maintained by a Syrian journalist and is based in Syria.

4.2. Corpus size

Table 1 shows the number of Al-Assad's speeches and interviews delivered in or translated to **Arabic/English** from 2000 to 2016. As explained above, the speeches and interviews are divided into two main sub-corpora based on their occurrence before or during the uprisings. The word count for each sub-corpus is provided with the number of speeches and interviews in each year. In this study, the researcher only investigates the Arabic part of the corpus, i.e. the speeches and interviews that were delivered in or translated into Arabic.

4.3. Research Stages: The steps to be followed in this research paper:

Some scholars (see Baker et al., 2008; Mautner, 2009; Partington, 2008) outlined some steps researchers can follow in corpus-assisted discourse analysis studies. This study follows the research steps suggested by Haider (2016a).

Step 1: Designing research questions.

Step 2: Building an appropriate corpus that combines Bashar Al-Assad speeches and interviews delivered in or translated to Arabic from 2000 to 2016.

Step 3: Making frequency lists for the countries mentioned in the corpus. The researcher found that لبنان *Lebanon* was the most frequent country in the pre-uprisings period.

Table 1. Assad's Speeches and Interviews (2000-2016)

Comparable Corpus of the Speeches and Interviews of Al-Assad						
	Before the Uprisings					
		Arabic Corpus				English Corpus	
	Year	No. of Speeches	Word count	No. of interviews	Word count	No. of speeches & interviews	Word count
Period 1(a)	2000	3	9,727	2	1,173	7	12201
	2001	10	14,259	3	10,905	7	12479
	2002	6	7,962	1	5,637	6	15862
	2003	5	16,047	1	2,469	11	33310
	2004	4	6,103	1	11,286	5	11256
Period 1(b)	2005	5	16,913	4	13,787	7	35488
	2006	4	14,596	6	33,702	9	38890
	2007	5	4,448	5	18,536	10	16351
	2008	9	11,094	8	20,118	24	42202
	2009	17	24,243	7	36,093	33	46704
	2010	24	44,266	9	28,019	27	66897
	Total (period 1)	92	169,658	47	181,725	146	331,640
		139 Speeches & Interviews		351,383 words		146 Speeches & Interviews	331,640 words
	During the Uprisings						
	Year	No. of speeches	Word count	No. of interviews	Word count	No. of speeches & interviews	Word count
Period 2	2011	4	18,285	2	7,388	9	58428
	2012	4	19,896	5	18,499	10	54150
	2013	3	7,550	18	89,099	21	96609
	2014	1	6,040	2	6,085	5	16874
	2015	1	580	18	86,702	19	104165
	2016	2	10,079	17	75,988	19	85677
	Total (period 2)	15	62,430	62	283,761	83	415903
		77 Speeches & Interviews		346,191 words		83 Speeches & Interviews	415903 words
Total of Periods 1+2		107	232,088	109	465,486	229 Speeches & Interviews	747,543 words
		219 speeches & interviews		697,574 words		229 Speeches & Interviews	747,543 words
1,445,117 words						

Step 4: investigating the context by reading some stuff about the history, religions, politics, and culture of Syria and Lebanon. Such information enabled me to set the scene for further analysis.

Step 5: Following Wodak's (2009) discourse historical approach, the researcher divided the data into two main corpora, based on the historical background of Syrian-Lebanese relations, covering the periods (i) 2000-2010, characterised by the presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon (2000-2004) and their subsequent withdrawal of troops (2005-2010), and (ii) 2011-2016, characterised by the occurrence of the Syrian uprisings.

Step 6: Using clusters in phase 1/A (2000-2004) to see what this tool can reveal about hidden ideologies related to the use of *Lebanon,* the country under investigation.

Step 7: Generating a collocation list for the node word *Lebanon* in 1/B (2005-2010) to identify wider patterns and topics in the corpus that are difficult to come up with manually. The list was then studied for the items which seemed to group together into thematic sets. A number of ideological motifs were uncovered in this way.

Step 8: Concordancing some results that were found in steps 6 and 7.

Step 9: Using Keywords tool in order to produce a list of the countries which are relatively more frequent in the sub-corpus (B) (during uprising) when compared with the other sub-corpus (A) (pre- uprising). The keywords lists were then compared both by hand and by feeding them into the concordances tool.

Step 10: Utilising critical discourse analysis theoretical framework to interpret the findings.

5. Data Analysis

In the present paper, the researcher uses Wordsmith 7 (WS7) (Scott, 2016) to create a wordlist, i.e. a list of all the words in the corpus a long with their frequencies. Going through the word list, the researcher observed the presence of some countries, and investigated the reasons that motivated Bashar Al-Assad to mention such countries all over his speeches and interviews, and so uncover his stance toward some hot issues in the world in general and the Middle East in particular.

Figure 1 shows the most frequent countries in Bashar Al-Assad speeches and interviews (2000-2016) divided based on the two main phases mentioned above. The numbers below include the names of the country as well as their derivative forms. For example, the number of the hits of the United States includes the *US (الولايات المتحدة)*, *America (أمريكا)*, *American* (أمريكيون/أمريكيين/أمريكان/أمريكيات) *Americans* and , (أمريكي/أمريكية).
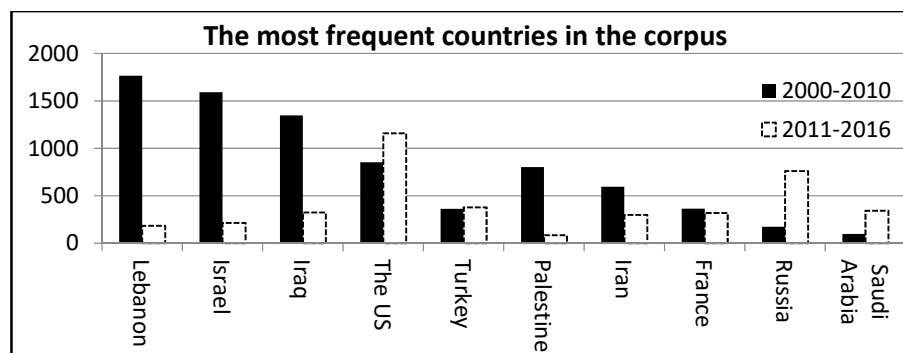

Figure 1. The most frequent countries in the corpus

The researcher has regenerated Figure 1 based on the normalized frequencies per 100,000 tokens as this is good in terms of the validity of the findings (see Table 2). Comparing the frequencies of the countries in the pre-uprisings period (2000-2010), with their frequencies in the during- uprisings period (2011-2016), the researcher found that the countries can be divided into three main categories; first, countries with dramatic drop in frequencies such as *Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Iraq,* and *Iran*; second, countries with similar frequencies such as *Turkey, France*, and the *US*; and third, countries with dramatic rise in frequencies such as *Russia* and *Saudi Arabia*.

