



CRACKING IDEOLOGIES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TRUMP'S 20-POINT GAZA PEACE PROPOSAL 2025

Muhammad Fiaz

MPhil English, Bahauddin Zakariya Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email. fiazsheikh1111@gmail.com

Abdul Haseeb Ezmi

Corresponding Author

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: abdulhaseebazmi@bzu.edu.pk

Naveed Ijaz

MPhil English, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: naveedijaz2r1@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores Trump's 20-point Gaza peace proposal through Fairclough's and Van Dijk's frameworks of critical discourse analysis. The study examines how language is used to construct power, ideology, and representation of participants discussed in the proposal. Political participants are portrayed differently through discourse especially, Gaza, USA, Israel, Hamas, and the Palestinian people. Critical analysis of lexical choices, agency, syntactic and macro-ideological structures frame Gaza as a security threat, USA as prime authority and Israel as sub-authority. This discourse portrays Gaza as passive recipients and USA and Israel as authoritative peace makers. The findings reveal that peace is controlled, conditional, and governed by international bodies. This paper contributes to deeper understanding of people by revealing that peace proposals are not just for the sake of peace, rather those may reinforce dominant ideologies through language.

Key words: *Ideology, Critical discourse analysis, Trump's peace plan*

Introduction

Language is an instrument which shapes society and is shaped by society. Political discourse is never neutral rather it propagates the dominant ideologies. Israel and Gaza conflict has been a topic of great interest by international community; many political leaders including US President Donald Trump tried to resolve this conflict. Trump's peace proposal construct power relations and suggests ideological assumptions and reinforces the discursive strategies that suit the established balance of power. Peace agreements are considered something neutral but, in this case, the proposal implicitly encodes unequal distribution of powers among the parties involved. Trump's 20-point Gaza peace proposal appears to achieve peace, development and stability but it portrays Gaza as troublemaker, undeveloped, unstable, and persistent threat to peaceful world. The present study critically analyzes Trump's 20-points through CDA using the models proposed by Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1998). The purpose of the study is to reveal the hidden ideologies and assumptions which are navigated through this discourse, which will help the readers to better understand the political statements and their underlying meaning and interest. The present study investigates the specific linguistic features that neutralize and legitimize political actions which are being taken under the umbrella of Trump's peace proposal (2025). This study also explores the discursive practices which silence the Palestinian and legitimize the Israeli brutality. This study critically analyses the plan which was proposed by Trump on September 29, 2025 during a press conference at White House accompanying Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister. The plan was signed on October 9, and the United Nations Security Council endorsed it on November 17.

Literature Review

Fairclough (1995, 2001) considers discourse not only a means of communication but an effective mode of social action which maintains and constructs power relations. Foucault (1980) argues that discourse is a power that establishes the socially acceptable truth. According to him (1980) governmentality functions through systems of knowledge that neutralize, legitimize and normalize actions. Power asymmetry determines narrative dominance and media access (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Political discourses, including peace proposals and



agreements, are not neutral statements. Said (1978) states that Western discourse portrays east as something inferior, uncivilized, unstable and undeveloped. Chilton (2004) states that political discourse legitimizes the authority through language. Especially, peace proposals frame conflict in such a way that the dominant actors seem to play a positive role. Fassin (2012) argues that humanitarian language masks political agendas and responsibility. Peace documents often ignore violence and present development and aid as crucial elements for peace. Critical discourse analysis examines the political discourse to study how inequality and power are disseminated through concerned discourse. Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square presents how political leaders construct their positive image and negative image of out-group; this strategy hides the misdeeds of in-group and virtues of out-group. Chomsky (2003) explains that political discourse is always designed according to the interests of elite class. Discourse of terrorism is one of the major discourses which are discussed and interpreted in present geopolitics. Jackson (2005) argues that tagging people as terrorist is not only descriptive rather it invites other groups to control that labelled group through military occupation. Media studies by Philo and Berry (2011) highlight the portrayal of only the suffering side of Palestinians and their rights, resistance and sovereignty are ignored. Peace proposals and models designed by international powers serve the process of control, not peace and liberation (Duffield, 2007). According to Chandler (2006), international powers overthrow national and local control under the missions of stability and reforms. Economic development in an occupied area reinforces dependency and overlooks the main causes of conflicts (Roy, 2007). Khalidi (2020) states that Israel with the support of its allies has portrayed Palestine as a security threat on global level. Many studies investigate the peace proposals and documents regarding Palestine and Israel conflict, but the amalgam of Fairclough's and Van Dijk's frameworks is not used in this context by the researchers. Previous studies focus on the old peace initiatives, but the present study explore the most recent peace proposal proposed by American President, Donald Trump (2025). The 20-point proposal drives on the western assumptions regarding Middle Eastern disputes, so it provides a sound ground for critical discourse analysis.

Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative research design of critical discourse analysis. The qualitative approach suits the purpose of the research because the researcher investigates the meanings, ideologies, and assumptions which construct the realities through discourse. This study explores embedded power relations, so numerical data is not needed in this context. Since this 20-point proposal is an ideological and political text and requires detailed interpretation to reveal the hidden ideologies, identity framing, and power dynamics. Secondly, this research uses a critical interpretative approach because it is argued that political discourse is not neutral rather than it represents, reinforces or challenges the dominant perceptions and ideologies. This study does not test the hypotheses, but it unveils the representation of US, Israel, Gaza, Hamas and Palestinian people through linguistic features and propagated ideologies. Donald Trump's 20 points of Gaza peace proposal is the primary data for this study, and no secondary data is analyzed for this study. However, insights are taken from related theoretical literature to conduct an effective interpretation. This paper analyzes key lexical items, phrases, clauses, sentences, discursive constructions, and recurring ideological themes; to highlight the ideological framing, representation, and balance of power.

This paper uses the amalgam of two major CDA models, three-dimensional model and socio-cognitive model, proposed by Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1998) respectively. At textual level Fairclough's model is used to analyze vocabulary, grammar, modality, metaphors, and agency. Discursive practice level analyses the production and interpretation of the text. Third level, which is social practice level, analyses the broader ideological and political context. Van Dijk's framework analyses polarization, representation of in-groups and out-groups, control of knowledge and legitimacy. Van Dijk's framework helps to understand the portrayal of right or wrong through text, and it also reveals the legitimation of authority through language.

For in-depth analysis thorough study of 20-point peace is conducted. Dominant ideologies, recurrent expressions, and themes are identified. Sentences are examined for lexical choices, modality, and agency. Ideological patterns including dependency, authority, and securitization are identified. After identification the findings are explained and interpreted using the amalgam of Fairclough's and Van Dijk's theories. This study upholds and ensures validity by using established frameworks, giving textual evidence in relation to historical and political context. Systematic procedures of analysis and clear use of models ensure reliability.



Data for the research is obtained from the public platform, BBC. Proposal is a political document and easily available for the masses, and no human subjects are involved. The study critically examines original text with academic integrity without bias and hate. Only 20-point proposal text is analyzed, so its findings are not generalizable to all other peace plans. Furthermore, this study analyses the text, not the political outcomes of the discourse.

Data Analysis

Data is analyzed at the following stages.

Textual Analysis

The text is analysed under these headings.

Lexical Choices

There are security-oriented and ideologically loaded lexical items in the proposal. Lexical items show ideologies which construct the perception of reality. *Deradicalized, terror free, threat* (Trump, 2025, Point 1); these words present Gaza as an abnormal place which is highly disturbing and posing constant threat to its neighbors and other countries. These lexical items further seem to advocate that Gaza is not a peaceful place rather a terrorist territory. These items are mentioned in the very first point of the proposal, setting the tone of the proposal. *Decommission* (Trump, 2025, Point 6), *terror, offensive infrastructure, demilitarization* (Trump, 2025, Point 13), these lexical items present Gaza and Palestinian people as militants who need to be demilitarized. It is evident from these words that Gaza's infrastructure is used by terrorist factions and organizations which is to be demolished for peaceful world. These lexical items hide the humanitarian dimensions of Israel-Gaza conflict and relate it to security narratives. Furthermore, these words also show that political empowerment of Palestinian is not the goal of the plan rather it focuses on the control of the territory. *Redeveloped* (Trump, 2025, Point 2), *peaceful coexistence* (Trump, 2025, Point 6), *rehabilitation* (Trump, 2025, Point 7), *redevelopment* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), *rebuild and energize Gaza, hope* (Trump, 2025, Point 10), *better Gaza* (Trump, 2025, Point 12), and *New Gaza* (Trump, 2025, Point 13, 14); these words present the plan as Gaza centered which promises the betterment of Palestinian people. Implicitly these lexical choices present the negative image of Gaza; a place which is not developed and requires immediate attention from the international organizations for its prosperity. These choices also reinforce the anti-Palestinian ideology by promising new Gaza because for this purpose it is necessary to demolish present Gaza. The discourse further reveals that the future is bright with job opportunities.

