**Metaphorical language in the speeches of Yasser Arafat, former president of the Palestinian National Authority**

# Abstract

This paper shows how Yasser Arafat, the former president of the Palestinian National Authority (1994–2004), relied on metaphor as a critical rhetorical device to promote his ideological position of strong opposition to the discriminatory and brutal policies of the Israeli government toward the Palestinian people, and its policy of building settlements in the Palestinian territories.

This study uses the theoretical framework of conceptual metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) to investigate and explore the target and source domains that Arafat drew on to conceptualize various aspects of—in the main—the Israelis, but also the Palestinians. In particular, Arafat draws on biblical metaphors and those relating to the victory of the “few over the powerful many,” both of which are deeply rooted in Jewish culture, to help convey the message that, ultimately, the Palestinian people will be victorious in their struggle against the Israeli occupation..

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; political discourse; Yasser Arafat; Palestine, Israel

# 1 Introduction

This paper discusses the use of metaphor in the political discourse of Yasser Arafat, the former president of the Palestinian National Authority (1994‒2004). The aim of the paper is to shed light on the use of metaphor as a rhetorical device in Arafat’s political discourse. This paper aims to demonstrate that Arafat’s use of metaphor in his political discourse has distinct rhetorical characteristics that can be identified. Additionally, the paper will show that Arafat chose specific metaphors to highlight the Palestinian suffering that results from Israel’s discriminatory policies toward them as well as the different characteristics of the conflict and its geopolitical implications.

This paper argues that Arafat’s choice of metaphors is not random but is rather designed to serve his political positions and, frequently, to express sharp criticism of Israel’s racist conduct against the Palestinians. Such a choice reflects Arafat’s perception of how his audience understands the world and serves to persuade them to take a stand. The research question explores the specific source domains employed in Arafat’s metaphorical discourse and examines how these conceptualize aspects mainly of the Israelis, but also of the Palestinians.

Some background regarding the role of the Holocaust in Israeli discourse is included, as Arafat appeals to metaphors that pertain to the Holocaust. In so doing, conveys a double message: sympathy with the suffering of the Jewish people and simultaneously harsh criticism against them for the ongoing Israeli occupation and the trampling of the Palestinian people’s rights.

It was very important to address the concepts of critical discourse analysis theory and conceptual metaphors, in particular the concept of source domains and target domains (Lakoff 1980) to examine how Arafat employed emotional manipulation to influence public opinion. Furthermore, some theoretical background concerning the rhetorical concept of *topos* has been included, as there is a strong relationship between this and how Arafat expresses his criticism of the Israeli government.

One of the limitations of this study is that only a few of Arafat’s political speeches have been published on the internet. Another limitation relates to the fact that, while a relatively large number of media interviews with Arafat have been published on the internet, a significant number of these are relatively short.

**2 The Holocaust in Israeli discourse**

Many on Israel’s left have criticized the emphasis that Israel’s political culture places on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, claiming that this excessively focuses on Jewish victimhood (Margalit 1998: 61). Such critics 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 (Litvak and Webman 2009: 325).

As explained in detail later in the article,the metaphors of the Holocaust clearlyshow that Arafat was 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 highlights the methods or stratagems through which the discourse produces or maintains an unequal balance of power in a society (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361). CDA aims to expose the linguistic, cultural, and historical roots that support the practices – the modes of action – that preserve the balance of power (Hart 2010: 13–4; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32; Scott 2023: 1–2; van Dijk 2001: 352; Wodak 2001a: 10).

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-2)

## 3.2 Conceptual metaphor theory

**3.2.2 Conceptual metaphor in political discourse**

The phenomenon known as “metaphor” or “figurative language,” whereby people speak or think of one object or entity in terms of another, has long preoccupied humans. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, literary scholars have focused on creative figurative language expressed in literature and poetry. In the last three decades—largely influenced by the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff 1993; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; 1999)—many scholars have focused on the study of metaphor in human cognition (Kupferberg 2016). Conceptual metaphor theory defines metaphors as structures stored in the human brain that influence the formation of figurative language in everyday discourse, literature, and poetry. According to this theory, the metaphors that appear in various types of discourse are evidence of cognitive structures within the human mind.

According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor is an essential core of human thought and creativity. Since the language of politics is characterized by metaphorical themes, metaphors are a powerful tool for uncovering the essence of political thought. Metaphorical expressions nourish our worldview and shape our thinking and, in turn, our actual behavior (3–6; Koller 2012: 25; Lakoff & Johnson 1980: Mio 1997: 117–126).

In parallel to the interest in conceptual metaphor that has arisen since the 1990s, numerous scholars have examined the role of various figurative language constructs applying discourse analysis of various texts, including natural interactive discourse and media discourse. These studies have made it possible to explore hidden aspects of language for the first time (Kupferberg & Green 2005; 2008; Weizman 2008).

This study follows Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in taking a conceptual approach to the study of metaphor. Their work sought to reveal the metaphorical nature of human thought through examining common metaphors, the use of which is habitual and agreed upon. Their findings demonstrate that the use of metaphorical language reflects how humans perceive reality. Metaphors frame our world, and without them we are unable to think (Livnat 2004, Part B: 368).

