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Conceptualizing the Israeli Side in Al-Jazeera's Metaphorical Discourse During Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Flood [†]

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[†] *Our decision to examine the metaphors used by this Arab network specifically was based on the fact that it was the first to report on the war and that it is the news network with the most viewers in the Arab world.*

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Israel is potrayed in the metaphorical discourse of the Al-Jazeera Arabic (AJA) network, which the Israeli government has deemed a Hamas mouthpiece, from the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7 to November 11, 2023 (The metaphors described in this paper do not reflect the author's views.). The study employs the concept of conceptual metaphor as its theoretical framework, highlighting the source domains that AJA uses to conceptualize various aspects of the Israeli side—the target domains. An analysis of the source domains shows that AJA conceptualizes the Israelis as Nazi war criminals and atheists who deserve to be punished, and whose military forces and military leadership are so weak that they can easily be defeated. It is possible to claim that AJA used this conceptualization to manipulate its audience and justify the war emotionally. Specifically, the network relied on the myth of the few against the many, which is deeply ingrained in Jewish culture, to communicate that Hamas would prevail in the war. AJA's discourse also included references to the Holocaust to imply that the Palestinians have become the victims of its former victims, that is, the Jewish people. The study's corpus consisted of seven hours of AJA news coverage watched daily over 36 days. The data collected

was not recorded, which constitutes a limitation; additionally the discourse consisted of prewritten statements rather than spontaneous speech. It is important to note that the discourse we examined is pre-edited and not spontaneous, as will be further explained.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor; Political Discourse; Al-Aqsa Flood; Palestine; Israel; Al-Jazeera; Hamas; The Israel-Hamas War

1. Introduction

This paper examines metaphors as a rhetorical and manipulative tool in planned political discourse within the context of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood—the name given to the war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas by the Al-Jazeera network in Arabic (AJA)[1]. The paper will focus on the metaphors used by AJA and examine how they contribute to the construction of meaning. Hamas began its attack on October 7, 2023, with a barrage of thousands of rockets aimed at Israel. Under the cover of this rocket attack, Hamas fighters approached the border fence. Tractors tore down the military fence in dozens of places, whereupon Hamas fighters, equipped with firearms, hand grenades, explosives, and other weapons, attacked eight Israel Defense Forces (IDF) posts and destroyed communications and observation equipment to disrupt IDF command and control abilities in the region. At the same time, Hamas gunmen attacked Israeli towns and villages, where they massacred innocent civilians, burned down houses, and abducted more than two hundred hostages.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how AJA, in their reporting of the aforementioned events, employed metaphor as a rhetorical tool to conceptualize the Israeli side of the conflict. The research drew on Lakoff and Johnson's[2] concept of conceptual metaphor and on the notion that metaphor has rhetorical power in influencing the recipient's position and creating emotional manipulation, as further explained in the subsection about the study's theoretical framework.

2. Theoretical Framework

Since the present study is based on conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), let us begin by emphasizing the importance of Lakoff[2] and Lakoff and Johnson[3] in this field. Attention was given to the importance of metaphor in various types of discourse as evidence of human cognitive structures that

both reflect and influence how we perceive reality and justify our attitudes.

Metaphors, through which people speak or think of one object or entity in terms of another, have long preoccupied researchers. Since the early twentieth century, literary scholars have focused on creative figurative language as expressed in literary prose and poetry. Over the last three decades, many scholars, largely influenced by CMT, have focused on studying the role that metaphor plays in human cognition[4]. CMT defines metaphors as structures stored in the human brain that shape both everyday and literary figurative language, serving as evidence of human cognitive structures. Paralleling this burgeoning interest in conceptual metaphor since the 1990s, numerous scholars have examined the role of various figurative language constructs through discourse analysis of various texts, including both natural, interactive, and media discourse, to explore the hidden aspects of language[5–7].

