

Pragma-Discourse analysis of the United States' 20-Point Gaza-Israel Peace Framework

Isah Muhammad

Abstract

This study investigates the United States' 20-point plan, unveiled in September 2025, which seeks to end the Gaza-Israel conflict and outline a conditional pathway toward Palestinian statehood. The main objective is to examine how linguistic and pragmatic choices within the plan construct peace, power, and legitimacy between the two parties. The analysis adopts Searle's speech act theory, conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis as its theoretical framework, focusing on the performative and pragmatic functions of the speech acts embedded in each of the plan's twenty clauses. Methodologically, the study employs a pragma-discourse analytical approach, treating each clause as a performative utterance to uncover implicit meanings and power relations. The findings reveal that, although the plan emphasizes humanitarian aid and reconstruction, it systematically prioritizes Israeli security concerns while deferring substantive Palestinian sovereignty. The study concludes by recommending that future peace proposals should adopt more balanced linguistic framing to ensure equitable representation of both parties and to avoid reproducing geopolitical hierarchies through discourse.

Keywords: Pragmatics, speech acts, peace process, Palestinian statehood, ideology

1. Introduction

Peace proposals and post-conflict frameworks are not neutral diplomatic instruments; they are complex linguistic artefacts that construct particular visions of reality through discourse. The words and metaphors used in such texts perform strategic acts of persuasion, legitimization, and identity framing. Within the Gaza-Israel context, where conflict narratives have long been contested, each proposal for peace is itself a pragmatic act, an attempt to re-define agency, morality, and responsibility through language. This study examines the *United States 20-Point Gaza-Israel Peace Framework* (2025) as a site of political communication, analysing how pragmatic and discourse strategies encode ideological meanings and shape perceptions of peace, security, and reconstruction.

Political discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1998), and Charteris-Black (2004) have shown that language in policy texts reflects and reproduces relations of power. Similarly, pragmatics scholars including Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Grice (1975) argue that speech acts and implicatures reveal the performative intentions underlying communication. When combined, these perspectives illuminate how political texts do not merely describe social realities but enact them. In the case of Gaza, diplomatic discourse operates as both a performative commitment to peace and a strategic attempt to manage international legitimacy.

The U.S. proposal, hereafter referred to as *the Framework*, outlines a detailed plan for ceasefire, governance, and economic redevelopment of Gaza after the 2023–2025 war. Its 20 clauses call for deradicalisation, demilitarisation, international oversight, and a “technocratic” transitional government chaired by external

actors. At first glance, the document appears technocratic and humanitarian; yet, its pragmatic texture suggests deeper ideological functions. Terms such as *deradicalised zone*, *rehabilitation*, and *New Gaza* invoke metaphorical schemas that construct Palestinians as patients, Gaza as a reconstruction site, and peace as a managerial process. These choices call for linguistic scrutiny because they naturalise power hierarchies and legitimise externally imposed governance models.

The study therefore interrogates the Framework's underlying communicative and ideological structures through a pragma-discourse lens. Specifically, it explores (a) the speech acts that perform policy intent, (b) the implicatures that conceal or soften coercive meanings, and (c) the ideological discourses that shape the representation of actors and agency. The research asks:

1. What pragmatic strategies and discourse features are employed in the Framework to legitimise its goals?
2. How do these linguistic choices construct representations of Gaza, Hamas, and the United States?
3. What ideological positions are embedded in the text's linguistic and rhetorical structure?

The rationale for this study lies in the need to extend pragmatic and critical discourse approaches to real-time peace documentation, particularly in the Middle East, where policy language is often accepted as technical rather than ideological. By examining the Framework as discourse, this paper contributes to the interdisciplinary dialogue between linguistics, international relations, and peace studies. It also highlights how political texts function as instruments of social engineering, transforming humanitarian vocabulary into vehicles of soft power.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant scholarship on linguistic and pragmatic studies of political discourse and peace communication. Section 3 outlines the theoretical foundation combining Speech Act Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. Section 4 describes the methodology adopted for textual analysis. Section 5 presents and discusses the findings, while Section 6 concludes with the study's implications for understanding the pragmatics of peace discourse in conflict settings.

2. Literature review

Scholarly work on the Israel-Palestine crisis consistently demonstrates that the conflict is not sustained purely through military confrontation or diplomatic stalemate but through deeper historical structures, socio-political asymmetries, and discursive mechanisms that shape how actors, events, and responsibilities are represented. Foundational analyses by Bar-Tal (2013) conceptualise the conflict as an intractable socio-psychological formation, drawing upon collective memory, fear, and entrenched narratives of victimhood. His findings establish that political texts, policy frameworks, speeches, communiqüs, play a central role in reproducing these repertoires by determining whose suffering is foregrounded and whose agency is backgrounded.