According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors are cognitive structures (that is, structures stored in the human brain) that allow humans to understand conceptual domains of greater complexity than those found in everyday experience, by considering them in terms of other, simpler, conceptual domains. The encounter between the two conceptual domains is a cognitive process in which humans understand the initial domain—the target domain—in terms of the second, or source domain. For example, the metaphor ‘life is a journey’ is a conceptual metaphor that has been studied in many languages. The target domain is ‘life’ and the source domain used to conceptualize it is that of ‘a journey’ (Kupferberg 2016: 20-21). While the target domain is accessed via the source domain, the reverse is not true. For example, when we say “life is a container” we conceptualize the concept of ‘life’ through the concept of the container, but we do not conceptualize the concept of the container through the concept of life. In cognitive semantics, the conceptualization of the target domain through the source domain is known as mapping and refers to the mapping of the target domain through the source domain. The term mapping implies that there is no single metaphorical connection between the two domains, but rather a system of connections or interrelationships between them (Livnat 2014, Part B: 121).[[2]](#footnote-3)

Lakoff (1991) also argues that metaphors not only reflect our view of reality but also influence it. In January 1991, in the wake of the First Gulf War, he analyzed the U.S. administration’s political discourse and showed how the Bush Administration used metaphors to justify going to war. In so doing, he demonstrated how metaphor analysis can be critical in exposing discourse manipulations and normally hidden ideologies (Baider & Kopytowska 2017; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 368–369; Kopytowska 2010).

Conceptual metaphor theory emphasizes that metaphors are an encounter between the two domains, and explores the transition from the abstract to the tangible domain. It is not concerned with a single borrowing of a particular word from domain to domain, but rather with a 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 (Livnat 2014, Part B: 120).

In a study of metaphor in Israeli political discourse, Dalia Gavriely-Nuri (2009: 169–193; 2011: 93)shows how metaphor is used to help to portray war as a normal part of life. Such war-normalizing metaphors aim to naturalize and legitimize the use of military power by creating a systematic analogy between war and objects that are far from the battlefield.[[3]](#footnote-5) For example, the metaphoric phrase “Golda’s Kitchen” was the popular nickname for the most intimate circle of Prime Minister Golda Meir’s advisers. This metaphor conceals a secretive and undemocratic decision-making process, even in security matters and other central issues. In essence, the ‘kitchen’ metaphor hides what was often, in fact, a ‘war room’ where Israel’s most urgent security matters were decided.

If we combine this with the lens of critical discourse analysis, we can see that the use of this particular metaphor helps to depict war as a normal, mundane, and unsurprising state, as expected and reasonable as medicine or business. In this way, the metaphor masks the true, terrible, and violent nature of war. Such patterns of discourse, repeated time and again (by politicians, military leaders, academics, journalists, and internet commentators), help the public become accustomed to this abnormal situation. Similarly, these metaphors help leaders convince the public of the rationality and necessity of war. (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: …)

Tony Blair defended his decision to send British soldiers to the Second Gulf War in 2003, by using metaphors of progress—the successful attainment of goals (in the future)—as opposed to metaphors of regression, which reflect the failure to reach goals (in the past). These metaphors mirror the choices faced by the UK’s Labour Party and its leader, Blair, and thus establish the expected party policy: always go forward. Blair was willing to accept nothing but progress, and presented himself as a strong and reliable leader who would not be swayed by difficulty or criticism. The metaphoric description of a particular problem or situation reflects the speaker’s perceptions of it and establishes his or her preferred solution.

In this context, the rhetorical power of metaphors of movement, widely encountered in political discourse, is worth mentioning. One example is the metaphor (Charteris-Black 2005: 54–152; Musolff 2004: 30) that depicts the European common currency (the euro) as a train that must progress at the same speed and in the same direction with all its cars in order to avoid derailment.[[4]](#footnote-6) This metaphor reflects a specific perspective that urges 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). Musolff presents examples of manipulative rhetorical baggage evoked by metaphors. The metaphors that he discusses express hostility toward the language of immigrants in Britain, such as the description of roads in British cities as streets in Bombay or Karachi (Musolff 2019: 257–266) and Coronation Street as having been relocated from Britain to Pakistan.

In brief, this paper uses conceptual metaphor theory to explore the source domains employed by Arafat to conceptualize various political issues and—in the main—the Israelis, but also the Palestinians.

## 3.3 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. Methodology**

The metaphors collected here are more generally representative of Arafat’s political discourse, as they have been collected from his most important speeches. These were published on the internet, in Arabic-language newspapers that published his political discourse, and in the interviews and speeches that are collected in the Yasser Arafat Foundation for the preservation of his legacy. A total of more than 90 interviews and speeches were analyzed.

A collection and sorting methodology was used: after collecting the metaphors, we sorted them

into different categories according to the source domains from which they were taken. We then attempted to show how each source domain contributes to the delivery of Arafat’s messages, and how they are used to conceptualize mainly the Israelis, but also the Palestinians.

The access dates and URLs for the various websites on which the metaphors were published were recorded. As noted above, one of the limitations of this study is that only a relatively small number of Arafat’s speeches have been published on the internet. Another limitation is the fact that, although a large number of interviews with Arafat have been published on the internet, a significant number of these are short. A third limitation is that the texts of Arafat’s political speeches published in print media have not been also published on the internet, and so it was not possible to verify the texts of political speeches quoted in newspapers by either using a transcript or recording of the speech itself.