Lakoff and Johnson[2] seek to reveal the metaphorical nature of human thought by examining habitual metaphors, demonstrating how their use reflects how humans perceive reality. Metaphors frame our world, and we are unable to conceptualize reality without them. CMT views metaphors as human cognitive structures that enables us to comprehend conceptual domains of greater complexity than those encountered in everyday experience by considering them in terms of simpler ones. The encounter between the two conceptual domains is a cognitive process through which we humans understand the primary (target) domain in terms of the secondary (source) domain. For example, with the metaphor "life is a journey," a conceptual metaphor that has been studied in many languages, "life" constitutes the target domain. In contrast, the source domain is "a journey"[4]. The target domain is conceptualized through the source domain; however, the reverse is not true. For example, when we say "life is a container," we conceptualize life through the concept of a container. However, we cannot equally conceptualize a container through the concept of life. In cognitive seman-

tics, the conceptualization of the target domain through the source domain is known as mapping, a term that implies no single metaphorical connection between the two domains, but rather a network of connections[8–10]. Thus, for example, the metaphor "life is a journey" is based on the image of the road, one that is commonly used in many English-language expressions, such as "being at a crossroads," "meeting a dead end," "coming to a point of no return," "overcoming road-blocks," enduring a "bumpy ride," and the like. However, each domain, source, and target has multiple characteristics: the journey involves passengers, means of transportation, a route, obstacles, and more. In life, there are relationships, events, development, and more. The metaphor links the characteristics of the source domain to those of the target domain: people are travelers, the course of life is the route, the difficulties one encounters are obstacles on the path, and so on, in a complex network where multiple connections are possible.

CMT emphasizes that metaphors represent an encounter between the two domains and explores the transition from the abstract to the tangible. Its primary focus is not a single borrowing of a particular word from domain to domain but rather the significant interrelationship between the two domains that manifests itself through a series of metaphorical expressions. Such an interrelationship is not rooted in a coincidental similarity between two objects from different domains but in the conceptualization of one domain through the other[8]. Lakoff[11], for example, argues that metaphors not only reflect our view of reality but also influence it. In the wake of the First Gulf War, he analyzed the Bush administration's political discourse and demonstrated how it employed metaphors to justify US involvement in the war, showing how metaphor analysis can be critical in exposing discursive manipulation and otherwise hidden ideologies[12–14].

Gavriely-Nuri[14,15] similarly demonstrates how metaphor is employed to portray war as a regular part of life in Israeli political discourse[15,16]. These metaphors of war aim to naturalize and legitimize the use of military power by creating a systematic analogy between war and objects far from the battlefield[11]. For example, the metaphorical phrase "Golda's Kitchen" was popularly used for the most intimate circle of Prime Minister Meir's advisers. This metaphor conceals a secretive and undemocratic decision-making process on issues of security and other key matters.

In essence, the kitchen metaphor hides what was often, in fact, a war room where Israel's most pressing security matters were decided. If we combine this with critical discourse analysis (CDA), we can see how this metaphor helps depict war as routine, mundane, and reasonable, while masking its true, terrible nature. Such patterns of discourse, repeated frequently by politicians, military leaders, academics, journalists, and commentators, help accustom the public to the abnormal situation of war and help leaders convince the public of its rationality and necessity[8,9].

A relevant example here is how UK premier and Labour Party leader Tony Blair defended his decision to send British soldiers to the Second Gulf War in 2003, using metaphors of progress (the successful attainment of goals). These metaphors mirrored Blair's policy of accepting nothing but progress and presenting himself as a strong and reliable leader unswayed by difficulty or criticism. The metaphors used reflect Blair's perceptions of the problem and preferred solution. Such processes are generalizable.

The rhetorical power of metaphors of movement, widely encountered in political discourse, is worth mentioning here. One example is the metaphor that depicts the euro (as, for example, used in the UK's *Independent* newspaper in January 1999) as a train whose carriages must progress at the same speed and in the same direction in order to avoid derailment[16,17]. This metaphor reflects a call to European governments to adopt a uniform monetary policy and act in complete economic harmony in order to ensure the success of the European Monetary Union.

3. Methodology

Al-Jazeera is a television network based in the Qatari capital, Doha, which broadcasts in Arabic and English. Al-Jazeera Arabic is the most popular news channel in the Arab world, and its reports and news broadcasts often reflect the foreign policy perspectives of the Qatari government and the small elite that controls it[18]. Data were collected by watching seven hours of the network's main news broadcasts, including interviews, daily from the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, 2023, through November 11, 2023. The data were translated from Arabic into English by professional translator and copyeditor who is native to English.