The variation in the frequency between phases seems to be significant. To prove this point, the researcher carried out a keyword analysis for period one (2000-2010) against period two (2011-2016), and considered the most salient keyword countries as shown in Figure 2. The findings showed that *Lebanon* was the most salient country in the pre-uprisings period when compared to the during-uprisings one. Other countries were also significantly mentioned in the pre-uprisings period, namely *Israel, Iraq,* and *Palestine* as Figure 2 shows.

Table 2. The most frequent countries divided based on the change of their frequencies

Normalized Frequencies of the Countries per 100,000 Tokens			
Category	**Country**	**Before the Uprisings**	**During the Uprisings**
Drop	Lebanon	502.5855	53.43871
	Israel	453.0669	62.10445
	Palestine	228.241	24.26406
	Iraq	383.3424	93.58995
	Iran	169.3309	86.36851
Similar	Turkey	103.0215	109.1883
	France	103.3061	92.43452
	The US	243.0396	334.7863
Rise	Russia	48.94944	219.8209
	Saudi Arabia	27.60521	99.07825

N	Translation	Key word	.Freq	%	Texts	.RC .Freq	% .RC	Log_L	Log_R	P
1	Lebanon	لبنان	992	0.28	89	119	0.03	770.80	3.04	0.0000000000
2	Israel	إسرائيل	850	0.24	104	119	0.03	610.62	2.82	0.0000000000
3	Iraq	العراق	861	0.25	81	216	0.06	403.97	1.97	0.0000000000
4	Lebanese	اللبنانية	237	0.07	47	19		216.28	3.62	0.0000000000
5	Palestinian	الفلسطينية	202	0.06	76	27		148.74	2.88	0.0000000000
6	Israeli	الإسرائيلية	168	0.05	61	16		144.10	3.37	0.0000000000
7	Palestinian	الفلسطيني	155	0.04	50	14		135.64	3.45	0.0000000000
8	Iraqi	العراقي	112	0.03	32	3		130.01	5.20	0.0000000000
9	Palestinians	الفلسطينيين	141	0.04	58	12		126.07	3.53	0.0000000000
10	Israeli	الإسرائيلي	172	0.05	57	28		113.14	2.60	0.0000000000

Figure 2: The most salient keyword countries in period one (2000-2010) when compared to period two (2011-2016)

As mentioned above, studying the social, political, and economic contexts of *Syria*, the analysis below consists of three sub-sections based on the investigated period. Period 1/A spans from 2000 (the year when Al-Assad came to power) to 2004 (before the withdrawal of the Syrian army from lebanon); period 1/B is from 2005 (the year when the Syrian Army withdrew from Lebanon) to 2010 (before the Syrian the uprisings); and period 2 (during the uprisings) covers events from 2011 (the outbreak of the Syrian uprisings) to 2016 (the time of writing).

Different corpus linguistic tools are used to investigate these three time periods. The researcher chooses frequency and clusters in the first category (2000-2004) since it represents the smallest phase in terms of word count when compared with the other two categories and to see what such tools can reveal about hidden ideologies. In Phase 1/B (2005-2010), the researcher uses collocation as Lebanon along with their derivatives was frequently used in it, and because collocation is better discernable with the availability of large amounts of texts, and less accessible to introspection or the manual analysis of a small number of texts (Hunston, 2002). Keyword analysis was used in the other period (2011-2016) to examine Al-Assad's focus before and during the Syrian civil war. Concordance analysis is used in the analysis of the three periods as it is fundamental for discourse analysis, and without using it, the analyst is liable to make incorrect assumptions about the content of the corpus.

5.1. Category 1 (2000-2010)

The researcher examined the sub-corpus (2000-2010) for the lexical frequency of "لبنان" "*Lebanon*" and found that it is one of the most frequent words in the whole corpus being among the most frequent 20 content words. This suggests its significance in the Syrian context.

5.1.1. Period 1/A (2000-2004)

Examining the use of (*لبنان*)(*Lebanon*) in this phase is critical since it represents the very beginning of Basher's reign in ruling Syria succeeding his father, Hafez Al-Assad, who was known for his strictness regarding many regional and international issues (Büchs, 2009; Huber, 1992; The Guardian, 2012). The researcher first created a wordlist for the most frequent countries in this category as Figure 3 shows.
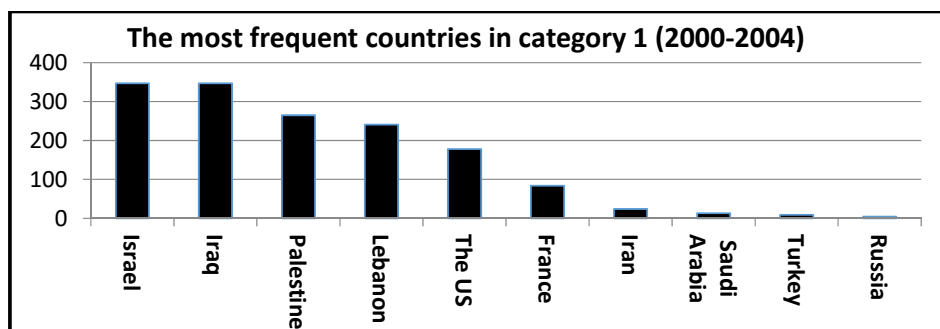

Figure 3: The most frequent countries in phase 1/A (2000-2004)

Figure 3 shows that in phase 1/a, *Lebanon* was mentioned less frequently than *Israel*, *Iraq*, and *Palestine*. Following Wodak's discourse historical approach, the researcher found that such variation in the mentions of the countries can be interpreted based on some historical and social information; for example, this period represents the very beginning of Al-Assad's reign in ruling Syria, and it seems that he avoided mentioning Lebanon a lot as Syria-Lebanon relations are seen to be controversial and critical at the same time. However, he tried, at this period, to use resistance card to show his bright face as a man of values who does his best to resist the occupiers represented by Israel in Palestine and America in Iraq (2003) and liberate the occupied Arab lands. In this part of the analysis, the researcher uses the corpus techniques of clusters and concordance.

Clusters. How is *لبنان* *Lebanon** described in phase 1/A (2000-2004)? In order to answer this question, the researcher considered frequencies beyond single words (multi-word units). Using WS7 and examining clusters with the size of 2-3 in Al-Assad speeches and interviews between 2000 and 2004 revealed different patterns as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 4. Clusters of *لبنان*Lebanon* with the size of 2-3 (2000-2004)

The researcher then used the concordance tool to investigate some of these clusters in their wider contexts.

Concordance. Using concordance to study the most frequent cluster في لبنان*in Lebanon* revealed some results as shown in concordance 1.