All the metaphors collected were translated from Arabic into English by a native English-speaking translator and editor. The collection of metaphorical constructs showed that there are single-word metaphors and metaphors that consist of a sequence of words. The metaphorical constructs were analyzed in several stages—in the first stage, the metaphorical constructs were associated with source domains. In the second stage, an examination was performed to show how these source domains conceptualize mainly the Israelis, but also the Palestinians. In the third stage, an attempt was made to identify any source domains that merited particular attention, and conclusions were drawn accordingly.

# 4. Findings

**4.1 Rhetorical characteristics of Arafat’s discourse**

Arafat’s metaphorical discourse has clear rhetorical characteristics, as outlined below:

A. The double messages rhetoric

As noted, Arafat incorporates Holocaust metaphors into his public discourse. The mere usage of metaphors from this domain is not itself a significant rhetorical characteristic. What matters is that the main aim of using such metaphors is not to identify with the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust but to deliver persuasive criticism against the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians, and, as such, reflects the double messages rhetoric, as will be further detailed below.

Another of Arafat’s most noteworthy metaphors is the one in which he transposes the audience into the moment when God freed the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt and before they entered Israel. This metaphor also reflects the double message rhetoric: Arafat identifies with the Jewish people who suffered from slavery in Egypt and wandered the desert for forty years, and simultaneously criticizes the Israeli government. Using this metaphor, Arafat suggests that the Israeli government has learned nothing from this experience, as, instead of expressing sympathy with the suffering of the Palestinian people, it continues to suppress their rights. As a result, the Palestinian people have become the victims of the victim.

B. The simple-message rhetoric

Most of the metaphors gathered here relate to metaphors of holy books and places, nature, and the military. It seems that Arafat focuses on nature metaphors since they are relatively simple, easy to understand, and convey their messages clearly – in contrast to more complex metaphors that require in-depth thought to decipher. With these metaphors, Arafat employs a rhetoric of conveying the message in a simple, sharp, precise, and unambiguous way.

C. Incorporating biblical metaphors that reflect absolute truths

Arafat had a purpose in choosing biblical metaphors. His purpose is to emphasize that in the Bible, that is, in the sacred book of the Jewish people, which reflects the word of God and of the prophets, solid proof can be found that, in the end, justice prevails over military might. Incorporating such metaphors reflects the rhetoric of absolute truths, about which there can be no dispute.

D. The rhetoric of adopting myths that are deeply rooted in Jewish culture

Arafat appeals to metaphors that reflect the myth of the ‘few against many,’ which is deeply rooted in Jewish culture.

E. The implicit message rhetoric

F. The rhetoric of positioning the war against Israeli occupation as a holy war

Arafat positions the war against Israeli occupation as a holy war whose justification derives from the sacred books and thus imbues it with the sanctity of holy places. For example, he compares the stones, as symbols of rebellion against the Israeli government, to the Black Stone in Mecca, and in so doing attributes supreme sanctity to this uprising.

## 4.2 The source domains from which the metaphors were taken

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Source domain** | **No. of metaphors** | **% of total** |
| Natural phenomena | 11 | 25.5813% |
| Animals | 4 | 9.3023% |
| Trade | 1 | 2.3255% |
| Military | 7 | 16.2790% |
| Travel | 7 | 16.2790% |
| Supernatural | 2 | 4.6511% |
| Historical events | 3 | 6.9767% |
| Religious metaphors | 4 | 9.3023% |
| Metaphors related to the myth of the “Few against the Many” | 1 | 2.3255% |
| Medicine | 2 | 4.6511% |
| Sport | 1 | 2.3255% |
| Total | 43 | 100% |

As we will see below, the source domains that Arafat uses conceptualize the Israelis as….

### 4.2.1 Metaphors from the source domain of natural phenomena

Metaphors from the source domain of nature exist in all religions. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, one reads “A person is like a tree of the field” (Deut. 20:19). That is, just as investing in a seed will yield a sturdy tree and excellent fruit, so is a child like a seed; investing in him will pay off when he turns into a stable adult imbued with values. In the Quran, we read: “We have handed the Quran to you [the Prophet Muhammad] for the deliverance of man from darkness to light,” i.e., from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge (Surah Al-Hadid 27:538).

This study finds that Arafat is particularly inclined to adopt transparent metaphors from the source domain of nature because they are pointed, reflective of direct speech, decodable with no need for deep thinking, and very accessible to people as well as easily stirring emotions.

**Examples**

(1) We drowned in a **whirlpool of violence and terrorism**.

(*Al-Quds*, March 14, 1996, p. 1., col. 2)

The whirlpool, a natural phenomenon, is a metaphor for involvement in acts of terrorism. It invokes imagery of a maelstrom of dark colors that are associated with destruction and blood, like black and red. It is evident that this metaphor is charged with emotion. The target domain—Palestinians becoming embroiled in acts of violence and terrorism—is conceptualized through the source domain of the whirlpool.

(2) Our dream of freedom, independence, and self-determination cannot be fulfilled in a **sea of blood and tears**.

(*Al-Quds*, March 14, 1996, p. 19, col. 6)

The sea is a metaphor for the many occurrences of terrorist acts. It invokes imagery of a bloodstained red mass without borders, like a sea. The metaphor is emotionally charged and is intended to deter violence. The target domain—multiple acts of terror—is conceptualized through the source domain of the sea.

(3) Palestine the blessed land, the cradle of culture and holiness and the **wellspring of love and peace**.