Studies have traced how settler-colonial logics, territorial dispossession, and the long-term securitisation of Palestinian identity have shaped the linguistic architecture of peace proposals over many decades. Their analyses show that official discourse routinely recasts structural domination as security necessity or humanitarian intervention, thereby embedding asymmetry into the very grammar of diplomatic

communication. These historical dynamics are mirrored in the contemporary political economy of Gaza (Khalidi, 2020; Pappe, 2006; Masalha, 2012; Shlaim, 2014).

Roy's (2011) extensive study shows that the enclave has been systematically transformed into a humanitarian space without sovereignty, where economic precarity is not an accidental by-product of conflict but the outcome of sustained political design. Her work shows that international aid frameworks, reconstruction plans, and technical policy language often function as instruments of governance, distributing resources while simultaneously constraining Palestinian autonomy. Peteet (2017) adds a spatial and bureaucratic dimension to this analysis, showing how checkpoints, mobility restrictions, and administrative regimes produce fragmentation not only on the ground but also in how Gaza is discursively constructed as an exceptional, securitised space requiring management rather than genuine political resolution. These studies collectively establish that any contemporary peace-related text emerges within a material context defined by occupation, blockade, and institutionalised asymmetry, and that such texts often naturalise these constraints through ostensibly neutral administrative vocabulary.

Research on political communication deepens this understanding by showing how metaphors, framing devices, and lexical choices shape public perception and policy reception in the conflict. Farsakh (2011) demonstrates that debates around sovereignty, particularly the viability of one-state versus two-state models, are linguistically structured through demographic metaphors, territorial framings, and moral narratives that subtly guide interpretations of what constitutes a "realistic" solution. In parallel, Gordon and Perugini (2015) examine how human rights discourse itself can be mobilised as a technology of domination, lending moral legitimacy to practices that reinforce differential control. Their work reveals that even normative vocabularies of protection and accountability may displace or obscure structural violence when selectively applied. Collectively, these studies emphasise that political texts are not neutral containers of policy but ideological acts that allocate agency, distribute moral standing, and prescribe acceptable forms of political behaviour.

Recent empirical analyses extend these theoretical insights into the 2023–2025 period, focusing particularly on Gaza's representation during the escalations of those years. Corpus-driven and discourse-analytic studies identify recurring metaphorical patterns, Gaza as a wounded or diseased body, conflict as a virus requiring containment, peace as reconstruction or rehabilitation, that reinforce interventionist and securitised framings consistent with historical scholarship (Bar-Tal, 2013; Shlaim, 2000; Roy, 2011). These metaphors frequently appear in Western political briefings, international organisations' reports, and official Israeli and Palestinian statements. Analysts note that such metaphors are not merely stylistic: they activate cognitive models that legitimise external oversight, technocratic governance, and incremental or conditional sovereignty.

Furthermore, emerging commentary on the 2025 U.S. peace framework situates it within a long lineage of externally engineered post-conflict plans characterised by managerial peacebuilding, conditional sovereignty, and security-led sequencing. These studies argue that policy documents of this type often link peace to economic liberalisation, stabilisation forces, and supervisory international bodies. In this sense, they echo the concerns articulated by Roy (2011) and Gordon and Perugini (2015), suggesting that the grammatical structures and lexical choices of such plans, phrases like "capacity-building," "pathway," "reform," "assessment mechanisms", operate to normalise dependency and defer substantive sovereignty. Critics

describe these frameworks as advancing a “new colonial peace,” in which reconstruction is framed as a benevolent gift contingent upon compliance, thereby aligning with Bar-Tal’s (2013) findings on delegitimising narratives and Khalidi’s (2020) account of historically entrenched asymmetry.

Across these bodies of literature, a consistent gap emerges: while there is extensive scholarship on media representations, historical roots, and humanitarian dimensions of the Gaza–Israel conflict, systematic pragma-discourse analyses of full policy texts remain rare. Most studies analyse speeches, negotiations, or media excerpts rather than conducting clause-by-clause examinations of an official, contemporary peace framework. The integration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, pragmatic speech-act analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis has been proposed in theoretical discussions but remains underapplied in the context of formal policy texts issued by external powers. This absence is striking given the central role these documents play in shaping international decision-making, humanitarian strategies, and the conditions of Palestinian life.