Concordance 1. Concordance of في لبنان *in Lebanon*

Al-Assad clearly stated that he supports the Lebanese resistance in its fight against Israel stressing that no one should underestimate the role that resistance plays anywhere (line 1). He also praised the Lebanese resistance represented by Hezbollah who defeated the military strength and the national unity of Israel in 2000 (line 2). He highlighted the role that the Syrian troops played, hand by hand with the Lebanese army, in confronting al-Qaeda (line 3). Al-Assad also referred to Israel and its occupation to some Arab lands; in Lebanon and Palestine, and Golan (Syria) stressing out that people there are suffering from the Israeli oppression and persecution and he, Al-Assad, will keep struggling till recovering and liberating all occupied Arab lands criticising the Israeli violations to Human rights (lines 4/5/6). He also referred to the joint Syrian-Lebanese interest, having some common concerns regarding war and peace with Israel (line 7). Al-Assad justified the deployment of the Syrian troops in Lebanon and their role in maintaining security and stability highlighting that such presence is temporary with no interference in the Lebanese internal affairs (lines 8/9). He also highlighted the strong social and economic ties between the two countries; where each of them is affected of what's happening in the other emphasizing that Syria's relation with Lebanon is more important than any other state in the region (line 10). Al-Assad stressed the Syrian role in supporting the Lebanese institutions since the end of the civil war in 1990 (line 11). Al-Assad also criticized the unstable internal situation in Lebanon and the necessity for making a quantum leap there; inviting the Lebanese forces to build institutional and organizational state that is governed by rules and law (lines 12).

Investigating the second most frequent cluster الدولة اللبنانية *The Lebanese State*, the researcher found that Al-Assad's use of this cluster has three main characteristics, namely, (1) the Syrian role in stabilising *the Lebanese state* and helping it become stronger, (2) assuring the sovereignty of *the Lebanese state* over its territory, but its decisions should not contradict with Syria's point of view (see concordance 2), and finally (3) questioning the ability of *Lebanon* as a *state* to maintain security and take the position of the Syrian forces in the Lebanese territories.

Concordance 2. Concordance of الدولة اللبنانية *the Lebanese State*

The researcher also examined the other clusters in Figure 4, and established four categories that summarize how Al-Assad referred to *Lebanon* in this period:

Israel as a core point. Although the relationships between countries are supposed to be, logically, decided by the states' governments, the researcher found that Al-Assad took Israel as an excuse to intervene in Lebanon's internal affairs. He has regularly tended to mention Israel next to Lebanon, and clearly justified this by saying that it is their common enemy. He frequently referred to the occupied territories in Palestine, Lebanon (the southern part) and Syria (The Golan Heights) highlighting the necessity of liberating these lands by any mean.

The Lebanese resistance. Al-Assad praised the Lebanese resistance capabilities, especially after defeating the Israeli army and obliging it to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. He also clearly stated that Syria has always been ready to support the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine in all means since they are fighting in the same trench against Israel. He also drew a clear line between terrorism and resistance as concordance 3 shows.

الفرق بين **المقاومة** والارهاب واضح وبسيط هو كالفرق بين صاحب الحق ومغتصب هذا الحق
The difference between **resistance** and terrorism is plain and simple; it is as the
difference between the right holder and this right usurper

Concordance 3. Concordance of المقاومة/*resistance*

Syrian troops' presence in Lebanon. Al-Assad highlighted the importance of deploying Syrian troops in Lebanon to maintain security and end the civil war that was launched in the 1970s. He also referred to Al-Taief agreement, the Lebanese National Reconciliation Accord that was negotiated in 1989 in Saudi Arabia, to justify the redeployment of the troops in the 1990s to help Lebanon recover its internal stability and improve its institutions. He also emphasized that such presence is temporary and the Syrian troops will withdraw after the end of their mission there.

The political independence of Lebanon. This category is similar to the previous one where Al-Assad keeps mentioning all the times that Syria does not intervene in Lebanon's internal political, social, and economic affairs and stating that Syria has some interests in Lebanon, only because it is a neighbouring country emphasizing the strong mutual impact of any of them on the other. He also pointed out that the Syrian troops will withdraw from Lebanon when the Lebanese army is able to protect its territories and borders.

5.1.2. Period 1/B (2005-2010)

Using WS7, the node word *لبنان* *Lebanon** was identified to collocate significantly with other words with the search span of ±5, i.e. five words on either side of the node word. In this study, the researcher uses two collocation statistics, namely, MI (Mutual Information) and t-scores, The question of how to measure the strength of collocation using these two measures is important; Hunston (2002, p. 71) proposed that an MI score of 3 or higher is "taken as evidence that two items are collocates". Regarding t-scores, McEnery, Xiao, and Tono (2006, pp. 56-57) stated that "t-scores tend to show high-frequency [collocating] pairs" and that "[a] t-score of 2 or higher is normally considered to be statistically significant". The researcher carried a collocation analysis for *لبنان* *Lebanon* (2005-2010), and considered the collocates with 3 or more MI score and 2 or more t-score intersected. Examining all the collocates manually, the researcher found that they can be classified into different thematic categories as in table 3.

Stability. All words in this category relate to the notion of stability in Lebanon in its negative meanings so as to convince the texts' receivers of the necessity of the presence of the Syrian troops in Lebanon. The researcher investigated the use of the word استقرار/*stability* which is supposed to have a positive discourse prosody (Stubbs, 2001), and found that Al-Assad made all credits to Syria in helping the Lebanese people achieve satiability. He referred to United Nations Security council Resolution "1559" which calls the Syrian forces to withdraw from Lebanon by saying that some parties had intervened in Syria-Lebanon relations under the pre-text of Lebanese sovereignty. He also pointed out that what mainly concerns him and his country is the unity and stability of Lebanon ensuring that they began carrying out the withdrawal before passing this resolution claiming that it is not against Syria's interest and they do not have any problems with it. Al-Assad also highlighted the role that the Syrian troops played in maintaining unity and stability in Lebanon

stressing that his country is keen on and interested in supporting any options and decisions that might achieve Lebanon's accord since stability in Lebanon is stability in Syria and a peace in Lebanon is a peace in Syria (concordance 4).

