

# Propaganda Techniques in the American Political Discourse: A Study Case of the CNN TV Show "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer"

By

**Kamal Khazal Mohamm**

College: imam Al-kadhumi University College

Mobile: 009647705573147

Email: [kamalkhazal@alkadhumi-col.edu.iq](mailto:kamalkhazal@alkadhumi-col.edu.iq)

## Abstract

The study of propaganda and its techniques is one of the complex and important matters in the media field, especially since propaganda uses many techniques to achieve its goals. Thus, the current study aims at analysing the propaganda techniques as used in the American political discourse, namely the case of CNN TV Show "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer". The discourses are analysed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The sample will be an episode where show hosted Governor Larry Hogan. This research is divided into three sections, as the first section includes the methodological framework which is the research problem, its objectives, the importance of the research, as well as the research method. The second section is the theoretical review of the propaganda techniques used in the discourse. As for the third section, it included content analysis of the Governor Larry Hogan speeches in CNN show the situation room with Wolf Blitzer, and then the used propaganda techniques are analyzed using the selected model. The techniques were analyzed based on the frequency and percentage of occurrences. Finally, the results clearly revealed that the most frequently used propaganda technique is the plain folks with frequency (43) and percentage of occurrence (28.66%).

**Keywords:** Propaganda Techniques, Discourse Analysis, Political Discourses, Critical Discourse Analysis

### *Research Problem*

The research problem is summarized in the fact that many politicians and leaders often employ a number of propaganda methods in their political speeches directed to the public. Those politicians use propaganda to influence the minds of the audience in order to make them believe in whatever they want them to. Therefore, the study tries to examine the use of propaganda by politicians in TV show and what is the most frequently used propaganda technique?

### *Research Aims*

The researcher seeks through this research to reveal the techniques used in the American Political discourse. To be more specific, the speeches of Governor Larry Hogan as he was hosted by CNN TV Show "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer" to identify the propaganda techniques employed by him and its nature and the topics it focuses on and what are the reasons for that.

### *The Significance of the Research*

This study is an important research in the field of linguistic studies, as it focuses on the study of two important phenomena, namely, propaganda techniques and how they can be employed in political discourse. The second phenomenon is the study and analysis of the

political discourse of the mentioned governor and how propaganda can be used to convey certain political agenda to the target audience. In addition, it can be useful to the reader in the sense that it identifies the different types of propaganda techniques.

### ***Research Procedures***

The researcher will rely on the use of the descriptive approach in this study. The study, in addition to using (content analysis) to analyze the political discourse of the Governor Larry Hogan in the practical study using tables, identifying the main, sub-categories, and knowing the statistics of recurrences and percentage according to the adopted model to stand and know the propaganda techniques found in his speech.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

The study is limited to the study of propaganda techniques as used by the governor Larry Hogan when he was hosted by CNN TV show “The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer”. Furthermore, it is also limited to the use of the model of Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### ***Introduction***

Propaganda in its essence is a logic that does not aim to direct or evaluate, and that its intent is to incite and direct the target audience according to the goals of the speaker. The multiplicity of media and its use of propaganda has become a dangerous element for societies in the possibility of communicating false or incomplete ideas and information targeting the audience in accordance with the trends and desires of the campaign leader. They mobilize the audience as he wants and with the goal he seeks to achieve, for example, the use of news reports and government reports as well as Books, magazines, pamphlets, press conferences, films, radio and television, and social media are all means that advertising can use to communicate what it seeks to achieve in society. Hence, the opinion of the public or its way of thinking is according to what the propagandist seeks and aims by employing propaganda to achieve what it aspires to through political discourses.

### ***Theoretical Framework on Discourse***

Most theorists in the field of discourse focus on the relationship between a text and other fields, such as culture and society. Fairclough, for example, defines discourse as “the whole process of interaction of which a text is just a part” (Bail, 2014). Also, Purvis and Hunt (1993) state that “discourses are ideological and that there is no arbitrariness of signs”.

Jäger and Maier (2009) relate discourse with power and they claim that “discourses exert power because they transport knowledge on which collective and individual consciousness feeds” (39). Similarly, Van Dijk (1993) discusses the relationship between discourse and power, in which he claims that if we want to relate power to discourse in a clear way, “we need the cognitive interface of models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies and other social representations of the social mind” (1).

Therefore, it has been found that a large number of theorists focus on the discourse role leading individuals to create their own social realities, identities, relations with other social groups, and their knowledge with other social groups (Reicher et al., 2005)

### ***Definition of Political Discourse***

Political discourse can be defined as (the thought, orientation, or position on any topic or intellectual, political, social or cultural that is published or broadcast through any material, analysis or investigation through the media for the purpose of achieving a specific goal, and it may be a source. It includes political, economic and social implications, but based on a specific political thought or position) (Lowi, 1964).

