

Critical Analysis of the Political Media Discourse of “Haider Al-Abbadi” the Former Iraqi Prime Minister

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Abstract--- *Critical Discourse Analysis is a method recently has been developed to analyze verbal texts especially political discourse. This study uses framework adopted from discourse and manipulation to discover discursive structures within the Iraqi political speeches and find out the ideologies underlying them. The focus of the study is on media political discourse in Iraq, more specifically, televised speeches of the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi in mid-2017. In the theoretical part of the study, critical discourse analysis, media discourse and political discourse are investigated. In the practical part, the data is analyzed qualitatively. The data consists of 20 political speeches of Haider Al-Abadi televised in 2017. By using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study tries to analyze these political speeches critically to reveal the hidden agenda and ideology which are concealed from ordinary audience, and to disclose the discourse devices used by Iraqi politicians to gain power and authority. One of the inferences of the study is that Haider Al-Abadi, like many other Arab and Muslim populists, tries to use religious symbols to convince the audience that he is doing right, he has projects to improve the life of Iraqi people, and he is fighting terrorism and corruption.*

Keywords--- *Critical Discourse Analysis; Political Media Discourse; Haider Al-Abbadi; Kurdistan region.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an offshoot of discourse analysis. Its roots can be traced back to critical linguistics, Frankfurt school and Marxism. Recently CDA has been used quiet often to study text and talk, especially political texts, written and spoken, and media scripts. It emerged from Critical Linguistics, critical semiotics and from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse and communication. CDA attempts at uncovering of implicit ideologies in texts. As Widdowson (2007) [13] states, "those who follow this approach are particularly concerned with the use (and abuse) of language for the exercise of socio-political power."

CDA is a multidisciplinary approach; there is no one way of doing CDA. Research in CDA varies in style and focus. These differences may mirror the diverse theoretical or philosophical orientations of researchers. The methodology followed by Rashidi & Souzandehfar (2010) [7], Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, to mention just few, are different. Despite these differences in research styles, all critical discourse analysts try to explore the role of

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discourse in the production and reproduction of power relations within social structures. In particular, they focus on the ways in which discourse sustains and legitimizes social inequalities. Hence, CDA has a clear political agenda.

The approach makes use of language, social norms and communication. The main idea of CDA is that texts contain recurring structures and expressions (discursive practices) that are themselves embedded in 'social practice'. Critical discourse analysts believe that ways of talking produce and reproduce ways of thinking, and ways of thinking can be manipulated via choices about grammar, style, wording and every other aspect of discourse, [4].

CDA is not only interested in revealing the mediating role of discourse but also makes a plea for political engagement—finding points of entry to support marginalized groups in society. Martín and van Dijk (1997) [5] states that: power is not only a way to control the acts of other people, but also their mind, and such mind control, which is again at the basis of action control, is largely discursive; i.e., discourse plays a fundamental role in the cycle of the production of social power.

The approach focuses on power, ideology and language. It tries to reveal the hidden agenda behind the use and abuse of language by powerful people. CDA is the uncovering of implicit ideologies in texts. It unveils the underlying ideological prejudices and therefore the exercise of power in texts. Power relationship, ideologies and identities are created and naturalized by the manipulative style of language. CDA is equipped with some devices to detect power, manipulation and ideologically biased language, [6, 10].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Discourse and Media

One cannot discuss discourse without media, since nowadays media is everywhere. In modern societies the life of individuals are occupied by media channels; people are exposed to media every hour in their lives, especially news on politics and politicians. It is argued that as politics became a televised activity, first in the USA, and then spreading to the rest of Western World, politicians were increasingly transformed into TV performers. Recently, the study of the relationship among discourse, politics and media, has developed and introduced new terms like political discourse analysis, spin-doctors, media-ized politics, and media discourse, [1].