(*Al-Quds*, June 3, 1997, col. 8)

The wellspring is a metaphor for abundance, an inexhaustible source of love, peace, and adherence to the peace process. The target domain—the status of Palestine as a peace-seeking nation and a source of love between peoples—is conceptualized through the source domain of a wellspring.

(4) The U.N.’s resolutions were among the most important **springs** of support for the Palestinian people.

(Arafat’s speech to the United Nations, 3 December 1988)

The target domain—the United Nations resolutions recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people to a Palestinian state—are conceptualized through the source domain of the wellspring.

(5) Israel’s leaders lived under an illusion and in a deceptive euphoria, as though, after the Palestinians’ departure from Beirut, the **sea** would swallow up the Palestinian Authority, and did not expect that such departure was actually a path back to the homeland, to the battlefield, to occupied Palestine.

(Arafat’s speech to the United Nations, 13 December 1988)

The target domain—the illusions of the Israeli leadership, their deceptiveness and desire for the Palestinian Authority to simply disappear—are conceptualized through the source domain of the sea.

In examples (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5) Arafat uses metaphorical concepts associated with water and the movement of vast quantities of water, as in a whirlpool, a sea, and a wellspring. The metaphors in examples (1) and (2) represent the inability to break free of the cycle of violence and return to the negotiating table. They point an accusing finger at Israel for the impasse in the negotiations and convey a need for bold, frequent, steps to revive them. The metaphor in sentence (3) that describes Palestine as a “wellspring of love and peace,” implying that the Palestinian people always strive to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and negotiations, also expresses a willingness to renew negotiations on the Palestinian side. Notably in this context, metaphorical use of the concept of ‘flood’ is traditionally encountered (as both a verb and a noun) in the context of migration, especially in defense of anti-immigration ideologies and processes. In example (4), the U.N. resolutions in support of the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel are likened to an ever-flowing spring. Just as trees require water to bear fruit, so the Palestinian Authority requires the U.N.’s recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to realize their rights, to jumpstart the peace process, and to establish a Palestinian state. Example (5) pertains to the Israelis’ expectations from the Palestinian Authority after the Palestinians departed from Lebanon. The Israeli government hoped that the event would be shrouded in fog, just like the sea, which symbolizes the unknown and loss.

(6) Holy Jerusalem, **the gem of our land and our eternal pearl**.

(*Al-Haya Al-Jadida*, June 4, 1996, p. 2, col. 5)

Jerusalem is described using images of precious stones. The metaphor invokes prestige and sublime splendor, a kind of supreme beauty that testifies to Arafat’s great emotional attachment to the city and helps to justify his calls for Jerusalem to be the capital of a Palestinian state. The target domain—the value of the city of Jerusalem to the Palestinians—is conceptualized through the source domain of the pearl.

(7) Terrorism is trying to rewind the hands of the clock after the **sun of peace** has risen on a beautiful dream we called a “new Middle East.

(*Al-Quds*, March 14, 1996, p. 19, col. 6)

The phrase “the sun of peace” is a metaphor for optimal peace. The sun is an established literary symbol of success and invokes images of positive energy radiating down onto a new Middle East, which is a political symbol of a new future in the region. The target domain—an optimal peace rooted in values of justice and recognition of the rights of the other, whoever and wherever they are—is conceptualized through the source domain of the sun.

(8) We must keep the **embers of this dream burning** and protect holy Jerusalem, the pearl of Palestine, the flower of her city, and her beating heart.(*Al-Quds*, July 2, 1998, col. 4).

The “burning embers of this dream” is a metaphor that describes a spark, the precious essence of the Palestinian dream. Later, the speaker creates metaphorical identifications with a fixed object and a shifting base: Jerusalem is likened to a precious stone to emphasize its grace and prestige, a flower to reflect its splendor and radiance, and a beating heart to convey its centrality to a Palestinian state, since the Palestinians view East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. The target domain—the dream of reaching a just peace with the Israelis—is conceptualized through the source domain of the burning embers.

(9) The U.N.’s resolution to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people was the most significant spring to have watered the olive tree that has developed **deep roots and branches reaching to the sky**, after we watered it with tears and sweat. This tree promises a **fruit of** **victory** over Israeli occupation and oppression.

The target domain—the status of the Palestinian people after being recognized, and having their rights recognized, by the United Nations is conceptualized through the source domain—a tree that developed deep roots and branches reaching up to the sky. The target domain—the victory of the Palestinian people, as reflected through their enjoying their full rights is conceptualized through the source domain—a tree whose roots are deeply planted in the earth.

(10) We extend our hand to the peace branch because it takes root in our heart from **the tree of the homeland and of liberty**.

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The Palestinian homeland and the Palestinians’ yearning for liberty are likened to a tree. Just as the roots of the tree are planted deeply in the earth, so are the Palestinian people’s homeland and liberty deeply rooted; they are, in fact, their own flesh and blood. The target domain—a Palestinian homeland and the Palestinians’ yearning for freedom—are conceptualized through the source domain of a tree, whose roots are planted deep in the earth.

(11) The Israeli government fears the settlement of Palestinians in their homeland, Palestine. It fears the **scarecrow** that is called the Palestinian settlement.

(Interview with Arafat, 12.1.1980)

The Israeli government is afraid of the realization of the Palestinians’ right of return to their homeland. This fear is likened to a scarecrow that disturbs the sleep of this government. The target domain—the fear that the Palestinians’ right to return will be realized—is conceptualized through the source domain of the scarecrow.

