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Field of Study: Critical Discourse Analysis

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Name: **DR JAGDISH KAUR**
Designation: **SENIOR LECTURER**
ABSTRACT

This study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the discursive strategies and argumentative moves deployed by Mahathir Mohamed, former Prime Minister of Malaysia in ten of his speeches that express resistance and challenge towards former U.S. President George W Bush’s military ideology of ‘War on Terror’ post September 11 2001. The themes of this study are Mahathir’s assessment of the 9/11 attack, his construction of terrorists and terrorism and his description of the political and social actors involved in the context of ‘war on terror’. This study also examines how Mahathir constructs his own position in the speeches, with particular reference to the use of the positive-self presentation move. The study is guided by CDA’s focus on power relations and power struggle that are manifested in language. The framework is an adaptation of Van Dijk’s ‘Ideological Square’ (2004). The analysis reveals how Mahathir’s arguments fall within the human rights rhetoric that calls on general norms, freedom, human rights and justice, supported with a heavy bias towards the plight of Muslims and the Middle East. Mahathir’s resistance and credibility to challenge Bush reveals repetitive use of national rhetoric, self-glorification, comparison moves, and references to shared history and shared presuppositions. His critical of ‘us’ move (towards the superpowers and the Muslims) and critical of ‘them’ move (towards the superpowers and the terrorists) are also employed to resist and challenge the supporters of war. His supportive of ‘others’ move (towards the Muslims and the oppressed) fall within the ideological construction of a positive self-presentation of himself as Prime Minister of Malaysia, a Muslim leader and a champion of Third World nations. Mahathir’s calls for resistance and change are meant to empower the people, which is in line with CDA’s overall purpose.
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