The present study directly addresses this lacuna by offering a comprehensive pragma-discourse analysis of the full 20-point framework. By combining metaphor identification, illocutionary analysis, and CDA, the study builds upon the historical and critical insights of the literature while providing a fine-grained account of how peace is linguistically constructed as a conditional, technocratic, and asymmetrically administered process. This approach situates the document not only within the geopolitical landscape of the conflict but also within the broader scholarly tradition that interrogates how language constitutes power, legitimacy, and political possibility in the Israel-Palestine crisis.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Speech act theory: The performative power of policy language

Originally developed by Austin (1962) and extended by Searle (1969, 1979), Speech Act Theory posits that utterances are not merely descriptive but performative, they *do* things in the world. Austin distinguished between three levels of speech acts: the locutionary act (the literal expression), the illocutionary act (the speaker’s intended function, such as requesting or promising), and the perlocutionary act (the effect produced on the hearer). Searle (1979) further classified illocutionary acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, each with unique felicity conditions.

Policy documents, though formally written, operate performatively much like speech acts. Their clauses often serve as *commissives* (“Gaza will be redeveloped”), *directives* (“Hamas members... will be given amnesty”), or *declarations* (“Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone”). Each clause enacts a commitment, an instruction, or an institutional fact once accepted by relevant actors. Thus, within this Framework, language itself constitutes political action, the textual act of constructing peace, delineating obligations, and legitimising authority. This interpretation aligns with Chilton’s (2004) and Cap’s (2017) analyses of international diplomatic discourse, where linguistic form serves as a medium of institutional performativity.

In addition, Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, assist in identifying implicatures and presuppositions. Policy discourse often violates these maxims strategically, creating implicatures that conceal coercive content under the guise of cooperation. For example, the clause “New Gaza will be fully committed to peaceful coexistence” presupposes that the old Gaza was uncommitted, thereby moralising the text’s ideological stance. These pragmatic mechanisms are

therefore central to uncovering how policy language performs persuasion while maintaining an appearance of neutrality.

3.2 Critical discourse analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the ideological lens through which speech acts and implicatures are contextualised. CDA views discourse as a social practice that both reflects and constructs social relations of power (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Its key assumption is that linguistic structures are neither arbitrary nor value-free; rather, they reproduce ideologies that sustain institutional dominance. Van Leeuwen (2007) identifies four major legitimisation strategies, *authorization*, *moral evaluation*, *rationalization*, and *mythopoesis*, through which political texts justify authority and policy. Each of these strategies can be observed within the Framework's language.

For example, *authorisation* is visible in repeated references to the "Board of Peace" headed by named international figures, invoking institutional legitimacy. *Moral evaluation* occurs when the text contrasts "terror-free Gaza" with the presumed immorality of radical groups. *Rationalisation* emerges through technocratic and developmental terminology ("modern and efficient governance," "economic development plan"), suggesting that intervention is justified by pragmatic necessity rather than ideology. Finally, *mythopoesis*, the narrative construction of moral exemplars and lessons, appears in the promise of "New Gaza" as a symbol of redemption and progress. By identifying these legitimisation patterns, CDA helps reveal how the Framework disguises asymmetric power relations as humanitarian cooperation.

Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, comprising textual analysis, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice, underpins this study's analytical structure. The textual level involves clause-level examination of lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical choices; the discourse practice level considers production and consumption contexts (e.g., U.S. authorship, global media circulation); and the sociocultural level interprets ideological implications within the geopolitical and humanitarian fields. Integrating CDA ensures that pragmatic insights are not treated as isolated linguistic observations but as manifestations of ideological strategies that reinforce global hierarchies and political dependency.

3.3 Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Musolff, 2016; Semino, 2008) extends the analysis from linguistic pragmatics to cognitive representation. According to CMT, metaphor is not a mere stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of thought by which abstract target domains (e.g., governance, peace, reconstruction) are understood through concrete source domains (e.g., medicine, architecture, commerce). These mappings structure the ways individuals and societies conceptualize political realities and, in doing so, normalise particular ideologies (Charteris-Black, 2004; Kövecses, 2020).

Metaphor studies of political discourse reveal recurring patterns such as *THE NATION IS A BODY*, *POLITICS IS WAR*, and *ECONOMY IS A MACHINE* (Musolff, 2016). In post-conflict discourse, these metaphors often shift to therapeutic or technocratic frames, as in *SOCIETY IS A PATIENT* or *PEACE IS CONSTRUCTION*. Within the Framework, metaphorical mappings such as *GAZA IS A PATIENT*, *GAZA IS A CONSTRUCTION SITE*, and *PEACE IS AN ENGINEERING PROJECT* perform cognitive work by framing reconstruction as a technical, curative process rather than a political negotiation. Kövecses's (2020) dynamic view of metaphor supports this approach by allowing the identification of "metaphor scenarios," in which multiple lexical expressions cluster around shared cognitive models, such as healing, building, or managing, that encode ideological assumptions about agency and control.

