

Portrayal Of The Hidden Agenda: A Critical Discourse Analysis Of Political-War Statements Of Israeli Officials

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Abstract: *The present research has unveiled the hidden agenda of Israeli government by critically analyzing their official statements during the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Fairclough's (2003) model of critical discourse analysis has been used to unearth the hidden utopia of power endorsed by Israel since its conception as a state. Critical discourse analysis has unfolded the gravity of situation that indicates the obstinate dogma of Israel being the only state on these lands. For the current study, the data of ten statements of high Israeli government officials has been taken from a social platform (Twitter/X). By analyzing these statements critically, the present study has identified the unequivocal power and ideology of Israel which explicitly promotes the dehumanization of Palestinians and occupation of their land. The current study highlights the critical role of language in sustaining political power and control, while underscoring the need for more transparent and equitable dialogue in addressing long standing conflicts between Israel and Palestine as well.*

Keywords: Israeli-Palestinian, conflict, political power, control, critical discourse analysis

Introduction

Language is a powerful tool for shaping public opinions i.e. the way in which people analyze the situation, set individual and societal rules and uphold power. The language used in statements made by the political officials depict their intentions, ambitions and intended actions in a particular way targeting to influence and justify their verdicts and plans of present and future actions (Bingtian, 2017). At the times of conflict, political statements of officials carry hidden meanings and reveal more than what is said verbally. The present study pursues to expose the agenda of Israel about Palestine. It intends to reveal their hidden schema, beliefs and theoretical mapping of Palestine, summed up in their official statements during the recently ongoing genocidal war. By using Norman Fairclough's (2003) model of CDA, this study anticipates to inspect the underlying, veiled agendas encapsulated in the war statements of Israeli officials. It also aims to reveal their unfathomable beliefs, unplumbed ideas and future schemes displaying the power they hold (Nye, 2004). By analyzing their statements, the study aims to find out the use of language by Israeli officials depicting their consistent and obstinate views about the present condition and definite future goals about Palestine. The current study aims to find out the ways in which these future plans influence the thinking pattern of common people.

CDA plays a crucial role in depicting the influence of the political and social actions. It examines how through language, people challenge, maintain their authority and use power they hold. For the current study, the data is collected from a Twitter/X (an electronic platform) which has been used by Israeli

officials to express and share their thoughts during the time of conflict. The research is significant as it helps to figure out the objectives of their statements, and shows how political statements shape public opinion and affect decision making. Furthermore, by revealing their beliefs and ideas a deeper conversation is being promoted about Israel-Palestinian conflict, concentrating on the (factual problems, complex matters) rather than surface level arguments.

To grasp the wider political and social effects of the conflict, it is important to understand their actual agenda. This research activity pursues to expose the hidden meaning, beliefs, and power structures rooted in their speeches. To unveil the underlying Israeli agenda, the study aims to achieve the certain research objectives by fostering some research questions given in the upcoming section.

Research Objectives

- To identify the lexical choices made by the Israeli officials in their political-war statements to portray their power over Palestinians.
- To unearth the ideological stance of Israel about Palestine.

Research Questions

1. What lexical choices have been made by the Israeli officials in their political-war statements to portray their power over Palestinians?
2. How the political-war statements of Israeli officials revealed their ideological stance about Palestine?

Literature Review

The relationship between language, ideology and power are investigated through the theoretical and methodological approaches. According to Fairclough (2003), power takes the form of disparities between the people participating in a discourse as well as their unequal control over the production, dissemination, and interpretation of texts. His theoretical paradigm, which is also known as the "three-dimensional" model, views every communication event as a textual, discursive, and social activity all at once. Fairclough (2003) aims to link discourse with ideology and power at the level of discourse as a social practice. According to him, ideologies are depictions of many facets of reality that support the creation, upkeep, or modification of dominance, exploitation, and power dynamics. According to him, ideologies ingrained in discursive practices have the greatest impact when they normalize and are taken for granted as common sense (Fairclough, 1992).

CDA is an approach that aims to analyze, interpret, describe and explain the texts and discourses critically. The level of analysis can be at word or sentence level and the text can be spoken, written, or multimodal. CDA produces and reproduces the text (Fairclough, 1992). During production, CDA intends to promote a fair distribution of discourse resources. In reproduction, it breaks down, analyzes and unravels power, theme and the relations present in everyday discourse. CDA uses the language and ideas to elucidate the use of power. It plays a crucial role in influencing the political and social action. According to Wodak (2002), CDA manifests the mysterious pattern of power and control that are patterned through language. Therefore, the goal of CDA is to bring a social change and this type of research is politically active and engaged. In short, it explores how through language, power is misused and ends up with injustice and unfairness.

