

**Blair, the Quartet, the Abraham Accords, and the Myth of Peace
Diplomacy as Continuity: A Rhetorical Journey from War to
“Peace”**



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Abstract:

This article investigates Tony Blair’s journey of rhetorical metamorphosis, from presenting military interventions as humanitarian efforts, to being labelled a “warmonger”, and finally to promoting conflict resolution as a “peace advocate”. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis of a selection of Blair’s public statements and interventions, reflecting his career from 1999 through 2020, to examine how this shift in presentation reveals broader patterns of diplomatic continuity *in lieu* of an actual transformation. This paper argues that Blair, still the interventionist, employs rhetoric that reframes elite agreements that typically exclude broader publics as popular progress towards peace. Thus “peace deals” like the 2020 Abraham Accords which were brokered by political elites, function as extensions of his earlier interventions, now camouflaged under the language of peace. This analysis ultimately contends that Blair’s post-Iraq diplomatic discourse represents a linguistic evolution that maintains strategic continuity rather than real ideological change.

Key words: Tony Blair; Rhetorical Metamorphosis; Critical Discourse Analysis; Peace; Abraham Accords.

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Introduction:

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's public transition from a staunch advocate of military intervention to a champion of Middle East "peace" presents one of the most striking transformations in contemporary diplomacy. This article challenges the narrative that Blair's post-premiership diplomatic activities reflect a genuine ideological transformation, proposing instead that his discourse reveals strategic continuity camouflaged under changing rhetoric, where language and framing adapt to new political circumstances while preserving long-standing objectives; a dynamic this article terms the "chameleon strategy". It further interrogates how Blair's evolving public role and language reflect broader themes of power, exclusion, and elite negotiation in the region, employing a critical lens to unpack the many subtleties and intentions behind Blair's speeches, statements and institutional roles within the wider context of Western engagement in the Middle East.

In order to trace the roots of this evolving discourse, it is essential to examine Blair's earliest public interventions, where he set the tone for later approaches to power and legitimacy in foreign policy. Beginning with his 1999 Chicago speech, which marked the articulation of what became known as the "Blair Doctrine", Blair established the foundation for humanitarian intervention that would later be applied to justify the War on Iraq. Blending moral imperatives with strategic considerations during the Kosovo War (1998–1999), he declared that this "is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand" (Blair, 1999). This interventionist logic was further crystallised in his March 2003 address to the nation, where he argued that "the threat to Britain today is not that of my father's generation [...] But this new world faces a new threat of disorder and chaos born either of brutal states like Iraq, armed with weapons of mass destruction, or of extreme terrorist groups" (Gibson, 2010). Following his departure from Downing Street in 2007, Blair's immediate appointment as Middle East Quartet envoy marked what can be described as a tactical evolution rather than a philosophical transformation, with his subsequent role in facilitating the Abraham Accords representing the culmination of this adaptive strategy. The agreements, which formalised diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab states, were presented by Blair as "landmark agreements [which] are important in their own right; but are also a massive and welcome opportunity to recast the politics of the region in a way consistent with the only future for the Middle East which works" (Abraham Accords, 2025). However, this framing conceals the fundamental consistencies in Blair's approach; central to his rhetoric is the notion that he, and the West he represents, bear a

moral responsibility to intervene, exercising deliberate and proactive involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. As such, Blair's rationale has remained consistent across varying contexts, simply adapting its presentation to changing political circumstances, and in this light, this article examines how Blair's discourse upholds and legitimises enduring power hierarchies while appearing responsive to change.

As Critical Discourse Analysis regards discourse as both shaping and reflecting power relations, this study uses the three-dimensional model advanced by Norman Fairclough, which examines the interplay of textual features, discursive practices, and socio-political context, while Teun van Dijk's approaches to discourse, ideology, and social cognition offer further insight into how elite discourse can sustain dominance and marginalise alternative voices. This framework consequently helps us to interrogate not just the content but the function of Blair's rhetoric, revealing enduring power structures beneath the surface of apparent transformation, and making it possible to examine what this study terms Blair's "chameleon strategy"; the ability to adapt discursive presentation while maintaining core strategic objectives.