CMT therefore complements both Speech Act Theory and CDA. While Speech Act Theory explains what the text *does* (its illocutionary functions), and CDA explains *why* it does so (its ideological motivations), CMT reveals *how* these acts are cognitively framed to make them persuasive and naturalised. The three frameworks are thus not independent but hierarchically aligned: pragmatic structure (speech acts and implicatures) feeds into cognitive framing (metaphor), which is finally interpreted within the socio-political ideology (CDA).

4. Methodology

The primary data for this study consist of the full, officially released U.S. 20-Point Gaza–Israel Peace Framework (2025). The text was obtained from *Al Jazeera* and *BBC News* digital archives, both of which published identical verified versions in September 2025. These news outlets were selected because they provided complete, coherent, and publicly accessible transcripts that maintained textual fidelity and have been widely referenced in international reports (see *Al Jazeera*, 2025; *BBC News*, 2025).

The decision to analyse the *entire* 20-point framework, rather than selected excerpts, is driven by empirical evidence showing that peace agreements and conflict-resolution documents derive their pragmatic and ideological force from their inter-clausal architecture, not from isolated sentences. Research on Israel–Palestine negotiations and similar protracted conflicts demonstrates that sequencing, conditionality, cumulative framing, and the ordering of commitments fundamentally shape how such texts perform power, construct obligations, and legitimise external authority (Bar-Tal, 2013; Roy, 2011; Khalidi, 2020; Musolff, 2016). Pragmatic meaning, speech-act force, presupposition chains, implicatures, and metaphorical scenarios, emerges through relationships across clauses, while CDA emphasises that dominance and ideological positioning operate at the level of the “macro-structure” of the full text (van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 1995). Because the plan’s logic is explicitly sequential (hostage release → prisoner exchange → amnesty → aid → transitional governance → demilitarisation → ISF deployment → withdrawal → conditional statehood), analysing only selected lines would fragment the communicative and political coherence that the document itself constructs. A full, clause-by-clause analysis is therefore methodologically necessary to accurately capture how the framework linguistically engineers peace as conditional, managed, and externally supervised.

Analysing the document holistically ensures that no clause-level pragmatic or metaphorical patterns are lost through sampling. Each clause represents a distinct pragmatic unit, a performative act that enacts a specific policy commitment or ideological stance. Moreover, the sequence of the clauses constructs a rhetorical progression, from security to reconstruction to governance and eventual statehood, that reflects the discursive logic of U.S. mediation. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is necessary to capture both micro-level linguistic features and macro-level ideological structure. Given the study’s aim to reveal implicit power dynamics and ideological presuppositions, the qualitative interpretive paradigm is most appropriate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It allows an in-depth exploration of linguistic form and function beyond surface textual description, focusing instead on *meaning construction*, *illocutionary intent*, and *cognitive framing*. Quantitative approaches would not capture the layered ideological meanings embedded in the document’s rhetoric. The analysis proceeds through three interlocking stages corresponding to the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier: (1) Speech Act and Pragmatic Analysis, (2) Metaphor Identification and Cognitive Framing, and (3) Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideological Interpretation.

5. Results and discussion

This section presents the pragma-discursive analysis of the United States' 20-Point Gaza-Israel Peace Framework (2025). Each clause is treated as a performative unit that enacts a policy stance and frames peace within specific ideological boundaries. The analysis integrates Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979), Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010), and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Leeuwen, 2007), revealing how the framework linguistically constructs peace as a conditional, hierarchical, and externally managed process.

Clause 1: Gaza as a “Deradicalised Terror-Free Zone”

Text: “Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.”

This clause performs a directive disguised as an assertive, using the future modal *will* to impose transformation under the guise of description (Searle, 1979). The presupposition is that Gaza is presently radicalised and dangerous, framing Palestinians as a security problem. The metaphor *PEACE IS PURIFICATION* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) portrays deradicalisation as cleansing, a process that assumes moral contamination. Through ideological deletion (Fairclough, 1995), the clause omits Israeli occupation as a causal factor, thereby constructing a unilateral moral geography. The perlocutionary effect is that peace becomes synonymous with Palestinian reform rather than reciprocal justice.

Clause 2: Reconstruction “for the Benefit of the People of Gaza”

Text: “Gaza will be redeveloped for the benefit of the people of Gaza, who have suffered more than enough.”