Critical Discourse Analysis is a theoretical and methodological approach to investigate the relationship between language, ideology and power. According to Fairclough (2003), power takes the form of disparities between the people participating in a discourse as well as their unequal control over the production, dissemination, and interpretation of texts. His theoretical paradigm, which is also known as the "three-dimensional" model, views every communication event as a textual, discursive, and social activity all at once. Fairclough (1995) suggests a three-tiered approach to conversation analysis, with

each layer adding to our understanding of language in its social context. The first and most in-depth layer is on "discourse-as-text," which examines the language structure and literary qualities of a particular work. Fairclough highlights the significance of examining word choices, syntax, and other language patterns since they reveal much about the social relationships and ideologies inscribed in the text. Similarly, Van Dijk (2015) investigates how language constructs cognitive frames and perpetuates stereotypes, notably in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, revealing how speech influences social beliefs.

Moving on to the second layer, "discourse-as-discursive-practice," Fairclough (2003) emphasizes the relationship between text and social activity. This layer investigates how texts are generated, distributed, and understood in society, emphasizing the fact that various types of discourse go through distinct processes. A discussion, for example, may be created and consumed spontaneously, but a newspaper story is a joint effort including several roles such as editors and reporters. Similarly, readers contribute their own backgrounds to the text, interpreting it differently depending on their personal frameworks. Fairclough (1992) observes that readers rely on "cues" in the text that interact with their own interpretative tools to construct meaning. This layer also investigates "interdiscursivity"

Fairclough (2003) promotes a sociocultural analysis that takes into account both the features present in a text and those excluded, since these omissions might provide vital information about the wider social environment. This holistic approach gives insight on the ideological factors that shape language, as well as how specific terminology or structures reflect societal power relations. Examining these levels allows us to obtain a more sophisticated understanding of the relationships between language, mind, and social institutions. A key component of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is intertextual analysis. According to him, intertextuality is the quality of texts being subtly or overtly intertwined with passages from other works. It is possible to modify, refute, or even echo these embedded references with irony (Fairclough, 1992). Since it connects the text to a larger context, this idea serves as the cornerstone of interpretive analysis.

Fairclough (2003) aims to link discourse with ideology and power at the level of discourse as a social practice. According to him, ideologies ingrained in discursive practices have the greatest impact when they normalize and are taken for granted as common sense (Fairclough, 1992). It is acknowledged that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a politically and socially involved method that advocates for change and focuses on emancipation, especially in terms of strengthening oppressed people. Owing to its transformative objectives, CDA has been extensively used in a wide range of research domains and has shown to be a priceless resource for numerous academics. A large portion of CDA research is concerned with modern themes, concerns, and social domains, including gender, institutional discourse, racism, and political discourse. CDA practitioners, with varying backgrounds and goals, have investigated a variety of discourses. Research on CDA has given considerable emphasis to political discourse including Chilton (2004), Chouliaraki (2004), Fairclough (2001, 2003), and others.

The study of ideology has garnered a lot of interest, especially in understanding how language plays a role in spreading and reinforcing certain beliefs. Scholars like Kress (1983), Kress & Hodge (1979), Luke (2002), and van Dijk (1998) have spent years examining how discourse supports the transmission of specific ideologies in society. Another major focus for critical discourse analysts has been racism. Many people are interested in the study of ideology, specifically how language influences the transmission and reinforcement of specific views. Scholars such as Kress (1983), Kress & Hodge (1979), Luke (2002), and van Dijk (1998) have devoted years researching how language facilitates the spread of varied ideas throughout society. Racism has also been a major focus for critical discourse analysts. Researchers include Mehan (1997), Reisigl & Wodak (2000, 2001), Rojo & van Dijk (1997), and van Dijk himself (in multiple studies between 1987 and 1996) have undertaken considerable study on how language contributes to the propagation of racial stereotypes and biases. They show how some language choices contribute to the existing societal divide by subtly embedding racist attitudes in everyday

conversation.

Being one of the most well-known discourse analysis approaches, it still piques the curiosity of researchers and students, suggesting that CDA will probably continue to expand into unexplored areas. During the time of conflict, language plays vital role as it shapes individual's opinions and justifies actions. In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the statements of official are being used to develop narratives that defend Military protocols and operations (Bingtian, 2017). Similarly, these narratives frame one side as legitimate and the other as a source of conflict. This research has revealed the that stereotypes are reinforced and created by language i.e. the choice of words such as "freedom fighter" or "terrorist" can trigger intense emotional reactions and influence public perspectives. The framing of events impact individual's perspective. By highlighting security concerns, they portray military actions as obligatory and justified, while neglecting Palestinian point of view.

