

## Neo-Orientalism, Islamophobia and the Resistance of War on Ghaza in the Speech of Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on 28th Oct 2023: A Critical Discourse Perspective



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**Abstract:** *Critical Discourse Analysis aims to analyze the hidden meaning within the language. Political actors utilize linguistic strategies to influence the masses and promulgate the pro ideologies while counter the opposing ideologies. Political discourse analysis aims to uncover the invisible agendas and power dynamics in the language. Van Dijk proposes techniques/ indicators for PDA, allowing the scholars of CDA to reveal the unspoken agendas within the political discourses. Taking advantage of van Dijk theory “Us vs Them” the researchers analyzed the speech of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, delivered on 28th Oct 2023, in Istanbul. Within the speech the researchers encountered various indicators. Firstly, Erdogan depicts Palestinian as innocent victims oppressed by Israel who are portrayed as cruel oppressors. To support, his claim, he provides various pieces of evidence: 700 martyrs, including 300 children; 1973 injured, among them 500 healthcare workers, 25 journalists, and 38 United Nations officials. Moreover, 200000 residences are affected, and 30000 buildings are destroyed. The speaker employs the discursive strategy of Victimization to garner sympathy and polarizes Turkey from West, highlighting Western support for oppressors and Turkish support for oppressed. He generalizes Israelian attacks on the entire Muslim community, holding the West responsible for the massacre in Gaza. The President references humanity, Islam and United Nation secretary general as an authority and exaggerates the number of Muslims martyrs across the world. Lastly, he taunts the West for being master in killing, accusing them becoming deaf and blind to the situation of Gaza.*

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Neo-Orientalism, Islamophobia, van Dijk and PDA.

### Introduction

Language expresses thoughts and conveys message. The role of Language is wide, ranging from daily conversation to the production of ideologies. In other words,

ideologies are constructed, strengthened and countered through language. In the domain of politics, the role of language is essential to deliver the speaker’s mapped out goals effectively to the audience. Addressing the masses is though job; a

speaker must take care of the audience's background, class and interests. Therefore, Political leaders use various linguistic strategies to address or convince them. The choice of words and syntax holds great importance in the field of discourse.

Discourse is from the Latin word "discourses", which pertains to conversation or speech. The term is attributed to three concepts: any piece of language, language in use and it also refers to any piece of spoken or written language beyond the sentence level. Discourse Analysis (DA) is the study of a language used in text and context. Critical Discourse Analysis is the kind of discourse analysis which explains how language works and also offers deep explanations in order to demystify the underlined power relations (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Dijk (1998) defined Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as, the area deals with the study and analysis of a written and spoken text in order to reveal the biasedness, inequality, dominance and the discursive source of power. It explores how these discursive sources are manipulated and produced within proper historical, social and political contexts. In other words, CDA digs out the hidden meaning within the text which may not be visible to ordinary people.

Israel-Palestine dispute dates back to the end of the World War II. In 1947, United Nations decided to divide the British mandate Palestine into Arab and Jews states under the resolution 181. The state of Israel was established on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948. The formation of the new state resulted in Arab Israel war, which culminated in 1949 with the victory of Israel. From then onward, the history witnessed a serious of Arab Israel wars. The conflict took on a different shape at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. An organization named Hamas was founded in 1987 with the motive of

liberating Palestine. The organization has targeted Israel since its establishment. It launched a heavy attack against the Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, using thousands of rockets and technology to breach the heavily protect border. They targeted military installations and took the 150 hostages. In response Israelian army retaliated harshly. The army attacked civilians, houses, school, mosques and even hospitals. Consequently, thousands of innocent people, including women children, lost their lives. The aggression sparked anger throughout the Muslims world. The leaders like Muhammad Bin Salman, Ebrahim Raisi and Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the aggression and announced their support with Palestinian people.

Tayyip Erdogan has been a prominent figure in Muslim world since 2003. He served as a Prime Minister of Turkey after securing three terms in 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections. Subsequently, he served as the president of Turkey in 2014 and then securing a second term in the 2018 elections. During his tenure, the country experienced economic growth, implemented constitutional reforms, and re-emerged as a major global power. Alongside his governance, he advocated for Muslims across the world, and earned places in every Muslim's heart. Consequently, he was ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> most influential Muslims leader in 2023. Following the outbreak of war on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, Erdogan cancelled his visit to Israel and organized a massive rally in Istanbul on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2023, to show solidarity with the Palestinian people. Thousands of the Turkish people attended the rally to express their sympathy and support for Palestine.