Table 3. Thematic categories of the collocates of *لبنان* *Lebanon**

Category	Examples	Translation
stability & the Syrian presence in Lebanon	واستقراره، الحفاظ، انقسام، استقرار، حماية، الانقسام، الاستقرار، وحدة، مصلحة، مصالح، الخروج، الوجود، وجود	and it stability, maintain, division, stability, protection, division, the stability, unity, interest, interests, withdrawal, the presence, presence
war & resistance	المقاومة، الله، الجيش، والعدوان، جنوب، تهريب، انتصار، الانتصار، القوات، المعركة، العدوان، حزب، حدود، الحرب، الأهلية	resistance, Allah, Army, and the aggression, South, smuggling, victory, the victory, troops, battle, aggression, party, borders, war, civil
relations with other countries	العلاقة، علاقة، العلاقات،علاقات، الدوحة، فلسطين، العراق، غزة، إسرائيل، الإسرائيلي	the relation, relationship,the relations, relations, Doha, Palestine, Iraq, Gaza, Israel, Israeli
internal affairs	المؤسسات، الشعب، الوزراء، الحوار، الدولة، الحكومة، الأراضي، قوى، القوى، الوطنية،حكومة،وطنية، الانتخابات، الحوار، السياسية	institutions, people, ministers, dialogue, State, the government, lands, forces, the forces, national, government, national, elections, dialogue, Political
inclusive language	ندعم، نبقى، نحن،نريد	we support, we stay, we, we want
Assassination of Al-Hariri	الحريري، اغتيال، المحكمة	Hariri, assassination, court

الصحفي: لماذا **سحبت القوات السورية** من لبنان؟
Journalist: Why were the **Syrian troops withdrawn** from Lebanon?
الرئيس الأسد: في الواقع بدأنا ذلك منذ خمس سنوات، وبالتحديد في عام 2000 فعلنا ذلك لأن الوضع في لبنان أصبح أكثر استقرارا في الفترة بين نهاية الحرب الأهلية و 2000 عندما بدأنا **بالانسحاب**. بحلول ذلك الوقت كانت اسرائيل قد انسحبت من الجزء الأكبر من لبنان عام 2000، ولأنه وجود جيشك خارج بلدك مكلف سياسيا واقتصاديا وفي جوانب أخرى.
President Assad: Actually, we started doing so five years ago, and precisely in 2000. We did that because the situation in Lebanon became more stable in the period between the end of the civil war and 2000 when we started the withdrawal. By then, Israel had withdrawn from the largest part of Lebanon in 2000. Moreover, having your army outside your country is expensive politically, economically and in many other aspects.
الصحفي: ولكن هذا كان **احتلالا**؟
Journalist: But it was an **occupation**?
الرئيس الأسد: لا. فقد دخلنا لبنان بناء على **طلب لبنان**
President Assad: No. We entered Lebanon upon a Lebanese request.
الصحفي: أنت لا تعتبر بأي حال من الأحوال **وجود القوات السورية** في لبنان **احتلالا**؟
Journalist: You, in no way, consider the **presence of the Syrian troops** in Lebanon as an **occupation**!
الرئيس الأسد: لا، مطلقا. إذا كان فعلنا **احتلالا** لوجدنا مقاومة ضدها. لم نكن محتلين. اللبنانيين حاربوا اسرائيل لاثنين وعشرين عاما ولم يقاتلوا سورية؟ هذا لأننا لم نكن محتلين
President Assad: No, I do not. If it was an **occupation**, we should have had resistance against us. We were not occupiers. The Lebanese fought against Israel for twenty-two years and did not fight against Syria! That's because we were not occupiers.

Concordance 4. *Syrian Troops' presence* in Lebanon

Al-Assad also stated that instability in Lebanon would threaten regional security, in general, and his country, in particular. He pointed out that his country has no problems in establishing diplomatic affairs with Lebanon where both states have strong and deep relations throughout history where his people paid heavy prices; not only supporting Lebanon financially but also sacrificing their blood and souls on the Lebanese lands (concordance 5).

سورية خلال ثلاثين عاما دفعت دماء في **لبنان** ، لم تدفع اموالا دفعت ارواح ابنائها سواء في تحقيق السلم ، ومنع
التقسيم ، او في الدفاع عن **لبنان** عام 1982 خلال **الغزو الإسرائيلي،** وفي مراحل لاحقة ودفعنا الالاف وليس
بضعة مئات ،لماذا؟؟ ، لان **استقرار لبنان** ينعكس مباشرة على **استقرار** سورية
During the previous thirty-years, **Syria** paid blood in Lebanon, it did not pay money, it paid its sons lives,
in achieving peace, preventing divisions, and defending Lebanon in 1982 during the **Israeli invasion**. In
later stages, we sacrificed not few hundreds but thousands of people. Why?? Because the **stability** in
Lebanon is reflected directly on the **stability** in **Syria**

Concordance 5. Concordance of استقرار/*stability* in 2005-2010

War and resistance. The collocates in this category refer to the role that Syria played in helping the Lebanese resistance to defeat Israel during 2006 war. It should be made clear, however, that Al-Assad sometimes praised the Lebanese resistance without attributing any direct credit for his country due to some international, diplomatic, and political issues. Al-Assad put Syria and Lebanon in the same trench as both are fighting against the Israeli aggressive and cruel acts stating that they will never recognize Israel since their lands are under its occupation. He also pointed out that Syria is the only country neighbouring Lebanon, given that Israel is an enemy occupying their territories, and so should not be considered as a neighbouring country (line 1 concordance 6). Al-Assad also referred to the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon between 1982 and 2000 accusing some Lebanese forces of helping Israel before 1982 invasion as they failed to hit the joint Palestinian-Lebanese resistance (line 2).

1/A.   هناك **انقسام** في **لبنان** وهذا **الانقسام** ليس بالشيء الجديد فهذا تاريخ **لبنان** منذ قرون وليس منذ عقود.. فيه الكثير من **الانقسام** ودائما
هذا **الانقسام** يؤثر سلبا على علاقة **لبنان** مع الآخرين ولكن بشكل خاص مع **سورية** لكون **سورية** هي الدولة الوحيدة **المجاورة** للبنان على اعتبار
أن **إسرائيل** هي **دولة عدو وتحتل الأراضي**.. نحن لا نفترضها دولة **مجاورة** لكن لنكون واضحين حول هذه النقطة
1/E.   There is a **division** in **Lebanon** which is not new; this has been **Lebanon's** history for centuries rather than decades. There are a lot of divisions which affect **Lebanon's** relations with others, particularly with **Syria** being the only **neighbouring** country to **Lebanon**, given that Israel is an enemy that occupies lands... we don't consider it as a **neighbouring** country; let's be clear regarding this point
2/A.   والكثير من الاجيال الحالية لا تذكر ما حصل في 17 أيار الحقيقي في عام 1983، عندما كان قبل غزو **لبنان** في 1982 كانت هناك **قوى لبنانية**
عملية لإسرائيل تفشل في مخططاتها لضرب **المقاومة الفلسطينية واللبنانية** المشتركة في ذلك الوقت
2/E.   Many of the young generations do not recall what took place in the real 17th of May, 1983 where there were **Lebanese forces** that worked as agents for Israel before the invasion of **Lebanon** in 1982. Those forces failed in their plans of hitting the joint **Palestinian-Lebanese resistance**

Concordance 6. War and resistance in Al-Assad's speeches and interviews (2005-2010)

Al-Assad also accused Israel of making sedition in Lebanon; trying to transfer fight from inside Israel to inside Lebanon, and working hard to disarm the resistance. He also defended Hezbollah stating that they have never attacked any civilians and they are not interested in launching any attacks inside Israel. They are only protecting the Lebanese borders and it is their right.

