**Paradox as a Rhetorical Device in the Political Discourse of Arab Politicians in the State of Israel**

# Abstract

This paper shows how Arab politicians in Israel, especially Arab Members of Knesset (MKs), relied on paradox as an essential rhetorical device in order to convey their messages, to promote their ideological positions and to criticize the Israeli government’s policies, which discriminate against Israeli Arabs and the Palestinian people and deprives them of their rights.

 We argue that the paradox contributes to focusing and structuring the message, in order to highlight the plight of Israeli Arabs and the Palestinian people, to impact positively on the Israeli government’s discriminatory policies towards them, to emotionally manipulate the government and to bring about a significant change in its attitude towards them.

In this study, we attempt to show how the paradoxical discourse employed by Arab politicians reflects a hidden message against the Israeli government. It aims to express harsh criticism of the Israeli government, comparing its behavior toward the Arab population in Israel and toward the Palestinian people to the behavior of the Nazis during the Holocaust, but to do so in an implicit manner, without outright stating it.

Keywords: Arab politicians; paradox; political discourse; Israel; rhetoric, critical discourse analysis

# 1. Introduction

This paper discusses the use of paradox in the political discourse of Arab politicians in Israel. The aim is to shed light on the use of paradox as a rhetorical device. The thesis on which the present paper is based maintains that the combination of paradox used in the political discourse of Arab politicians is not fortuitous, but the result of a choice whose objective is to serve politicians’ political positions and to sharply criticize the Israeli government for its racist policies towards Israel’s Arabs and the Palestinian populace. The choice affects the way in which addressees understand and perceive the world, and motivates them to take a stand.

The corpus is taken from examples of the written and oral political discourse of Arab politicians, in particular from speeches in the Israeli Parliament. This method was adopted because the Knesset is the central area where Arab politicians express their political opinions on a variety of subjects. The corpus is made up of examples in Hebrew, gathered at random from different time periods. It should be mentioned that this is necessarily an impressionistic approach. In no other serious political situation has an Arab Israeli politician discussed the political discourse. It was almost impossible to compile a wider corpus and identify further examples.

There are good reasons why Arab politicians’ discourse in Israel is focused so much on official discrimination against the country’s Arabs, since this is a group which has not enjoyed equal rights in all domains from the time of the establishment of the State of Israel to the present. The Or Commission, tasked with determining the facts concerning the clashes of October 2000, interpreted its mandate very broadly and also delved into this issue. The commission’s report defined the foundations of Arab society’s standing in Israel, documented the inequalities from which it suffered, and determined that its discrimination was against the law. Among the commission’s recommendations was a clear call on the government to act to close the gaps between Jewish and Arab citizens through equal budgeting and promotion of improving the situation of Arab society in areas such as education, employment, industrial development, land for construction, and addressing the problems of the Bedouin dispersion. The commission also called for enabling Arab citizens to publicly and properly express their identity, culture and language, and to initiate activities that would encourage them to feel part of the country and to promote their integration. By now it has become clear that most of the commission’s recommendations were not implemented. While some advances have been made on a number of issues, the fundamental problems remain unresolved, and the Arab sector in Israel still suffers from significant discrimination on the part of the Israeli government.

Some background regarding the role of the Holocaust in Israeli discourse was included, as Arab politicians incorporate into their discourse paradoxes that hint at the Nazi’s conduct during the Holocaust and, in so doing, transmit an implicit message: harsh criticism against the Israeli government for the ongoing Israeli occupation, the deprivation of the rights of Arab Israelis, and the trampling of the Palestinian people’s rights. It was important to provide some context applying Critical Discourse Analysis to show how Arab politicians employ emotional manipulations to influence general public opinion and thereby change the attitudes of the Israeli government. For example, when Arab politicians incorporate paradoxes that indirectly appeal to the Holocaust, their central aim is not to identify with the suffering of the Jewish people during that period, but to raise harsh criticism against the Israeli government and compare its treatment of the Palestinians to that of the Nazis toward the Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Furthermore, some theoretical background concerning the concept of ‘topos,’ has been included because there is a strong link between this concept and the way that Arab politicians portray their criticism against the Israeli government, as will be extensively discussed throughout the article. Also discussed is some theoretical background on the use of paradoxes as a rhetorical device with which the speaker can emotionally manipulate and influence the attitude of their audience.