The raw data were then processed to identify various metaphorical structures. Some metaphors consisted of a single word, for example *iltifāf* ("envelopment"), which depicts the various Palestinian resistance forces on different fronts (the Lebanese Shi'a group Hezbollah on Israel's northern border, Palestinians in the West Bank, and the Arabs in East Jerusalem) as beasts of prey that hunt in packs and outflank their victim, which has no chance of survival. Other metaphors consist of phrases, for example, *bḥar al-dam* ("sea of blood") used to describe the many innocent people killed in Gaza, to create false sense of victory. The metaphorical structures were analyzed in three stages. In the first stage, each metaphor was associated with source domains [4]. In the second stage, we analyzed how these source domains conceptualize the Israeli side. The third stage consisted of deriving conclusions based on the study's findings.

It is worth noting that the metaphorical discourse used by AJA is not fundamentally different from that employed by later-generation Palestinian leaders. Previous work on the use of metaphor in the political discourse of Arab politicians in Israel showed that the source domains used by these political leaders are very similar to those employed by AJA. Like AJA, Arab politicians in Israel, in particular Arab members of the Knesset (Israel's parliament), mostly use such metaphors as a vehicle to express pointed criticism of the Israeli government regarding its discriminatory policies toward the Arab population in Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

4. Findings

The source domains identified in the analysis fell into nine distinct categories: nature and natural phenomena, animals, death, the Holocaust and genocide, holy scriptures, manufactured objects, humans and the human body, and diseases and defects. Each category will now be examined individually.

4.1. Nature and Natural Phenomena

Metaphors borrowed from nature can be found in all cultures and religions, including, of course, Jewish and Muslim sources. Thus, in Deuteronomy (20:19) we read: "Are the trees people?" referring to the fact that both people and trees grow, and both can be cut down. Furthermore, like trees, people produce seed and fruit. In the Quran (57:8), we read: "He is the One Who sends down clear revelations to His servant to bring you out of darkness and into light." Ignorance is depicted as darkness, while knowledge is compared to light.

The following nature-related metaphors were identified in the AJA coverage:

> (1) This day, Gaza under a lava of fire says its historical words and proves the right of its people to a homeland, to soil and to respect [19].

In this quote from October 7, 2023, Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's political wing, compares the heavy bombardment of Gaza to volcanic lava, which destroys everything that stands in its way.

> (2) We hear the shelling pouring down at the edge of the village of Ayta al-Shaab [20].

The Arabic verb *yanhamiru* ("pour down") usually refers to heavy rain. The comparison to rain, whose individual drops are too numerous to be counted, highlights the intensity of the shelling.

> (3) The Israeli enemy has been trying for five weeks now to rinse (Rinsing is an action that is usually performed using water, a natural resource. For this reason we placed the source domain of this metaphor within the category of nature.) away its shame and defeat by shedding the blood of thousands of innocent women and children in order to create a picture of victory [21].

With this metaphor, Abu Obeida, the spokesman of Hamas's Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, compares what he believes are Israel's attempts to whitewash the shame of its defeat after the October 7 attack to the act of rinsing with water to remove dirt and filth.

> (4) The enemy strives to create a false picture of victory, relying this on a sea of blood of innocent civilians [21].

"Sea of blood" is a metaphor for the many innocent lives lost in Gaza, which, according to Abu Obeida, is used by Israel to create a false sense of victory. This is an emotionally-charged metaphor, indicating extreme violence. The bound-

less sea reflects the seemingly uncountable number of Gaza civilian casualties.

> (5) Our pain will explode in rage and fire in the enemy's face[21].

The Arabic word *ḥimam*, meaning "fire" in this context, would appear to refer to lava from a volcano. The reaction of Hamas fighters and Gaza residents to their pain and suffering will be powerful like a volcano. Just as lava is expelled by tremendous pressure deep within the earth, so the people of Gaza will respond with extraordinary violence to the enormous pressure placed upon them by the IDF's intensive attacks.