Analysis of Modality

There is frequent use of obligation modal verbs removing any kind of negotiations and agreement. *Gaza will be deradicalized* (Trump, 2025, Point 1), *Gaza will be redeveloped* (Trump, 2025, Point 2), *the war will immediately end* (Trump, 2025, Point 3), *all hostages will be returned* (Trump, 2025, Point 4), *full aid will immediately sent to Gaza strip, aid quantities will be consistent* (Trump, 2025, Point 7), *Gaza will be governed, the committee will be made* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), *a special economic zone will be established* (Trump, 2025, Point 11), *will be destroyed, new Gaza will be fully committed* (Trump, 2025, Point 13), *a guarantee will be provided* (Trump, 2025, Point 14), *ISF will work with Israel* (Trump, 2025, Point 15), *will be agreed upon* (Trump, 2025, Point 16), *dialogue process will be establish* (Trump, 2025, Point 18) and *United States will establish* (Trump, 2025, Point 20). These present a predetermined Gaza whose present and future are decided by the external forces. These also reveal asymmetrical power dynamics, giving Palestinians no role in decision making. These grammatical structures unveil the authoritative tone of the text because decisions seem to be imposed without mutual agreement. These modal verbs present Gaza as a subject which is meant to be controlled.

Distribution of Agency

The discourse establishes unbalanced and asymmetrical agency relating to Gaza, Hamas, Israel and America. *Gaza will be governed, apolitical Palestinian committee* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), *Hamas and other factions ready to not have any role in the governance of Gaza* (Trump, 2025, Point 13), and *Gaza poses no threat to its people and neighbors* (Trump, 2025, Point 14); all these phrases present Gaza as a victim as well as a threat to



its people and neighbors. Furthermore, the political agency and political role of the Palestinians are limited. The proposal seems to neutralize the process of control by international powers. Gaza and Hamas are being projected as disturbance creating agencies. Throughout the proposal, the presentation of Gaza is not clear at some points it seems to be a victim but at other points it is viewed as a culprit. Israel's military actions are justified through passive and conditional structures. *Israeli forces will withdraw to the agreed upon line* (Trump, 2025, Point 3), *Israel publicly accepting this agreement* (Trump, 2025, Point 4), *Israel will release* (Trump, 2025, Point 5), and *IDF will withdraw based on standards* (Trump, 2025, Point 16); these seem to establish the legitimate position of Israeli forces and create a room for rejection of the proposal. The discourse present Hamas and Gaza in negative way but Israel is presented in positive manner. It seems from the text that the brutality of Israel is justified, and Palestinian resistance is rejected and presented as absolute. *Board of peace chaired by President Trump* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), *a Trump economic development plan* (Trump, 2025, Point 10), *United States will work to develop* (Trump, 2025, Point 15), and *the United States will establish*; these show the authority and power assigned to United States. It seems that the whole procedure is pre-planned and is being manipulated by Trump himself. It is further revealed through these structures that development, economic growth, and establishment of peace are directly controlled by America. This discourse present United States as main authority, Israel as subordinate authority but Gaza as a subject to be controlled.

Discursive and Social Practice

The Gaza peace proposal is proposed by the president of United States, Donald Trump, who is a powerful geopolitical actor. Due to America's global influence this plan holds significance in global politics. The proposal is presented as a policy document; the language of the document is administrative and technical. *Agreement regarding humanitarian aid, rehabilitation of infrastructure, bakeries and hospitals* (Trump, 2025, Point 7), *temporary transitional governance of technocratic committee, committee will be made of qualified Palestinian and international experts* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), and *temporary International Stabilization Force* (Trump, 2025, Point 15); these make the text to appear natural, loaded with technical terms which echo expertise. The discourse reveals that Palestinians are excluded from the planned process. Gaza and Palestinians are not included in drafting the proposal basically Gaza's future is being discussed without Palestinian voice. The discourse is contextualized in neoliberal governance; in this discourse peace appears to be defined in terms of security, compliance, and economic growth. It is evident from this text that powerful states, such as America, control and manage conflicts in other countries and regions.