Every discourse has a specific goal that it seeks to achieve, whether it is a political, social, economic or religious discourse. It seeks to achieve a set of goals that are compatible with the directions and ideas of the person who directs or reads that speech.

### ***Types of Political Discourse***

The political discourse is divided into several types, including:

#### ***A - Academic and educational political discourse***

This type includes political and educational literature, a method and information, and it is literature that seeks to define the discourse, presumably free from every purpose, but this does not rule out the concealment of the purpose in the definition curriculum. This hides shades of the Arab recipient much wider than the shades of the non-Arab recipient, or of the non-Jewish religious from the religious in Judaism. To say that the Greater Middle East is a geographical region extending from Mauritania to West Pakistan is a definition in which ideologies and strategies hide in the dissolution of national identities in favor of establishing identities Geostrategic, this means an affirmation of the phrase that “every theory is from a person and for a purpose, as the critical school sees in the theories of international relations.” (Van Dijk, 1997).

#### ***B. Mass Political Discourse***

It is an inciting, propaganda text that is mostly associated with occasions and crises, and takes the form of political news, integrated text, slogan, song, or joke.

#### ***C. Theological Ideological Discourse***

It is the discourse created by thinkers or ideologists that continue to construct this building through historical stages, promoted and adopted by political organizations such as parties, groups and interest groups (Admirand, 2019).

### ***2.4 Propaganda Methods and Techniques***

The development and expansion of the media and communication techniques that are sweeping our world today led to the expansion of concepts and their sometimes overlapping with each other, as the concept of media necessitates with propaganda and the truth with books or the presentation of half-truths and the inclusion of some lies in the media content. It is directed by spreading the methods and means, whether they are media or even propaganda, and in order to understand the propaganda methods, it is necessary to define the concept of (propaganda). It can be defined as (a set of elements capable of creating a specific intended reaction in the future so that it leads through emotional and cognitive influence to convince the target audience, and then achieve the goals of the advocating expert. In other words, language become the channel of the stylistic phenomenon, it expresses, and the style achieves the propaganda goals (Zughayer & Salim, 2021). There are many propaganda techniques that many researchers have found in which they explained the nature of the style and objectives. Each one of these techniques has its own characteristics, and the most prominent of these techniques are:

***Repetition:***

It is the continuous repetition of an idea, usually in the form of a simple motto or an attractive pronunciation and by repetition, it turns into what can be considered part of the truth. This method works in the case of limited media and the control of the one who speaks on the available media. If you notice that advertisers are not usually satisfied with mere misrepresentation and lies, but rather they frequently repeat their mottos and media campaigns that chase people wherever they go. Some may resort to repetition in displaying their indirect advertisements to immunize a more effective product than direct advertising. A study shows that the reappearance of a movie star while he is smoking for four times, may lead to implanting a positive image of smoking in adolescents who admire this star, which gives a clear indication of the impact of indirect advertising in broadcasting. Advertising messages with constant repetition, which is more dangerous when combined with direct and directed statement (the free encyclopaedia site on the Internet) ([ar.wikipedia.org](http://ar.wikipedia.org)).

***Testimonial:***

This method means (the use of testimonies of people claiming that they represent the experience or possess it and that they have a reputation and well-known reputation, or the use of phrases, sayings and proverbs to support a material argument in support of the point of view or to corroborate the viewpoint of others. The term also refers to the authority of scientific, intellectual and political status for those who promotes the speech attributing to him, or mentions his name or appears while he is giving his witness based on the experience of this person in the field around which the conversation revolves, and this sophistry falls within a general pilgrimage path called calling the opinion of the expert ([Delpit, 1988](#)).

***Glittering Generalities***

The propagandist often employ this method by using (words related to values and beliefs of value and high value so that they carry the power of persuasion without the need for additional information, and these generalities related to words such patriotism, home and the desire for peace, freedom and glory. These glittering words generalizations are nothing but the launch of labels in reverse and without needing that in order to make us agree or accept because they represent deep, fixed ideas that we believe in and struggle for, words such as freedom, democracy, or the Promised Land. They are nothing but glamorous generalizations in the name of which wars and conflicts have taken place throughout human history.

***Name-Calling***

This method relies on giving names that incite hatred and out casting the other party and the dissemination of prejudices about the other party and drawing a negative image of it.

***Plain Folks***

This method means (addressing the recipient with a propaganda message that matches his language, dialect, level of culture and cultural background so that the propagandist ensures his awareness of it and the possibility of convincing him of its content ([Gambrell, 2010](#)).

***Bandwagon***

It is considered one of the important and dangerous techniques at the same time, and its idea is summarized (in this style, the idea that the individual must believe in what the group believes in, so it is wrong to act in the opposite way, and this approach invests in the individual's desire to belong and thus needs to have his beliefs to be the same as the beliefs of the group. The propaganda man seeks in this context to show those whose behavior is contrary to the rules and values of the group that they are strangers and do not belong to the group.