> (6) Go out and participate in the Al-Aqsa Flood that is now underway, to support the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its victory[21].

This invective sees the birth of the metaphorical name given by Hamas to the October 7 attack and the hostilities that followed. The many fronts which Hamas hopes will join its operation, the intention of which was supposedly to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, are compared to a flood—an uncontrollable flow of water. Abu Obeida is, thereby, calling on all believing Muslims to join Hamas in its war to protect Al-Aqsa and engulf the region like a flood.

4.2. Animals

Animal metaphors have played key roles in many cultures. Thus, for example, the fox is used in Persian and the owl in English as metaphors to describe a shrewd person, although their connotations differ. The former has a negative connotation and implies the use of one's wits for dishonest purposes, while the latter connotes wisdom used for positive aims. Animal metaphors may describe bravery (for example, those relating to the lion), while others may be used to demean their object (for example, those relating to the chicken)[22].

The animal metaphors that appeared in the AJA broadcasts examined in this study served mainly to highlight the power of Hamas's fighters as compared to the weakness of the Israeli forces.

> (7) The IDF fears being enveloped by the Palestinian resistance and the many fronts[20].

The various Palestinian resistance forces on different fronts (the Lebanese Shi'a group Hezbollah on Israel's northern border, Palestinians in the West Bank, and the Arabs in East Jerusalem) are depicted as beasts of prey that hunt in packs, thus "enveloping" (*iltifāf*) and outflanking the Israeli security forces—their doomed quarry.

> (8) Israel is painted as a victim that makes human pity flow[20].

The Arabic verb *yudirru* means "make milk flow abundantly." It is primarily associated with dairy cows that produce large quantities of milk. Israel's tremendous efforts to disseminate propaganda that presents it as the victim, in order to arouse pity and influence public opinion, are compared to an animal that produces a great deal of milk. Just as a calf feels its mother's love as it suckles, so Israel tries to influence public opinion and arouse pity.

> (9) Israel's armed forces will become the prey of Hamas fighters[20].

Here, prey refers to the source domain that conceptualizes the IDF's weakness in comparison to Hamas fighters.

> (10) Our forces hunt tanks and destroy them[21].

While hunting is an activity performed by humans, in the present context, the spokesperson for Hamas's Izz ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades compares Hamas to animal predators. The Israeli tanks are, therefore, their prey.

4.3. Death

AJA made considerable use of metaphors taken from the source domain of death. Such metaphors mainly aim to expose what AJA describes as the Israeli government's plot to bury the Palestinian issue and to massacre innocent people in Gaza.

> (11) The World Health Organization demands that Israel stop immediately its orders to evacuate hospitals in Gaza. It views such orders as orders of execution[20].

AJA is saying that the IDF's evacuation orders are essentially execution orders, since they would certainly mean death for the patients. A double execution is implied here:

the execution of Palestinian hospital patients is also a death trap for IDF soldiers.

> (12) The Palestinian issue has exhausted the international community, and now Israel is trying to cover it with soil[20].

AJA uses this metaphor to express its view that Israel is killing innocent Palestinians in an attempt at mass annihilation aimed at burying the Palestinian issue once and for all.

> (13) Our fighters have always been a cemetery for the dreams of this enemy's leaders[21].

Here, the cemetery is a metaphor for dreams that cannot be realized.

> (14) Our fighters will turn the enemy's armored troop carriers into mobile graves[21].

Israel's armored troop carriers are compared to mobile graves in which IDF soldiers will be buried.

4.4. The Holocaust and Genocide

The use which AJA makes in its discourse of metaphors associated with the Holocaust is intended to accuse the IDF of massacring innocent people in Gaza, thus creating a comparison between this massacre and the horrors which the Nazis inflicted on the Jews during the Holocaust. The metaphors convey a double message: the Jewish people are identified as victims of genocide in the Holocaust, which constitutes an admission that it happened. However, at the same time, AJA is expressing sharp criticism of the Jewish state, which kills innocent people in Gaza. It is a tacit criticism of the double standard adopted by Israel: the victim has become the murderer. The implied expectation is that the past victim should feel empathy towards the suffering of others, rather than turning the Palestinians into victims of yet another genocide.