Relations with other countries. This category comprises countries that collocate with *Lebanon*. In the previous category, Israel was discussed in one way or another, so the researcher investigated the use of Iraq and Palestine next to *Lebanon*. Al-Assad tended to combine Iraq, Palestine along with *Lebanon* to emphasize the idea of common suffering from occupation whether by Israel in Palestine and Lebanon or the US in Iraq. He stressed that there is a mutual influence by the resistance movements in these three countries (line 1 in concordance 7). Al-Assad also highlighted that the civil War in Iraq will drag in Syria and Lebanon, pointing out that he has some constant consultations with Arab and non-Arab countries like Iran and Turkey with regard to some issues related to Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine. He also stated that the status quo in the Arab world is critical and needs to be well-understood if the whole world wants to get rid of stress and worries (line 2).

Lebanon's internal affairs. The collocates in this category index the presentation of Lebanon's internal affairs and whether Syria really intervenes in such affairs or not. The researcher chose the words حكومة/*government* and سيادة/ *sovereignty* in order to test the previous claim. Regarding the word *government*, Al-Assad frequently recommended having a *unity government* that represents all parties in Lebanon as a condition to having diplomatic relations with them. He also denied any interventions in the internal affairs of Lebanon, stating that the *Lebanese government* not the Syrian's is responsible to reflect the political situation in Lebanon. Investigating the word *sovereignty*, the researcher found that

Al-Assad referred to 1559 Resolution which calls the foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon, and criticized the international parties' intervention between the two states under the pretext of the Lebanese *sovereignty*. He also criticized deploying international troops along the Syrian Lebanese boarders since it cancels the sovereignty of Lebanon. Accordingly, it seems that Al-Assad is eager to achieve the Lebanese *sovereignty*, but at the same time he connects such sovereignty with the presence of his troops in Lebanon.

A/1. المقاومة العراقية أيضاً أثرت بشكل آخر باتجاه لبنان وباتجاه فلسطين، وفلسطين تؤثر في كلا الجانبين. هناك تبادل في التأثير بينهما،ولكن هذا الانتصار بهذا الشكل وبهذه النوعية،سيؤثر بشكل مباشر في ما يحصل في العراق،وقال بأنه أثر من خلال ارتفاع نسبة العمليات في شهر تموز أو ربما ليس بالضرورة شهر تموز، وإنما شهر الحرب في لبنان،بنسبة 4 بالمئة

1/E.   The **resistance** in **Iraq** influenced the **resistance** in **Lebanon** and **Palestine**, and the **Palestinian resistance** influences both sides; this influence is reciprocal. This **victory** with such quality will directly affect what's happening in **Iraq** , it is said that the **resistance** in **Iraq** intensified by 4 % in July, maybe not necessary in July, but during the month of war in **Lebanon**

A/2. نحن قلقون على الوضع العام، على الأمة العربية. فاذا علينا أن نفهم المؤامرة بأبعادها المتكاملة لكي نستطيع أن نتعامل مع كل حلقة من هذه الحلقات . طبعا الان سيقولون بأن العرب دائما لديهم عقدة نفسية هي عقدة المؤامرة ، ولو عدنا للقرن الماضي من سايكس- بيكو الى احتلال فلسطين في 48، الى غزو لبنان في 1982، الى احتلال العراق، وما بين كل هذه الاحداث الى ما يحصل الان مع سورية والعراق. ربما هم يعتبرونها ليست مؤامرة، ربما يعتبرونها جزءا من التنمية المستدامة للمنطقة ،أو من الاعمال الخيرية ،فعلينا أن نرسل لهم برقية شكر

2/E.   We feel worry over the general situation of the Arab nations. We have to know the whole dimensions of **conspiracy** so that we can deal with each part of it. Of course, they will now say that **Arabs** have always a psychological complex which is the complex of **conspiracy**. If we go back to the past century from Sykes-Picot to the occupation of **Palestine** in 1948 to the invasion of **Lebanon** in 1982 and the occupation of **Iraq** and the intervening events and what is happening now with **Syria** and **Iraq**. Maybe they don't consider these events as a **conspiracy**. Maybe they consider them as part of durable developments for the region or part of charity actions and we have to send them a cable of gratitude

Concordance 7. *Iraq* and *Palestine* as collocates of *Lebanon* (2005-2010)

Inclusive Language. While going through the collocation list, the researcher found a group of words that were written in the inclusive form such as (ندعم، نبقى، نحن،نريد) (*we support/ we stay/ we/ we want*). The researcher investigated the use of these words as collocates to *Lebanon* and found three types of uses. First, it is logically related to Syria; i.e. the Syrian troops, government, and people, to show that he, Al-Assad, represents his people's opinion regarding critical issues such as the Lebanese one (line 1 in concordance 8). Second, to refer to countries that have similar challenges as Syria's; he wanted to emphasize that *Lebanon*, *Syria*, and sometimes *Palestine*, are suffering from occupation and have a common enemy and should work hand by hand to get rid of it (line 2). Third, Al-Assad used the inclusive language in the context of Lebanon to talk about all Arab countries (line 3).

A/1. نحن نريد من لبنان الخطوط العامة... موقف لبنان تجاه العلاقة مع سورية... موقف لبنان تجاه إسرائيل... تجاه السلام... تجاه الأمن والاستقرار... تجاه التعاون والقضايا الأخوية بين الشعبين.. أما ان ندخل بتفاصيل يومية لبنانية فهذا ليس من مصلحة سورية ونرفض هذا الكلام

1/E.   What **we want** from Lebanon is the general guidelines... Lebanon's position toward the relationship with Syria ... Lebanon's position toward Israel.... toward peace ... toward security and stability ... toward cooperation and brotherly issues between the two peoples ... However, to get into the Lebanese daily details, this is not a part of **our** interest and **we** totally **reject** it.

A/2. وعلينا أن نتحدث بصراحة.نحن في سورية ولبنان وفلسطين لاتزال لنا أراض لم تحرر،هذا يعني أننا نحن المعنيون بالحرب وبالسلم،وفي المقام الاول نحن نريد من أشقائنا العرب أن يقفوا معنا ونرحب بكل من يريد أن يقف معنا ولكن من خلال رؤيتنا وتقديرنا لمصالحنا، فنحن من عانى في الحرب وفي مفاوضات السلام خلال العقود الماضية،ومن لا يقتنع برؤيتنا فلا نطلب منه سوى افساح الطريق لكى نقوم بما يجب علينا القيام به ولن نطلب من أحد أن يحارب معنا ولا نيابة عنا.

2/E.   We have to speak frankly. We in Syria Lebanon and Palestine still have occupied lands, this means that **we** are concerned with war and peace, and **we want our** Arab brothers, in the first place, to stand **with us** and **we** welcome them. However, based on **our vision** and **interests**, **we** are the **ones** who suffered from war and peace negotiations during the past decades, and **we ask** those who are not satisfied with **our vision** to make the way **for us** to do what **we should** do and **we will** not ask any of them to fight **with us** or on **our behalf**.