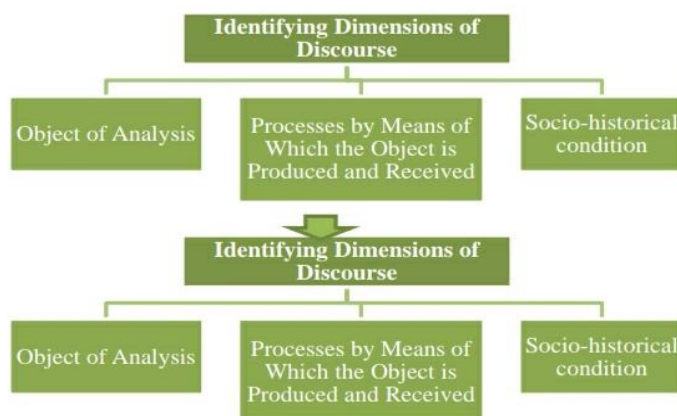
**Card Stacking**

This propaganda technique is employed with the purpose of over- and under-emphasis of information in order to distort the ideas of proposals. This technique of omissions and distortions advocates ignorance among the message recipients of inconvenient information.

**3. Methodology**

The present study employs research techniques with the purpose of determining the types of propaganda techniques that are used in political discourse and how effective they are. The procedure will start by collecting data and then analyze using Fairclough’s CDA theoretical framework as below and categorize it based on the type of propaganda that is employed.

The study will also tries to highlight the most frequently used techniques and what is the ideology and purposes behind the using the techniques, to create more comprehensible image of the structure and the audience reaction to propaganda. Analysing the techniques using a CDA framework will allow us to comprehend any potentially buried and intended messages, as well as the effectiveness of the propaganda in the provided materials (Kress, 1990).



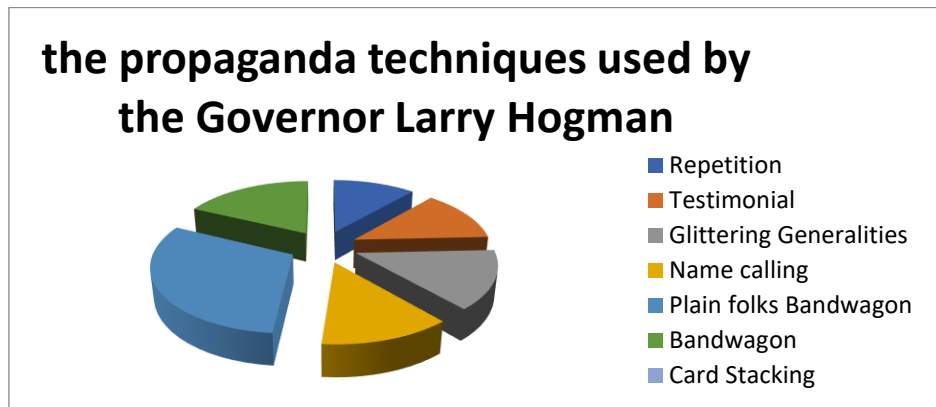
**3.1 Data Analysis: Analysis of the Governor Larry Hogan Political Discourse through CNN TV Show “The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer”**

The researcher will analyze the Governor speech by finding out the frequency and percentages of the propaganda techniques that the Governor used and resorted to in his speeches and the information he presented to the public through CNN TV show. The researcher used the analysis form that he presented to a group of experts that the researcher used in the scale across a group of main and sub-categories, which represent the propaganda techniques used in the political speech of the Governor. The main categories of analysis, which represent the propaganda techniques in the political discourse of the Governor are shown in table no. (1):

**Table (1).** the propaganda techniques used by the Governor Larry Hogman

Type of Technique	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Repetition	16	10.66%	5
Testimonial	18	12%	4
Glittering Generalities	20	13.33%	3
Name calling	18	12%	4
Plain folks	43	28.66%	1
Bandwagon	25	16.66%	2
Card Stacking	10	6.66%	6
Total	150		

We note from the table below that the techniques of plain folks ranked first among the rest of the propaganda techniques, with a frequency of occurrence (43) out of a total of (120) and a percentage of (28.66%), which explains that the Governor is trying to gain the public attention and respect. While the second most used type of techniques is the Bandwagon with frequency of occurrence (25) and percentage (16.66%) where the Governor tries to show that those who don't believe in what he says are behaviour are strangers and do not belong to the group.



**Figure (1)**

### ***3.2 Propaganda Techniques as Used by the Governor Larry Hogan***

#### ***1. Repetition***

The first main category was included in the analysis is the repetition, the analysis show that the technique is used by the Governor (16) time with percentage of occurrences (10.66%). He employs it by repeating certain ideas related to the failure of Trump to establish this idea in the minds of the audience, as shown in figure (1).