Representation and Polarization

The proposal seems to establish a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. As the proposal is drafted and proposed by the president of United States, presents America and its allies positively. *New international transition body 'Board of Peace' chaired by President Donald Trump* (Trump, 2025, Point 9), *a Trump economic development plan* (Trump, 2025, Point 10), and *the ISF will work with Israel and Egypt to help secure border areas* (Trump, 2025, Point 15); these fragments seem to present Trump, United States and Israel as effective factors struggling for peace and peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, these choices reveal that development, prosperity, and economic growth are possible only by following Trump's decisions. The text presents Gaza and Israel in a negative way and reinforces orientalist perspective about Muslims. *Gaza will be deradicalised terror-free zone* (Trump, 2025, Point 1), *Gaza will be redeveloped for the benefit of the people of Gaza* (Trump, 2025, Point 2), *Hamas members who commit to peaceful existence and to decommission their weapons* (Trump, 2025, Point 6), and *change mindsets and narratives of Palestinians* (Trump, 2025, Point 18); these structures present Gaza and Hamas in a negative way, relating them to chaos, destruction, terrorism and deterioration. The text presents Palestinians in a very controversial way as victims, beneficiaries and troublemakers.

Discussion

The study critically analyses Trump's peace proposal (2025) using CDA frameworks of Fairclough and Van Dijk. The thorough examination of the text reveals that the proposal is a politically charged document. The text seems to marginalize Hamas and Gaza while seem to centralize US and Israel. Securitization of Gaza is the most recurrent theme in the proposal, representing Gaza as dangerous and unstable. The text seems to



justify military control over Gaza. The proposal seems to present in-group and out-group differently. In-group such as the United States, Israel, and international partners seem to be portrayed as rational, peace loving and developed. While out-group including Hamas and Gaza seem to be portrayed as dangerous, irrational and violent. This ideological positioning seems to justify and reinforce the actions taken by Israel and other countries against Gaza. The analysis further reveals that the political agency of Palestinians is neglected and ignored. The proposal promises job opportunities, development and prosperity, but apparently text does not ensure freedom and self-determination. The proposal seems to support the neo-colonial form of government as future of Palestinians is controlled by international committee chaired by Trump.

Implications of the Study

The study demonstrates that peace proposals, peace documents, and peace initiatives are ideologically embedded and must be critically analyzed. The findings of the present study reveal that the discourse implicitly reinforces certain ideologies through language. This study highlights the importance of critical discourse analysis in examining international documents. This paper reveals that power operates through language. This study provides a road map for policymakers by highlighting the importance of discursive practices in establishing peace.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that Trump's 20-point Gaza peace proposal presents peace in terms of security, compliance, power, and economic ideology. Through linguistic choices positive self-representation while negative other representation is achieved. The proposal seems to legitimize the international control over Gaza and marginalizes Palestinians. Peace proposal is not neutral, rather it reinforces and reproduces geopolitical hierarchies. Linguistic choices reveal that Gaza is not a political community rather dangerous which must be tamed for international peace. Hamas is represented as terrorist group and Gaza's political and historical context is ignored. The analysis through CDA models reveals that discourse is the main factor which defines and redefines peace, shapes the perception of control, and justifies the agency of involved actors.

References

- Chandler, D. (2006). *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State Building*. Pluto Press.
- Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
- Chomsky, N. (2003). *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
- Duffield, M. (2007). *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Fassin, D. (2012). *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fairclough, Norman (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Fairclough, Norman (1995a). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- Jackson, R. (2005). *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counterterrorism*. Manchester University Press.
- Khalidi, R. (2020). *The Hundred years War on Palestine*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
- Philo, G., and Berry, M. (2011). *More bad news from Israel*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- Roy, S. 2007. *Failing peace: Gaza and the Palestinian- Israeli Conflict*. London, UK Pluto Press.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2025). *Racism and Discourse in Spain and Latin America*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wolfsfeld, G. (2004). *Media and the Path to Peace*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.



Appendix

Gaza Peace Proposal by Trump (2025)

