

**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century":
Marginalizing Palestinians and Its Ongoing Impact**

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Abstract

This study examines the ideological underpinnings and power dynamics embedded in President Donald Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century" speech, with a specific focus on the marginalization of Palestinians through discourse. It also seeks to explore how the speech's discourse continues to influence current geopolitical realities, reinforcing patterns of dispossession, exclusion, and the normalization of structural violence. Adopting a qualitative interpretive approach, the research is grounded in Fairclough's (1992) model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which enables a multi-level exploration of how language shapes and sustains social hierarchies. Through lexical, metaphor, and transitivity analyses, the study reveals how the speech constructs Palestinians as passive, irrational, or obstructive, while positively framing Israeli and American actors. These discursive strategies not only reinforce asymmetrical power relations but also work to delegitimize Palestinian political agency within a U.S.-centric peace narrative. The findings contribute to understanding how political discourse functions as a tool of ideological control and geopolitical positioning in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ultimately, the study reveals that Trump's discourse reflects a broader ideological project rooted in Anglo-Zionist imperialism and corporate interests—an agenda that continues to shape global politics today.

Key words: CDA; Marginalization of Palestine; International Law

Introduction

Language is not a passive medium of communication; it is a mechanism of power that shapes perception, constructs political identities, and legitimizes material realities (van Dijk, 2006)¹. In conflict contexts—particularly settler-colonial regimes—political discourse operates strategically to obscure asymmetries, marginalize resistance, and normalize state violence (Pappé, 2006)². The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a paradigmatic case where language is mobilized to sustain Israeli settler-colonial dominance while erasing or delegitimizing Palestinian political claims. U.S. political rhetoric, shaped by its long-standing alliance with Israel, has played a central role in framing the conflict through Orientalist binaries: civility versus barbarism, security versus terror, and order versus chaos (Kalloufi, 2024)³.

President Donald Trump's 2020 announcement of the "Deal of the Century"—framed as a peace plan—marked a critical juncture in this discursive history. While presented as a diplomatic breakthrough, the speech and its accompanying documents overwhelmingly prioritized Israeli interests and adopted a lexicon that erased Palestinian agency, territorial rights, and historical narratives (Iriqat, 2020)⁴. Through carefully selected metaphors, transitivity structures, and lexical patterns, Trump's discourse constructed Palestinians either as passive recipients of Israeli benevolence or as obstructions to peace, denying them status as equal stakeholders (Khalifa, 2024)⁵.

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Trump's 2020 speech not only as a rhetorical act but as a precursor to policy. As CDA scholars assert, discourse is not merely reflective but constitutive—it enacts, sustains, and legitimates social inequalities (Van

van Dijk, 2006¹

Pappé, 2006²

Kalloufi, 2024³

Iriqat, 2020⁴

Khalifa, 2024⁵

Dijk, 1993)⁶. Focusing on the linguistic mechanisms that frame Palestinians as irrational, delegitimize their sovereignty claims, and portray Israeli dominance as morally justified, this analysis links these discursive strategies to the ideological foundations of settler colonialism. In doing so, it demonstrates how language functions as an instrument for facilitating real-world disenfranchisement.

The urgency of this analysis is heightened by President Trump's continuation in office through 2025 and the ongoing war in Gaza from 2023 to the present—characterized by unprecedented Israeli military aggression and an escalating humanitarian catastrophe. This sustained violence reflects the material realization of the exclusionary discursive logic embedded in the 2020 speech, where Palestinians were framed as security threats rather than political agents (Ahmed, 2025)⁷. Language that constructs Palestinians as inherently violent or politically irrelevant has served to justify disproportionate force, rationalize international silence, and obscure the structural asymmetries of power under the guise of self-defense (Waleed, 2025)⁸.

Thus, this paper argues that discourse must be treated not as abstract or peripheral, but as a central site of political struggle—where meanings are negotiated, power is legitimized, and violence is rendered intelligible. By situating Trump's speech within a broader settler-colonial and Orientalist framework, and tracing its discursive continuity with policy and violence in 2025, this study reveals the rhetorical architecture that underpins the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians. It contributes to a critical understanding of how global political language—particularly that of hegemonic actors like the U.S.—does not merely describe reality, but actively produces it.