### **Problem statement**

The issue of Palestine holds significant

importance for Muslim world. Every Muslim supports Palestine and opposes Israelian actions in the Muslim country. Erdogan employs various discursive strategies to advocate for Palestinian people and condemns Israelian aggression while addressing the rally on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The use of discursive strategies invites the scholars of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the speech using Van Dijk theory.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To explore the resistance of Islamophobic Ideology and war on Gaza in the speech of Recep Tayyap Erdogan in Istanbul on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023.
2. To find out the discursive strategies used by Recep Tayyap Erdogan in the said speech for the resistance of Islamophobic Ideology and war on Gaza.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does Recep Tayyap Erdogan resist the Islamophobic ideology and war on Gaza in his speech in Istanbul on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023?
2. What discursive strategies do Recep Tayyap Erdogan in the said speech for the resistance of Islamophobic Ideology and war on Gaza?

### **Methodology**

#### **Design**

The researchers have employed qualitative deductive method to conduct this paper. They relied on theoretical arguments rather than numerical explanation. The interpretations provided in the research are based solely on the sentences, without using any statistical data.

#### **Data collection**

The authors analyzed the speech of Turkish President Erdogan delivered on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2023 to a rally in Istanbul. Although the

speech was originally in Turkish language, they utilized a translated version available on the internet.

### **Significance of the study**

This paper addresses Israel-Palestine dispute, which has transcended regional boundaries to become a global issue. Additionally, it introduces its readers to one of the prominent Muslim leaders Erdogan. Lastly, it contributes to the field of CDA, allowing its readers to learn about one of the important figures in the field of CDA, Van Dijk, and his theory.

### **Literature Review**

In order to ensure the credibility and the authenticity of the paper, the researchers studied previous articles conducted in the field of CDA.

According to Bayram (2010) the way people perceive language forms the basis of their social construction and relationships between individual and group. Researches in sociolinguistics have attempted to elucidate this connection between the use of language and the significance of perceptions. A particular discourse, whether spoken or written, can originate from various sources such as power, cultural or social background, region or social status. As Turkish President, Recep Tyyp Erdogan utilized language as a potent social tool to present his characteristics in Davos. His attitude and linguistic behavior reflected a particular social group, and the attitude of this particular group towards him was positive.

Rababah and Hamdan(2019), analyzed the speeches delivered by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israelian Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the UN General Assembly regarding the Gaza War (2014). Leveraging Linguistic choices, the speakers effectively employed the strategy

of positive-self presentation and negative-other presentation. Throughout the speeches, each leader portrayed the Self/in-group as a beacon of strength, humanity and goodness, advocating for peace. In contrast they depicted “Other” as negative, evil, threat and an agent of destruction, seeking violence. Moreover, they attributed the sufferings in-group to the out-group.

Arshad, Ahmad, Waheed and Badshah (2020), state that political discourse analysis aims to reveal how political leaders strategically produce their discourses to influence the masses. The use of language serves as an effective tool for obtaining political benefits. As former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan successfully challenged Western’s view about Islamophobia. By providing significant examples, Khan made it clear that there is no between connections Islam and terrorism and cannot be associated to each other, while addressing the United Nations general assembly 25th September 2019. Moreover, he supported his stance by utilizing various discursive strategies such as actor description, authority, disclaimer, generalization, irony, victimization and presupposition.

Rahmi Hazmah and Fitrawati(2019) argue that discourse concerns the relationship between ideology and language. For instance, former American president Donald trump utilizes language to achieve political goals. In his speeches about National Security, he promotes his fascist ideology, portraying himself in positive light as lover of America and dedicated to the future of the country. Additionally, he portrays “other” like Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in a negative light accusing them of not loving America and criticizing their policies.

According to Ali, Mehmood and Ahmad

(2023), CDA analyzes how political connections are performed and contested. As the former Iranian president, Ahmadinejad resists Western hegemony and powers in his speeches, highlighting the injustices perpetrated by them in Middle East and other Muslim countries. He portrays the in-group members (Muslim world) in a positive light while depicting the out-group members (the Western powers) in a negative tone. Additionally, by employing various discursive strategies, including authority, generalization, evidentiality, euphemism, disclaimer, hyperbole, vagueness, presupposition, irony, polarization and victimization, Ahmadinejad presets the Muslim world as the innocent party, while the Western powers are portrayed as involved in the war on terror.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Teun Adrianus Van Dijk is a well-known scholar in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. He has worked as a professor of discourse studies at various institutions such as the University of Amsterdam, University Pompeu Fabra, and Barcelona. He began work on generative poetics, text grammar, and the psychology of text processing by the time when text was solely analyzed through Chomsky’s grammar. The list of his contributions is extensive in the field of CDA, but this paper adopts one of his models “Us and Them” (2007).