A/3. وفى عام 2000 تحرر لبنان بفضل المقاومة وثبت بأنهم كانوا على خطأ وأننا كنا على حق. بعد العام 2000 تكرر هذا النقاش،بما أننا نحن العرب نحب أن نكرر التاريخ بتفاصيله بدون تطوير أحيانا،تكرر نفس النقاش من خلال الضغوط على سورية على نفس الشأن،فكان جوابنا بأن المقاومة هى قوة رادعة لاى عدوان إسرائيلي،فكان أيضا جوابهم الرفض لهذا المنطق.

3/E.   In 2000, Lebanon was liberated; thanks to the resistance which proved that they (Arab countries) were wrong and **we were** right. After 2000 once again **we started** to have the same kind of discussion as **we**, Arabs, are fond of repeating history with all its details without advancement sometimes. The same discussion took place by exerting pressure on Syria with regard to the same issue. **Our answer** was that the resistance is a deterrent to any Israeli aggression, a logic which they once again rejected.

Concordance 8. Inclusive language in the speeches and interviews of Al-Assad

Assassination of Al-Hariri. This category is intimately connected to most of the above mentioned groups. It contains

the name of *Rafiq Hariri*, the former Lebanese Prime Minister, who played a very important role in ending the Lebanese civil war and reconstructing Lebanon by making numerous charitable works, in addition to providing aids to the victims of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon. Hariri was assassinated on February 14th, 2005. As a consequence, the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon since there were some indications that the Syrian government may be involved in the assassination (Wright & Lynch, 2005). As a result, an international tribunal was established in order to detect and prosecute the killers. Investigating the word حريري*Hariri*, Al-Assad confirmed that his country has nothing to do with Hariri's assassination. Regarding the reasons behind the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon at this particular time, he stated that they have already begun the process in 2000 and done it completely after 1559 resolution (issued at the end of 2004). He also justified the withdrawal's decision by saying that lots of Lebanese people accused Syria of Hariri's assassination and they stood against Syria after being their allies saying "we cannot stay in Lebanon when some Lebanese are against Syria". Concordance 9 shows Al-Assad's answer to a question regarding the UN investigators' doubts that Syria has something to do with the assassination of Hariri.

Concordance 9. Assassination of Al-Hariri in the speeches and interviews of Al-Assad

5.2. Category 2 (2011-2016)

To uncover the differences between the periods that precede and follow the Syrian uprisings, the researcher compared the sub-corpus B (2011-2016) with the other sub-corpus A (2000-2010). The researcher used the keyword tool in WS7 in order to determine which words occur statistically more often in (2011-16) wordlist when compared with (2000-2010) wordlist. Using a log-likelihood test with a P value of < 0.0000001, the researcher got a keyword list that includes words like (الشعب، الإرهابيين، الإرهاب، داعش، الأزمة، المعارضة، الجيش، الأسلحة ، الأرهابيون، النصرة، الإرهابية، الكيميائية) (*people, terrorists, terrorism, ISIS, crisis, opposition, army, weapons, terrorists, Al-Nusra, terrorist, chemical*). However, since the focus in this paper is on Syria's relationships with other countries, particularly Lebanon, the researcher excluded the keywords that are irrelevant to this focus as figure 5 shows.

Figure 5 shows two sets of keywords; the upper part of the figure shows the countries that are more statistically significant in the post-uprisings sub-corpus (2011-2016) when compared with the pre-uprising sub-corpus (2000-2010), while the opposite is true for the second part of the figure. Going through the list, it can be observed that ليبيا*Libya* was the only main Arab Spring country that Al-Assad refers to significantly, i.e. although the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen were toppled in 2011 because of the Arab Uprisings, they were not among the most salient in the keyword list.

Examining ليبيا *Libya* in more details by carrying out a concordance analysis, the researcher found that Al-Assad used it to say that Syria is geographically, demographically, politically and historically different from Libya, pointing out that the international intervention scenario in Syria will be unviable, in reference to the NATO intervention during the Libyan uprisings in 2011. He also stated that some countries are not content with the Security Council decision regarding Syria; rather they want a military strike similar to what happened in Libya. Al-Assad also tended to mention Libya to criticize the Arab League who gave cover to the bombardment of Libya highlighting that Libya is now not better than before, and questioning what the whole world has achieved after the military action in Libya rather than the spread of terrorism in its aftermath.

KeyWords — Countries that are statistically salient in the post-uprisings era 2011-2016

File   Edit   View   Compute   Settings   Windows   Help

N	Translation	Key word	.Freq	%	Texts	.RC .Freq	% .RC	Log_L	Log_R	P
1	Aleppo	حلب	202	0.06	35	8		226.05	4.68	0.0000000000
2	Geneva	جنيف	155	0.04	32	2		198.51	6.30	0.0000000000
3	Russian	الروسية	129	0.04	36	12		115.14	3.45	0.0000000000
4	The Russians	الروس	109	0.03	34	7		109.46	3.98	0.0000000000
5	and Saudi Arabia	والسعودية	76	0.02	37	3		85.10	4.68	0.0000000000
6	Saudi Arabia	السعودية	195	0.06	43	59	0.02	78.81	1.75	0.0000000000
7	Russian	الروسي	118	0.03	39	23		71.45	2.38	0.0000000000
8	and Qatar	وقطر	60	0.02	32	3		64.07	4.34	0.0000000000
9	and Russia	وروسيا	54	0.02	29	5		48.28	3.45	0.0000000000
10	Americans	الأمريكيين	66	0.02	27	11		44.41	2.61	0.0000000000
11	Libya	ليبيا	43	0.01	28	4		38.38	3.45	0.0000000000
12	and Britain	وبريطانيا	35	0.01	17	2		36.23	4.15	0.0000000001
13	Raqqa	الرقة	31		14	1		35.91	4.98	0.0000000001
14	and France	وفرنسا	27		18	1		30.58	4.78	0.0000000292
15	Moscow	موسكو	45	0.01	21	8		29.05	2.51	0.0000000677

KeyWords — Countries that are statistically salient in the pre-uprisings period 2000-2010

File   Edit   View   Compute   Settings   Windows   Help

N	Translation	Key word	.Freq	%	Texts	.RC .Freq	% .RC	Log_L	Log_R	P
1	Lebanon	لبنان	992	0.28	89	119	0.03	770.80	3.04	0.0000000000
2	Israel	إسرائيل	850	0.24	104	119	0.03	610.62	2.82	0.0000000000
3	Iraq	العراق	861	0.25	81	216	0.06	403.97	1.97	0.0000000000
4	Lebanese	اللبنانية	237	0.07	47	19		216.28	3.62	0.0000000000
5	Palestinian	الفلسطينية	202	0.06	76	27		148.74	2.88	0.0000000000
6	Israeli	الإسرائيلية	168	0.05	61	16		144.10	3.37	0.0000000000
7	Palestinian	الفلسطيني	155	0.04	50	14		135.64	3.45	0.0000000000
8	Iraqi	العراقي	112	0.03	32	3		130.01	5.20	0.0000000000
9	Palestinians	الفلسطينيين	141	0.04	58	12		126.07	3.53	0.0000000000
10	Israeli	الإسرائيلي	172	0.05	57	28		113.14	2.60	0.0000000000