### 4.2.2 Animal metaphors

Many different cultures have made important contributions to the creation of metaphors from the animal world. For instance, in Persian, comparing someone to a fox implies that person is wise and clever, while in English, the owl metaphor is used to convey approximately the same meaning. However, the fox metaphor also has a somewhat negative connotation, as it implies employing cleverness for deception and cunning. The owl metaphor, in contrast, has a somewhat positive connotation, as it implies employing cleverness for positive purposes (Rouhi and Mahand 2011: 253). Other animal metaphors are used to praise a certain person’s positive qualities. For example, comparing an individual to a lion implies that they are brave and fearless. In contrast, some animal metaphors are used to mock and belittle a person and their personal worth—comparing someone to a chicken, for example, implies that that person is a coward (Rouhi and Mahand 2011: 253).

The metaphor ‘talons of the occupation’ in example (12) emphasizes Israel’s extraordinary aggression and its adherence to its policies of occupation, like a predator mercilessly sinking its talons into its prey. The metaphor of the “young lions” in example (13) reflects stubborn resistance of the Palestinian youth to the Israeli occupation, bravery and the extraordinary emotional strength that will ultimately be reflected in the victory of the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

***Examples***

(12) Jerusalem must be rescued from the **talons** of the occupation.

The target domain—the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem—is conceptualized through the source domain of a predator digging its talons into its prey.

(13) Until a **young lion** unfurls the Palestinian flag on the walls of Jerusalem.

(*Al-Ayam*, May 5, 1999, p. 18, col. 3)

The phrase “young lion” is a metaphor for the bravery and stubborn resistance of the Palestinian youth. The target domain—the bravery of Palestinian youth—is conceptualized through the source domain of the young lion.

(14) On the horizon, I see no chance of holding a conference in Geneva. And even if it does take place, the Israelis will **spit their drugs** into it…(Interview with Arafat, 23.4.1977).

Here, Arafat was implying that the Israeli government would attempt to interfere with the peace talks at the Geneva Convention and poison them if and when they did occur. That is, it will attempt to poison the atmosphere during these talks, and as such the Israeli government is likened to a venomous snake. The bad intentions of the Israeli government are like the venom of a snake. The target domain—the attempts by the Israelis to poison the Geneva peace talks—is conceptualized through the source domain of a venomous snake.

(15) There is greed on the part of the Israeli government to **devour** large parts of Lebanon, just as it has **devoured** significant parts of Palestine.

(Interview with Arafat, 12.1.1980)

The Israeli government’s ambitions to occupy parts of Lebanon, as it did in Palestine, is like a predator that mercilessly pounces on its prey. The target domain—the attempts by the Israelis to occupy territory in Lebanon—is conceptualized through the source domain of a predatory animal.

### 4.2.3 Trade metaphors

The long ongoing negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israeli government can be seen as akin to trading activity, and as in any trade, there is profit and loss. Arafat expresses his disgust at the exploitative nature of the Israeli government in the negotiations, since it is unwilling to make concessions for the sake of achieving peace, while expecting the Palestinians to make such concessions, a position that renders negotiations fruitless and bellicose.

***Examples***

(16) The Palestinian people are the only ones **paying the price** of peace.

(*Al-Haya Al-Jadida*, June 4, 1996, p. 2, col. 7)

‘Paying a price’ is a metaphor for making concessions that result in the loss of money or soul of the party making the compromises, since the Palestinians suffer terrible living conditions and are willing to make far-reaching concessions for the sake of peace. This is in contrast to the Israeli government, which, although it seeks peace, is not willing to make significant concessions to achieve it. The target domain—the concessions made by the Palestinians for the sake of peace—is conceptualized by the source domain of paying a heavy price.

### 4.2.4 Military metaphors

The military domain remains one of the most popular sources of metaphors in politics. This domain, in which political activities are conceptualized as war, is usually employed metaphorically for all types of human struggle and conflict (Ifeanyichukwu et al. 2018: 95–96). For example, the metaphorical expression ‘war on terror’ has been an integral element of American foreign policy since September 11, 2001, evidently reflecting the principal American strategy for defense against terror attacks (Silberstein 2002: 1–17).

***Examples***

(17) 100,000 new workers are joining the great **army of the unemployed**.

(*Al-Quds*, March 14, 1996, p. 19, col. 6)

The ‘**army** of the unemployed’ is a hyperbolic metaphor by which to describe a large number of unemployed workers. The number of unemployed people in reality was certainly less. The target domain—the large number of unemployed people—is conceptualized through the source domain of an army.

(18) Our principled, stable, and permanent hold on peace and peace talks is a **strategic option** from which there is no retreat.

(*Al-Quds*, June 3, 1997, p. 23, col. 4)

The phrase “strategic option” is a metaphor for a diplomatic act of negotiation. The target domain—the diplomatic act of undertaking negotiations—is conceptualized through the source domain of a strategic option.

(19) I will sound the **alarm bell** about the plot to build the Temple.

(*Al-Quds*, December 10, 1997)

The phrase “alarm bell” functions as a metaphor for warning. The target domain—Arafat’s warning about a plot to build the Third Temple on the ruins of the Al Aqsa Mosque—is conceptualized through the source domain of the alarm bell.