The paradoxical discourse of the Arab politicians have distinct rhetorical characteristic: the double messages rhetoric. Using such paradoxes referring to the time of the Holocaust, signifies identification with the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust and simultaneously sharp criticism against the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians and the Arabs population in Israel, and, as such, reflects the double messages rhetoric, as will be further detailed below.

**2 The Holocaust in Israeli discourse**

Many in Israel’s left have criticized the emphasis that Israel’s political culture places on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, accusing it of excessively focusing on Jewish victimhood. They believe that the Holocaust has been exploited to justify Israel’s aggressive policies toward the Arab world and Israelis’ moral blindness to the wrongs carried out against the Palestinians in their name (Margalit 1998: 61). In this context, the *Syrian Times* argued that “a country that continually uses, and too often manipulates, Holocaust imagery to justify its policies of self-defense and ‘never again,’ cannot complain when the rest of the world uses those same standards to make judgments concerning its own policies” (Litvak and Webman 2009: 325).

Renowned Israeli Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer contends that the term Holocaust has become ‘flattened’ in the public mind because any evil that befalls anyone anywhere becomes a Holocaust: Vietnamese, Soviet Jews, African-Americans in American inner cities, women suffering inequality, and so on (ibid.).

As explained in detail later in the article,the metaphors of the Holocaust clearlyshow that Arafat is convinced that The Israeli governmentexploited the Holocaust tojustify Israel’s aggressive policies toward the Arab world and the Palestinians.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

## 3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in discourse analysis. Focused on how social and political power is created and maintained through language, it seeks to expose discursive biases and manipulations that serve political interests and advance controversial ideological positions. It also highlight the methods or stratagems through which the discourse produces or maintains an unequal balance of power in a society. CDA aims to expose the linguistic, cultural, and historical roots that support the practices – the modes of action – that preserve the balance of power. The basic premise of the approach is that discourse has the capacity to shape social identities and establish relations between groups of people and individuals. CDA thus emphasizes the ways in which social structures embody the existing balance of power and control in the society through discourse: how the discourse produces them, approves them, challenges them, or legitimizes them. It seeks to understand, expose, and ultimately oppose social inequality (Hart 2010: 13–4; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32; van Dijk 2001: 352; Wodak 2001a: 10; Scott 2023: 1–2).

The term “power” is the main concept in CDA, and the discourse mechanism is seen as a central way to actualize power in social contexts. This premise is fostered by the thinking of social philosophers such as Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, and others who drew attention to the central role of language in constructing social reality (Hart 2010: 13–14; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32).

For Foucault, discourse is a representation of knowledge about a certain subject; it is linked to knowledge production through language. Foucault argues that the term “discourse” relates not only to language but to action modes (practices), rules, and regulations. Discourse constructs and defines the objects of our knowledge. It controls how we talk about a subject or act in relation to it; it determines the accepted ways of talking about it, and thus also limits other possibilities for knowledge construction about the same subject. A discourse will never consist of one statement, one text, one act, or one source; it will appear in a variety of texts and different institutional contexts in the society (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 362).

According to Foucault, “Words/Things” have meaning and can be called real only in a specific historical context. For example, ‘mental illness’ is not an ‘objective’ object that means the same thing in every era and every culture. Thus, the term “mental illness” does not signify something objective in the world. The object it represents is an outcome of the construction of knowledge that occurs within a certain discourse. This object is constructed by all that is said about it in a certain culture and in a certain period, by the way it is described, explained, judged, classified, and more (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 362; Meyer 2001: 15). In essence, discourse constructs objects, instilling them with significance and meaning in a particular social and cultural context. Discourse determines how people see things and creates a picture of their world and their outlooks, thus influencing their actions as well.

CDA scholars regard themselves as ideologically motivated and committed, and their research is a kind of intervention in the life of society and social relations. Many researchers from this school are also active in anti-racism, feminist, and peace movements, and so forth. They state their ideological intentions openly and support weaker social groups against more powerful ones.