> (15) What is happening today in Gaza can be summed up as genocide[20].

The IDF attacks in Gaza and the thousands of casualties are described as a genocide.

> (16) The Nazi enemy's war crimes will not erase our victory in this eternal battle[21].

The war crimes committed by the IDF are compared to the crimes which the Nazis perpetrated against the Jews. Just as the Nazis failed in annihilating the Jewish people, so the Israelis (here compared to Nazis) will not prevail in the struggle against the Palestinians.

> (17) The Israeli enemy is committing a massacre in Gaza, and what is happening there today is a Holocaust[21].

The IDF's crimes in Gaza are compared to the Nazi crimes against the Jews.

4.5. The Quran

When speakers wish to persuade, they may incorporate literary, religious, and folkloristic elements, such as popular songs, maxims, proverbs, myths, and holy scripture. When holy scripture is quoted, the ideas presented are self-explanatory, and for the speaker (and perhaps also for the target audience), their truth is self-evident. In Arab culture, the Quran is regarded as a model for the correct use of Arabic. Its style and language are considered inimitable, and for believers, the truth of its verses needs no confirmation. AJA's metaphorical discourse uses Quranic verses, informed by awareness of their effect on Muslims throughout the world.

> (18) Dozens of officers and soldiers are prisoners held in our hands[21].

The phrase *fī qabatinā* ("held in our hand") in this context is a metaphor for Hamas's control of the war. An allusion to the Quranic verse: "Surely those who pledge allegiance to you are pledging allegiance to Allah. Allah's hand is over theirs" (Q. 48:10). The Prophet Muhammad called on his companions to swear allegiance to him and stated that Allah's hand would be over theirs. That is, Muhammad's hand served as a proxy for Allah's hand during the pledge and its implementation. The meaning here is that Hamas will win the war and its hand will prevail, thanks to divine justice and God's blessing, since it is fighting to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

> (19) Come out to participate in the Al-Aqsa Flood, which is underway in order to support the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its victory[21].

The metaphorical phrase *ṭūfān al-ʾAqṣā* ("Al-Aqsa Flood") alludes to the story of Noah and the flood, which

is described both in the Hebrew Bible and the Quran. In Q. 14–15 we read of God's purpose in sending the flood: "Indeed, we sent Noah to his people, and he remained among them for a thousand years, less fifty. Then the Flood overtook them, despite their persistence in wrongdoing. However, we delivered him and those in the Ark, making it a sign for all people." In both Judaism and Islam, Noah was a pious man who attempted to persuade the people of his generation to abandon their idolatry and unbelief, but ultimately failed. Hamas's attacks on Israeli towns on October 7, 2023, are compared to God's flood—God punished the idolaters of Noah's time, while Hamas punished the infidels who desecrated the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This metaphor imbues Hamas's attack with a sense of sanctity.

> (20) I swear by God that the enemy is a weak spider's web[21].

The metaphorical phrase *baytu ʿankabūtin wahinin* ("spider's web") alludes to a Quranic verse, Q. 29: 41: "The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of a spider spinning a shelter. Moreover, the flimsiest of all shelters is certainly that of a spider, if only they knew." The phrase thus alludes to the IDF's weakness. The spider's web here is also a reference to the whole of Q. 29, Al Ankabut. In general, in his speech, Abu Obeida refers to Surah 40:

> So each We punished for his sin; of them was he on whom We sent down a violent storm, and of them was he whom the rumbling overtook, and of them was he whom We made to be swallowed up by the earth, and of them was he whom We drowned; and it did not beseem Allah that He should be unjust to them, but they were unjust to their souls.

4.6. The Hebrew Bible

In addition to metaphors related to Noah's flood, Abu Obeida, the spokesman of Hamas's Al Qassam Brigades, also makes the following allusion to the Hebrew Bible:

> (21) This war will be taught throughout the world and will be immortalized in history, just as David's victory over Goliath has been immortalized[21].