Figure 5. Keyword list of the countries in the two investigated sub-corpora

Also, it can be noted that *Russia* روسيا along with its derivative forms, i.e. (الروسية /الروس /الروسي /وروسيا /موسكو) *(Russian / the Russians / Russian/ and Russia/ Moscow)* are the most frequent in the upper keyword list. Al-Assad tended to praise the Russian support for his country (concordance 10). After the outbreak of the Syrian uprisings, Russia has taken a strong position against taking any actions against the Syrian regime. In the Security Council, Russia has threatened to veto any sanctions against Syria and kept providing Syria with arms and weapons claiming that it has some earlier contracts with the Syrian government before the beginning of the uprisings. It is worth noting that Syria is one of the most important clients for the Russian arms, in addition to the presence of a Russian naval base in Syria.

This study is concerned with the lower side of the keyword results where لبنان *Lebanon* is the most salient in figure 5. When concordancing *لبنان* (*Lebanon) in the sub-corpus (2011-16) and going through all the incidents, the researcher found that

لاشك أنا نعول على **روسيا** أولا للعلاقة التاريخية الموجودة بين بلدنا وروسيا وبنفس الوقت لأن **روسيا** هي **قوة عظمى** وعضو دائم
في مجلس الأمن الدولي وبكل الأحوال هي لعبت هذا الدور منذ الأيام الأولى **للأزمة** وكان هناك تواصل مباشر بيننا وبين الحكومة
الروسية وكنا نشرح لهم بالتفاصيل هذا الوضع انطلاقا من أهمية **سورية** وتأثيرها على الوضع في الشرق الأوسط وفي هذه
المنطقة تحديدا... كان هناك معرفة **روسية** لمخاطر محاولات التدخل في **سورية** وكان آخر مافعلته هو الفيتو في مجلس الأمن فنحن نعول على الموقف
أخرى لذلك قامت **روسيا** بلعب دور مهم على الساحة الدولية وكان آخر مافعلته هو الفيتو في مجلس الأمن فنحن نعول على الموقف
الروسي وعلى استمرار دعم **روسيا** ليس دفاعا عن **سورية** فقط وإنما دفاعا عن الاستقرار في العالم.

There is no doubt that we are counting on **Russia**, primarily because of the historic relations between the our country and
Russia and because **Russia** is a **superpower** and a permanent Security Council member. In all cases, **Russia** played
an important role since the first days of the **crisis** and our governments was communicating directly its **Russian**
counterpart to explain the situation in details based on Syria's importance and its influence on the situation in the Middle
East and this region particularly ..... **Russia** knew the dangers of the foreign interference in Syria politically, military, or any
other way, thus **Russia** played an important role in the international arena, with the **Russian** veto at the Security Council
as the most recent action in this regard . Syria is counting on the **Russian** stance and continuing support not just in
defence of Syria, but also in defence of worldwide stability.

Concordance 10. *Russia* in the post-uprisings period

Al-Assad used it in the following contexts:

1.   The sensitivity of Syria's geographic location; boarding Iraq, Lebanon, and Israel. Al-Assad claimed that Syria was massively affected by the situation in Lebanon being sectarian divided community, the American invasion to Iraq in 2003, and the presence of Israel in the heart of the Arab world. He also stated that Syria has been punished due to its clear and straight situations towards some critical issues in the region; in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq (line 1 concordance 11).

2.   Reminding the Lebanese people of the role that Syria played during the civil war in 1976, the Israeli invasion in 1982, and the liberation of their territories in 2006 (line 2).

3.   The negative role that the Lebanese government has been playing during the uprisings in Syria where many terrorists and weapons come from its side (line 3).

4.

1/A.   .... ولاحقا حرب عام **2005** في **لبنان** تعرفون ما حصل **سورية** أن تدفع ثمن موقفها ضد الغزو.. أصبح المطلوب من **التآمر** على **سورية**..
.. **2006** وتداعياتها.. حرب غزة في أخر **2008** يعنى كانت مرحلة من الضغوط
1/E.   .... **conspiracy** against **Syria**...**Syria** had to pay the price for its standing against the US occupation of Iraq...you know what
happened in **Lebanon** in **2005** and later in the **2006** Israeli war and its consequences...the Israeli war on Gaza in late **2008**...It was a
period of pressures..
2/A.   ...في العام **2000** **لبنان** المقاومة في ذلك الوقت والتي أدت بالمقاومة إلى تحرير **لبنان** في عام **1982** وكانت منطلق **دافعنا** عن **لبنان** وعندما...
2/E.   ...when **we defended Lebanon** in **1982**, it was the springboard of resistance which led to the liberation of **Lebanon** in **2000**...
3/A.   الصواريخ كان الجزء الكبير منه، بما فيه **بلبنان** ... من المعروف أن **السلطات اللبنانية** احتجزت مؤخرا سفينة تنقل السلاح فصادرته. كان الجزء الكبير منه، بما فيه الصواريخ دعونا نبدأ
المضادة للطائرات، يأتي من ليبيا. وفقا لمعلوماتنا فإن **الحكومة اللبنانية** على علم **بالتهريب**.... حتى الآن كانت الحصة الكبرى من الأسلحة تأتي إلينا
من **لبنان** وتركيا. لكن ليس لدينا أدلة تثبت أن سلطات هاتين الدولتين ساعدت في الماضي على **التهريب**
3/E.   Let's start with **Lebanon**... It is known that the **Lebanese authorities** recently seized a ship transporting weapons, a large part
of it, including anti-aircraft missiles, comes from Libya. According to our information, the **Lebanese government** is aware of
smuggling .... So far the majority of weapons are smuggled through **Lebanon** and Turkey. However, we have no evidence that proves
that the authorities in these two countries helped smugglers in the past or not

Concordance 11. *Lebanon* in the post-uprisings period

5.   The relations with Hezbollah to protect the Syrian-Lebanese borders. Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, clearly stated they are helping Bashar al-Assad to fight the uprising against his rule and will stand by him (Black and Roberts 2013). However, Al-Assad denied any military intervention for Hezbollah inside Syria, making all credits to the Syrian Army, not any other external troops (concordance 12).