Van Dijk, 1993⁶
Ahmed, 2025⁷
Waleed, 2025⁸

1. Problem Statement

Despite extensive political commentary on the "Deal of the Century," there remains a significant gap in discourse-focused scholarship that critically examines how Trump's language ideologically marginalized Palestinians. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on the geopolitical and legal dimensions of the deal, often overlooking how political discourse operates as a strategic tool of exclusion—shaping perceptions, obscuring power asymmetries, and legitimizing domination. This study addresses this gap by investigating how Palestinians were represented in Trump's 2020 speech—particularly through linguistic features that framed them as politically irrelevant or obstructive to peace. Such portrayals contributed to the erasure of Palestinian agency and rights, aligning with broader settler-colonial narratives that sustain Israeli dominance. Importantly, this study also traces the continuity between Trump's 2020 discourse and the material outcomes witnessed during his renewed presidency in 2025, amid intensified violence and deepening humanitarian crises in Gaza.

While some critical studies have analyzed the Deal's political and legal ramifications, few have approached it through a linguistic lens. Even fewer have examined how discourse from 2020 laid the ideological foundation for subsequent policies that normalized Palestinian dispossession and justified disproportionate Israeli aggression. This oversight limits our understanding of how language not only reflects but actively facilitates exclusionary political agendas. By conducting a critical discourse analysis of Trump's speech and linking its discursive strategies to real-world developments in 2025, this study highlights the instrumental role of language in enabling systemic injustice. It offers a vital intervention into the nexus of discourse, power, and policy in the context of settler-colonial conflict.

2. Research Questions

1. How does Donald Trump's Deal of the Century discourse linguistically marginalize Palestinians through lexical choices, metaphors, and transitivity structures?
2. How did the ideological framing of Palestinians in Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century" speech shape the discursive marginalization of Palestinians during Trump's 2025 presidency?

3. Literature Review

4.1 Discourse, Power, and Representation

Critical Discourse Analysis plays a central role in examining how language functions to reflect and reinforce societal power dynamics (Sari, Hamadi, Setiyadi, Kencana, & Effendi, 2025)⁹ Scholars such as Fairclough (1995)¹⁰ and van Dijk (2006)¹¹ argue that political language is not neutral; instead, it serves as a tool for advancing dominant ideologies and maintaining systemic inequalities. CDA is particularly valuable in political contexts, where language can frame issues in ways that legitimize certain agendas while delegitimizing others (Wodak & Meyer, 2009)¹². The intersection of language and power is fundamental to CDA, with Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (2006)¹³ emphasizing that discourse not only reflects but actively constructs and legitimizes power relations. In political speeches, linguistic structures often reveal the ideologies and agendas that underlie the rhetoric, shaping public perception and influencing policy decisions (Huang & Gadavani, 2025)¹⁴. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of marginalized groups and their exclusion from political processes.

Sari, Hamadi, Setiyadi, Kencana, & Effendi, 2025⁹

Fairclough 1995¹⁰

van Dijk, *ibid*¹¹

Wodak & Meyer, 2009¹²

van Dijk, *ibid*¹³

Huang & Gadavani, 2025¹⁴

Van Leeuwen (1995)¹⁵ expanded on this by introducing a framework for analyzing the representation of social actors in discourse. His model highlights techniques such as exclusion, backgrounding, and role allocation as means of marginalization. In a similar vein, Reisigl and Wodak (2001)¹⁶ discourse-historical approach offers insights into how historical and intertextual elements shape nationalistic and exclusionary discourse. This approach is essential for understanding how the political rhetoric surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict draws upon historical narratives to justify ongoing power imbalances and perpetuate the marginalization of Palestinian voices.

4.2 Trump's Discourse on Palestine

Donald Trump's discourse on Palestine has drawn critical attention for its overtly one-sided alignment with Israeli narratives and its marginalization of Palestinian identity, rights, and political agency. Scholars such as Richardson (2020)¹⁷ and Al-Saaidi (2022)¹⁸ observe that his rhetoric often relies on selective terminology, biased metaphors, and implicit delegitimization of Palestinians. This discursive strategy contributes to shaping public opinion and policy frameworks that frame Palestinians as problems to be managed, rather than as political actors with legitimate claims.

Trump's language consistently reflected a broader shift in U.S. political discourse, where Palestinian voices were either silenced or sidelined. His public statements on Palestine rarely acknowledged historical grievances, international law, or the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict. Instead, they frequently depicted Palestinians through a securitized lens, emphasizing terrorism and instability, while celebrating Israeli strength and sovereignty. This binary framing

Van Leeuwen 1995¹⁵
Reisigl and Wodak 2001¹⁶
Richardson 2020¹⁷
Al-Saaidi 2022¹⁸

not only erases complexity but also reinforces an ideological narrative of “good ally” versus “irrational other.”