1. Theoretical Framework

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how Tony Blair's language shapes and sustains power relations in Middle East diplomacy while the conceptual and analytic approach is based on the frameworks of Fairclough and van Dijk, which guide both the selection of linguistic features and the interpretation of their ideological roles. The core analytical structure comes from Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA as articulated in *Discourse and Social Change* (Fairclough, 1992) and *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Fairclough, 1995), which views discourse as socially constructive, constituting social subjects, relations, and knowledge systems (Fairclough, 1992, p. 45). He identifies three axes for language examination: Textual Analysis (linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies), Social Cognition Analysis (beliefs, values, and ideological foundations), as well as Social Context Analysis (how language is embedded in and reproduces wider power structures and institutional relations). Fairclough also highlights modality, through words like "must" or "should", as normalising obligations and authority and notes that passive voice often obscures agency and diffuses responsibility (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). Discourse analysis, he argues, reveals how power relations and ideologies are created, contested, and negotiated (Pujolar, 1996, p. 144).

Van Dijk's work, particularly *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (1998), is also pivotal, emphasising the need to situate discourse within socio-political contexts and to study how power abuse, dominance, and inequality

are enacted and resisted through text and talk (Van Dijk, 1993, pp. 249, 352, 354). His approach bridges the micro-level of language use and the macro-level of societal power, insisting that language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication “belong to the microlevel of the social order” while power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are “typically terms that belong to a macrolevel of analysis” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 354). This orientation supports the study’s analysis of Blair’s discourse within historical and institutional contexts such as the War on Iraq, post-9/11 global politics, and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and hence, while the focus on modality -how modal verbs like “must” create an imperative tone- and the understanding that passive voice obscures agency is based directly on Fairclough’s detailed linguistic analyses, the imperative to interpret language choices within broader political and ideological contexts is grounded in van Dijk’s work on the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology.

Using these combined insights, the study reveals how Blair’s rhetoric normalises Western intervention as peacebuilding, maintains strategic continuity, and marginalises alternative narratives, demonstrating CDA’s critical role in uncovering power structures embedded in language. This approach thus enables us to understand not only what Blair says but also how his language sustains specific political agendas, even when his style appears to change. With these conceptual tools charted, our analysis begins by tracing Blair’s foundational interventionist rhetoric which would shape his subsequent policies in the Middle East.

2. From Chicago to Baghdad: Blair's Interventionist Foundations

The origins of Blair's interventionist doctrine are most clearly expressed in his 1999 speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, where he framed humanitarian intervention as a moral and strategic imperative for Western democracies. This was a defining moment that outlined what became known as the “Blair Doctrine”, also known as the “Doctrine of International Community”. In that speech, Blair articulated five criteria for intervention:

First, are we sure of our case? War is an imperfect instrument for righting humanitarian distress; but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators. Second, have we exhausted all diplomatic options? We should always give peace every chance[...] Third, on the basis of a practical assessment of the situation, are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake? Fourth, are we prepared for the long term? [...] And finally, do we have national interests involved? (Blair, 1999)

Beyond outlining these specific intervention criteria, Blair's rhetorical choices in the Chicago speech reveal deeper assumptions about Western moral authority and the imperative nature of intervention, with the linguistic structure of his argument