Television is a widespread medium in modern life. Politicians try to manipulate this medium to exercise their power and control over the mind of ordinary people. Many genres of political discourse, such as parliamentary debates, political speeches, laws, propagandas, etc., are largely defined in contextual, rather than in textual, terms. Political discourse is not primarily defined by topic or style, but rather by who speaks to whom, as what, on what occasion, with what goals and on what medium, i.e., political discourse is especially political because of its functions in political process.

B. Discourse and Manipulation

Those who are in control use different methods to manipulate the discourse and communication mediums. Wodak (2001) [14] believes that 'Manipulation' is one of the crucial notions of CDA that requires further theoretical analysis. He suggests a triangulated approach to study manipulation. The three angles of manipulation are discourse as a form of social power abuse, cognitive mind control and discursive interaction. Socially, manipulation is defined

as illegitimate domination confirming social inequality. Cognitively, manipulation as mind control involves the interference with processes of understanding, the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies. Discursively, manipulation generally involves the usual forms and formats of ideological discourse, such as emphasizing our good things, and emphasizing their bad things. At all these levels of analysis it is shown how manipulation is different from legitimate mind control, for instance in persuasion and providing information, for instance by stipulating that manipulation is in the best interest of the dominated group and against the best interests of dominated groups. Finally, this theory is illustrated by a partial analysis of a speech by Tony Blair in the House of Commons legitimating the participation of the UK in the US-led war against Iraq in 2003, [11].

Van Dijk (2006) [9] finds out that to understand and analyze manipulation in discourse, one need to examine and study the environment and the social context. How powerful people can control the mind of the audience or the ordinary people, [12]. Powerful people, such as politicians, are powerful because they can manipulate other people's mind and behavior. They are powerful because they have the means of manipulation like money, social status, religious power, media, etc. He believes these politicians are powerful because they are able to first of all control the mind of others, that is, of the beliefs of recipients, and indirectly a control of the actions of recipients based on such manipulated beliefs.

C. Who is Haider Al- Abbadi?

The Iraqi former prime minister, Haider Jawad al-Abbadi is one of the politicians who became a prominent figure in Iraq after the collapse of Saddam's Baathist Regime. He was born in 1952 in Baghdad. He gained a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Technology / Baghdad. He earned his Master's Degree in 1977 and his Ph.D. in 1980 in the field of Electronic and Electrical Engineering from the Manchester University, UK. He returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 and became the minister of communications. In 2006 he became a member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives. And finally became prime minister on August 11, 2014 [3].

During the years 1999 to 2003, he was a teacher of the Science of (علوم القرآن و آيات الاحكام والتفسير) -- The Koran and verses of judgments and interpretation) in London. He has published a book entitled: (المختصر في علوم القرآن) The Summary in the Sciences of the Quran). He has many research and religious studies in English language [3].

III. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study depends on van Dijk's (2006) [9] framework adopted from discourse and manipulation to discover discursive structures within the Iraqi political speeches and find out the ideologies underlying them. The study uses Van Dijk's positive self-presentation and negative other presentation to analyze the speeches of Iraqi prime minister. This tool is very typical in this biased account of the facts in favor of the speaker's or writer's own interests, while blaming negative situations and events on opponents or on the others (immigrants, terrorists, youths, minorities, etc.).

The data of the study is taken from media, more specifically, televised speeches of the Iraqi former Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi in mid-2017, more specifically from June, 2017 until mid-December, 2017. The study sample is 20 sermons starting from June and ending in mid-December 2017. It is a period of three months before the independence referendum of Kurdistan, and three months after the announcement of the success of the referendum [8].

IV. DATA ANALYSES

Mr. Abbadi was trying hard to present himself in a positive image, a desirable situation, and a good factor. On the other hand, he insists on showing the other in a negative, undesirable state and a bad factor. In this context, he uses all available methods, including religious, sectarian, nationalism and mythical.

In this chapter of the research, we will present and analyze a number of the most prominent methods that Mr. Abadi resorted to, in order to achieve his political purposes in the period of time that the research is interested in.