السؤال: ترى بعض الجهات أن **حزب الله** هو منظمة إرهابية. وكما سمعنا بأن **حزب الله** قاتل إلى جانب القوات السورية في القصير
Question: Some view **Hezbollah** as a terrorist organization; we know that it has fought alongside Syrian troops in al-Quseir
السيد الرئيس: الإعلام الآن يحاول أن يصور أن **حزب الله** كان يقاتل.. والجيش السوري هو جيش ضعيف لا يحقق أي انتصار... .. وبدأ
الإرهابيون يضربون القرى الموالية لحزب الله على الحدود فكان لا بد من تدخل **حزب الله** مع الجيش السوري لإنهاء الفوضى.
President Al-Assad: The media is trying to portray **Hezbollah** as the main fighting force on the ground and the Syrian
Army as weak and unable to achieve victory.....terrorists started attacking the bordering towns that are loyal to **Hezbollah**,
which warranted their intervention alongside the Syrian army in order to restore stability.
السؤال: كيف تقيمون قوة كتائب **حزب الله** الموجودة في سورية.. هل هي قوة وأعدادها كبيرة
Question: How strong and large are the **Hezbollah** brigades currently in Syria?
السيد الرئيس: لا يوجد كتائب.. هم أرسلوا عددا من المقاتلين على أطراف الحدود حيث يوجد إرهابيون في منطقة الحدود عند القصير...
وساعدوا الجيش السوري في عملية التنظيف على الحدود اللبنانية.. ولم يرسلوا قوات إلى داخل سورية.. كما تعلم قوات **حزب الله**
تتموضع باتجاه إسرائيل ولا تستطيع أن تغادر جنوب لبنان.
President Al-Assad: There are no brigades. They have sent fighters who have aided the Syrian army in cleaning areas on
the Lebanese borders that were infiltrated by terrorists. They did not deploy forces into Syria. As you are aware, **Hezbollah**
forces are positioned towards Israel and cannot depart Southern Lebanon.

Concordance 12. *Hezbollah* and the *Syrian Army* in the post-uprisings period

6. Implications, Recommendations, and Limitations

This study used a particular type of data (presidential texts), within a defined timeframe (2000-2016), geographical context (Syria), and theoretical and methodological framework (CDA and CL) to answer particular research questions. Therefore, there are bound to be limitations. Before the concluding remark of this study, the researcher reflects on some points as the limitations and recommendations of this research.

First, the corpus of this study is well-compiled, and will be available for the public use. Since the researcher only examined a limited number of research questions, future studies may investigate other areas and answer different research questions. Second, unlike most of the previous studies which only examined 3 or 4 presidential speeches, this study used 219 speeches and interviews, and so its findings are likely to be more generalizable. Future researchers are recommended to move from the qualitative towards the quantitative approach. This may result in getting different types of findings. Third, in this study, the researcher followed a corpus assisted discourse approach. CL and CDA are not free from shortcomings, for example, CL is good at having generalizable findings that might be known to all, and CDA is good at having new and interesting findings (Haider, 2016a). Accordingly, combining the two approaches is recommended. For future research, the corpus of this study may be given to a CL expert and CDA analyst to see whether their findings are convergent, complementary or dissonant (Baker & Levon, 2015). Fourth, the researcher of this study used Wodak Discourse Historical Approach, and found that spending some time on investigating the historical and political context is important. Future research can use other CDA approaches like Van Dijk (2009), and Fairclough (2009). Fifth, in this study, the researcher compiled a new Arabic political corpus. Due to the shortage of similar Arabic corpora, other researchers are recommended to compile several Arabic corpora, and improve some free CL analytical software which support right to left languages. Sixth, the corpus of this study is included under monitor corpora (corpora which develop and are added to), and so adding Al-Assad's speeches that were delivered after 2016 is recommended. Seventh, this study only examined the speeches of one president, and so future researchers are recommended to investigate the speeches of other (Arab) presidents to check whether they follow similar/different strategies.

7. Conclusion

Discourse is one of the significant instruments of politics, being as important as money and power. Chilton and Schäffner (2002, p. 5) defined politics in two different ways, 'as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it' and 'as cooperation, as the practices and institutions a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, power, liberty and the like'. Investigating *Lebanon* in Al-Assad's speeches and interviews, it is found that he utilised both techniques mentioned in these two definitions; he portrayed 'power struggle' as the essence of politics where the Syrian troops were in Lebanon for nearly 30 years under the pretext of ending the civil war and protecting the Syrian territories from any invasions through Lebanon. On the other hand, he tended to manage the conflicting interests in a non-violent manner by making some loyal allies and groups inside Lebanon.

Investigating the use of لبنان/Lebanon in the corpus, the researcher found that Bashar Al-Assad denied any Syrian interventions in the Lebanese internal affairs. He also did not consider the presence of the Syrian troops on the Lebanese territories as an occupation by any mean though they stayed there for nearly 30 years. Moreover, though both countries gained their independence from the French mandate in the 1940s, they did not have normal diplomatic ties, which implies full mutual recognition until 2008 when Al-Assad issued a decree to open an embassy in Beirut (Black, 2008b). Al-Assad kept saying that the Syrian-Lebanese relations are normal though this paper shows the opposite where Lebanon was treated as a subordinate state.

Regarding the methodological synergy of CL and CDA, this study showed its effectiveness in uncovering some discourses that would be difficult to be discovered manually. However, while analysing any dataset, researchers should take into consideration that the results they obtain may not directly provide them with the discourses behind the text, and so it is their role to consult other resources to be able to prove the existence of such discourses.

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العلاقات السورية اللبنانية: دراسة تحليلية نقدية باستخدام تقنيات لغويات المدونة الحاسوبية لخطابات ومقابلات بشار الأسد

أحمد صلاح حيدر

ملخص

تساهم هذه الدراسة في مجال لغوي حديث نسبيا يجمع بين تحليل الخطاب النقدي وعلم لغويات المدونة الحاسوبية لتحليل علاقات سوريا مع الدول الأخرى، تحديداً لبنان، في خطابات ومقابلات الرئيس السوري بشار الأسد من شهر تموز 2000 حين وصل الأسد إلى السلطة إلى كانون الأول 2016. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الدور الهام الذي يؤديه الجمع بين هذين النهجين البحثيين في إظهار كيفية استخدام الأسد اللغة للتأثير على وجهات نظر وآراء متلقي النص. وباستخدام منهج ووداك Wodak المعتمد على السياق التاريخي في تحليل الخطاب (2009)، تم تقسيم البيانات إلى جزأين بناء على تاريخ العلاقات السورية اللبنانية. وتمتد الفترة الأولى (1) من 2000 إلى 2010، التي تتميز بتواجد القوات السورية في لبنان (2000–2004) وانسحابها لاحقا (2005–2010)، وأما الفترة الثانية (2) 2011–2016، فتتسم بتأثر البلاد بالثورة السورية التي بدأت في عام 2011. ويظهر التحليل أنه تم تصوير لبنان في خطابات الأسد أنه دولة من الدرجة الثانية بحيث يقوم النظام السوري في التدخل في شؤونه الداخلية على الرغم من نفي الأسد الدائم مثل هذا الادعاء.

الكلمات الدالة: بشار الأسد، علم لغويات المدونة الحاسوبية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، لبنان، خطابات رئاسية، سوريا، الربيع العربي.