This approach to discourse aligns with broader patterns of Orientalist and colonial representation. Drawing on Said’s (1979)¹⁹ foundational concept of Orientalism, many scholars—including Pappé (2006)²⁰ has argued that Western political discourse, particularly in the U.S., often casts Palestinians and Arabs in passive, violent, or irrational roles. Trump’s rhetoric echoes and amplifies these tendencies, thereby reinforcing asymmetrical power dynamics and legitimizing exclusionary policies.

4.3 Bridging Discourse and Armed Conflict

A significant body of scholarship has underscored the powerful role of discourse in legitimizing armed conflict, particularly in asymmetrical power contexts such as the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes that language is not a passive medium but an active force that constructs social reality, often normalizing injustice and reinforcing dominant power structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006)²¹. In situations of prolonged violence, discourse serves as a key mechanism through which states rationalize military aggression, securitize resistance, and silence counter-narratives. As Fairclough (1989)²² notes, political language is always ideologically charged; it strategically frames actors, events, and actions in ways that either legitimize state policies or delegitimize opposition. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of Palestinians, who are frequently framed as aggressors or terrorists, while Israeli actions are constructed as measured responses or protective strategies.

Said 1979¹⁹
Pappé 2006²⁰
Fairclough, *ibid*; van Dijk, *ibid*²¹
Fairclough 1989²²

A salient example of this discursive framing is the persistent invocation of Israel's "right to self-defense"—a phrase that has become a hegemonic justification for disproportionate military responses, especially during intensified assaults on Gaza. Scholars such as Pappé (2006)²³ and Finkelstein (2018)²⁴ argue that this rhetorical construct abstracts and decontextualizes the conflict, erasing the structural conditions of occupation, blockade, and systemic oppression. The notion of self-defense is often employed to obscure the power asymmetry between a nuclear-armed state and a besieged, stateless population, casting Israeli violence as reactive and necessary while depicting Palestinian resistance as irrational or illegitimate. This discursive strategy not only sustains legal and moral impunity for Israel but also conditions global audiences to view Palestinian suffering as either inevitable or self-induced, thereby deepening the erasure of Palestinian agency and rights within international discourse.

These entrenched discursive patterns form the foundation for understanding more recent political initiatives—most notably Donald Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century." Framed as a peace proposal, the plan employs rhetorical strategies that echo long-standing discourses used to marginalize Palestinians, particularly through an overemphasis on Israeli security and the near-total erasure of Palestinian historical and legal claims (Awayed-Bishara, 2023)²⁵. By reframing the conflict in managerial terms rather than acknowledging the realities of occupation and settler-colonialism, the plan shifts the discourse from ending injustice to legitimizing the status quo. As Halper (2021)²⁶ argues, the proposal does not aim to resolve the conflict but rather to entrench a one-state reality in which Palestinians are permanently subordinated. Thus, this study applies

Pappé, *ibid*²³
Finkelstein, 2018²⁴
Awayed-Bishara, 2023²⁵
Halper 2021²⁶

CDA to critically examine how Trump's plan reproduces and institutionalizes discourses of domination, erasure, and asymmetry under the guise of diplomacy.

5. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design, centered on the textual analysis of former President Donald Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century" speech. The speech was delivered on January 28, 2020, at the White House in Washington, D.C., alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The analysis aims to uncover how language constructs ideological meanings and reinforces power structures, particularly in the marginalization of Palestinians. The research is grounded in Fairclough's (1992)²⁷ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, which provides a framework for examining the relationship between discourse, ideology, and social power. The model guides the analysis across three levels: (1) identifying thematic content and discourse meanings; (2) analyzing linguistic features such as syntax, semantics, and rhetoric; and (3) contextualizing findings within broader political and institutional settings.

The speech was purposively selected for its geopolitical relevance and its discursive framing of Palestinians and Israelis. The scope of the analysis is limited to discursive strategies directly related to the theme of marginalization. Specifically, the study employs three targeted CDA tools:

1. Lexical Analysis – Investigates word choice and naming to reveal ideological bias, highlighting how Palestinians are framed negatively in contrast to positive portrayals of Israeli and American actors.

