



**From 9/11 to 10/7: Netanyahu's Metaphor Transforming
Terror into a Moral Narrative**

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Abstract:

The paper presents a case study on metaphorical expressions of Netanyahu, examining how war crimes, violence, and morality are embedded within a metaphorical framework. The paper aims to contribute towards a better post-9/11 metaphorical analysis of "Israel-Palestine conflict" through a close examination of the video recording of Netanyahu's address, focusing specifically on strategies of positive self-presentation, "Us-Them," strategies, to make violence appear legitimate. The research paper further uses a Political Discourse Analysis tool conceptualized by Teun A. Van Dijk, to identify how this metaphorical appropriation can help identify Netanyahu's cover mechanism, where terrorists past historical strategies are likened to cement a political ideology. Within this broader metaphorical construct, this paper interprets a qualitative research design where textual analysis of the metaphorical representation is presented. The result of this paper explains how metaphorical conceptualization can help create a division to position people both as victims and terrorists, besides metaphorical usage to frame terrorism as a threat to humanity. The paper further contributes towards enhancing our knowledge of metaphorical usage within a post-9/11 construct, and helps to identify how metaphoric conceptualization can create opportunities for politicians to frame terrorism within a threat construct.

Keywords: Netanyahu, Political Discourse Analysis, Critical Metaphor Analysis, Israel-Palestine conflict, positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, metaphorical framing

INTRODUCTION

War legitimization involves framing military actions as necessary, just or divinely ordained to mobilize support and demonize the enemy (Walzer, 2006; Evans, 2008). When the use of military force is framed as just and to highlight that the war is imperative to underscore its necessity, using religious, moral and legal justifications, it is known as War Legitimization. There have been numerous historical and contemporary examples to legitimize the use of weapons, using variety of justifications (Rumsfeld, 2002; Blair, 2003).

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Historical justifications for war often relied on religious, moral and expansionist ideologies (Augustine, 2001; Aquinas, 1947). One of the commonly used rationale behind war is divine will. By claiming the God given authority, many nations went to war. For instance, in ancient Mesopotamia, Urukagina claimed that city god has 'selected' him as a ruler. By this claim, he justified his use of authority and military power, and rejected the traditional succession. Another historical example is of The Crusades. The Crusaders were European Christians who ran campaigns in 11th century to 13th century. The motif behind those campaigns was to reclaim their 'Holy Land' from Muslims rulership. They called these as 'Holy Wars', that were fought under the orders of catholic church and the participants of the war were promised spiritual rewards. Similarly, as in Islamic contexts, one of the major incentives of jihad is to gain benefits in the afterlife.

Justifications for wars we see nowadays navigates the framework of international law, especially the UN charter, that prohibits the use of military force except for self-defense and when it is under the UN security council's authorization. For instance, the rationale often presented for 'War on Terror' is self-defense. Leaders like Donald Rumsfeld (2002), US Secretary of Defense, framed the 'War on Terror' as a moral and necessary response. United States and its allies try to convince the security council that their country is under attack so there is affirmative necessity for self-defense. Iraq War is another example where the pretext given was that Saddam Hussein possesses Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), which turned out to be a false claim and invasion was declared illegal under the international law by UN Secretary general. Similarly, Tony Blair (2003), Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, justified the invasion of Iraq based on claims of weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorism (Blair, 2003).

Similarly, Israel-Palestine conflict has been going on since a very long time. After Holocaust, majority of Jews from all over the world migrated towards Palestine. In 1915, when world war one was at its peak, Britain promised the same land to Jews, Arabs and France, that lead to this long, never-ending 'cursed war' between nations. From 1918 to 1948, Britain ruled over that land, colonizing the inhabitants, which riots erupting all over the country. After colonisers left, United Nations stepped in and divided the land. 55 percent of area as a Jewish state and 45 percent as Palestinian state. But after the First Arab-Israel war of 1948, Israel won and occupied most of the Palestinian land allotted by UN. In 1987, a Palestinian organization 'Muslim Brotherhood' was established in Gaza Strip during the First Intifada, to help Palestinians living in Israel and to spread the teachings of Islam but it was not involved with Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In 1948, Muslim Brotherhood's leadership created a new wing; Harakat-al-Muqawama-al-Islamiya (HAMAS). To weaken PLO Israel supported and funded Hamas. Ron Paul, a former Republican congressman accepted it officially. "Hamas was encouraged and really started by Israel because they wanted Hamas to counteract Yasser Arafat". Brig General Yitzhak Segev, Israel Military Governor in Gaza in early 1980s, told New York Times reporter that he helped finance the Palestinian Islamist movement as a "counterweight to the secularists and leftists of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Fatah party, led by Yasser Arafat". This divide and rule policy backfired on Israel. Hamas grew stronger since then. On October 7, 2023, during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, Hamas attacked Israel from Gaza Strip into the Gaza envelop of Southern Israel, killing 1195 people. The repercussions of this act were faced by Palestinian civilians. According to Al-Jazeera, two years of Israel genocide in Gaza have killed at least 67000 Palestinians. As a result, Israel is facing diplomatic isolation over its military actions in Gaza. In order to portray Israel as a