The metaphor refers to David's victory over the heavily armored Philistine fighter, Goliath. David's victory proves that the Palestinian people will prevail, because their cause is just, just as David's was. It may be argued that this metaphor is conceptualized from the source domain of the few against the many, a concept that is deeply rooted within Israeli culture, with its dominant narrative that Israel has been victorious in its wars against its enemies despite numerical inferiority, because its cause is just. Abu Obeida refers to an unimpeachable biblical source in order to express his certainty that the Palestinian people will win the war against Israel.

4.7. Manufactured Objects

Metaphors derived from the source domain of manufactured objects are relatively simple and are easily interpreted.

> (22) Here is the paper tiger's armored personnel carrier that desecrates the Al-Aqsa Mosque and humiliates our prisoners. It is about to fall and break apart[21].

The metaphor refers not only to the IDF's *Namer* ("tiger") armored personnel carrier, but to IDF forces in general, perceived as weak and ineffective by Hamas. In the AJA broadcast, one sees a *Namer* armored personnel carrier on fire after being attacked by Hamas fighters. Here it is compared to something made of paper, which can easily be burned.

> (23) The IDF's leadership is made of paper and outdated[21].

The IDF's leadership is breaking apart, like a piece of old paper which crumbles at the lightest touch. Such a leadership is incapable of withstanding Hamas forces.

> (24) Produce the anxiety and nightmare from which the Israeli enemy flinches[21].

Anxiety and nightmares are presented here as a manufactured product. In other words, it is possible to manufacture terror for the Israeli enemy just as one manufactures any other product.

4.8. Humans and the Human Body

Metaphors based on the human body can play a significant role in fostering a sense of national identity, pro-

moting harmony, and reducing conflict. Examples of such metaphors are expressions associated with the state and the "body politic," such as "head of state" and "heart of the country." The metaphor of the "body politic" is used in English and German about the European Union as a federation of states[23].

> (25) The battle of the Al-Aqsa Flood was a battle of minds. In less than an hour, 1,200 Palestinian fighters succeeded in defeating 10,000 Israeli soldiers on their soil and inside their military camps[20].

It is the mind that gives orders to the body and leads it. Here, Hamas's war against Israel is referred to by the metaphorical phrase a battle of minds, in order to highlight the fact that Hamas is the party that leads this war. Hamas's superior planning is proven by the fact that 1,200 Hamas fighters succeeded in surprising and defeating 10,000 IDF soldiers and taking over 200 hostages, without the IDF having any inkling of the planned attack.

4.9. Diseases and Deformities

Metaphors taken from the source domain of diseases and deformities present the enemy as insane and inhumane. For example, the metaphor "one cannot live next to a monster" presents Hamas as barbaric and inhumane, an organization that justifiably needs to be fought; in other words, the legitimacy of waging war against it is derived from its depiction as a monster.

> (26) The Palestinians from inside Gaza say that the world turns a blind eye towards their killing, but it cannot kill the Palestinian issue[20].

The countries of the world that voluntarily refrain from seeing the horrors being committed in Gaza are here compared to a blind person.

> (27) The massacre that the Israeli enemy is perpetrating against innocent people and the shelling of hospitals in Gaza reflect its sadistic desires[21].

The killing of innocent civilians and the shelling of hospitals is compared to the actions of a sadist, who obtains satisfaction from causing others to suffer.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

AJA depicts the Israelis as Nazi war criminals, infidels, military weaklings, and easy prey for Hamas forces. The source domain of animals is used mainly to highlight the heroism of Hamas and its ability to hunt down IDF soldiers like a beast of prey. The source domain of the Holocaust serves to accuse the IDF of massacring innocent people in Gaza, and to compare its actions with what the Nazis did to the Jews during the Second World War. AJA conveys a double message by using this source domain: it acknowledges the status of the Jewish people as victims of the Holocaust, but it also aims sharp criticism at Israel for the massacre of innocent civilians in Gaza.

In AJA's metaphorical discourse, nature, natural phenomena, and manufactured objects occur frequently. It appears that metaphors based on these source domains facilitate the conveyance of messages, as they are easily deciphered and the source domains from which they are conceptualized are readily identifiable. Metaphors taken from the religious domain also appear frequently, especially quotes from the Quran. This is to be expected, since the Quran forms the basis of the ideology in whose name Hamas opposes Israel, as demonstrated even in the name given to its October 7 attack—Al-Aqsa Flood. AJA also makes use of the rhetoric of intimidation, reflected mainly in the use of the source domain of death, intended to deter the Israeli enemy and to raise the morale of Hamas fighters.