According to Dijk, ideologies are the fundamental beliefs of a group and its members. As every group has diverse ideology than other, based on these differences he polarized the people into self/in-group and them/Out-group. Discourse plays a crucial role in the daily expression and production of ideologies. While producing a discourse, member in a

group support the in-group and oppose the out-group. Therefore, the theory proposed various indicators that discourse producers use while producing a discourse.

- Actor Description
- Authority
- Consensus
- Comparison
- Distancing
- Dramatization
- Disclaimer
- Euphemism
- Empathy
- Exaggeration
- Evidentiality
- Generalization
- Hedging/Vagueness
- Hyperbole
- Irony
- Modality
- Presupposition
- Polarization
- Victimization

## Analysis and Discussion

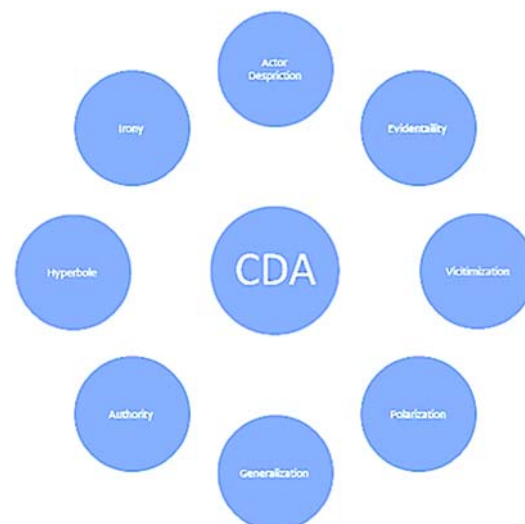
### General discussion

The protest took place at Istanbul's Ataturk airport, organized by Turkey's governing AK Party to show their support for the Palestine. It was attended by thousands of people holding the flags of Turkey and Palestine, along with placards bearing the slogans of "Free Palestine". Erdogan took the stage, greeted the attendee and foreign guests, and thanked the rally organizers. He shed light on the Turkish history and mentioned various Muslims countries such as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Crimea, Karakab, Bosnia, Kiruk where Muslims are facing issues. Erdogan then turned the discussion to Palestine, vehemently condemned the Israelian aggression in Palestine and expressed his solidarity to the oppressed people of Gaza. He informed the world about the condition of Gaza after the

attacks, mentioned that hundreds of innocent people lost their lives and thousands are injured. The infrastructure has been damaged, and there is no medical support available in the city. Furthermore, the president blamed west for supporting the massacre in Gaza. Finally, he invited all the stakeholders to negotiate about the issue for the betterment of the region.

### Linguistic analysis

Linguistics analysis concerns the examination of language structure and meaning. Critical Discourse Analysis, as a field of linguistics, investigates language beyond its context. To identify discursive strategies in Erdogan's speech, the researchers will employ Van Dijk's theory, "Us and Them" (2007). The theory recommends various indicators for the scholars of CDA such actor description, Actor Description, Authority, Consensus, Comparison, Distancing, Dramatization, Disclaimer, Euphemism, Empathy, Exaggeration, Evidentiality Generalization, Hedging/Vagueness Hyperbole Irony Presupposition Polarization and Victimization. The paper addresses eight of them in Erdogan's speech including authority, actor descriptions, evidentiality, generalization, irony, polarization and victimization.



## Actor description

Meanings are neuter, but the way speakers describes the things imbues meanings. In the context of Political discourse, binaries are employed wherein one party is praised and counter party is criticized. Dijk (2007) explains the significance of actor description in “Us and Them” political discourse analysis. The discourse producers emphasize the positive attributes of in-group while depicts out-group in negative light. (Dijk, 2007, p.51).

Political speakers describe the self/in-group as good, positive and victims, while portrays them/out-group as negative, evil and cruel. Actor refers to individuals, family, political party, organization and country, which can be called by their name, role, or group name. Actor descriptions are inherently biased, as the speaker aims to expose out-group while garnering sympathy for in-group.

In his speech, Erdogan describe Palestinian as the victims and oppressed people, while Israel is portrayed as terrorist, invader, oppressor and criminal. Moreover, he rejects the negative representation of Hamas as a terrorist organization, indirectly depicting them as liberators.