Fairclough, 1992²⁷

2. Metaphor Analysis, identifies figurative language potentially used to represent Palestinians and Israelis, in order to explore whether metaphorical constructions reinforce particular narratives, power asymmetries, or binary oppositions.
3. Transitivity Analysis – Explores how agency is distributed in the text, with the aim of identifying whether particular actors (e.g., Palestinians or Israelis) are granted or denied agency, and how this may contribute to patterns of representation or marginalization.

By narrowing the analytical focus to discursive features directly tied to the theme of marginalization, the study offers a critical, in-depth understanding of how Trump's speech contributes to the delegitimization of Palestinian political agency and the reproduction of unequal power relations.

6. Data Analysis

This paper analyzes U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of the Deal of the Century 2020, focusing on the dominant theme of the marginalization of Palestinians. The analysis examines the speech's lexical choices, metaphors, and transitivity structures, exploring how these linguistic features contribute to ideological representation and political messaging.

6.1 Lexical choices

The language choices in Trump's announcement support allegations of racial prejudice and ideological bias against Palestinians while portraying Israel in a favorable and legitimizing light. These choices contribute to a discourse that reinforces structural inequality and delegitimizes Palestinian political agency. The following six extracts from the speech exemplify how specific lexical patterns serve to marginalize Palestinians and elevate Israeli interests.

1. During my **trip to Israel**, I **also met with Palestinian President Abbas in Bethlehem**.
2. We will form **a joint committee with Israel** to convert the conceptual map into a more detailed and calibrated rendering so that recognition can be immediately achieved. We will also work to create a contiguous territory within the future Palestinian state, **when the conditions for statehood are met**, including the firm rejection of terrorism.
3. **I sent a letter today to President Abbas**. I explained to him that the territory allocated for his new state will remain **open and undeveloped for a period of four years...** Under this vision, Jerusalem will **remain Israel's undivided, very important, undivided capital**. But that's no big deal because I've already done that for you... **In truth, Jerusalem is liberated**.
4. Won't be allowed. Peace requires compromise, **but we will never ask Israel to compromise its security**. Can't do that. **I have done a lot for Israel**, moving the United States embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing the Golan Heights, and frankly, perhaps most importantly, getting out of the terrible Iran nuclear deal... **I have to do a lot for the Palestinians** or it just wouldn't be fair.

5. **Israel will work closely** with a wonderful person, a wonderful man, **the King of Jordan**, to ensure that the status quo of the Temple Mount is preserved and strong measures are taken to ensure that all Muslims who wish to visit peacefully and pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque will be able to do so... I want to **thank Prime Minister Netanyahu**. I also want to thank **Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates** for the incredible work they've done helping us with so much and for sending their ambassadors to be with us today.
6. Today's agreement is a **historic opportunity for the Palestinians** to finally achieve an independent state of their very own. After 70 years of little progress, this could be the **last opportunity** they will ever have, and last for a lot of reasons. We'll never have a team as we have right now. **We have a team of people that love the United States, and they love Israel**, and they're very smart, and very, very committed, from your ambassador, David Friedman to Jason and Avi and Jared, and they are all great **deal makers** and they also understand the **other side** and they want the other side to do well because that's the sign of a great deal and they understand that.

The extracts above illustrate an instance of positive in-group presentation and negative out-group presentation; that is, Israelis are favorably evaluated for their flexibility in responding positively to peace talks, while the Palestinians are discredited as untrustworthy and unreliable, and were excluded from being an equal part in the Deal of the Century. It is noteworthy how Trump, in extract one, uses such words to highlight two significant points. Firstly, he states that the meeting

took place during his trip to Israel, which reflects that the top U.S. priorities have always been Israel. Secondly, Trump belittles Abbas and the Palestinians by referring to Bethlehem, which is only a city in their country, thereby treating the Palestinians as a people without an independent state.

Furthermore, the exclusion of the Palestinians as an equal part of the deal is clearly noticeable in Trump's speech when he states "a joint committee with Israel." He proposes forming a team that includes U.S. experts and another from Israel, while there is not even a recognition of the Palestinians as an essential part of the deal. These words carry negative connotations, which are neither neutral nor objective, and thus signal bias. Trump's speech should have been about peace between Palestine and Israel, not peace for Israel alone. This reveals how he is biased toward Israel and seeks to delegitimize certain Palestinian parties, such as Hamas, in order to reinforce the legitimacy of Israel. According to Trump, there will be no Palestinian state if the conditions for its creation are not met. Therefore, Trump's plan gives Mr. Netanyahu everything he wants—and offers the Palestinians very little: a sort-of state that will be truncated and lacking proper sovereignty, as he said, "for when the conditions for statehood are met."

