THE ROLE OF EUPHEMISMS IN POLITICAL PROPAGANDA: AN EXAMINATION OF WAR AND PEACE DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Euphemisms are pivotal tools in political propaganda, especially in shaping narratives about war and peace. These linguistic expressions help obscure the true nature of controversial actions, reshaping public perceptions and swaying opinion on critical topics like military conflict. Politicians often use euphemisms to present violent actions as justified or noble, while portraying peace negotiations as weak or insufficient. This paper delves into the role euphemisms play in the discourse surrounding war and peace, assessing their influence on political rhetoric and public opinion. Through analysis of both historical and contemporary instances, the study reveals how euphemisms are employed to manage political narratives, influence public sentiment, and legitimize governmental decisions.

Keywords: Euphemism, political propaganda, war discourse, peace discourse, political language, framing, public opinion, language manipulation.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, political propaganda has leveraged language to sway public opinion, with euphemisms playing an essential role in this process. Euphemisms are softer, indirect expressions that replace harsher terms to make uncomfortable topics seem more palatable. In the context of war and peace, euphemisms are used to justify military actions, downplay atrocities, and frame conflicts in ways that support government agendas. This paper explores how euphemisms are strategically used in political discourse, particularly in the areas of war and peace, with comparisons drawn across different political systems.
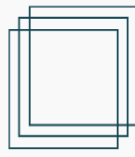
Euphemisms in War Discourse

Euphemisms are frequently employed during wartime to diminish the emotional weight of violence, maintain public support, and justify military interventions. For instance, "collateral damage" is a term used to describe civilian casualties, shifting focus away from the ethical implications of the loss of innocent lives and presenting it as an inevitable aspect of military strategy (Beard, 2000).

Another example is the term "enhanced interrogation techniques," which was used during the War on Terror to mask what is widely considered to be torture. This euphemism allowed the U.S. government to justify the use of brutal interrogation practices by rebranding them as necessary actions for national security (Luntz, 2007).

Additionally, euphemisms are used to portray military interventions in a more positive light. For example, "regime change" was a term used by the U.S. during the Iraq War to frame the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government as part of a democratic mission rather than an act of military aggression (Chomsky, 1997).

Euphemisms in Peace Discourse

While often associated with wartime, euphemisms also have significant roles in peace rhetoric. Politicians may use euphemisms to downplay their country's involvement in peace efforts or to frame peace initiatives as weak or ineffective. Peace agreements are often referred to as "framework agreements" or "deals," terms that obscure the complexity of negotiations and prevent criticisms of perceived failure (Sykes, 2019).

Another common euphemism is "peacekeeping operations," used to describe military interventions that are often seen as the imposition of foreign power. This term frames such actions as stabilizing forces, downplaying their aggressive nature (Mills, 2004).

Furthermore, the expression "negotiating with terrorists" is used in a negative light to criticize peace efforts that involve dialogue with hostile groups. This term implies that peace talks are weak and detrimental, framing them as unnecessary compromises with extremism (Wilkins, 1992).

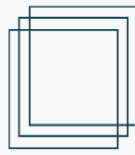## The Function of Euphemisms in Political Propaganda

Euphemisms in both war and peace discourse serve multiple purposes in political propaganda. They simplify complex, controversial issues and allow politicians to communicate sensitive messages without directly confronting uncomfortable truths. By using softer language, leaders can maintain public support for military actions or peace talks that might otherwise be opposed.

Euphemisms also manage public emotions. In the context of war, phrases like "collateral damage" and "enhanced interrogation techniques" desensitize the public to the harsh realities of violence and human suffering. In peace discussions, terms such as "peacekeeping" or "framework agreements" help present diplomatic efforts as successful and less prone to failure, even when these efforts involve significant compromises.

Finally, euphemisms are used to shape the political narrative in ways that benefit those in power. Politicians can use strategic language to position themselves as defenders of security and peace, while framing opponents or adversaries as threats to these ideals. This helps solidify political power and maintain legitimacy (Kövecses, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Euphemisms are essential tools in political propaganda, particularly within the contexts of war and peace rhetoric. By manipulating the language surrounding military conflict and peace efforts, politicians can shape public opinion, justify controversial actions, and control political narratives. Whether portraying war as necessary or presenting peace efforts as weak, euphemisms obscure the true nature of political decisions, influencing

how the public perceives those in power. Understanding the role of euphemisms in political discourse provides valuable insights into the ways language can be used to manipulate narratives and influence public sentiment.

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