## Examples

*Hope for the oppressed people of Gaza.*  
(Erdogan, 2023)

*Hamas is not a terrorist organization*  
(Erdogan, 2023)

While addressing to Israel he says *You are an invader* (Erdogan, 2023)

*The bombs rained down on them by the oppressor* (Erdogan, 2023)

*We will introduce Israel to the world as a war criminal.* (Erdogan, 2023)

## Evidentiality

Speakers are responsible for what they say. Arguments/claims are strengthened through solid proofs and evidences. Strong arguments result in convincing the people easily. Political actors need to bring proofs and evidences to convince the audience and make his/her speech credible. Recognizing this important need for a political discourse, Dijk suggest the indicator: evidentiality. Dijk (2007), defines evidentiality is the proof and evidence that a discourse producers provides in the support of their stance during the production of a discourse to influence the audience.(Dijk, 2007, p.52). Evidences include facts and figures obtained from media reports and books etc.

In his speech Turk president provides many facts and figures to expose the cruelty of Israel in Gaza. First, he talks about the duration of war stating *Israel has been openly committing war crime for exactly 22 days.* (Erdogan, 2023).

Then, Erdogan discusses the number of Casualties and injuries caused by Israelian attacks. He also addresses the condition of Gaza after the attacks.

*The number of children martyred since the attacks launched by Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October has reached 300, and the total number of martyrs has reached 700. Among those there are 500 healthcare workers, 25 journalists, and 38 United Nations officials who were injured. A brutality hit the hospitals where 1973 injured were hospitalized. The uninterrupted bombardment has destroyed 30,000 buildings and affected 200000 residences. Electricity water and sewage infrastructure has already has already been completely destroyed.* (Erdogan, 2023)

Lastly, mentioned various regions as evidence where Muslims are suffering for example, From *Crimea to Karakabh,*

*Bosnia to Kiruk, Palestine to Turkestan and  
Afghanistan to Chechnya. (Erdogan, 2023)*

## Victimization

Human naturally tends to support victims. In the realm of politics, to get the support of the masses, political actors represent themselves as victims. Therefore, victimization plays a vital role in political discourses.

Dijk (2007), states that through their discourse, speakers divide the people into in-group and out-groups. Furthermore, they portray the in-group as victim which experiencing oppression, marginalization and injustices from the out-group (Dijk, 2007, p.84).

Erdogan aims to represent the people Gaza/in-group as victims of Israel/out-group to gain support from the world.

*We shed tears for much geography, our lives were not spent in vain, and today someone attacked Gaza.* (Erdogan, 2023)

*Watching the deaths of thousands in Gaza.* (Erdogan, 2023)

*The Western world has mobilized its politicians and media to cover the massacre of innocent children and women in Gaza.* (Erdogan, 2023)

*They are using the people of Gaza like a weapon, starving, thirsty and lacking fuel and collectively collapsing their health services. They are trying to destroy. There is nothing to eat, hospital are dark, they do surgeries without using anesthesia and they do their operation in the dark.* (Erdogan, 2023)

## Polarization

People differ based on race, color, gender, nationality, and ideologies. Consequently, people segregate themselves from those who have differences. According to Dijk (2007), speaker divides the people into in-group (US) and out-group (THEM), while producing a discourse. (Dijk, 2007, p 61). In

other words, in-groups consider themselves as positive, peace lovers and victims, in contrast to the out-groups are viewed as negative, war lovers and cruel.

Turk president separates in-group/ Turkey from the out-group/ West stating *West owes you but Turkey doesn't owe.* (Erdogan, 2023)

By saying *We always stand with oppressed.* (Erdogan, 2023), he segregates the in-group/ Turkey from the out-group/ West which stands with oppressor.

## Generalization

Generalization refers to the act of broadening a small event, example and idea to emphasize its importance. Once something gets generalized, it appeals more to the emotions of the audience, particularly in realm of politics. Therefore, it becomes a core element in political discourse.

According to Dijk (2007), generalization is phenomenon wherein discourse producers generalize a/an event, claim, incident, idea and issue by providing specific examples from the in-group/Us. By using examples, they aim to clarify their stance in a common way. (Dijk, 2007, p.71).

Erdogan generalizes the attack on a single city (Gaza) by considering it an attack on two billions Muslims. Stating, *Gaza is issue for all of us, not for those struggling to hold on.* (Erdogan, 2023). Furthermore, he attributes the responsibility for the attacks committed by one state, Israel, to the entire West like *West is most responsible for the massacre in Gaza.* (Erdogan, 2023)

## Authority

Authority refers to an individual, forum and organization that hold power in the domain of politics. Political actors mention relevant authorities while producing a discourse. They seek assistance from these authorities



to bolster their discourse.