guardian and peace-ensuring nation, Netanyahu is seen giving speeches on different platforms using metaphorical expressions and careful lexical choices to legitimize Israel's war crimes, violence and destruction.

This paper highlights Israel-Palestine conflict where justifications for war relied upon religious as well as moral ideologies. The rationale behind their use of military forces, is to defend their nation from the terrorist organizations harbouring in Palestine. This paper focuses on video recorded statement of Netanyahu aired on September 10, 2025, where he is seen creating a link between 9/11 attack on twin towers in United States and October 7 attack in Israel. Netanyahu's speech craftly created a metaphorical link between these two incidents, encouraging the world to show the support that was seen after 9/11.

Although the discourse after October 7 is widely distributed around the globe, few studies have been conducted to explore the transfer of acts of war into the realm of morals through the metaphorical usage of the discourse by Netanyahu. Since few studies have been done using the concept of metaphor, the persuasive and legitimating qualities of the discourse of the said individual are yet to be explored.

The main aim of this paper is; to identify and analyze the conceptual metaphors used by Netanyahu in his September 10, 2025 video statement, intended to provide a moral basis for Israeli actions. To explore the way these metaphors, manipulate narratives of warfare and destruction, transforming them into perspectives of self-defense within political and media discussions. To highlight the discursive strategies in video-statement to frame audience's perception.

This paper is focused on these questions: What conceptual metaphors did Netanyahu use in his September 10, 2025, video statement to justify war crimes and violence? How do his metaphorical expressions portray Israel as morally legitimate and under divine guidance? What kind of discursive strategies have been used by Netanyahu to shape political ideologies and public opinion?

Media framing of Israel-Palestine conflict is mostly biased representation and generally the focus is on critical discourse analysis, analyzing power and ideology. But a metaphoric centered analysis of how moral legitimacy and persuasion are linguistically constructed in Israel-Palestine context, is yet to be explored. 'War on Terror' is generally a hot topic in research field but the link Netanyahu created between 9/11 and 10/7 to legitimize war is yet to be explored metaphorically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of political discourse has traditionally placed great stress on the fact that politicians very seldom communicate political information in a clean and straightforward manner but rather use linguistically very carefully designed communication that gradually leads the general public to interpret facts about enemies, crises, and their national identification in a certain way. Indeed, this specific point about the very essence of political communication is the core concern for Political Discourse Analysis (PDA), arguing that "political discourse is not primarily about the communication of information, but rather about the creation of possible futures, the justification of decisions, and the delimitation of public understanding about conflict and responsibility" (Dunmire, 2012). Indeed, the current study is heavily influenced by this point, because Netanyahu's utterance does not only report the facts about the tragic incidents of 9/11 and 10/7 but rather constructs

parallel moral incidents that aim at a certain understanding of the issue of terrorism and country protection.

Metaphor is one of the most persuasive resources available to politicians. According to Charteris-Black, metaphors persuade because they tap into public meanings, which enables politicians to "frame political choices as moral imperatives, as choices guided by moral reasoning, and as actions oriented towards moral goals, in contrast to biological, psychological, or geological choices and actions" (Charteris-Black, 2005). Clearly, this is one way in which Netanyahu's use of metaphor in referring to September 11 and October 7 is simply not a historical metaphor but functions as October 7 as metaphor, as which is defined by the meaning of September 11, which is "closely linked in public culture to ideas of extreme victimhood, oneness, trauma, and righteous revenge." Using Charteris-Black's insights, it is clear that Netanyahu's use of metaphor can be understood as a tool which enables "the framing of political violence as moral narrative," in which "war is not assault but protection," and in which "the clash of arms is not aggression but both defense and honoring of civilization in resistance to barbarism" (Charteris-Black, 2005).