reinforcing these ideological foundations. He established his interventionist framework with clear moral imperatives, stating that “the most pressing foreign policy problem we face is to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other people's conflicts” (Blair, 1999). For example, as we can see, the use of modal verbs such as “must” and “should” conveys a strong sense of moral obligation, while the active voice in the phrase “we should get actively involved” positions Western powers as necessary and decisive actors. Furthermore, the lexical choices of “pressing” and “actively involved” evoke a sense of urgency and duty, reinforcing the notion that intervention is not only justified but imperative. Thus, this framework explicitly assigns agency to the West in determining when and how to intervene in global conflicts, highlighting its self-appointed role as the morality flagbearer (James, 2024). In this sense, the speech established a framework that would later justify the Kosovo intervention and, crucially, the War on Iraq. Expressing the rhetorical foundations for his future interventions, Blair asserted that “we are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration.” (Blair, 1999). Conflating moral obligation with national self-interest, Blair uses the inclusive pronoun “we” that universalises Western priorities, while the phrase “doctrine of international community” elevates his policy preferences to the level of global common sense. Thus, by redefining national interest as inherently collaborative, Blair clears a rhetorical pathway from humanitarian concern to coercive intervention; if security is collective, then military action in Kosovo or later Iraq, can be cast as a defence of shared civilisation rather than a breach of sovereignty (“Blair's 'international community' doctrine”, 2004). Such lexical reframing exemplifies the “chameleon strategy” that will be dealt with later in the article. Through semantic bleaching of contested terms like “community” and “dependence,” Blair normalises Western agency and masks asymmetrical power relations, enabling a seamless transition from the language of war to the language of peace without altering the underlying strategic objectives (Aronson, 2000, p. 1480).

Building on these foundations, a few years later Blair's rhetorical strategies evolved and intensified in the lead-up to the 2003 War on Iraq as he married appeals to security, concerns over weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism with ethical imperatives to liberate oppressed peoples. His discourse maintained strong Western agency and moral authority, justifying controversial military action as reluctant but necessary, and the continuity between the humanitarian rationale of the Kosovo intervention and the invasion of Iraq is pronounced in

Blair's justifications and discourse strategies. This was evident in his televised address of 20 March 2003, where he declared that "my fear, deeply held, based in part on the intelligence that I see, is that these threats come together and deliver catastrophe to our country and our world" before continuing: "These tyrannical states do not care for the sanctity of human life - the terrorists delight in destroying it" ("Iraq Invasion Justified: Tony Blair," 2010). Thus, the underlying logic of Western moral responsibility, active agency, and the necessity of intervention proved consistent across these contexts.

Blair maintained his interventionist stance even when confronted with the absence of WMD. In a BBC televised interview broadcast in December 2009, he insisted: "I would still have thought it right to remove [Saddam Hussein]. Obviously, you would have had to use and deploy different arguments, about the nature of the threat" ("Blair Delivers Impassioned Speech to US Congress," 2003). This unwavering commitment to the intervention's righteousness demonstrates the depth of Blair's interventionist conviction, which would later manifest in his diplomatic approach to the Middle East. Henceforth, this foundational phase sets the context for understanding his later transformation, revealing how deeply embedded ideological and rhetorical frameworks supported his approach to the Middle East. The next section examines Blair's path as he moved into diplomatic roles, tracing how his language and strategy adapted around his everchanging roles and demands.

3. From Baghdad to Abu Dhabi: Blair's Changing Colours

Immediately following the end of his premiership, Blair transitioned from military advocate to a leading diplomat in the Middle East marking a shift not in strategic goals but in rhetorical style and institutional roles. His appointment was announced "just hours after he stood down as UK prime minister" ("Blair Appointed Middle East Envoy," 2007). Appointed as the Quartet envoy in 2007, Blair's mandate steered away from direct military intervention towards technocratic governance, economic reform, and security cooperation, and his language transitioned accordingly; from the urgent moral imperatives of war to the managerial phraseology of "practical steps" and institution-building. However, Blair's appointment was highly controversial. While endorsed by Western and Israeli leaders, his nomination faced sharp criticism from many quarters, first and foremost Palestinian leaders and civil society, who perceived his role as advancing Israeli interests and marginalising Palestinian political agency. Indeed, officials questioned his suitability as a mediator from the outset, with Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi declaring: "Blair is the last person qualified to be a mediator. We know whose side he is on and has been from the beginning. I don't believe he

moves without [Israeli Prime Minister] Netanyahu's approval. He's looking after Israel's interests" ("Palestinians Unhappy with Envoy Tony Blair," 2009). Mohammed Shtayyeh, an aide to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, summed up for his part the Quartet's record as "useless, useless, useless" (McCarthy, 2012). Despite resigning as Quartet envoy in 2015, Blair continued his diplomatic efforts, and from 2015 to 2018 he quietly participated in initial discussions between Israeli and Emirati representatives, contributing to the conditions for what became the US-brokered Abraham Accords in 2020, which formalised normalisation between Israel and several Arab states ("Abraham Accords," 2025).