(20) And he opened many **old-new wounds**, especially relating to the implementation of U.N. resolutions.

(*Al-Sha’ab*, March 16, 1998)

The “old-new wounds” are a metaphor for bad political relations. The target domain—bad political affairs—are conceptualized through the source domain of wounds.

(21) Not only did the Camp David Accords fail to realize peace, with these agreements Carter brought **dynamite** into the region. Therefore, the U.N. must resolve the situation.

(*Al-Mustakbal*, April 22, 1979)

According to Arafat, the Camp David Accords reflect an Egyptian and U.S. betrayal of the Palestinian people. They are like dynamite, because these accords destroy the explicit promise made by the U.N. and by the U.S. administration concerning the rights of the Palestinian people to an independent state. Additionally, Arafat sees these accords as a conspiracy against the Arab world more generally, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf, because, in them, Egypt cared only about itself and neglected the Palestinian problem. The target domain—the Camp David Accords—is conceptualized through the source domain of treason and conspiracy.

(22) I am honored to be one of the sons of this nation, who write the most impressive uprising against the Israeli occupation with the **blood** of their children, women, and men.

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The Palestinian people are not destined to suffer forever from the Israeli occupation. They are their own masters and can determine their own destiny. Writing, in this context, means to determine one’s own destiny. The Palestinian people sacrifice their blood in their war against the Israeli occupation. The blood, which represents their willingness to make the greatest sacrifice, is likened to the Palestinians’ most effective weapon, which will eventually determine their fate. The target domain—the Camp David Accords—is conceptualized through the source domain of treason and conspiracy.

(23) The Israelis have adopted a **scorched earth** strategy and we now have 6,000,000 Lebanese and Palestinians who were exiled as a result of Israel’s aggressive military operations.

(Interview with Arafat, 8.7.1979)

Exiling Palestinians and Lebanese people from their homeland is akin to scorching the earth. The target domain—the exile of six million Palestinians and Lebanese citizens by Israel—is conceptualized through the source domain of a scorched earth policy.

### 4.2.5 Travel metaphors

Travel metaphors are very common and familiar in English. Travel destinations (Semino 2008: 81–82) are planned in the manner of stops that need to be reached. Therefore, forward motion reflects a change for the better, as in growth and success, whereas reverse motion symbolizes failure and backsliding. It was in this context that we explained Tony Blair’s ‘journey’ metaphor in the Introduction.

In the examples below, Arafat uses travel metaphors mainly to emphasize the threats to the peace process that lurk on both sides, but especially those presented by Israel, as it is the Palestinian people who are under occupation by Israel, which has disregarded their legitimate and justified rights. In examples 24, 25 and 30 the metaphors ‘dead-end street,’ ‘delays and obstacles,’ and ‘red line’ serve to emphasize the clearly unreasonable conditions that Israel set for the renewal of peace talks with the Palestinians.

The metaphors ‘burning the bridges’ across which the ‘peace train’ is traveling and the ‘terminus’ at which the train is supposed to arrive resemble the metaphor that appeared in the British newspaper *The Independent* in January 1999: the European common currency (the euro) is portrayed as a train that must progress at the same speed and in the same direction with all its cars; otherwise, it will derail and shatter. The point is that the countries that adopted the euro need to coordinate and harmonize their policies if they wish to enjoy economic success. The metaphors ‘first stop [on the way to somewhere],’ ‘peace train,’ ‘bridges,’ and heading in a ‘particular direction’ reflect optimism for the renewal of the peace process, its revitalization, and the establishing of peace, despite the stubborn position of the Israeli government and its repeated attempts to create difficulties for the Palestinians so as to hamper the renewal of the peace process.

***Examples***

(24) The many, continuous **delays and obstacles** that this government places **in the way** of the progress of the peace process.

(*Al-Sha’ab*, 16 March 1998, p. 15, col. 6)

Delays and obstacles on the metaphorical road creating disruptions in the peace process. The target domain—disruptions to the peace process—is conceptualized through the source domain—obstacles and delays.

(25) The peace process in the region is going through an acute crisis and has reached a **dead-end street**.

(*Al-Quds*, December 12, 1997, p. 19, col. 7)

The complicated situation or conditions that Israel creates for the Palestinians are difficult to overcome and are a “dead-end street.” The target domain—the creation by Israel of difficulties for the Palestinians as conditions for renewing the peace process are conceptualized through the source domain of the dead-end street.

(26) This day . . . should be the **point of departure** on the journey to committing to a great national, Arab, and global effort.

(*Al-Ayam*, May 5, 1995, p. 18, col. 3)

The “point of departure” is a metaphor for the beginning of a political movement. The target domain—the beginning of a political movement—is conceptualized through the source domain of the point of departure.

(27) There are attempts by extremists on both sides to burn the bridges between us so that the **peace train** cannot travel over them.

(*Al-Haya Al-Jadida*, June 2, 1996, p. 2, col. 7)

The “peace train” is a metaphor for the ongoing peace process and the bridge is a metaphor for a positive relationship between the two parties to the process. The target domain of the peace process is conceptualized through the source domain of a train.

(28) There is no escaping [the fact that] the peace train will reach its **final stop**.

(*Al-Haya Al-Jadida*, June 4, 1996, p. 2, col. 5)

A ‘final stop’ is a metaphor for the goal of peaceful coexistence. The target domain—the goal of a peaceful settlement—is conceptualized through the source domain of a final stop.