This clause performs a commissive act, ostensibly promising reconstruction while implicitly asserting external authority. The humanitarian tone masks asymmetry: Palestinians are recipients, not agents. The metaphor *REBUILDING IS HEALING* frames U.S.-led intervention as benevolent therapy. The phrase “*who have suffered more than enough*” functions as moral legitimisation (van Leeuwen, 2007), while agent deletion conceals accountability for suffering. Ideologically, reconstruction is reframed as charity rather than reparation, positioning the U.S. as moral caretaker and Gaza as dependent patient.

Clause 3: Conditional Peace Agreement

Text: “If both sides agree to this proposal, the war will immediately end.”

This clause is a conditional commissive, where the promise of peace is contingent on symmetrical agreement, an illusion, given the asymmetry between Israel and Gaza. The metaphor *PEACE IS A CONTRACT* presents peace as a negotiable transaction rather than a moral imperative. Pragmatically, conditionality places the burden of peace on the weaker party. From a CDA perspective, this represents discursive equilibrium masking material inequality (Fairclough, 2001). The clause thus performs reconciliation linguistically while preserving domination structurally.

Clause 4: Hostages Released Within 72 Hours

Text: “Within 72 hours of Israel publicly accepting this agreement, all hostages, alive and deceased, will be returned.”

This clause performs a directive with commissive undertones, merging command and promise. The cognitive metaphor *HOSTAGE RELEASE IS MORAL RESTORATION* situates Israel as ethical actor and Palestinians as obligated respondents. The lexical asymmetry, *hostages* for Israelis versus *security prisoners* for Palestinians, creates differential empathy (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997). Through authorization legitimisation

(van Leeuwen, 2007), Israel's compliance appears morally superior. The clause's temporal precision, "within 72 hours", symbolically asserts control, embedding urgency as authority.

Clause 5: Reciprocal Release of Prisoners

Text: "Once all hostages are released, Israel will release 250 life-sentence prisoners plus 1,700 Gazans who were detained after 7 October 2023."

This is an indirect commissive that portrays fairness while embedding subordination. The presupposition that Palestinian prisoners must be exchanged after Israeli hostages reinforces hierarchical reciprocity. The metaphor *JUSTICE IS EXCHANGE* converts moral redress into transaction. CDA reveals lexical polarisation, Israel acts ("will release"), Palestinians are acted upon ("detained"), illustrating asymmetry of agency. The clause thus transforms restitution into generosity, reinforcing dependency.

Clause 6: Amnesty for "Peace-Committing Hamas Members"

Text: "Hamas members who commit to peaceful co-existence and to decommission their weapons will be given amnesty."

This clause is a conditional commissive, offering pardon in exchange for submission. The presupposition is that Hamas is inherently violent, constructing peace as moral reformation. The metaphor *PEACE IS REDEMPTION* aligns compliance with virtue. Pragmatically, amnesty functions as reward discourse, granting legitimacy to those who conform. CDA interprets this as moral legitimisation through obedience, turning coercive demilitarisation into benevolent forgiveness.

Clause 7: Quantified Aid Commitments

Text: "Upon acceptance of this agreement, full aid will be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip..."

The clause performs both assertive and commissive acts, presenting aid as immediate and generous. The metaphor *AID IS FLOWING WATER* evokes abundance but conceals the conditionality of control. The enumeration of sectors, water, electricity, sewage, creates bureaucratic precision that technocratises morality. CDA interprets this as rationalisation legitimisation (van Leeuwen, 2007), depoliticising occupation into a logistics issue. Thus, aid is framed as benevolence, obscuring structural dependency.

Clause 8: Aid "Without Interference"

Text: "Entry of aid will proceed without interference from the two parties..."

This clause is a directive disguised as neutrality, prescribing restraint while appearing cooperative. The metaphor *AID IS A SACRED FLOW* invokes purity, while the ambiguous "without interference" implicitly blames Palestinians for obstruction. CDA reveals discursive displacement where international supervision substitutes for local agency. The humanitarian lexicon legitimises external control as moral necessity.

Clause 9: Transitional Governance Under Supervision

Text: "Gaza will be governed under the temporary transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee... overseen by the Board of Peace headed by Donald J. Trump."

This is a directive act imposing governance structure. The adjectives *technocratic* and *apolitical* construct depoliticised control, aligning with the metaphor *GOVERNANCE IS MANAGEMENT*. CDA exposes

rationalisation legitimisation, external control reframed as efficiency. Naming Western leaders (Trump, Blair) invokes authorisation legitimisation. Thus, sovereignty is linguistically postponed, recast as mentorship. Gaza becomes a *project*, not a polity.