In fact, Israeli newspaper *Israel Today* revealed in 2020 that "for years, a UAE minister and Yitzhak Molcho, a top advisor to Israeli PM Netanyahu, held secret meetings in Britain, the UAE, and Cyprus, with Blair personally facilitating these discussions" ("Blair, Molcho, and the Secret Channel to the Gulf," 2025). Molcho "chaired these initial talks between 2015 and 2018" with unnamed senior Israeli political figures confirming that he met "an Emirati minister in London, Abu Dhabi, and Nicosia" mediated by Blair. The talks "helped rebuild trust between Israel and the UAE" after the assassination of member of Hamas Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, in Dubai in 2010 by Israeli Mossad ("Dubai Killing Shines Unwelcome Spotlight on Mossad," 2010). Molcho also "conveyed messages of rapprochement" from Netanyahu to UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, leading "to several phone calls and, ultimately, to meetings in 2018". The newspaper noted that these meetings, with Blair's participation in various European and Gulf capitals, formed the basis for the Israel-UAE agreement ("Blair, Molcho, and the Secret Channel to the Gulf," 2025). While widely lauded by Western and regional leaders, the broader reception was far from positive.

Certainly, the Palestinian reaction to the Abraham Accords was overwhelmingly negative, characterised by widespread condemnation across the political spectrum. Palestinian Authority spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, denounced the UAE-Israel normalisation as "a betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian cause" describing it as "an aggression against the Palestinian people" ("Israel and the UAE Establish 'Full Normalization of Relations'," 2020). This condemnation was rooted in Palestinian perceptions that the accords abandoned the longstanding Arab consensus enshrined in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which stipulated that normalisation with Israel should only occur after resolution of the Palestinian Question and establishment of a Palestinian state ("Arab Peace Initiative," 2025).

As was expected, Algeria strongly opposed the Abraham Accords with the Algerian government reaffirming its longstanding position of solidarity with the

Palestinian cause while rejecting any normalisation of relations with Israel. Official statements emphasised that Algeria would not be part of the initiatives and reiterated its support for the “right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital”. Domestically and in regional forums such as the Arab League and African Union, Algeria continued to call for comprehensive peace based on international law rather than partial normalisation agreements like the Abraham Accords (“Algeria Says Will Not Normalize Relations with Israel,” 2020).

For its part, the United Nations has repeatedly stressed that any sustainable peace in the Middle East cannot bypass the Palestinian issue. Secretary-General António Guterres has consistently affirmed the UN's commitment to “a two-state solution to the Israel and Palestine conflict on the basis of pre-1967 lines” and that “any plan must align with UN and UNSC resolutions and secure the approval of all parties involved” (Wilde, 2022). Besides, senior UN officials have repeatedly warned that normalisation without substantive progress on Palestinian rights risks entrenching the status quo and undermining prospects for a just, inclusive resolution to the Palestinian Question.

Echoing these concerns, academic and policy analysts have criticised the Accords for presenting peace as largely a matter of interstate rapprochement whilst neglecting the realities of occupation, displacement, and Palestinian political rights. Many scholars argue that the Accords have further marginalised Palestinians and eroded the already fragile foundations of the two-state solution (“Guterres: UN 'Committed' to Palestinian State on Pre-1967 Lines,” n.d.). The framing of normalisation as “historic peace” has been described as a form of semantic bleaching, which obscures ongoing conflict and injustice and legitimises regional hierarchies that serve Western and Israeli interests. In addition, international human rights organisations have questioned the prioritisation of strategic and economic interests over justice and human rights, noting that the diplomatic momentum behind the Accords has allowed Israeli authorities to solidify settlement expansion and the “normalisation” of occupation, often without meaningful international scrutiny or accountability (“United Nations 'Fully Committed to Peace, Stability, Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People',” 2025).