Also, in example 3, giving Abbas a letter outlining the deal—rather than including him as a key player in its creation—demonstrates that Trump is merely imposing the deal on them and forcing them to accept the terms of having an undeveloped and open state for a period of four years. If the Trump administration truly believed that Abbas was a partner and key player in making this deal happen, then he should have been involved in outlining its terms. But this is a huge slap in the face for Abbas, who was hoping for a more prominent role in the negotiations. This reveals U.S. bias and prejudice toward the Palestinians. Netanyahu was prominently mentioned, praised,

and thanked in Trump's speech, while Mahmoud Abbas, the President of Palestine, was only referred to in the context of being instructed to accept the deal and approve the peace process. Furthermore, Trump's assertion that Jerusalem is and will remain Israel's undivided capital reinforces the message that Israel has a legitimate claim to the city.

In addition to the political aspect of this declaration, it also has religious significance. President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a reaffirmation of the belief that Jews were historically raised in Palestine and that their holy place is in Jerusalem. Moreover, it represents a repudiation of the Palestinians' attempt to delegitimize Israel. Significantly, the statement does not make any reference to the Palestinian aspiration for East Jerusalem to serve as their capital. The discourse aims to reinforce the Zionist narrative of the conflict between Palestine and Israel, recognizing the Jewish state with a unified Jerusalem as its capital while denying the Palestinian presence. It displays a clear bias in favor of Israel and the Jews by presenting a positive image of Israel's development, prosperity, and peace, while portraying the Palestinians negatively, disregarding their rights, legal and political demands, and overlooking Israeli violations against them.

In extract 4, two points are noteworthy. Trump claimed that peace in general requires compromises, and then he immediately added that he would never ask Israel to compromise its security. This implies that concessions are expected only from the Palestinians, while Israel will retain the advantage of not having to compromise. While this may have been intended to reassure Israel, it offers no reassurance to the Palestinians. Trump excluded the Palestinians from all his list of priorities. He did not mention their plight, rights, or cause. From beginning to end, Trump's support for Israel was evident, as he said, "I've done a lot

for Israel," exposing his efforts on behalf of their greatest ally in the Middle East. He demonstrates this special relationship by defending Israeli security in the region while promoting the shared interests of the U.S. and Israel in dominating the Arab world. Although he mentioned that he had done a lot for the Palestinians, he implied that they had not yet benefited, even though his peace plan was ready—indicating that the Palestinians had been excluded from the peace process.

Extract 5 overtly shows Trump's bias by marginalizing the Palestinians, as he stated that Israel would work with the King of Jordan to maintain peace in the region. He excluded President Abbas from the process. He also thanked Prime Minister Netanyahu, Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, without any reference to the Palestinians. Trump's team aimed to legitimize the deal by gaining endorsement from Arab governments. In extract 6, referring to the agreement as a historic and last opportunity for the Palestinians to have an independent state indicates that President Trump truly and unwaveringly believes he is offering the "Deal of the Century." It is, in fact, a fantastic deal for Mr. Netanyahu and his administration. More than ever, U.S. views of the Palestinians align with those of Israel. Trump and Netanyahu are not waiting for Palestinian approval of the deal; the announcement came as a provocative short notice to the Palestinian people that the Israeli-American vision is already being implemented to confiscate what remains on the ground. Despite claiming that this is the last opportunity for the Palestinians, and boasting about having a smart and great deal-making team that loves the U.S. and Israel, Trump again neglected the Palestinians, referring to them only as "the other side."

President Donald Trump repeatedly used the word "Israel" in his speech, affirming it as an independent, fully autonomous, and recognized country, more often than he used "Israelis." In contrast, the word "Palestine" was never used to refer to a state, while "Palestinians" was used in a way that rejected statehood and denied recognition of Palestinian independence. Trump appeared to attempt to reinforce a favorable image of the State of Israel, praising it and celebrating its success and progress through the frequent use of the term "Israel" in his discourse.

6.2 Metaphor

A metaphor is typically one of the hallmarks of effective political speech, as it provides a logical core around which an argument can cohere. To a large extent, Trump's use of metaphors reflects his ideological stance regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In this section, the researcher examines Trump's use of metaphors in his speech and explores their implications (see Table 1.1).