While analyzing texts and ‘linguistic events’ requires some analytical method, it is a principle of CDA that it is neither based on, nor prefers, a single theory or a uniform analytical method. Instead, CDA offers a kind of toolbox for the researcher, a list of linguistic and textual characteristics that can be examined when one wishes to analyze a text critically (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 366; Wodak 2001b: 64).[[1]](#footnote-1)

This article seeks to show how Arafat appeals to metaphors that raise manipulative biases for the purpose of advancing his political goals: the cessation of the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is exemplified with the double message rhetorical device, as in his Holocaust metaphors, where he talks of the division of Palestinian lands into ghettos. With this metaphor, Arafat sends a double message: on the one hand, it reflects identification with the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, but on the other hand, its main purpose is to express harsh criticism of the Israeli government over its brutal treatment of the Palestinian people and, indirectly, compare it to the Nazi’s treatment of the Jewish people. This comparison elicits a manipulation that might embarrass the Israeli government and eventually influence its position and persuade it to improve its attitude toward the Palestinian population.

## 3.2 Topos

# Topos is a term borrowed from classical Greek rhetoric that literally means ‘commonplace,’ and refers to a standardized way of constructing an argument; an intellectual theme found in a ‘stockroom’ of topics. The speaker searches in the topos for persuasive rhetorical devices. The topos contains a treasury of social or ideological conventions that are meant to elicit the mental acceptance of a given topic by an audience. The topos is the ‘glue’ that creates a common denominator between the speaker and the target audience, based on a social consensus (Aristotle 2002: 28–32). If a leader, or speaker, who wants to be particularly effective addresses the nation, they must base their statements and appeal on what is commonly accepted by that society; in other words, on ‘the truth’ of the society, its ideological narrative, collective memory, and cognitive patterns (Gitay 2010: 135–136). A speaker who is concerned about the effectiveness of their speech must adopt the views of their audience (ibid.: 137). According to Perelman, the speaker must not start with their own truth, but with the accepted consensus of the public they wish to address. In other words, the speaker must make the consensus and accepted patterns of their audience as the starting point, because if they do not, they lose their audience (Perelman 1982: 21). According to Eco (2006: 44-45) and van Dijk (2008: 165), it is advisable for the speaker to begin by adjusting to the views of their audience, and obviously not to mock or annoy them. The speaker must aim to connect with the audience and present the subject in a positive, noncontroversial way. As will be explained in more detail below, Arafat does indeed act in this way when employing Holocaust related metaphors.

**4. Analysis and Discussion**

**4.1 Paradox**

A paradox involves the simultaneous application of two mutually contradictory claims. In order to resolve a paradox, one of the clashing statements must be sacrificed, or a way found in order to avoid the clash (Perelman 2003, 52). A paradox is valid or true if the two clashing claims are true. When the two clashing claims are not uttered simultaneously, that is, each is said at a different time, the paradox is no longer valid, even if its component claims are both true, because of the time gap between the claims (Landau 1988, 118–127).

**4.2 Paradox as Reflected in the Political Discourse of Arab Politicians in the State of Israel**

Below, we show the contribution of paradox as a manipulative rhetorical device for sharpening messages in the political discourse of Arab politicians in the State of Israel. These politicians are mocking the apparently non-normative and unjust actions and behavior of Israeli government, showing them as ironic and ridiculous, to the point of absurdity. It can be said that these politicians are trying to prove that, when fairly examined, the statements of the Israeli government make promises that are not fulfilled. For example, while the Israeli government talks about striving for peace with the Palestinians and their good intentions to grant them their legitimate rights, they continue to suppress their rights. The following are additional examples that highlight the paradox in the conduct of this administration and illustrate the discrimination against Israeli Arabs and the Palestinian population.

(1) “The 1967 lines are a historical compromise which the Palestinian people make with the State of Israel. No historical compromise is possible without history. You must understand this. We commemorate Nakba Day because it is part of our collective memory, it is part of our identity. You cannot speak to us as an identity, as a nation, without recognizing our historical memory. Otherwise, you do not recognize us as a nation. It is very important for you to understand this.” (Azmi Bshara, 14th Knesset Protocols, 20.5.1998).

The government of Israel cannot recognize the Palestinian people and at the same time deny Nakba Day, which is an integral part of the Palestinian collective memory and identity. This behavior of the government is perceived as a paradox, because the two things are mutually incompatible.