A. *Attempts to legitimize the discourse*

Mr. Abbadi always tries to legitimize his speech by using some Meaningful vocabularies for example: He always starts with (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ): In the name of God the Most Merciful, and the Word of (الله - God) was used 39 times in 20 televised speeches, and many times used the phrase: (الله اكبر كبيرا والحمد لله كثيرا) "God is great and thank God so much".

He repeats all these words at a rate of 5 times, such as (our Islamic nation, Islam, Muslims, the Islamic nation) in order to give religious legitimacy to everything that will come after the: (In the name of God the Most Merciful).

The use of the term (المرجعية - religious reference) and its authority, is also one of the ways to legitimize the content of his sermons.

For example, He repeats all these words at a rate of 5 times at the beginning, middle or at the end of his speeches, such as: (المرجعية الرشيدة) - Good religious authority, (المرجعية الدينية العليا) - The supreme religious authority, (المرجعية الدينية الحكيمة) - The wise religious authority, (الامام علي عليه السلام - Imam Ali peace be upon him). He does all this because he knows very well how these expressions affect the feelings and emotions of the Shiite masses inside and outside Iraq.

Mr. Abbadi used the name (Federal Court) 15 times for one purpose: refusing to accept the issue of the referendum on independence which took place for the independence of the Kurdistan Region in September 25 2017, and its results, trying all his efforts to give constitutional legitimacy to his unconstitutional decisions against the people of the Kurdistan Region.

Dependence on the concept of martyrdom: On many occasions, Mr. Abbadi repeated words such as: Father of martyrs, martyrs, Martyrs souls, Revolution of Martyrs, Martyrs and Victims, Martyrs and the wounded... In order to stimulate Shiite sectarianism among the families of the dead and injured members of the Shiite militia during their military operations against ISIS (Da'ash) and against the Kurdish Peshmerga at Oct.16.2017 and few days later.

The concept of martyrdom in Shiite culture has a special status and magical effect and is directly related to the story of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was killed in 680 AD, by another Islamic sect in a dispute with him for power!

Putting himself in the place of the people and speaks on behalf of them:

Mr. Abbadi repeats, 34 times the phrases: Our honorable people, our dear people, our people, our people and heroic forces, our mighty people, the sacrifices of our precious people, our Iraqi people, our people's victory, the components of our people, Our Mujahid People. Mr. Abbadi (in an attempt to legitimize everything he does) wants to tell the people: Look at me, I do everything in your name, on your behalf, and for your benefit.

Mr. Abbadi used the term (our Kurdish people) only once... deliberately diverts (Kurds) to (our people)! Even though he knows very well, that the Kurdish people have heard many of these resonances and hypocritical expressions from Saddam Hussein, Jaafari and Maliki. He also used the word "Akrad" instead of "Kurds". Even though he knows that the designation of (Akrad) like (A'arab), holds within it a meaning that there is no (a nation called Kurds)! But (Akrad) and they are not more than some tribal groups!

B. The Dualism of Good and Evil

In this field, Mr. Abbadi used more than 16 times the word "corruption" in his speeches: "Fighting corruption", "corruption and terrorism", "our fight against corruption", "Corruption and waste of public money", "corruption and organized crime", "preventing corruption", "terrorists and corruption," Administrative and financial corruption". The aim is to present himself as a representative of the Good that fights the Evil of corruption! While he knows very well how words and phrases that contain the meaning of "fighting corruption" affect the simple Iraqi citizens, and making him a hero in their eyes.

C. The equation of: "We" with "I" and "Us" with "Me"

Mr. Abbadi used words such as (we), (we are determined), (we face terrorism), (we are coming), 49 times. While he used the word "I" 50 times.

The purpose of this is:

To point to the equality of (me) and (us). By this way, he wants to say: (I am) not alone, because (I) is equal to (us)!, I'm a lot more, I'm strong and capable!.

He wants to say: (all of you) do not exist unless you become (Me). There is nothing called (you) unless you become (me).