Reflecting these concerns, commentators have questioned whether deals made without Palestinian consent can genuinely deliver stability or justice. Numerous academic studies and media analyses have documented widespread scepticism toward the Abraham Accords among both regional and global audiences. Multiple sources confirm that public opinion across the Arab world and the Gulf

remains sceptical regarding the long-term sustainability and inclusivity of the Abraham Accords, despite apparent official enthusiasm at the leadership level.

While media commentary across the Arab and Middle Eastern world constantly questions the longevity and representativeness of the agreements, public polling and scholarly research reveals no popular support, without any hope about sustainability, inclusiveness, and the potential for genuine peace (**Monshipouri, 2025, pp. 47-63**). Another study argues that the Accords “have the potential to spark an intracultural conflict among Muslim countries unless they are not turned into a strong alliance that is also welcomed by Arabic public opinion” highlighting the fragile and sceptical perceptions among the broader Arab public (**Kaya, 2022, pp. 166**). Polls and commentary consistently show that the wider Arab public expresses significant reservations about normalisation efforts without meaningful progress on issues of Palestinian statehood and justice (**Monshipouri, 2025, pp. 47-63**). Consequently, the Abraham Accords have attracted widespread scepticism from international, regional, and expert audiences, many of whom criticise these realignment efforts for being exclusionary and elite-driven rather than backed by the population of the Arab signatories of the Accords.

During this same period, Blair’s Tony Blair Institute for Global Change became increasingly prominent as a vehicle for articulating and promoting a technocratic “modernisation and normalisation” agenda, a continuation and institutionalisation of his peacebuilding rhetoric. The Institute’s mission statement emphasises “making globalisation work for the many, not the few” and implementing “practical and pioneering programmes of change” (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, n.d.), representing a technocratic evolution of Blair’s earlier interventionist language.

Blair’s public embrace of the Abraham Accords, celebrated in his rhetoric as monumental achievements in regional peace and cooperation, must thus be read against the backdrop of this multi-layered scepticism. His discourse, all made up with narratives of “progress”, “modern societies”, and “peace”, often serves, as critics note, to mask enduring exclusion and retain the logic of intervention by other means. Thus, the metaphor of “changing colours” encapsulates well Blair’s rhetorical method of adapting language and presentation to the occasion while sustaining consistent policy objectives. Such rhetorical adaptability invites deeper theoretical examination. How do such discursive shifts serve to preserve strategic continuity under the appearance of transformation? This leads us to the central concept of the “Chameleon Strategy” which will be discussed below.

4. Blair and the Art of the Chameleon Strategy

The concept of a Chameleon Strategy is useful to our analysis as it frames Blair's rhetorical evolution as a deliberate process of adaptive alignment. His previous training and experience as a barrister, where persuasive skills and rhetorical agility are essential, undoubtedly contributed to his sophisticated manipulation of language and his capacity for strategic discursive shifts. Just like the reptile that alters its appearance to match its environment, Blair continually shifts his colour by modulating his discourse through changing terminology, tone, and agency attribution, to fit changing political contexts and audiences without changing the substance. Beneath these adaptations, the core strategic objectives of consolidating Western authority, reinforcing Israeli regional primacy while marginalising Palestinian claims, remain intact. This strategy helps explain how Blair managed to hold onto his credibility, even as the focus of his work shifted, from New Labour's domestic reforms to his role as Middle East envoy. He was able to navigate different political landscapes by using the language of humanitarian intervention to appeal to Western audiences, while recasting "peace" in more security-oriented terms when speaking to Gulf leaders. In this way, Blair kept his messaging persuasive and relevant in each new context, always adapting his tone and vocabulary to suit his listeners but never truly departing from his core political goals.