The use of metaphor within political persuasion also falls within the scope of analysis using computer and cognitive methods, such as the study conducted by Prabhakaran et al. (2021) on a large scale under the title 'How Metaphors Impact Political Discourse.' This study confirms that the use of metaphor is not an anomaly within political discourse but a phenomenon that systematically shapes the way recipients treat social and political issues. It is also a finding among the many contributions that the use of metaphors tends to group around certain issues within politics (such as crisis, security, threat, and morality), and it is precisely around such issues that emotionally powerful narratives that are highly explanatory appear. This is central to the current research because Netanyahu's discourse precisely rests on such grouping, through which he constructs a narrative that not only sees terrorism as an issue but also as a moral issue, and that the state's response is the only moral and thus justifiable course of action that can be taken against such terrorism that is clearly defined on moral grounds.

The use of computer analysis further confirms that metaphors can systematically shape political emotions on a macro-scale and that such can thus systematically form an important tool within policies that aim to achieve objectives such as conducting war or conducting security within a state.

Finally, in the article *Terrorism in Media Political Discourse: From Metaphorical Expressions to Cognitive Models*, there is evidence of the cognitive and, at the same time, ideological role of metaphors in terrorist communication. The authors (Musolff & Zinken, 2016) maintain a stance, according to which terrorism is often conceptualized using the following metaphorical models of "disease," "evil," "contamination," "darkness," or "animalistic threat," each of which conceptualizes a rather complicated geopolitical phenomenon in terms of a simplified moral message. The cognitive simplification of the message makes it easy for the media and for political leaders to disseminate a specific message about dangerous people and justified types of violence. The message is typical of Netanyahu's rhetorical style, according to which he appeals to the memory of 9/11, a phenomenon of absolute moral truth in the Western memory. In Netanyahu's narrative, the message of October 7 is reduced to a similarly clear-cut moral message. The terrorists are metaphorically presented as carriers of evil, and the state is portrayed as a keeper of civilization,

compelled to act in defense of the latter. The cognitive role of the article, focusing on metaphorical models of thinking, explains why a message of such obvious ideology appeals to people's intuition.

Thus, concluding, the current body of literature on the analysis of political discourse makes it clear that such politicians as Netanyahu apply metaphorical language instrumentally when constructing moral narratives, justifications of reactive actions, and collective understanding of violence and conflict. From here, this makes such a crucial starting point from which to examine the way in which the leader's statement on September 10, 2025, adjusts the sequence of events of 9/11 and October 7 into placing the utilization of force as imperative within the context of national security.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the proposed research, the researcher will adopt an interpretive, discourse-analysis methodology that is qualitative in nature. The researcher will apply the theory of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) conceptualized and outlined by Teun A. van Dijk to identify the noble reinvention of the word 'terrorists' promoted by Netanyahu. According to the theory of PDA conceptualized by Teun A. van Dijk, the researcher will identify that the Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, uses the word 'terrorists' to create an ulterior noble narrative that is socially well-accepted but lacks factual validity invested in the word 'terrorists.' According to the theory, the social ideologies of the world, particularly the noble ideologies that people support, fall within the parameters of the mental model shared between the speakers and the audience typified by cognitive structures invested in social knowledge, which is derived from the shared mental model typified by cognitive structures invested in social knowledge related to the world.

Through Netanyahu's discursive language, the researcher is able to interpret how Netanyahu uses history and groups through collective beliefs and stereotypes in creating certain emotional responses and rationalizations on particular decisions and policies made by Netanyahu, and mostly, the attention would be on the analysis of metaphors and their significance on the language used by Netanyahu, and through the analysis of the mapping process of the used metaphor from its target domain, the researcher is able to interpret Netanyahu's language on how it converts complicated history into moral imperatives.

By employing the methodology of PDA, the researcher gains a profound understanding of Netanyahu's discourse not only on a macro-level (context and ideology) but also on a micro-level (individual linguistic details). This enables a richer and more complex understanding of how the discourse strategy and metaphors interrelate in creating public opinion and moral framing views and interpretations. This theoretical framework enables the researcher not only to analyze what Netanyahu says in his discourse but also how he does this by deploying linguistic tools and strategies in his discourse.

METHODOLOGY

The research employs a qualitative textual analysis of Netanyahu's video message in which he draws a parallel between the events of 9/11 and October 7. The transcript of this speech is considered the key data, as it explicitly holds the metaphors and political discourses that this study seeks to investigate. It is essential for the study to identify the socio-political context in which the speech is embedded, as identifying the socio-political context is mandatory in order to apply

Political Discourse Analysis, following van Dijk, which seeks to interpret the broader ideological setting in which these discourses are embedded.