(2) “Is it conceivable that a movement which adheres to such a racist view has the right to exist in the State of Israel? *Is it conceivable that the Israeli writer Amos Oz demands of the German government to act against the neo-Nazis, and rightly so, but the Israeli public remains indifferent to the activities of Israeli neo-Nazis?* Why is this movement, in view of its deeds, not declared a terrorist movement, and outlawed? How long can will this forgiving attitude last towards dangerous phenomena that could destroy Israel’s sensitive social fabric?” (Taleb el-Sana, 26th session of the 13th Knesset, 18.11.1992).

The Israel government’s demand to act against neo-Nazis in Germany is incompatible with its forgiving attitude towards the Kakh movement, which promotes racist views.

(3) “I asked him (a senior minister): How do you separate (the Jewish and Palestinian people) when Kfar Sava, Kalkiliya and towns in the region, such as Taybeh, Tira and others, are connected inside the Israeli borders? How do you separate between Tulkarm and Netanya and the towns on the border? How will you separate Afula from Jenin? And the list is long. How will you prevent these people, laborers, who worked inside Israel for more than 27 years, from Judea, Samaria and Gaza, to work here? How can you say to them now: You will not work here, because there is a peace agreement? How is a peace agreement consistent with the people in Judea, Samaria and Gaze to whom you now say: Now, because of peace, you will sit there? That is not logical. If there is a true intention to go for a peace agreement, when you tell him: Now you will not enter our country and we will bring foreign laborers from all kinds of places around the world.” (source inaccessible).

The government’s conception of separating the two nations as part of the peace process is perceived as a paradox. Separation and a peace agreement are inconsistent with each other, since peace means reconciliation rather than separation. The series of rhetorical questions contributes to feeding the paradox.

(4) “There is also a phenomenon of relating to concepts that slowly are accepted as legitimate in the accepted values and norms of the State of Israel, as if whatever concerns the Arab population is something inferior, and what belongs to the Jewish sector is the ideal to which one should aspire. Thus, for example, inferior work, how is it defined? Arab work. What is a bad appearance? An Arab appearance. Bad taste? Arab taste. An indecent gesture? An Arab gesture. How can one raise an egalitarian generation that believes in coexistence when such norms and feelings in inculcated in it?” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, 23.12.1996).

Taleb el-Sana’s series of examples, in the form of questions and answers, bolster and enhance his claims that: the Israeli government is trying to raise a generation that believes in equality and coexistence, but at the same time treats anything having to do with the Arab populace as inferior in comparison with the Jewish sector. This behavior of the government is perceived as a paradox.

(5) “When we learn about Chernichovski and about Haim Nahman Bialik, why at the same time don’t they let us learn the literature of the Palestinians, of our people? And when they teach the Tanakh, King Saul, Kings, Sayings of the Fathers, the words of King Solomon and all these nice things, why don’t they let us learn the Muslim religion? Why this cultural coercion? Why don’t they enable us to have an education administration like the Haredim? Do the Haredim have a separate history? They have something that is much more unique than the Arab national minority in Israel, which makes the Haredim special with respect to the general education administration, which is why they receive an independent religious education administration.” (Taleb el-Sana, 14th Knesset Protocols, 23.12.1996).

The Israeli government allows the Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews) to manage their own school system, despite the fact that they do not have a different history than the rest of the Jewish people, but at the same time does not permit the Arab population, which does have a history of its own, to learn its culture and its history.

(6) “Is it conceivable, MK Kleiner, that the school system of the Arab population of Israel will be controlled and shaped by people who are foreign to the school system? How can those people, who design a school system that is completely foreign to us, create a new generation that is immune to the influence of foreign elements, including exposure to the issue of drugs, or the influence of drugs, by the very fact of violating the norms and values of Arab society, which opposes every negative phenomenon like drug abuse or alcohol?” (Taleb el-Sana, 14 Knesset Protocols, 23.12.1996).

Israeli government policy with respect to the Arab school system is perceived as paradoxical: On one hand, the government recognizes the Arab school system as an independent entity, with its own culture, but on the other hand it is controlled by people who design a school system that is completely foreign to this system.