Media plays an important role in constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing public perception by the depiction of events about conflict. Coverage of media exposes and strengthens prevailing power dynamics (Nye, 2004). Officials grasp extensive audiences due to quick spread by social media, particularly Twitter, to grasp masses, to quickly response criticism and to emphasize particular beliefs Israeli officials uses Twitter to interconnect. Their lexical choices, arrangement of events describing the things may result into unfair viewpoints and impact the response of society. For instance: Israeli officials are portraying their narrative in such a way that large audience is considering Palestine as "terrorist" and Israeli action as "self-Défense". Papacharissi (2015) research highlights that social media is the platform that allow quick spread of narratives, ideologies and construct public opinion.

In the context of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the depiction of political agendas through discourse analysis has gained robust traction in interpreting conflicts. To analyze how language constructs power ideologies and relations, CDA serves as a lens. Scholars like Van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (1992) have highlighted the importance of analyzing political language to reveal veiled agendas and power dynamics. The common tactic used by Israeli military and intelligence is to portray Palestinians as a security threat as they want to weaken Palestinian claims to land and independence. This important work was done by Hanry (2017) in their study by highlighting the use of language by Israeli officials during their operations against Palestinians. The strategy utilized by Israeli officials reveals a desire to increase Israeli settlements while neglecting Palestinian rights. Khamaisi (2020) says that the language used by these authorities not only declares their dominance, but also influences public opinion, normalizing the occupation. Similarly, Ghanem (2021) examined Israeli leaders' political statements and discovered a persistent pattern portraying Palestinians as impediments to peace. This portrayal is used to legitimize military acts and policies aimed at maintaining control over Palestinian territory. Ghanem's findings are consistent with the study's emphasis on how political utterances reflect ideological notions, which often promote a concealed objective of territorial dominance. Finally, the study discovered that Israeli political discourse serves two purposes: imposing control over Palestinians and anchoring ideological views that support the present power structure.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine Israeli officials' "Speech Patterns". It examines political utterances through Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis's perspective, which focusses on how lexical choices influence social and power dynamics. The goal is to reveal the underlying power dynamics and beliefs driving the conflict. Fairclough's framework is based on the premise that language is an essential component of social interaction (Fairclough, 2003), making it a useful tool for studying how discourse shapes power structures and societal attitudes. He sees discourse as a social practice that both shapes and reflects reality, in addition to being a means of communication. This implies that discourse is both representation and action; it actively contributes to the creation of the world in addition to describing it. The present research activity aims to analyze their statements, lexical choices and CDA will help to identify how the words of Israeli officials speak louder. It will not

only illustrate what is said but also reveal their hidden agendas about the existence of Palestine as a state. It involves examining their linguistic choices i.e. the depiction of events, actions, modality and use of passive, active voice.

Data Analysis

The connection between discourse and political, economic, cultural processes, institutions, and practices has been traced by CDA (Fairclough, 2003). Influences from social, philosophical, and linguistic theories are combined in Fairclough's framework. He makes use of intertextuality—the idea that texts are shaped by other texts and discourses—and Bakhtin's (2014) theory of genre, in particular the ideas of production and creativity in discourse practices. In order to clarify how discursive practices may both reflect and shape power dynamics and ideologies; Fairclough (2003) also draws on Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony. He contends that discourse serves as a weapon for creating, establishing the legitimacy of, and contesting dominant power relations in addition to being a reflection of power. Certain ideologies and power structures are naturalized through language, appearing normal or indisputable; critical discourse analysis (CDA) exposes the dynamics at work under the surface. In the subsequent lines, analysis of the selected statements of Israeli officials has been given following the dynamics of Fairclough's model of CDA.

Statement 1: "We are here to stay, forever"

Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Modality: The term "forever" unequivocally indicates certainty and unwavering dedication, underscoring the permanence and non-negotiable nature of Israel's presence in the West Bank. Using active voice in the phrase "*We are here*" makes the statement straightforward, highlighting a feeling of power and resolve. The lexical item "*forever*" denotes an intentional decision to stay stationary while indicating a static state.

Interpretation:

In Israeli media, this statement is commonly understood to mean a claim of authority over the nation and its land. Right-wing proponents frequently view it as strengthening the legitimacy of settlers. Globally, it is perceived as a dismissal of peace efforts and Palestinian demands.

Explanation:

The statement emphasizes the strong commitment of the Jewish community in the West Bank, considered as part of their historical homeland. It highlights Israel's refusal to return occupied lands during peace negotiations, reinforcing the Zionist belief in Jewish sovereignty over the land.