According to Dijk (2007), authority is potent force within power relations, capable of playing decisive or arbitrator roles in a discussion. (Dijk, 2007, p.63). Authorities encompasses a/an individual, platform, religion, group, organizations.

In his speech Erdogan mentions various authorities. First, he references the Secretary General of United Nations. *The secretary general of United Nations is screaming.* (Erdogan, 2023)

Then, he mentions humanity and Islam stating *We have A few words for those who try to take this issue out of humanitarian and Islamic grounds.* (Erdogan, 2023)

### **Hyperbole**

Statements/ arguments gain value when they are exaggerated. Political actors exaggerate things, facts and figures to emphasize a particular point. According to Dijk (2007), hyperboles are semantic rhetorical devices used for enhancing meaning. (Dijk, 2007, p.56) Discourse producers exaggerate the wrong doings of “other” to strengthen in-group’s discourse. It is used to emphasize strongly negative ideological meanings.

The speaker exaggerates the number of Muslims who died in different wars.

### **Examples**

*Millions of our people lost their lives.*(Erdogan, 2023)

*Those who came from tens of thousands of kilometers and murdered millions of people day by day, under the pretext of fighting against terrorism.* (Erdogan, 2023)

The dawn of 21th century brought destruction to the Muslims world. Wars broke out in many Muslims countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. Additionally, Israel continuously targeted

Palestine. All of these conflicts resulted in thousands deaths of Muslims. As Erdogan mentioned, but he exaggerates the number into million to strengthen the discourse against Islamophobia.

### **Irony**

Irony is a rhetorical device which expresses something opposite of their literal meaning, resulting in a humorous effect. Political actors use irony against their opponent to expose them.

Dijk (2007) explains irony as, a tool used during discourse production to support the claim of “in group” by using an argument containing a slight sense of humorous and taunt (Dijk, 2007, p.76).

Erdogan uses irony in the form of taunting West. First, he argues *You know how to kill the people.* (Erdogan, 2023)

Killing is considered a mastery in which West excels. In order to draw the attention of West to the massacre in Gaza and to expose them for supporting Israel, he says *You have become deaf and blind* (Erdogan, 2023)

### **Conclusion**

For an effective conversation, a speaker should understand the class, ground, interest, emotions and psyche of the listeners he/she is talking. The selection of words should align with these aspects. In the domain of politics, political actors must empathize and put themselves in the shoes of their audience to convince them effectively. It is crucial to utilize linguistic strategies adeptly to deliver influential political speeches, which involves understanding how to use the strategies properly. Van Dijk, renowned for his significant contributions to the field of CDA, introduces the theory “Us and Them”(2007). The theorist categories the people into two groups: “Us/in-group”,

who share the same ideology, and “them/out-group” and who hold different ideology. For the scholars of CDA, Dijk(2007) proposes various indicators, based on this theory. Taking those indicators into account, the researchers analyzed the speech of Turk president Rəcəp Tayyip Erdoğan delivered to a rally on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2023, in support of Palestine. They observed that Erdoğan, a skilled speaker, employed various indicators such as actor description, evidentiality, hyperbole, authority generalization, irony and Victimization. Through these discursive strategies, Erdoğan not only influenced the audience but also advocated for Palestine while opposing Israel in the speech.

### Findings

- The researchers encounter various discursive strategies in Erdoğan’s speech.
- Erdoğan described the Palestinian as innocent, oppressed victims while portraying Israel as cruel oppressors and criminals.
- To strengthen his argument, he presented various evidences: 700 people are martyred, including 300 children; 1973 are injured, including 500 healthcare workers, 25 journalists and 38 United National officials. Moreover, 200000 residences are affected and 30000 buildings are destroyed.
- To garner sympathy, the discursive strategy of Victimization was used, portraying Palestinian as the victims of Israel.
- Erdoğan polarized Turkey from West, suggesting that West supports oppressors while Turkey supports oppressed.
- The Muslim leader generalized Israelian attacks on the entire Muslim

community and blamed the entire West for the massacre in Gaza.

- Erdoğan mentioned humanity, Islam and United Nation secretary general as authority in the speech
- Erdoğan exaggerated the number of Muslims martyred in various Muslims region.
- Lastly, he taunted the West for being master in killing and deliberately turning to deaf and blind to the massacre in Gaza.

### Recommendations

Islamophobia is a global issue. Prejudices towards two billion Muslims lead to the polarization in the world. The researchers attempted to address this issue. They analyzed only one speech, so they invite CDA’s scholars to study the speeches/articles of other Muslim leaders. Moreover, the researchers need to address other indicators of Van Dijk, as this paper only addressed eight of them.

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