(7) “Instead of the state telling the Arab population that as a national minority it has its own history and culture and can manage an independent school system according to its own values, language and unique independent history, they are trying to empty it of those values, of that culture, and cram into the Arab population’s school system the history of the Jewish people, Bar Kochba, the Hasmoneans, the Maccabees, the Hellenistic Jews and all that world. This is good to know, but why do we have to learn this and at the same time not to learn our own history, who we are, where we came from? We have no history? Why do they cut us off from our national identity, from our national history?” (Taleb el-Sana, 14 Knesset Protocols, 23.12.1996).

The Israeli government’s policy of requiring the Arab population to learn the history of the Jewish people and at the same time to ignore the study of the Arab people is perceived as a paradox: One cannot demand of the Arab population to learn the history of the Jewish people and at the same time not to learn its own history.

(8) “The situation is complicated in this respect, that Israel, the country in which we live, is at war with our nation. But you can’t come and say: Either you convert and become Orthodox Jews, or you don’t have the right to live here. We don’t derive our right here from anyone, not from the Knesset and not from a member of Knesset. Our right to be here is a natural right, because we are the rightful people,” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, 16.5.2001).

Arabs and Jews are citizens of Israel and both should enjoy fully equal rights. Making Arab rights conditional on conversion to Judaism is incompatible with the fact that the Arabs citizens’ right to live in Israel is their natural right.

(9) “We were here since before the establishment of the State. We will continue to express our credo, which is based on a true belief that there can be no peace when there is occupation. True security is only through true peace.” (Taleb el-Sana, 13th Knesset Protocols, 16.5.2001).

On one hand, the Israeli government strives to make peace with the Palestinians, but on the other hand it continues the occupation. This behavior of the government is perceived as paradoxical, because peace and occupation are mutually contradictory. Ending the occupation is a condition for peace.

(10) “Madam Speaker, Members of Knesset, the State of Israel must decide what its attitude is towards the Arab minority within it. It must form a policy of actual equality and not leave it as a slogan about democracy and equal treatment, when for decades the treatment has been the opposite of equal. The treatment was based on a different attitude, one of discrimination, an attitude that discriminated against the Arab sector, for just one reason: They belong to a different nation. During all the years that have passed, the Arab sector suffered both in the budget and from a policy of expropriation, of recognition of towns, of depriving the Muslim population of its basic, elementary right to manage its own religious endowments by itself.” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, 25.12.1995).

The State of Israel calls for equality and for egalitarian treatment of the Arab population in the country, but in fact ignores that population’s basic needs. Its calls are just slogans, because the Arab population for years has been suffering from discrimination. The government’s treatment of the Arab population on the issue of equal rights is therefore perceived as paradoxical.

(11) “It is a stain on democracy and equal treatment. In my opinion, it is necessary to act immediately to improve the conditions of the inhabitants of the mixed cities. One cannot have inside one city that there will be a different approach just because of the national identity of the residents of that city, especially in the mixed cities Jaffa, Lod, Ramla, Haifa and Acre. Even in Jawarish they erected a wall, a real wall, like the Berlin Wall, which separates the Arab from the Jewish neighborhood, between Jawarish and the Jewish neighborhood. How can such a thing be possible? Why do they do such a thing when they speak of partnership, of an attempt to develop a sense of belonging among the country’s citizens? Raising a wall that separates Arabs from Jews? On the wall’s right side there is no sewage system, no infrastructure, nothing, and on the wall’s left side there are all the utilities, and yet they speak of equality and a democratic country? That is the true test to fix all the wrongs in the national budget.” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, 25.12.1995).

Official Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Arab population is perceived as paradoxical: On one hand there is talk of partnership and equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, but at the same time the Arab population suffers from discrimination and is not given its basic rights, just because of its national identity.

(12) “I would like to say: Is it conceivable that the country will deprive a large minority, the Muslim population of the country as a whole, of the right to administer its own religious endowments? Yesterday, during the evening news on television a picture of a church in Bosnia, in Sarajevo, was broadcast, in which Muslim Bosnian Muslim soldiers entrenched themselves. They gave broadcast time to one church in Sarajevo, and I’m for that, it’s legitimate – even in time of war it is forbidden to harm holy places – but what can we say when in Israel mosques – in Beersheba, in Caesarea, in Safed, in Tiberias – are desecrated every day, not in time of war but in time of peace, and an whole population, the country’s Muslim minority, is deprived of the right to manage its own religious endowments?” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, 25.12.1995).