After discussing the context, the text will be analyzed using the van Dijk's Political Discourse Analysis method. In this phase, the text will be analyzed in detail to find out the metaphors, representation of social actors, lexical features, and other discursive features like positive self-representation and other-negative representation. In this phase, the morally dividing groups, along with the positioning of the act of Israel, will be uncovered through the discourse of the Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu. In the analysis of metaphor, the source, target, and moral meaning of the metaphor will be analyzed to show how the act of violence is turned into a morally instructive or ethical experience.

Lastly, the findings gained from the theory of PDA are significant as they demonstrate how these metaphors function as part of an even larger ideological framework, which enables the analysis not only to state what metaphors are being deployed but how they work in relationship to the ethical message that Prime Minister Netanyahu is putting out. Since there are no ethical concerns regarding the data, measurement is not required.

DISCUSSION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Benjamin Netanyahu's video recorded statement got aired on September 10, 2025, just a day before September 11, the historic day when twin towers got attacked by terrorist, which resulted in United States declaring war on terror. The whole world applauded them for capturing Osama Bin Laden. Netanyahu, in his speech, demanded the same support that United States got from the World. In that statement, Netanyahu gave a warning to nations who are harbouring terrorists that if they will not get rid of them, Israel will. In his less than two-minutes video statement he has used various metaphors and war rhetoric to legitimize his war crimes. By applying Political Discourse Analysis, this study will highlight how language builds and reflects larger ideological forces in politics.

IDENTIFICATION OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN NETANYAHU'S STATEMENT

Netanyahu employs metaphors that entail moral and ideological significance and power in defining terrorism as an act of savagery and moral evil. Netanyahu defined terrorists as inhuman entities and morally wicked aggressors. "Islamist terrorists perpetrated the worst act of savagery on American soil." Thereafter, he further explains and moralizes terrorism as past moral evil by paralleling the October 7 attack on a globally accepted moral atrocity, adding moral significance by stating, "Islamist terrorists perpetrated the worst act of savagery against the Jewish people since the Holocaust." The Israeli Prime Minister employs a moral and ideological contextual reference that systematically follows and hunts down moral evil, thus making military actions moral and righteous acts against terror. These actions were thus moral because terror had to be chased down and held accountable, thus Netanyahu moralized military ambitions as follows: "We went after terrorist masterminds who carried out the October 7 massacre." He also classified Israel as a moral authority that dispenses evil, not aggression against an internationally recognized terror entity. Thus, he defined Israel as an actuating moral entity that is an actuating moral authority against terrorism by denouncing other states that had failed to act against terror within their nations, by threatening that if they do not act against terror within their nations, Israel and its allies would undertake an act against the state that had not taken an act against terror within its territories. He

classified Qatar as a nation that moralizes and supports moral evil by explaining that Qatar, "gives safe haven, it harbors terrorists, it finances Hamas, it gives its terrorist chieftains sumptuous villas, it gives them everything", highlighting that Qatar is morally complicit because they support and harbour terror organizations that had been terrorist and still act as moral entities that search and hunt down terrorists, by threatening other states and nations that are trying to hunt down and eliminate terror organizations.

Persuasion and Framing Devices

In his video statement, Netanyahu has carefully focused on language by cherry picking his lexical choices, metaphorical expressions and persuasive language to frame Israel as a victim and to shape how audience should feel about Israel-Palestine conflict and to build public perception about Israel as a protector of the realm. While doing this, Netanyahu presented his war activities as doing a righteous act of doing what other international nations ought to learn from; as such, they ought to applaud Israel, "They should applaud Israel for standing up to the same principles and carrying them out". Such as going after terrorist organizations and hunting them down while pointing America as a moral example. He portrayed his act of war crimes as doing it for a righteous reason. Additionally, he highlighted antisemitism by presenting a victimized Israel because of violence, dating back to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which started from the holocaust. Netanyahu has used emotionally charged language to evoke fear, anger and nationalism "