(I) is equal to (you) then (all of you) is equal to (Me). (All of you) merged into (Me). For this reason (I) became a substitute for (You), and (All of you) become (We), then at last: (We) is nothing more than (Me).

There is another interpretation to (we) which can be again another tool of positive self-presentation. Eriksen (2015) [2] believes that the word 'we' is situational in that it can refer to a variety of collectivities depending on the context. It implies both inclusion and exclusion: by logical extension, the word 'we' implies 'they'. Of particular interest is the question why certain ways of delineating a collective identity become empirically predominant while

others are forgotten. This is not an issue of mere academic interest in a world which witnesses the upsurge of ethnic, religious and national identities – sometimes from below, in opposition to the state, sometimes from above, in defense of the state– while other forms of identification (based on, say, place or class) tend to be less visible. Regarding the contemporary state, the issue at hand concerns who is to be included in the state, and what it entails to be included.

D. Iraq, Kurdistan and Arabism

Mr. Abbadi used the word "Iraq" 128 times in different ways, such as "One Iraq" (United Iraq) (the unity of Iraq). While the term "Democratic Iraq" was mentioned only once! And the terms "Federal Iraq" was not mentioned at all! The mention of (Iraq) as a state and stripping it of its constitutional and international identity is a violation of the Constitution and carries within it bad intentions, because the state that Mr. Abbadi calls (one Iraq) have an official name in the Iraqi constitution, which is the (Federal Republic of Iraq), not the “one Iraq”!. And it is quite clear what is the deferent between them! In our opinion, this is because Mr. Abbadi does not recognize the concepts of federalism, democracy and the constitution.

While he referred to the name of Kurdistan 12 times when he expressed his discontent and rejection of the “independence referendum”, which was conducted in Kurdistan. It is noteworthy that he called it a "referendum of separation" rather than “Independence”. The purpose is to accuse the Kurds of rebelling against the constitution and separation from Iraq in order to incite the anger of the Iraqi Arab street against the Kurds, thereby diverting attention from the right to self-determination of a people annexed to the Kingdom of Iraq 90 years ago against its will. He used the name (Arabs) 48 times! While not mentioning the name (Kurds) nor even once! He only mentioned (our people in Kurdistan) once, instead of (Kurdish and Kurdistan people), while (Kurdistan Region) has been mentioned in Article 117 of the Iraqi Constitution.

E. Legend of Heroes

Mr. Haider al-Abbadi used 38 times terms such as: (Heroes) (fighting heroes) (The courage of our heroes) (Heroes of Iraq) (Our heroic forces) (our heroic armed forces) (heroic Iraqi forces) (Fighting) (Force) (Law enforcement) (Imposition of security) (Imposition of power). All these concepts reflect the culture of violence, blood, and cruelty that has deep roots within the history of conflict about power and wealth, which dominated Middle East for hundreds of years. The use of words fraught with violence and cruelty is evidence of Mr. Abbadi's mentality and his psychological state.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study of twenty political speeches by the former Prime Minister of Iraq, which was presented during the six months from June to December 2017, concluded the following results: He abuses language and discourse by using the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation to control the mind of his audience and present Shi'a Arabs as superior to other Iraqi ethnics. Because of the weakness of logic and rationality in his speeches, Mr. Haider al-Abbadi, like any Arab (Shi'a) populist politician, used the name of Allah, the imams and the Shiite reference in all his sermons, targeting the feelings of the Shiite masses. He takes advantage of the public's

lack of knowledge about the constitution and its articles, so he puts his ideas and ideological ambitions as if they were inspired by the spirit of the constitution and its text. His strategic goal is to serve a (Shi'a Iraq) at the expense of a (Federal democratic Iraq), or even an (Arab Iraq). The connotations carried within these speeches are an early alert for the future of Iraq and Peaceful coexistence between all these nationalities, religions and sects within the State of Iraq.

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