1. Gaza will be a deradicalized terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbors.
2. Gaza will be redeveloped for the benefit of the people of Gaza, who have suffered more than enough.
3. If both sides agree to this proposal, the war will immediately end. Israeli forces will withdraw to the agreed upon line to prepare for a hostage release. During this time, all military operations, including aerial and artillery bombardment, will be suspended, and battle lines will remain frozen until conditions are met for complete staged withdrawal.
4. Within 72 hours of Israel publicly accepting this agreement, all hostages, alive and deceased, will be returned.
5. Once all hostages are released, Israel will release 250 life sentence prisoners plus 1,700 Gazans who were detained after 7 October 2023, including all women and children detained in that context. For every Israeli hostage whose remains are released, Israel will release the remains of 15 deceased Gazans.
6. Once all hostages are returned, Hamas members who commit to peaceful co-existence and to decommission their weapons will be given amnesty. Members of Hamas who wish to leave Gaza will be provided safe passage to receiving countries.
7. Upon acceptance of this agreement, full aid will be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip. At a minimum, aid quantities will be consistent with what was included in the 19 January 2025 agreement regarding humanitarian aid, including rehabilitation of infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage), rehabilitation of hospitals and bakeries, and entry of necessary equipment to remove rubble and open roads.
8. Entry of distribution and aid in the Gaza Strip will proceed without interference from the two parties through the United Nations and its agencies, and the Red Crescent, in addition to other international institutions not associated in any manner with either party. Opening the Rafah crossing in both directions will be subject to the same mechanism implemented under 19 January 2025 agreement.
9. Gaza will be governed under the temporary transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee, responsible for delivering the day-to-day running of public services and municipalities for the people in Gaza. This committee will be made up of qualified Palestinians and international experts, with oversight and supervision by a new international transitional body, the "Board of Peace," which will be headed and chaired by President Donald J. Trump, with other members and heads of state to be announced, including Former Prime Minister Tony Blair. This body will set the framework and handle the funding for the redevelopment of Gaza until such time as the Palestinian Authority has completed its reform program, as outlined in various proposals, including President Trump's peace plan in 2020 and the Saudi-French proposal, and can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza. This body will call on best international standards to create modern and efficient governance that serves the people of Gaza and is conducive to attracting investment.
10. A Trump economic development plan to rebuild and energise Gaza will be created by convening a panel of experts who have helped birth some of the thriving modern miracle cities in the Middle East. Many thoughtful investment proposals and exciting development ideas have been crafted by well-meaning international groups, and will be considered to synthesize the security and governance frameworks to attract and facilitate these investments that will create jobs, opportunity, and hope for future Gaza.
11. A special economic zone will be established with preferred tariff and access rates to be negotiated with participating countries.
12. No one will be forced to leave Gaza, and those who wish to leave will be free to do so and free to return. We will encourage people to stay and offer them the opportunity to build a better Gaza.
13. Hamas and other factions agree to not have any role in the governance of Gaza, directly, indirectly, or in any form. All military, terror, and offensive infrastructure, including tunnels and weapon production facilities, will be destroyed and not rebuilt. There will be a process of demilitarization of Gaza under the supervision of independent monitors, which will include placing weapons permanently beyond use through an agreed process of decommissioning, and supported by an internationally funded buy back and reintegration program all verified by the independent monitors. New Gaza will be fully committed to building a prosperous economy and to peaceful coexistence with their neighbors.



14. A guarantee will be provided by regional partners to ensure that Hamas, and the factions, comply with their obligations and that New Gaza poses no threat to its neighbors or its people.
15. The United States will work with Arab and international partners to develop a temporary International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to immediately deploy in Gaza. The ISF will train and provide support to vetted Palestinian police forces in Gaza and will consult with Jordan and Egypt who have extensive experience in this field. This force will be the long-term internal security solution. The ISF will work with Israel and Egypt to help secure border areas, along with newly trained Palestinian police forces. It is critical to prevent munitions from entering Gaza and to facilitate the rapid and secure flow of goods to rebuild and revitalize Gaza. A deconfliction mechanism will be agreed upon by the parties.
16. Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza. As the ISF establishes control and stability, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will withdraw based on standards, milestones, and timeframes linked to demilitarization that will be agreed upon between the IDF, ISF, the guarantors, and the United States, with the objective of a secure Gaza that no longer poses a threat to Israel, Egypt, or its citizens. Practically, the IDF will progressively hand over the Gaza territory it occupies to the ISF according to an agreement they will make with the transitional authority until they are withdrawn completely from Gaza, save for a security perimeter presence that will remain until Gaza is properly secure from any resurgent terror threat.
17. In the event Hamas delays or rejects this proposal, the above, including the scaled-up aid operation, will proceed in the terror-free areas handed over from the IDF to the ISF.
18. An interfaith dialogue process will be established based on the values of tolerance and peaceful co-existence to try and change mindsets and narratives of Palestinians and Israelis by emphasizing the benefits that can be derived from peace.
19. While Gaza re-development advances and when the PA reform programme is faithfully carried out, the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood, which we recognise as the aspiration of the Palestinian people.
20. The United States will establish a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians to agree on a political horizon for peaceful and prosperous co-existence.