Table (1.1): Metaphors of the Marginalization of the Palestinians

No.	Marginalization of Palestinians
1.	"The hearts and history of our people are woven together "(addressed to the Israeli audience)
2.	"...those seeking to use them as pawns to advance terrorism and extremism."
3.	"Palestinians have been trapped in a cycle of terrorism, poverty, and violence

In the first example, Trump uses a metaphor to describe the hearts and histories of the American and Israeli peoples as a fabric woven together, suggesting unity and harmony between them. This metaphor emphasizes that Israel is the United States' strongest ally in the Middle East. As a result, we gain deeper insight into Trump's ideology, which marginalizes and excludes the Palestinians. In the second example, Trump clearly employs a metaphor to portray the Palestinians as pawns used to support terrorism and extremism. This metaphor implies that the Palestinians lack agency and are manipulated by more powerful forces. Trump identifies these forces as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other so-called enemies of peace, thereby legitimizing his exclusion of the Palestinians from being vital participants in the Deal of the Century.

In the third example, Trump depicts the Palestinians as animals trapped without knowing how to escape, with terrorism, poverty, and violence represented as human-like entities imprisoning them. According to Trump, the Palestinians are politically powerless and unable to resist terrorism on their own; therefore, they need the intervention of the United States and Israel. Since their decisions are allegedly influenced by external groups such as Hamas, Trump argues they should not be considered a fundamental part of the peace deal's construction. All three metaphors are negative and serve to delegitimize the Palestinians, justifying Trump's biased stance and actions toward them.

6.3 Transitivity

Marginalization is defined as the act of placing or maintaining someone in a weak or insignificant position within a community or organization (Merriam-Webster, 2014)²⁸. It also refers to the

Merriam-Webster, 2014²⁸

persistent experiences of inequity and hardship caused by prejudice, social stigma, and stereotypes. Furthermore, marginalization encompasses systemic mechanisms that exclude individuals or groups from political discourse, social negotiation, and economic participation. Consequently, challenges related to access and marginalization significantly affect underrepresented and disadvantaged populations and nations (Al-Saaidi, 2022)²⁹. Marginalization manifests in various forms and affects diverse groups. However, it is generally categorized into three main types: social, economic, and political marginalization. In many emerging and developing democracies, large segments of the population remain politically disenfranchised due to factors such as ethnicity, religion, age, disability, gender, or sexual orientation (Asghar & Akhter, 2022)³⁰.

This research focuses on Donald Trump's announcement of the "Deal of the Century" and the ways in which his discourse centers Israel's security, safety, and right to self-defense while marginalizing the Palestinian people by neglecting their rights to self-determination and equal coexistence. In the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump addressed the global community from Washington, D.C., yet the Palestinians—arguably the most affected party—were not even represented. Moreover, the deal was formulated without any Palestinian input, violating nearly all humanitarian standards and principles of impartial conflict resolution. The biased and unjust nature of both the plan and its presentation may provoke further tensions and is likely to embolden hardliners on both sides who oppose a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In this section, the researcher examines how Donald Trump employs the transitivity system in his discourse to reinforce the marginalization of Palestinians. Specifically, Trump utilizes two

Al-Saaidi , 2022²⁹
Asghar & Akhter, 2022³⁰

transitivity processes—mental and relational—to reflect his failure to provide Palestinians with a meaningful opportunity to participate in the creation of the Deal of the Century. The mental process refers to acts of sensing, which include perception, emotion, and cognition. Perception is associated with the five senses; affection relates to emotional responses; and cognition involves thinking or understanding. In such processes, there are two participants: the sensor—a conscious human being who perceives, feels, or thinks—and the phenomenon—that which is perceived, felt, or thought about. According to (Anggraini, 2018)³¹, the sensor is always a sentient individual capable of mental activity. For illustration and analysis, refer to Table 1.2.