(29) Today, we **walked** a good part of the way together in the direction of a Palestinian state.

(*Al-Quds*, December 31, 1995)

Walking in a certain direction is a metaphor for achieving a goal, i.e., a Palestinian state, which is perceived by Arafat as the objective of the peace process. The target domain—achievement in the form of a Palestinian state—is conceptualized through the source domain of traveling in the same direction.

(30) Jerusalem is a **red line** […] and there is no one among us who would be willing to give up a single speck of land from Holy Jerusalem.

(*Al-Quds*, July 2, 1998)

A ‘red line’ is a road sign that advises caution or is an order to stop. It is a metaphor for preventing negotiations on a particular issue due to its extreme sensitivity. The target domain—holding negotiations regarding Jerusalem—is conceptualized through the source domain of the red line.

### 4.2.6 Supernatural metaphors

There is a direct and immediate connection between a particular event and its meaning, e.g., animal tracks in a certain area indicate that a certain animal passed through that area. In the desert, certain signs are immediately understood by trackers, but non-trackers are unable to decipher these signs and understand their meaning. Beyond this, there are phenomena that are outside our daily experiences and the limits of our imagination, i.e., the supernatural.

The legends have it that the Arabs have three impossibilities: the *ghoul*,the *anqāa*, and *al-khel al-wafī*. The *ghoul* is a legendary evil spirit or demon in Islamic folklore and fables. This creature is ugly, savage, and large. Ghoul stories are told to frighten children. The *anqāa* is a legendary bird or griffin with a long neck, which is feared by all due to its size and supernatural strength. The *khel al-wafī* is a soulmate who never abandons its friend in times of distress.[[5]](#footnote-7)

***Examples***

(31) The city of Jerusalem needs to be saved from **the ghoul of this spreading settlement**.

(*Al-Quds*, December 10, 1997, p. 19, col. 6)

The phrase ‘the ghoul of the spreading settlement’ is a metaphor likening the settlements to predatory ghouls, who are famous in Arabic legends for eating corpses and mercilessly devouring anything that stands in their way. Thus, stopping the settlements and declaring war against them is justified. The target domain—the phenomenon of Jewish settlement—is conceptualized through the source domain of the ghoul.

(32) I tell the Israelis: “Come make peace and move away from the **spirit** of war that has been going on for 40 years already.”

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The vicious ongoing war between the Israeli government and the Palestinians is like a malevolent spirit. The target domain—the vicious war between the Israelis and Palestinians—is conceptualized through the source domain of the malevolent spirit.

### 4.2.7 Metaphors Connected to Historical Events

### 4.2.7.1 Metaphors related to the Holocaust

### Arafat, who is seen by the Jewish audience as an anti-Zionist and even as a terrorist by some among them, uses the Holocaust narrative to point an accusative finger at the racism of the Israeli government. In fact, it sends a double message: empathy and solidarity with the Jewish people as victims of the Holocaust, together with poignant criticism against them for their racism, hate, and trampling of Palestinian rights. Arafat does not directly compare the behavior of Israelis toward Palestinians to the behavior of Nazis, though he does mean to imply it.. In fact, he is masking his true intention. For Arafat, the moral of the Holocaust is that the Jewish people should stand beside the weak and the weakened, the oppressed and dispossessed, that is, the Palestinians as the victims of the victim. In spite of Arafat’s harsh criticism of the Israeli government, he presents this criticism in a way that is positive and noncontroversial for his audience: he does not throw his accusation directly at the audience—“you are fascists, you are racists.” Rather, he builds his arguments on what is accepted by the Jewish audience, that is on its social ‘truths,’ ideological narratives, its collective memory and cognitive patterns, and the concepts ‘furnace’ and ‘ghetto’ undoubtedly create solidarity among the Jewish people. He sought concepts with which the Jewish audience would identify, like ‘furnace’ and ‘ghetto,’ and there is no doubt that these concepts are the ‘glue’ that comprises the common denominator between the speaker and his audience, as is socially accepted.

***Examples***

(33) Let us make peace and move away from the **furnace** of this conflict.

(Arafat’s speech to the United Nations, 13.12.1988)

The target domain—the ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis—is conceptualized through the source domain of the crematorium furnace.

(34) Israel took over 58% of the West Bank, and what was left for the Palestinians is 42% of the West Bank, divided into cantons and **ghettos**.

(Dialogue with Arafat, *Al-Haram*, 12.8.2003)

The target domain—the division of Palestinian land into small pieces that undermine its unity is conceptualized through the source domain of the ghetto.

In example (33), Arafat addresses the bloody conflict between the Palestinians and the Israeli government. This conflict is like the furnaces of a crematorium. In example (34), Arafat criticizes the Israeli government for carving up Palestinian land into small parts in such a way as to dissolve its geographic unity and the unity of the Palestinian people. Such division of the land is compared to the ghetto. Arafat mentions the words ‘ghetto’ and ‘furnace’ in these examples as a reminder of the Jewish people’s awful memories of the Holocaust. The mere mention of these words by a person who is considered a clear anti-Zionist, and the absence of Holocaust denialism, even if this is implicit rather than overt, could build a bridge of trust between him and the Jewish audience. The implicitness of his appeal to the Holocaust is to be expected. It is inconceivable that Arafat, who was viewed as an anti-Zionist, would recall the Holocaust to express public support and empathy with the Jewish people as victims of the Holocaust, as this would paint him a traitor in Palestinian eyes. He is thus walking a very tight rope, and usually expresses his solidarity with the Jewish people’s suffering during the Holocaust implicitly or covertly.