Clause 10: Economic Development as Peace

Text: “A Trump economic development plan will rebuild and energise Gaza.”

This assertive act frames economic modernisation as salvation. The metaphor *PEACE IS DEVELOPMENT* fuses politics with economics, echoing neoliberal logic (Harvey, 2005). CDA reveals depoliticisation: structural injustice is replaced with market rationality. Peace is recast as prosperity, shifting moral discourse into managerial optimism.

Clause 11: Special Economic Zone

Text: “A special economic zone will be established with preferred tariff and access rates.”

This directive act equates cooperation with access. The metaphor *PEACE IS TRADE* naturalises subordination within capitalist logic. CDA interprets this as neoliberal legitimisation, where freedom is reframed as integration into global markets (Pugh, 2005). Thus, political sovereignty is exchanged for commercial dependency.

Clause 12: Voluntary Stay, Exit, and Return

Text: “No one will be forced to leave Gaza, and those who wish to leave will be free to do so and return.”

This expressive–commisive act presents reassurance while masking displacement. The metaphor *HOME IS A CONTAINER* positions mobility as privilege rather than right. CDA reveals discursive reframing of forced migration as voluntary movement. By promising “freedom to stay,” the clause linguistically pre-empts accusations of coercion, transforming rights into discretionary allowances.

Clause 13: Exclusion of Hamas and Demilitarisation

Text: “Hamas and other factions will not have any role in governance... all military infrastructure will be destroyed.”

This is a directive act enforcing exclusion. The metaphor *PEACE IS CLEANSING* transforms political pluralism into contamination. Pragmatically, the clause performs control disguised as stabilisation. CDA identifies delegitimisation strategy (van Dijk, 1998): dissenting actors are linguistically erased. Economic “buy-back” schemes commodify demilitarisation, turning surrender into transaction.

Clause 14: Regional Guarantees for Compliance

Text: “A guarantee will be provided by regional partners to ensure that Hamas complies.”

This commisive act transfers agency to external actors. The metaphor *PEACE IS GUARANTEED SECURITY* encodes paternal protection. CDA reveals outsourced sovereignty, where Palestinians are governed through regional intermediaries. The discourse transforms dependency into reassurance, masking the perpetuation of external control.

Clause 15: International Stabilisation Force

Text: “The United States will develop an International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to deploy in Gaza...”

This is a commissive act with directive force, promising intervention while prescribing policing norms. The metaphor *SECURITY IS TRAINING* constructs surveillance as assistance. CDA highlights colonial continuity, where “vetting” and “training” reproduce hierarchies of knowledge and control. The perlocutionary effect is to naturalise militarised peacekeeping as humanitarian necessity.

Clause 16: Israeli Non-Annexation of Gaza

Text: “Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza...”

This concessive act portrays restraint as generosity. The metaphor *NON-ACTION IS GIFT* reverses moral logic, crediting Israel for compliance with international law. CDA exposes inversion rhetoric (Shlaim, 2014): illegality rebranded as benevolence. Conditional phrasing (“based on milestones”) linguistically defers withdrawal, transforming obligation into discretionary mercy.

Clause 17: Conditional Aid to “Terror-Free Areas”

Text: “If Hamas rejects this proposal, aid will proceed in terror-free areas.”

This conditional directive enforces compliance through selective aid. The metaphor *AID IS REWARD* embeds coercion within benevolence. CDA interprets this as humanitarian government (Fassin, 2012): the distribution of relief as discipline. Dissent becomes punishable deprivation, turning compassion into governance.

Clause 18: Interfaith Dialogue for Mindset Change

Text: “An interfaith dialogue process will be established to change mindsets and narratives...”

This expressive–directive act attributes conflict to attitude rather than structure. The metaphor *CONFLICT IS MISUNDERSTANDING* shifts blame from politics to psychology. CDA shows discursive depoliticisation: occupation reframed as narrative deficiency (Said, 1979). The moral burden of reform thus falls on Palestinians, masking power asymmetry behind civility.

Clause 19: Conditional Pathway to Statehood

Text: “When the PA reform programme is faithfully carried out, conditions may finally be in place for a pathway to statehood.”

This promissory act embeds perpetual postponement. The metaphor *STATEHOOD IS A JOURNEY* introduces temporal distance and uncertainty. CDA reveals deferral rhetoric, recognition is conditional, never immediate (Khalidi, 2020). Thus, sovereignty is linguistically deferred into abstraction, maintaining control while promising hope.

Clause 20: U.S.-Brokered Dialogue

Text: “The United States will establish a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians to agree on a political horizon.”