Table (1.2): Transitivity Analysis of Mental processes associated with Palestinians

No.	Sensor	Mental Process	Phenomenon
1.	I	Want	this deal to be a great deal for the Palestinians.
2.	They	Want	the other side to do well,
3.	I	Want	you (President Abbas) to know that if you choose the path to peace, America and many other countries we will be there
4.	They	Understand	the other side
5.	I	Know	they (Palestinians) are ready to escape their tragic past and realize a great destiny

Anggraini, 2018³¹

The first, second, and third examples in Table 1.2 are mental processes of affection. The mental process of affection is indicated by the verb “want.” This verb expresses desire, which is why it indicates the process of feeling. The participants who have the role of Sensor are “I” and “they,” and what is being sensed here—“this deal to be a great deal for the Palestinians,” “the other side to do well,” and “you (President Abbas) to know that if you choose the path to peace, America and many other countries will be there”—is called the Phenomenon. These clauses, on their surface, express Donald Trump's willingness for the deal to be good for the Palestinians. The mental process appeals to the audience's inner feelings to make a clear and emphatic connection between their political ideas, aspirations, expectations, and hopes. Trump wants to convince the audience that he is working for the sake of the Palestinians, while his actual actions prove the exact opposite, since there wasn't any participation of the Palestinians in the Deal. The third example is obvious proof of Trump's ideology when he conditioned his support for the Palestinians on their acceptance of the deal. It means if they don't choose the path designed for them—which he claims is a peaceful path—there will be no support from America or other countries. This is clear evidence of the exclusion of the Palestinians from composing the deal and making their own decisions.

In the fourth example, the mental process is categorized as cognition. The mental process of cognition is shown by the verb “understand,” which indicates the process of understanding. Here, the Senser is “they” as the people who understand, and the Phenomenon is “the other side” as the thing that is understood. The pronoun “They” as the Senser refers to the committee formed by Trump to make the deal. Trump referred to the Palestinians as “the other side,” reflecting that they are considered an out-group. Also, this mirrors Trump's marginalization of the Palestinians, since the committee did not include any representative from the Palestinian side. So, the process

of truly understanding a party that is excluded from being part of the deal is, to a large extent, difficult.

In the fifth example, the mental process is known as cognition. The verb "know" shows the mental process of cognition, which indicates the process of knowing. The Senser is "I" as the one who knows the Phenomenon, while the Phenomenon is "they (Palestinians) are ready to escape their tragic past and realize a great destiny." In this case, Trump is the Senser, and he wants to connect with his audience by persuading them that the Palestinians are trapped in a traumatic history that is similar to a prison. He thus saw his plan as a means for the Palestinians to escape this invisible prison.

The relational process is ideal to describe the intricate links between certain abstract entities, since it sounds definite. The process of relationships is a process of being. It may be split into two categories: identifying relation and attributive relation. The first refers to the characteristics an object possesses or the category it falls within. The other signifies uniformity between one thing and another. It is frequently used to describe both people and things. The process explains how traditional ideas and their beliefs relate to one another as a consequence. Such elaboration can accomplish the president's goals of having the audience accept the logic naturally and subconsciously and making them happily accept the exclusion of the Palestinians from the speech. Look at Table 1.3.

Table (1.3): Transitivity Analysis of Relational processes associated with Palestinians

No.	Token	Identifying/Relational	Value
1.	Palestinians	have been	the primary pawn in this regional adventurism
2.	Today's agreement	Is	a historic opportunity for the Palestinians to finally achieve an independent state of their very own.
No.	Carrier	Attributive/Relational	Attribute
3.	To what extent You (President Abbas)	Are	ready to lead the Palestinian people to statehood.

The type of relational process is identifying. In the first example, the identifying process is indicated by "have been," which functions as a verb. The identifying mode in this process reflects that one entity is used to identify another. Here, the token "Palestinians" is identified by the value "the primary pawn in this regional adventurism." This implies that Trump compares the relationship between the Palestinians and the region to that of a pawn and a player. This shows that Donald Trump justifies his decision not to involve the Palestinians in the process of creating the deal by viewing them as pawns being used by others. The verb used in the second example is "is." The token "Today's agreement" is identified by the value "a historic opportunity for the Palestinians to finally achieve an independent state of their very own." Trump's depiction of his

deal as a historic opportunity for the Palestinians indicates that they were not included in this deal.

Example 3 contains a relational process which is categorized as an attributive type. The attributive mode is encoded by the verb “are,” which is used to assign the process of being. The two participants in this process are “You” as the carrier and “ready to lead the Palestinian people to statehood” as the attribute. Here, the quality of the attribute is assigned to the carrier. The pronoun “you” in the carrier refers to President Abbas. So, Trump tries to portray President Abbas as the one who is going to lead the Palestinians to their independence and to having their own state—but only if he does not reject the deal, in which the Palestinians were excluded from taking part.