Israel condemned the attack on the church in Sarajevo in which Muslim soldiers entrenched themselves, and gave the matter time on television, while at the same time it ignores the desecration of mosques every day in Beersheba, Tiberias, Caesarea and elsewhere, and even deprives the Muslim minority in the country of its right to manage its own religious endowments. This behavior is perceived as paradoxical.

(13) “When they want to close some deal under the table with respect to Muslim endowment property in Jaffa or in Lod they say: We are transferring these assets to be managed by "boards of trustees". On one hand they transfer the asset to be managed by the board, and on the other hand the state contacts the board in order to purchase these assets. As if people are stupid, don’t understand. It’s a game of fraud. The government dares engage in games of fraud, to cast sand in our eyes. It engages in commerce in endowment property, which must not be sold or bought in the case of cemeteries and mosques. It is time that this stain, this shame, be removed, this shame of depriving the Muslims from managing their own religious endowments.” (the original source is inaccessible).

The government’s actions with respect to Muslim religious endowments in Jaffa is perceived as paradoxical: On one hand it appoints a board of trustees to manage the endowment’s assets, and on the other hand it negotiates with the same board to acquire the assets.

(14) “This budget allocates money also to settlements, it still allocates money to settlements in the Golan Heights, when negotiations are taking place with Syria in order to reach a peace agreement; allocating money to settlements and increasing the amounts. The same story is true with respect to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. You negotiate with the Palestinian Authority, the army withdraws from some of the Palestinian territories, but you continue to allocate money to the settlements. We cannot support a budget that allocates money to the settlements that are an obstacle to peace.” (source unavailable).

The settlements are an obstacle to peace, and any allocation of funds to them makes it more difficult to reach a permanent peace, full peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

(15) “The Prime Minister, everywhere he arrives around the world, boasts and says that the Arabs in Israel enjoy equality, justice, equal rights and an *ahla* – sweet – life. Arabs throughout the world, there are no Arabs in all the countries of the world who enjoy the rights and the good, pleasant life of the Arabs in Israel. Mr. Speaker, only in the ‘Isra-democracy’ are the basic rights of the Arabs in the Negev expropriated, entire villages are cut off from water, the school system is not developed, people’s rights are not recognized because the place is not recognized. In the ‘Isra-democracy’ demolition orders are handed out to entire villages, like the village of Wadi al-Naam, like Umm al-Hiran, like Atir. And for what? In order to build a Jewish town named Hiran in place of Umm al-Hiran and to set up a nature reserve in place of the Arab village of Atir. How can one, Mr. Speaker, speak of democracy, when it is a conditional democracy? When it is a democracy that expropriates a person’s basic rights?” (Masoud Ghanaim, Knesset Protocols, 9.1.2012).

The Prime Minister’s words about full equality for Arabs in Israel contradict the government’s policy of depriving Arabs of their basic rights, especially the Arabs of the Negev.

(16) “When disaster hits some region or country, the Israeli government quickly sends the Rescue Unit, flies them to give help, sets up tents, and also sets up a hospital in the field in order to help the injured. But the Israeli government, which helps other countries and other nations, is the one who destroys homes of its Arab citizens in the winter. As my colleague Masud Ghnaim said, imagine the situation of the old eighty-year-old woman whose house has been destroyed, turned into a pile of rubble, with no solution. What good will this do to the country? What did the country gain from this deed? What is the message when one day before Minister Begin came to that place and on the next day the forces come to destroy?” (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocol, 10.1.2012).

On one hand, the Israeli government provides aid whenever a region or country is hit by disaster, but on the other hand it demolishes the homes of its Arab citizens, especially in winter. The government sends Minister Begin to meet with the Arabs in the Negev in an attempt to solve the problem through dialogue, but on the next day forces are sent to demolish. This behavior of the government is perceived as paradoxical.