Looking at Blair's speeches and public comments from the perspective of the Chameleon Strategy, we see how his ability to shift his language let him both hide and highlight what he really stood for. This flexibility made it possible for Blair to fit into -and seem at home in- a wide range of political settings throughout his career after leaving office, always adapting his words to match the moment but never letting go of his core beliefs. This strategy is realised through several key mechanisms. Blair, for example, is known to use lexical colour-shifting¹ allowing him to move seamlessly between terms like "humanitarian intervention," "practical steps/governance" and "technocratic modernisation." For instance, where he once spoke of "rooting out evil dictators who threaten their neighbours and the wider world" ("Statement by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to the United Nations General Assembly," 2002) requiring military action, he now speaks of "modern societies based on religious and cultural tolerance and co-existence, and modern economies based on diversification, the embrace of technology and high standards of education" ("Abraham Accords," 2025). This evolution is also demonstrated at the London Meeting on Supporting the Palestinian Authority on

¹ Lexical colour shifting refers to the change in a word's connotative or evaluative meaning its "colour" within a context, altering its emotional or attitudinal impact while retaining its basic denotation. It reflects how discourse influences the perceived meaning and tone of lexical items.

March 1, 2005², where Blair's language shifted toward a technocratic framing of "peace-building" exemplified by his statement that:

What we have today is an agreement not just on behalf of the Palestinian authority that has got to usher in such a state, but also on behalf of the whole of the international community as to the practical steps, the foundation stones necessary to create that viable state in the future. (Blair, 2005).

Blair's shift is reflected in the lexical reframing from terms like "intervention" to more neutral expressions such as "practical steps" and "foundation stones." The use of passive constructions, for instance in phrases like "agreement [...] has been reached," serves to obscure who precisely made the decisions. Furthermore, the invocation of the "international community" as a collective actor diffuses direct Western responsibility, while the overall technocratic language transforms inherently political issues into ostensibly administrative tasks.

In addition, Blair also employs selective agency³ by emphasising the roles of Western and allied actors while minimising or diffusing accountability for controversial decisions. Blair's statement on the Abraham Accords perfectly exemplifies this:

For many years I and my Institute team have worked on deepening relationships between Israel and the Arab world. I had long come to the conclusion that if we want to see a fair resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue on the basis of two states, there had to be a complete reversal of the idea that the Arab world should refuse contact with Israel ("Abraham Accords," 2025).

Blair highlights his and his Institute's proactive involvement - "I and my Institute team have worked on deepening relationships [...]" - placing Western or external mediators at the centre of the narrative as the most active agents driving change. He frames progress toward peace as requiring a "complete reversal" of a long-standing Arab-world approach, "the idea that the Arab world should refuse contact with Israel", positioning the transformation of Arab policy as the critical step forward. This shifts attention to the Arab side's choices and actions. He does this while de-emphasising the agency of Palestinians themselves; what they want, what political strategies they pursue, or how their situation shapes the conflict, is simply absent and not mentioned. Responsibility for progress is deflected away from Israel's policies or actions and is placed, instead, on the willingness of the Arab world to alter its stance. In other words, by selectively describing who acts,

² The meeting was convened by Tony Blair with an agenda to secure international support for Palestinian institutional reforms in governance, security and economic development as the foundation for a viable, independent state.

³ Selective agency refers to the way discourse grants the power to act to some actors while omitting or sidelining others. In CDA, this is often discussed as the "allocation of agency", "representation of agency", or "unequal agency", describing how texts highlight certain agents' actions while marginalising others.

who changes, and who matters, Blair shapes causality by presenting “peace” as depending mostly on Arab engagement, not on changes in Israeli or Western behaviour. He also obscures complexity by downplaying the agency and demands of Palestinians as central actors in the conflict. This consequently legitimises certain narratives which, in the quote above, centres Blair’s and his Institute’s role, and frames Arab engagement as the missing ingredient, legitimising specific diplomatic approaches while sidelining others. In essence, selective agency in this quote highlights Western mediation and Arab states’ willingness as decisive, while minimising the visible role and agency of Palestinians and downplaying other factors. This rhetorical choice shapes both who is seen as responsible for change and whose voices set the agenda in the peace process.