Statement 2: "Israel will never relinquish security control west of the Jordan River"

Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Modality: The word "never" shows a total refusal, implying a strong and enduring commitment to retaining security control. By depicting Israel's presence as "security control," It underscores the necessity for self-defense, switching attention from occupation to security-related issues. The statement "Israel will never relinquish" is a forceful and emphatic statement.

Interpretation: In Israeli media, the statement is depicted as national security measure, often seen as essential for protection against eastern threats. Meanwhile, international media portrays it as an impediment to peace, highlighting how it bolsters Israel's power over Palestinian territories.

Explanation: The statement illustrates Israel's geopolitical viewpoint, regarding the Jordan River as a

natural defense boundary. It reflects Israel's defense posture, which validates the ongoing occupation of Palestinian zones to avoid terrorism. It indicates a reluctance to cede territory.

Statement 3: "No Palestinian state on my watch"

Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

The phrase "No Palestinian state on my watch" is a blunt rejection of Palestinian statehood, with "on my watch" underscoring the speaker's authority and intention to block Palestinian independence during their leadership. The absolute tone signals a refusal to negotiate, sending a clear message to domestic and international audiences that Israel is committed to maintaining control over Palestinian territories and resisting efforts toward a two-state solution.

Interpretation

This statement reflects Israel's assertion of power over Palestinians and rejection of Palestinian statehood, aligning with a broader strategy to retain territorial dominance in areas like Jerusalem and the West Bank. It underscores Israel's stance that Palestinian sovereignty is incompatible with its interests, dismissing Palestinian aspirations for independence and reinforcing Israeli control over the region. By denying the legitimacy of Palestinian self-determination, the statement portrays Palestine as a territory under Israeli authority rather than a separate, sovereign entity. This relates to your research by highlighting how Israeli officials express political control over Palestinians and silence their pursuit of statehood.

Explanation:

The statement "No Palestinian state on my watch" functions as a deliberate political message to affirm Israel's dominance and dismiss international efforts for a two-state solution. It reflects Israel's stance that Palestinian statehood will not be considered under current leadership and aligns with a broader narrative framing Palestinian sovereignty as a threat to Israeli security. This position prioritizes Israeli interests and settlements in the West Bank over Palestinian autonomy, signaling Israel's intent to prevent a Palestinian state and maintain territorial control. It also suggests ideological isolationism, reinforcing national sovereignty and appealing to conservative factions within Israel that oppose Palestinian statehood on security and ideological grounds.

Statement 4: "The original inhabitants are returning to their land"

Shimon Peres (Former President of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Word Choices: The term "*indigenous people*" conveys a sense of historical heritage and authenticity. It presents the comeback as inherent and deserved. Passive construction with "*are returning*" implies an ongoing and inevitable process, without attributing active responsibility.

Interpretation: This statement in Israeli discourse, supports Zionist ideology by portraying Jewish people as the legitimate successors to the land. Globally, it is commonly understood as a means to disregard the Palestinian entitlement to return, presenting Jewish settlement as a form of restoration rather than colonization.

Explanation: Peres's comment aligns with the Zionist story of the Jewish people's longstanding link to the land, supporting assertions of rightful ownership based on divine or historical reasoning. It mirrors wider Israeli strategies that support Jewish building and reject Palestinian control.

Statement 5: "I will do everything in my power to make sure they never get a state"

Naftali Bennett (Former Prime Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Modality: The statement "*I will do everything in my power*" indicates a strong sense of commitment, showing a personal dedication to hindering Palestinian statehood. Bennett's use of "make sure" positions him as the one directly accountable for halting progress towards Palestinian sovereignty.

Interpretation: Bennett's comment appeals to right-wing Israeli voters who are against Palestinian statehood. In global discussions, it is viewed as a clear denial of the peace process and a dedication to asserting control over Palestinian territories.

Explanation: The declaration represents the overall ideological position of staunch nationalists who believe that Palestinian statehood threatens Israel's security and territorial interests. It strengthens the idea of Jewish control of the land and eliminates the possibility of any future political agreements.

Statement 6: I have taken the lives of many Arabs in my lifetime - and I see no issue with it.

Naftali Bennett (Former Prime Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Lexical Choices: Referring to "*many Arabs*" in such a way is oversimplifying and degrading, turning a community into potential victims of aggression.

Modality: Saying "*No problem with that*" makes killing seem like a normal and acceptable action. Bennett asserts personal agency and responsibility in the violence through the use of the active voice.

Interpretation: This statement caused controversy domestically, but it resonated with far-right supporters who view military actions against Arabs as a way to protect Israel. On a global scale, it was criticized for promoting violence and racism.