#### ***2. Testimonial***

This technique has been used (18) times with percentage of occurrences (12%) sub-categories of the second main category. We find that the second main technique was mentioned in the analysis through a group of phrases that indicate its existence as shown in figure No. (1), this technique ranked fourth among the other techniques that occurred through the analysis, and what this means is that part of the prime governor's policy to gain public approval

#### ***3. Bandwagon***

The technique has occurred in the speech of the Governor through a number of utterances. Among these utterances is an attempt by the governor to make the public follow his point of view of what is happening in Trump administration by stating that all the American agrees or believe that his administration was failing. This technique occurred (25) times with percentage of occurrences (16.66%) and ranked in the second place as the most used type of techniques.

#### ***4. Glittering Generalities***

It has also been found that there are utterances with that imply the use of Glittering Generalities propaganda technique in them. This technique ranked third with a percentage of (13.33%) and the number of recurrences amounted to (20) out of a total of (150). This indicates that the Governor seeks to use the technique of glittering generalities to confirm that the lack of Corona virus vaccine in his City is something happened in all the other cities so the audience would believe that it is not the Governor responsibility.

### **5. Plain Folks**

Utterances that show the use of Plain Folks propaganda technique has also been found in the Governor statement. Interestingly, this technique ranked first as the most used propaganda technique by the Governor with percentage of occurrences (28.66%) and frequency (43). This can be attributed to the governor's desire to connect with audiences by using simple terms that are used daily by them so he can win their approval of what he states.

### **6. Card Stalking**

We find that this technique has occurred in the analysis through a group of utterances that show this technique. This technique ranked sixth among other techniques with the number of repetitions (10) and frequency (6.66%). The Governor uses this technique mainly to convince the audience that almost 90% percent of the people of the city have taken the vaccine with the purpose of over- and under-emphasis of information in order to distort the ideas of proposals.

### **7. Name- Calling**

In the analysis, there are a group of utterances that show this propaganda technique, it fourth among other techniques with percentage of occurring (12%) and frequency (18). As the name suggests, this technique is based on the use of naming to suggest something to the audience that could make them believe in the authenticity of the speaker. The Governor mentioned a number of names such as Trump, President Biden, the CDC and other names to prove that his point of view is agreed by those known people.

## **Conclusions**

The study comes to the following conclusions:

- 1- The Governor Larry Hogan uses more than one propaganda technique to deliver his political speech to the public through CNNTV show "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer"
- 2- One of the most used propaganda techniques by the Governor is the method of plain folks, which is intended here to get the audience to be connected with the speaker to make them believe that the Governor is one of them and knows how their needs and requirements. Therefore, they would instantly believe and agree to whatever he states. The other highly used techniques are the Bandwagon and Glittering Generalities techniques.
- 3- The propaganda techniques used by the Governor are varied, as they included techniques directed to his audience and others to deliver messages to others through certain signs in his speech
- 4- These techniques variations is an attempt to gain the support of the people by using a simple and colloquial language (the language of the street) without any complex and unfamiliar terms and vocabularies.

## **References**

- Admirand, P. (2019). Humbling the discourse: Why interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, liberation theology, and secular humanism are needed for a Robust Public Square. *Religions*, 10(8), 450. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10080450>
- Bail, C. A. (2014). The cultural environment: Measuring culture with big data. *Theory and Society*, 43(3), 465-482. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-014-9216-5>
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other
- Res Militaris*, vol.12, n°3, November Issue 2022

- people's children. *Harvard educational review*, 58(3), 280-299. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.58.3.c43481778r528qw4>
- Gambrill, E. (2010). Evidence-informed practice: Antidote to propaganda in the helping professions? *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(3), 302-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731509347879>
- Jäger, S., & Maier, F. (2009). Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and dispositive analysis. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2, 34-61.
- Kress, G. (1990). Critical discourse analysis. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 11, 84-99. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500001975>
- Lowi, T. J. (1964). American business, public policy, case-studies, and political theory. *World politics*, 16(4), 677-715. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009452>
- Purvis, T., & Hunt, A. (1993). Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology. *British Journal of Sociology*, 473-499. <https://doi.org/10.2307/591813>
- Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A., & Hopkins, N. (2005). Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(4), 547-568. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.06.007>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, 4(2), 249-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002001>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). What is political discourse analysis. *Belgian journal of linguistics*, 11(1), 11-52. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bjl.11.03dij>
- Zughayer, N. H., & Salim, S. K. (2021). Propaganda styles in talk shows on Iraqi satellite channels: Analytical study in the game of chairs program on Al-Sharqiya News Channel. *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, 11(11), 316-327.