Another key mechanism used by Blair is semantic bleaching⁴ of key terms such as “peace” and “normalisation” which become flexible, depoliticised signifiers legitimising elite projects. Blair’s framing of the Abraham Accords as providing “a massive and welcome opportunity to recast the politics of the region” (“Abraham Accords,” 2025) exemplifies this process of linguistic transformation.

An alternative rhetorical device Blair employs is strategic ambiguity⁵, allowing for contradictory interpretations that preserve flexibility in policy positioning. For instance, Blair’s acknowledgment of Palestinian concerns whilst simultaneously endorsing the Accords demonstrates this technique: “I know and understand the objections of the Palestinian leadership to what has been agreed. But I believe in time the Palestinian people will understand that it is only by radically changing strategy that the legitimate aspirations for a viable Palestinian State can be realised” (“Abraham Accords,” 2025). Building on this ambiguity, by 2020 Blair fully embraced normalisation as synonymous with “peace”, characterising the Abraham Accords as “a massive and welcome opportunity to recast the politics of the region in a way consistent with the only future for the Middle East which works.” His use of metaphorical language, such as “recast the politics”, implies a reshaping rather than a genuine or fundamental transformation, while semantic bleaching renders “peace” an empty signifier that serves to legitimise normalisation. Also, the deterministic framing in the phrase “the only future [...] which works” closes off alternative possibilities, effectively excluding dissenting views. Moreover, there is a strategic omission in Blair’s language, with minimal

⁴ Semantic bleaching refers to the process by which a word loses its original, specific meaning and becomes more general or less forceful through frequent or broadened use.

⁵ Strategic ambiguity refers to the deliberate use of vague or unclear language or actions to maintain flexibility, avoid conflict, or accommodate multiple audiences by allowing different interpretations. It is commonly analysed in political and diplomatic contexts as a purposeful rhetorical strategy.

acknowledgment of Palestinian objections, thereby marginalising critical perspectives within the discourse.

By looking closely at these techniques, we can see how Blair's ability to change his language helps keep existing power structures in place, even though his diplomatic language sounds progressive and forward-looking. Throughout this study, it has become clear that his subtle use of words masks a deeper continuity, maintaining the same power arrangements beneath a surface that seems to promote change. In short, his skilful use of shifting vocabulary, carefully assigning who takes action, softening the meaning of key terms, and using vague language allows him to keep old power dynamics intact while sounding adaptable, without making any real or meaningful changes. This analysis reveals Blair's success in maintaining hegemonic power structures through sophisticated discursive practices. The chameleon strategy thus provides a crucial lens for understanding not only Blair's career but broader diplomatic language, which frequently masks continuity and power in the face of apparent change.

Conclusion:

Looking at Tony Blair's rhetorical evolution over two decades reveals a linguistic metamorphosis. From the moral imperatives of "humanitarian intervention" to the technocratic language of "practical steps" and finally to the sanitised vocabulary of "normalisation", Blair demonstrates a sophisticated deployment of what has been termed the "chameleon strategy". This rhetorical dexterity allowed Blair to navigate different political landscapes while maintaining core strategic continuities. Being a master of words, he transforms military action into "stabilisation", coercive diplomacy⁶ into "modernisation", and elite agreements into "historic peace", while "normalisation" becomes "peace". His discursive choices about the Abraham Accords epitomise this dust in eyes approach. This way, elite agreements that bypass Palestinian participation are reconceptualised as "landmark" "achievements" that "recast the politics of the region". The chameleon strategy thus reveals itself as more than mere political opportunism; it represents a discursive legitimisation approach that maintains strategic continuity beneath the appearance of transformation thus offering the promise of change while delivering continuity wrapped in new vocabularies of peace and progress. The chameleon changes colour, but not substance.

⁶ Coercive diplomacy is the use of threats, sanctions, or limited force, backed by the credible possibility of escalation, to pressure another state or actor into complying with specific demands, all while seeking to avoid full-scale military conflict.

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Blair, the Quartet, the Abraham Accords, and the Myth of Peace

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