Explanation: The comment highlights the overall trend of increased militarization within Israeli society, emphasizing the importance of military service and the use of violence against Arabs for the protection of national security. It draws upon a conversation of legitimate force within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Statement 7: "Disloyal Arabs should be beheaded"

Avigdor Lieberman (Former Foreign Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Modality: The modality of "*Should be beheaded*" implies strong certainty and extreme brutality, indicating a severe punishment for disloyalty. The word "*disloyal*" implies that only Arabs who do not follow Israeli norms are singled out, establishing a contrast between loyalty and danger.

Interpretation: Within the country, the statement was seen as provocative, though it appealed to Lieberman's conservative voter demographic. On a global scale, it faced criticism for promoting aggression and prejudice, adding to Israel's contentious reputation in the international media.

Explanation: The assertion connects to wider exclusionary narratives in Israeli culture, in which non-Jewish individuals, particularly Arabs, are seen as endangering the Jewish essence of the nation. It demonstrates a belief in keeping out certain ethnic groups and using force.

Statement 8: "Peace with the Palestinians will never be achieved".

Textual analysis:

Modality: The word "*never*" expresses complete certainty, indicating a belief that peace is not achievable. Using active voice in the statement, it has showcased the assertion that the speaker takes a

definitive stance on the outcome of peace efforts.

Interpretation: This sentiment aligns with conservative beliefs that see Palestinians as untrustworthy peace negotiators. Globally, it is viewed as a fatalistic perspective that hinders diplomatic and negotiation endeavors.

Explanation: The sociocultural explanation refers to understanding the behavior based on the influence of society and culture. Lieberman's comment mirrors the widespread doubt in Israeli politics about the likelihood of achieving a peace deal. It shows a lack of trust in the peace negotiations and the conviction that there will always be conflict.

Statement 9: "This land is ours. All of it is ours"

Tzipi Hotovely (Former Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel)

Textual Analysis:

Modality: Saying "*all of it*" without any exceptions implies a firm and unwavering position on territorial claims. Repetition of the word "*ours*" highlights ownership and privilege.

Interpretation: Within the country, this declaration has been aimed at nationalist and religious conservative groups, strengthening the idea that the territory is given by God to the Jewish population. Globally, it is viewed as a denial of peace initiatives and Palestinian self-governance.

Explanation: Hotovely's assertion is based on Greater Israel ideology, which advocates for the belief that the entire area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean is the rightful land of the Jewish people. This argument supports the expansion of settlements and opposes giving up land as part of a peace deal.

Conclusion

The present study has critically examined the political war statements of Israeli officials, using Fairclough (2003) model of CDA to uncover the deeper ideological structures and hidden agendas that shape the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The language employed in these statements serves as a strategic tool to assert dominance, justify military actions, and frame Israel's occupation and control of Palestinian territories as necessity for their national security (Obeng, 1997). The current study exposes the ways and strategies Israeli officials adopt to construct a discourse by analyzing their narratives of conflict, word choices and speech patterns. The analysis indicates that the Israeli officials tend to marginalize Palestinian rights and prefer to orate the territorial and political objectives of Israel. Present research unearths the hidden agenda of Israel by analyzing their political stance. They present Palestinians as potential threats to their political and global future, sovereignty and individuality and this way they legalize the illegitimate occupation. Political discourse somehow influences the framing of public opinion and shapes the national and international perception which provokes the power imbalance in the Arab region Chilton (2004). The intense commitment of Israeli officials to their occupation has been exposed by the statements like "*Israel will never relinquish security control west of the Jordan River*" and "*We are here to stay, forever*". It highlights their ambitions about the expansion of their territory and expose the obstinate and immutable approach hindering the peace prevalence in the region.

By critical evaluation of the political war-statements, the current study has identified the underlying ideology of Israeli officials exposing their power structure supporting their wider future strategies and agendas about the region. It highlights how discourse is used not only to maintain control over Palestinian territories but also to influence the global narrative surrounding the conflict. The application of CDA in this context demonstrates that political language is not neutral; it is a potent force in shaping reality, constructing social hierarchies, and perpetuating cycles of conflict. Furthermore, this research underscores the role of media, particularly platforms like X (Twitter), in amplifying these narratives. The rapid dissemination of political messages via social media allows Israeli officials to shape the global

discourse, solidifying their position while suppressing alternative perspectives. This contributes to the entrenchment of Israel's ideological stance, perpetuating a worldview in which Palestinians are depicted as obstacles to peace, rather than as a people with legitimate claims to statehood and rights.

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