Ideological Polarization: "Us" and "Them" and Positive Self-Presentation

Polarization refers to the shift of public opinion to the ideological extremes. In his speech, Netanyahu presented the division between in-groups which are unified, virtuous nations and out-groups which are a threat, aiming to draw a picture of "Us vs. Them," where Israel is a defender, a protector, a moral one, a victim state, together with United States of America and United Nations. Israel follows America's path and UN's values. "What did America do after September 11th?" and Israel did the same, "We did what America did when they targeted Al Q'aida terrorists in Afghanistan, and after they moved to Pakistan and killed Osama Bin Laden." At the same time, "Us" stood against "Them," who are "Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and Palestine, and Qatar, who harbour terrorists." They 'are immoral, menacing, and barbaric.' The Prime Minister of Israel utilized 'Islamist Terrorist' who targeted twin towers of America on September 11, and then connected this incident to "October 7" to continue saying, "Tomorrow is September 11th. We remember September 11th. That day, Islamist terrorists committed acts of worst savagery on American Soil Since founding of United States. But, of course, we do too. We remember October 7th. That day, Islamist terrorists committed acts of worst savagery on Jews Since Holocaust." In this context, "We killed Osama Bin Laden," to again connect this to portraying "Pakistan as a country who harbours terrorists." Qatar was labelled as a state "that gives terrorists safe haven, harbours terrorists, finances Hamas, gives terrorists' leader luxurious villas, gives them everything." An example of "Negative Other Presentation."

Moral Legitimation of State Violence

Netanyahu presents Israel's military actions as restrained, necessary and principled. He explicitly frames Israel's response to fall within internationally accepted norms by invoking the United Nations Security Council resolution passed after 9/11, suggesting its actions are not unilateral

aggression but a continuation of established global counterterrorism practices. By saying, "We did exactly what America did", Netanyahu takes away Israel's agency as an aggressor and instead substitutes it with the image of a responsible state fulfilling a moral obligation. Through this, violence is discursively reformed into an act of justice and positions Israel military operations as defensive and unavoidable rather than politically contestable. He framed Israel and US standing on moral high ground and critics and harborers of terrorists as morally corrupt. In the end, Netanyahu used moral judgement metaphor by criticizing nations condemning them as morally hypocritical or blind, "Now, the various countries of the world condemn Israel. They should be ashamed of themselves"

Conceptual Metaphor Mapping: Linking 9/11 and October 7

Using the killing of Osama Bin Laden, Netanyahu continues to build upon the metaphor of WAR IS JUSTICE and shows how killing these terrorists is no longer a violent act but a corrective measure. He is trying to convince his audience to accept war as a righteous act only. By drawing parallels between 'October 7' and '9/11,' he is giving his country's version a moral and emotional edge. By claiming that "Tomorrow is September 11. We also have a September 11th. We remember October 7th," Netanyahu is drawing upon a moral precedent and a historical mirror of past event memories. Netanyahu is proud of his country's act of following America's footsteps when it says: "It promised to hunt down the terrorists who committed this heinous crime, wherever they may be. And it also passed a resolution in the Security Council of the UN, two weeks later, that said that governments cannot give harbor to terrorists." He is asking everybody for support of Israel's heroism and to gather applause from the world just like what United States received regarding its act of War on Terror when he says: "What did they do after America took out Osama bin Laden? Did they say, "Oh, what a terrible thing was done to Afghanistan or to Pakistan?" No, they applauded. They should applaud Israel for standing up to the same principles and carrying them out." Metaphor of historical evil act proper proportions to past violence of holocaust memories when he says 'the worst savagery against the Jewish people since the Holocaust', he is trying to draw a clear line between what is righteous and what is wrong as he equates October 7 with 9/11, transferring emotional and moral weight to Israel's narrative.

CONCLUSION

Metaphors transform political decisions into ethical imperatives, while discourse strategies delegitimize international criticism by portraying it as hypocritical and inconsistent. Netanyahu's persuasive and emotionally charged language to incorporate fear among the audience, has framed war as justified, urgent and a necessity. The integration of metaphor and political discourse in Netanyahu's statement ultimately serves to legitimize war by constructing a narrative of moral inevitability. By framing Israel as in the same boat as United States, Netanyahu created a division between a virtuous group and a group that is a threat to other nations. He also used a tone of urgency to imply the fact that if other nations will not get rid of terrorists, Israel will wipe them out in their stead, which would of course threaten to their peace. Netanyahu's use of metaphors transformed the war crimes into a much-needed action by a protector.

Further research could examine a larger assessment of political speeches of influential leaders to deeply analyse underlying ideological presuppositions and their use of language to shape

audience's belief. Additionally, multimodal elements of political speeches should be analysed to see how war crimes and violence is being justified all over the world. if you can see it, you can fix it and if the common man can identify these metaphoric patterns, they can decode them and avoid the manipulation and persuasion.

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