7. Discussion

This study reveals that Trump’s 2020 “Deal of the Century” was not a genuine peace initiative but a strategic discourse that marginalized Palestinian rights by replacing justice-based solutions with economic incentives. The plan reframed the conflict as a developmental challenge, ignoring the core issues of occupation and sovereignty. Palestinians were portrayed not as political agents, but as obstacles to peace or passive aid recipients—aligning with Edward Said’s critique of how dominant powers construct the “Other.” The plan erased Palestinian claims to sovereignty, using technocratic language such as “opportunity,” “corridor,” and “investment” to obscure structural injustice. This rhetorical approach confirms Weizman’s and Pappé’s arguments that settler colonialism operates through international complicity and linguistic concealment. The absence of any reference to Israeli violations of international law, coupled with the portrayal of Israel as a peace-seeking democracy, reinforced this erasure.

The 2020 plan also reflected a broader Anglo-Zionist and neoliberal ideology, rooted in settler logic and corporate interests. Trump's personal and political identity as a businessman aligned with the plan's economic framing, which offered Palestinians financial compensation in exchange for surrendering political rights. These incentives primarily served global financial actors and Israeli settler expansion, while treating Palestinians as clients of a privatized peace. Trump's more recent statements—such as his proposal to “buy Gaza” and transform it into a “Riviera project,” and his calls to relocate Palestinians abroad—do not represent a departure from the 2020 plan, but rather its logical continuation. These ideas reveal a strategy of demographic engineering, framed in the language of development (Al-Jazeera, 2025)³². As Alsemeir et al. (2024)³³ demonstrate in their analysis of Netanyahu's 2024 UN speech, developmental rhetoric is often weaponized to obscure dispossession and justify territorial expansion.

This shift also reflects the erosion of international legal norms. Trump's rejection of the ICC, his disregard for UN mechanisms, and his unwavering support for Israeli military actions exemplify how global accountability is being undermined. As Alsemeiri et al. (2025)³⁴ argue, international law is increasingly subordinated to imperial interests, where the logic of power eclipses legal principle. This imperial logic extends into domestic U.S. policy. The suppression of academic freedom—particularly around Palestine—and the criminalization of student protests illustrate what Alsemeiri et al. (2025)³⁵ call the rise of the “authoritarian university,” where dissent is punished and pro-Israeli narratives dominate. U.S. campuses have become extensions of foreign policy, enforcing compliance through censorship.

Al-Jazeera, 2025³²
Alsemeir et al, 2024³³
Alsemeiri et al, 2025³⁴
Alsemeiri et al, ibid³⁵

Trump's global rhetoric further illustrates an imperial imagination unbound by law or diplomacy. His comments on annexing Greenland, taking Canada, and controlling the Panama and Suez Canals (Gedeon, 2025)³⁶ expose a worldview steeped in settler entitlement and corporate dominance. These declarations, though provocative, align with the same ideological foundation that shaped the Deal of the Century. In sum, Trump's 2020 plan serves as a discursive blueprint for racial capitalism and settler colonialism, legitimized through economic language and imperial mythology. It not only marginalizes Palestinian rights but exemplifies a broader collapse of international norms, human rights, and democratic values. As Alsemeiri et al. (2025)³⁷ argue, this collapse is systemic—driven by a global turn toward authoritarianism and enforced through power, exclusion, and dispossession.

8. Conclusion

This study critically examined Donald Trump's 2020 "Deal of the Century" speech as a case of weaponized language against the Palestinian people, revealing how discourse is used to legitimize occupation, marginalize resistance, and construct Palestinians as obstacles to peace. However, the research does not limit itself to that speech alone, it also considers Trump's more recent statements to trace the continuity and evolution of his rhetorical strategy. Together, these discursive patterns expose a broader imperial logic that underpins Trump's worldview. Trump emerges in this discourse as the unapologetic face of American imperialism: the white master figure who assumes the right to dominate and exploit others. His language renders people into mere numbers and sovereign nations into puppets, easily manipulated to serve hegemonic interests. This study reveals the urgent need to reformulate international law, not simply to restrain violence, but to protect human dignity from the unchecked ambitions of imperial power.

Gedeon, 2025³⁶
Alsemeiri et al, *ibid*³⁷

Ultimately, the findings underscore that discourse is not neutral; it is a site of struggle, where ideology, power, and resistance are constantly negotiated.

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