(17) “I want to say also with respect to America – what was the regime in Iran before the Islamist regime? There was the Shah of Iran. Was he a great democrat? Did he believe in freedom of expression? In freedom? No. Yet he was a protégé of the United States and had good relations with Israel. This just indicates one thing, in my opinion, that for the United States, sadly, and for Israel as well, their interests are important. Dictator, democrat, believes in freedom, doesn’t believe – it doesn’t matter. The main thing is that he serves the interests of the West, of America or of Israel. That is dangerous, because I think that if we really want to be a democracy then it should not be a limited liability democracy. Thank you very much.” (Masoud Ghanaim, Knesset Protocols, 23.7.2009).

America and its traditional ally Israel criticize dictatorial regimes and constantly call for freedom of expression and a democratic system of government all over the world. This behavior contradicts the fact that both countries choose to turn a blind eye when countries trample on their citizens’ freedom of expression, as long as these countries serve their interests.

**4.3 Paradoxical discourse as a rhetorical device for implicit messages**

One central characteristic of the paradoxical discourse of Arab politicians is the delivery of an implicit message through the paradox:

sympathy with the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust and simultaneously harsh criticism against them for the ongoing Israeli occupation and the trampling of the rights of the Palestinian people and of Arab Israelis.

Examples:

As we have shown in example (2), Knesset Member el-Sana presents the paradox inherent in the Israeli government’s attempt to act against neo-Nazis in Germany while simultaneously adopting a tolerant policy toward members of the Kach movement, who hold a racist worldview and who el-Sana portrays as, themselves, neo-Nazis.

El-Sana is clear that Amos Oz’s request to demand of the German government that it act against neo-Nazis is justified, and in so doing he is expressing sympathy with the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. But that is not his main goal. El-Sana does not, explicitly, liken the Israeli government’s policy toward the Palestinian people to that of the Nazis. Yet that is his real, albeit implicit intention, because he believes that by turning a blind eye to the Kach movement and the Israeli government’s turning a blind eye to the Kach movement, its refraining from adopting harsh policies and criminalizing it, are tantamount to encouragement of the movement and consent to the racism that is reflected in its actions against the Palestinians.

Example (11) shows how the Israeli government discriminates against the Arab population living within mixed cities (with both Arab and Jewish residents), such as Acre or Haifa. The same example mentions the wall that the Israeli government built in the Jawarish neighborhood in the mixed city of Ramle to separate the Arab and Jewish populations.

Example (7) reflects strong criticism of the Israeli government for not allowing the Arab population to manage its own independent education system, based on its values and unique history. Instead, the government attempts to empty this education system of its values and culture and replace them with the history of the Jewish people, with Bar Kokhba, the Hasmoneans, the Maccabees, the Hellenists, and the rest of this world of content.

Indeed, in many of the examples above we find sharp criticism of the Israeli government’s depriving the Arab sector of its rights. Through these examples, the Arab politicians liken the Israeli government’s attitude to that of the Nazis toward the Jewish people during the Holocaust, but they do so implicitly rather than exposing this position publicly. They do not say to members of the Israeli government “You’re fascists,” or “You’re Nazis,” though that is their true intention. In other words, they criticize the victims of the Nazis on the grounds that it is exactly they who should show sympathy and sensitivity to the suffering of others.

**5**. **Conclusion**

It may be noted that Arab politicians in the State of Israel rely on paradox as a powerful manipulative rhetorical device to show that the conduct of the Israeli government is, to a large extent, involves making statements that they are not fulfilling, as its actions contradict its words. This administration claims that it is ready to extend a hand to the Palestinians in peace, while it continues to trample their rights and ignore their suffering. It condemns fascist movements around the world, and at the same time coddles radical right-wing activists despite the hate crimes they carry out, including chanting racist slogans such as “death to Arabs,” burning Palestinian homes, uprooting their olive trees, vandalizing the property of Israeli Arabs, writing racist graffiti on mosques, and more.

Through the use of paradox as a rhetorical device, Arab politicians strive to improve the behavior patterns of the Israeli government’s conduct towards Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinians. They believe that exposing the paradoxical conduct of this Israeli administration to the international community will increase the pressure on it to live up to its promises to the Palestinian people and the Arabs of Israel and to end their double messages, whereby they now speak in a way that is accepted by the international community, but their actions contradict their statements.

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1. See, for example, Koller (2012: 19–38), where she presents a working model for analyzing collective identity in discourse, which integrates a socio-cognitive approach as a major strand in CDA. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)