This commissive act centres U.S. authority. The metaphor *PEACE IS A HORIZON* constructs progress as perpetual pursuit (Lacau, 2005). CDA identifies self-legitimation through mediation (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). The discourse thus ends where it began, with American centrality as both architect and arbiter of peace.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Across the twenty clauses, a consistent pragma-discursive pattern emerges. Directive acts dominate, portraying Palestinians as subjects of reform and Israel as guarantor of order. Commissives function as rhetorical tools of moral authority, while conditionals encode hierarchy through dependency. Metaphorically, the Framework constructs peace as purification, development, and control, reinforcing Western managerial logic. Pragmatically, it redefines peace as compliance, not equality. Ideologically, it legitimises asymmetric governance through humanitarian and economic rhetoric. This study examined the United States' 20-Point Gaza-Israel Peace Framework (2025) through a pragma-discursive lens, integrating insights from Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979), Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; van Leeuwen, 2007), and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Musolff, 2016). The analysis treated each clause in the framework as a performative unit, combining illocutionary force, cognitive framing, and ideological presupposition. In doing so, it illuminated how the language of peace functions not merely as description, but as linguistic action, performing power, shaping perception, and legitimising geopolitical hierarchy.

The findings reveal that the 20-point text operates as a linguistic apparatus of control in which peace is defined and administered from a position of asymmetry. Through a predominance of directive and commissive acts, the United States projects authority and moral guardianship, while Palestinian agency is linguistically constrained. Clauses such as "*Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone*" and "*Hamas members who commit to peaceful co-existence will be given amnesty*" construct peace as obedience, positioning Palestinians as the moral object of reform. Conversely, Israeli actions, such as "*Israel will not annex Gaza*," are represented as voluntary benevolence rather than compliance with international law.

Across the text, linguistic strategies of conditionality, enumeration, and bureaucratic precision reframe coercive measures as administrative fairness. Humanitarian promises and economic pledges, phrased through metaphors of healing ("*redevelop Gaza for the benefit of its people*") and construction ("*rebuild and energise Gaza*"), encode an underlying technocratic paternalism. Pragmatically, the clauses convert structural inequality into moral logic, turning power into benevolence and dependency into cooperation.

Metaphorically, the discourse is structured around three dominant conceptual mappings:

1. PEACE IS PURIFICATION, through lexical items like *deradicalised* and *terror-free*;
2. PEACE IS RECONSTRUCTION, through *rebuild*, *rehabilitate*, and *redevelop*; and
3. PEACE IS MANAGEMENT, through *supervision*, *oversight*, and *governance*.
These metaphors collectively naturalise U.S. authority as the architect of order, framing the peace process as a technical rather than political enterprise.

From a critical discourse perspective, the text enacts what Fairclough (2001) terms ideological universalisation: the imposition of one worldview under the guise of common good. Through van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimisation categories, authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization, the United States discursively justifies its leadership as neutral, benevolent, and rational, even as it perpetuates asymmetry between Israel and Palestine.

The study contributes to three major domains of linguistic inquiry. First, within Pragmatics, it demonstrates the potency of Speech Act Theory in analysing policy texts as sites of performative governance. Clauses that appear declarative are, in effect, directives and commissives that enact authority. This confirms Searle's (1979) claim that utterances perform institutional actions and extends it to show how *international diplomacy*

itself functions as a speech act. Second, the study advances Critical Discourse Analysis by evidencing how humanitarian and neoliberal rhetoric operate as instruments of legitimization. The findings align with van Dijk's (1998) and Fairclough's (1995) observations that power is often exercised discursively through representations of rationality, civility, and compassion. The Gaza framework exemplifies this mechanism: coercion linguistically concealed within moral vocabulary. Third, the integration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory enriches the pragmatic reading by revealing how cognitive frames sustain ideological meaning. Metaphors of construction, healing, and management are not decorative but functional, they channel cognition toward acceptance of externally defined peace. Following Musolff (2016), the study confirms that political metaphors, once institutionalised, operate as vehicles of policy cognition, shaping how audiences conceptualise legitimacy and compliance.

At a practical level, the analysis demonstrates that the linguistic architecture of peace frameworks profoundly influences their reception and legitimacy. When the rhetoric of peace is framed through metaphors of management and purification, it risks reinforcing colonial hierarchies and moral asymmetries. Future diplomatic documents must avoid presuppositions that equate peace with reforming one side and rewarding the other.

For discourse architects and policymakers, adopting balanced performatives, those that distribute agency, responsibility, and hope equally, can prevent the reproduction of discursive injustice. Peace should be linguistically constructed as collaboration, not compliance; as mutual recognition, not supervision. Linguistic equity thus becomes an ethical imperative in international mediation.