Next-step research by the author of this article examined the use of metaphorical language in the speeches of Yasser Arafat, the former president of the Palestinian National Authority. A comparison between the two shows that AJA, in its coverage of what Hamas has called Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, and during Israel's Operation Iron Sword in Gaza, employed very similar source domains to Arafat in his political discourse. Similar to Arafat, Hamas leaders relied on metaphors that reference the Holocaust to convey a double message. Also echoing Arafat, Hamas leaders used biblical metaphors to convey the message that the Palestinian people will eventually emerge victorious. In particular, both Hamas and Arafat used the biblical story of David's victory over the Philistine warrior Goliath to express the idea that God will always stand by the righteous, even when they are fewer and weaker than their enemies. This metaphor also evokes the myth of the few versus the many, which is deeply

rooted in Jewish and Israeli culture. Its use shows how both Arafat and Hamas simultaneously employ, co-opt, and subvert a key emotive Jewish myth to convey the message that the Palestinians will ultimately emerge victorious in their struggle against Israel.

Furthermore, the metaphorical discourse of Arafat, Arab Israeli politicians, and Hamas's military and political leaders all rely to a significant extent on the Quran and Islamic imagery. Through this, they infuse their political discourse with religious sanctity and convey the message to the public that their battle against Israel is just. Crucially, they also imply that the fight against Israel is not just a Palestinian but also a pan-Arab or pan-Islamic struggle. It is no coincidence that Hamas has named its most recent campaign Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, mobilizing a powerful and emotive Islamic religious metaphor and religious imagery to express the message that, just as God sent a flood to punish humanity for their apostasy, so Hamas's war on Israel is a divine punishment in retribution for what it believes is Israel's desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

On the other hand, watching the main news edition of the popular Israeli Channel 12 (A television network headquartered in Jerusalem that broadcasts in Hebrew and has a relatively high rating compared to other competitors) revealed that its metaphorical language used more or less the exact source domains as AJA to highlight different aspects of the other side. For example, both channels used metaphors from the source domain of animals. On AJA, this source domain was mainly intended to highlight Hamas's bravery and its ability to hunt IDF soldiers like a beast of prey. On Channel 12, however, the same source domain was mainly intended to describe Hamas's barbarity, to shatter the concept that it is possible to live peacefully alongside it and thus justify the war against it and the need to overthrow its rule.

The present study had several limitations. One such limitation is the restricted period over which data were collected, from the first day of the war, October 7, 2023, through November 11 of the same year. It was also not possible to record the broadcasts. Future studies would benefit from relying on recordings of metaphorical discourse and covering a more extensive time range. In addition, news discourse is often pre-written or rehearsed and differs from spontaneous discourse that occurs naturally. Examining metaphors in natural discourse would likely yield additional conclusions and

shed light on additional aspects that were not addressed in this study. Unfortunately, it is likewise worth noting that the interpretation of metaphors in this article reflects a subjective approach to metaphor analysis, and, of course, there may be additional subjective interpretations or aspects that are not addressed in this article.

The study's theoretical contribution lies in the light it sheds on the use of various source domains during times of war to conceptualize aspects of one side of the conflict, in this case, the Israelis, by the other side, the Hamas militant group. These source domains frame the Israelis in a particular manner and so reveal various aspects of AJA's communicative behavior and its efforts to influence public opinion and provide justification for Hamas's war against Israel.

Author Contributions

A.S. and M.H. conceptualized and analyzed the deployment of varied source domains throughout the Al-Aqsa Flood War, with the aim of elucidating the ways in which the Israeli side is portrayed and of uncovering aspects of its communicative strategies. These strategies, as demonstrated in the study, function as affective rhetorical tools designed to shape public opinion and justify the pursuit of war against the Israeli side. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a foundational basis for future inquiries into the rhetorical features of Palestinian political discourse. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Google Scholar.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The metaphors described in this paper do not reflect the author's views.

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