In conclusion, the United States' 20-Point Gaza–Israel Peace Framework exemplifies how the language of peace can simultaneously promise reconciliation and reproduce control. Through directives masked as compassion, metaphors framed as healing, and commitments couched in conditionality, the document linguistically transforms political dominance into moral narrative. Pragmatics, cognition, and ideology converge here to reveal that peace, as articulated in the text, is not an end state but a discursive construct, a product of how authority speaks and how the world listens.

True peace discourse must therefore move beyond technocratic and conditional language. It must embrace linguistic parity, where the words of all participants, dominant or marginalised, carry equal performative force. Only then can language cease to manage peace and begin to create it.

6.1 Limitations and future directions

This study focused exclusively on the 2025 U.S. Gaza–Israel Framework, which, while comprehensive, represents a single discursive event. Future studies could expand the corpus to include comparative analyses of past and parallel peace texts, such as the Oslo Accords (1993), the Abraham Accords (2020), and the Saudi-French Peace Proposal (2024), to trace continuity and change in linguistic framing. Such diachronic inquiry could reveal whether conditional peace discourse is a persistent feature of U.S. mediation or a contextual response to post-2023 hostilities. Methodologically, subsequent work may integrate corpus-assisted CDA or metaphor density mapping to enhance the systematic identification of pragmatic patterns and metaphorical frequencies. Combining computational tools with qualitative interpretation would allow broader generalisation while retaining the depth of discourse analysis.

References

Al Jazeera. (2025, September 29). *Here's the full text of Trump's 20-point plan to end Israel's war on Gaza*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/29/heres-the-full-text-of-trumps-20-point-plan-to-end-israels-war-on-gaza>

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.

Bar-Tal, D. (2013). *Intractable conflicts: Socio-psychological foundations and dynamics*. Cambridge University Press.

BBC News. (2025, September 29). *Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan in full*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o>

Chilton, P., & Schäffner, C. (1997). Discourse and politics. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 206–230). SAGE.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.

Farsakh, L. (2011). The one-state solution and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Palestinian challenges and prospects. *Middle East Journal*, 65(1), 55–71.

Fassin, D. (2012). *Humanitarian reason: A moral history of the present*. University of California Press.

Gordon, N., & Perugini, N. (2015). *The human right to dominate*. Oxford University Press.

Group, P. (2007). MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22(1), 1–39.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.

Khalidi, R. (1997). *Palestinian identity: The construction of modern national consciousness*. Columbia University Press.

Khalidi, R. (2020). *The hundred years' war on Palestine: A history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. Verso.

Magid, J. (2025, September 27). *Revealed: US 21-point plan for ending Gaza war, creating pathway to Palestinian state*. The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/revealed-us-21-point-plan-for-ending-gaza-war-creating-pathway-to-palestinian-state>

Masalha, N. (2012). *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising history, narrating the subaltern, reclaiming memory*. Zed Books.

Mearsheimer, J. J., & Walt, S. M. (2007). *The Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Musolff, A. (2016). *Political metaphor analysis: Discourse and scenarios*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Pappe, I. (2006). *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld Publications.

Peteet, J. (2017). *Space and mobility in Palestine*. Indiana University Press.

Pugh, M. (2005). The political economy of peacebuilding: A critical theory perspective. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10(2), 23–42.

Roy, S. (2011). *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist social sector*. Princeton University Press.

Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Vintage.

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. Vintage.

Semino, E. (2008) Metaphor in Discourse, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Searle, J. R. (1979). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language* (Online ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609213>

Shlaim, A. (2014). *The iron wall: Israel and the Arab world*. Penguin.

Steen, G. J., Dorst, A. G., Herrmann, J. B., Kaal, A. A., Krennmayr, T., & Pasma, T. (2010). Metaphor in usage. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 21(4), 765–796. <https://doi.org/10.1515/COGL.2010.024>

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2023). *Gaza: Humanitarian overview and impact of the blockade*. UN OCHA.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). Legitimation in discourse and communication. *Discourse & Communication*, 1(1), 91–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307071986>

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. SAGE.

Note on Contributor

Dr. Isah Muhammad, a linguist specialising in Gbagyi and Hausa, with expertise in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and semantics, is of the Department of Linguistics, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. His research focuses on noun phrase structure, Binding, Theta, and Case theories within the Government and Binding framework as well as in Pragmatics. He has contributed to applied linguistic projects and publications, emphasising language description, translation and analysis. Dr. Muhammad advances African linguistic studies by combining theoretical thoroughness with empirical investigation of indigenous languages. isahgaladima@gmail.com