**4.2.7.2 Metaphors relating to the Sykes-Picot Agreement**

(35) What is happening in the Middle East is a new **Sykes-Picot**[[6]](#footnote-8) that aims to prevent the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and to prevent peace and stability in the region.

(Interview with Arafat, *Middle East Newspaper*, 5.10.2004)

The target domain—the division of Palestinian land into small fragments that undermine its unity—is conceptualized through the source domain of the ghetto.

The Israeli government’s attempt to take over Palestinian lands and the inability of the United States and European countries to prevent it are likened to the Sykes-Picot agreement, which shattered the Arab world and divided it between the United Kingdom and France in new national constellations.

**4.2.8 Religious metaphors**

When speakers aim to persuade, they may appeal to literary, religious, and folkloric elements, such as songs, proverbs, parables, scriptures, and myths that are accepted in society and culture. In the case of quotations from scripture, the ideas presented are self-evident, their truth requiring no proof.

**4.2.8.1 Metaphors related to religiously significant places**

The Black Stone is a stone found in the eastern corner of the Kaaba, which is at the center of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Muslims treat it as a holy Islamic relic, which according to Muslim tradition existed already during the time of Adam and Eve.

(36) I see the homeland in your **sacred stones**. (Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

Arafat attributes great sanctity to the uprising against the Israeli government. He compares the stones, as symbols of rebellion against the Israeli government, to the Black Stone in Mecca, and in so doing attributes supreme sanctity to this uprising.

The target domain—stones as an instrument of war of Palestinian children under the Israeli occupation—are conceptualized through the source domain of the Black Stone in Mecca.

**4.2.8.2 Quotations from the Quran**

The Quran is known in Arab culture as the paragon of Arabic language. Its style and language put to shame any attempt to imitate it. Its exclusive truth is sanctified with the seal of Allah, its verses considered to be truths that need no proof. Arafat harnesses verses from the Quran for his own needs and takes advantage of their somewhat magical influence upon his audience.

***Examples***

(37) I tell Israelis: “Come let us make peace and distance ourselves from the threat of wars, whose **fuel will be our babies and yours**.”

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The target domain—the flames of the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians—is conceptualized through the source domain of hellfire.

Arafat warns against the outbreak of wars, because these wars would be fueled by Palestinian and Israeli babies. He compares the fires of these potential wars between Palestinians and Israelis to the fires of hell and appeals to Surah Al-Bakarah (2:24): “…fear the Fire fueled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.” It is clear that Arafat means that the Israeli government is heretical, because the vicious and brutal policies it enacts against Palestinians is characteristic of the actions of infidels. The end of the Surah clearly shows that Arafat is threatening the Israeli government and warning it of the Palestinian response, which will be as severe as the fires of hell, if it continues with its brutal policy against the Palestinian people.

**4.2.8.3 Metaphors from the Old Testament**

Arafat takes his audience to the Old Testament story of Noah and the flood. In example (38), he compares the Palestinian people to the olive branch, because they are peace-loving rather than warmongering. Furthermore, the peace between the Palestinian people and the Israeli government is likened to the olive branch.

**Examples**

(38) The U.N.’s resolutions were among the most significant of springs to have watered the **olive branch**.

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The target domain—the United Nations resolutions recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people—is conceptualized through the source domain of the olive branch.

(39) How many times have our people, women, children, and the elderly, been forced to leave their homeland with no food or water and forced **to climb mountains and wander in the desert.**

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.11.1974)

The target domain—the suffering of Palestinian refugees in Palestine and all over the world—is conceptualized through the source domain of the wandering of the Israelites in the desert for forty years after their liberation from slavery in Egypt.

In example (39), Arafat takes his audience to the moment that God freed the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt and before they entered Israel. During this time, they wandered the desert for forty years. The wanderings of the Palestinian people around the world and their suffering, including in inhumane conditions in refugee camps in Israel and abroad, can be likened to climbing mountains and getting lost in the desert. Arafat’s meaning is that the Palestinian people suffer from brutal living conditions under the Israeli occupation, and are dispersed all around the world, just as the Jewish people wandered the desert for forty years and later were exiled from their homeland to all corners of the world. In fact, there is a common denominator between Palestinians and Israelis that is reflected in the fact that they have both suffered from wandering and from being far from their homelands. The expectation is that a people who suffered for forty years of wandering in the desert and during their long period of exile would have sympathy toward, and solidarity with, the Palestinians, but what actually happens is the exact opposite.

**4.2.9 Metaphors related to the Myth of the “Few against the Many”**

‘The few against the many’ is a cultural mythical expression that captures a deeply-rooted attitude in Israeli culture. Its basis is theological, reflecting Biblical references to the Israelite wars in which the balance of power favored the enemy, to the 1948 War of Independence, and others. The expression the ‘few against many’ is engraved in the Israeli public consciousness, and refers to the story of the festival in which Judah Maccabee and his rebel army, which, while suffering from numerical and weaponry inferiority in their struggle against enslavement by the Seleucid (usually called Greek) empire and its supporters in the Land of Israel, defeated the Seleucid army, flush with soldiers and armaments, on the battlefield.

(40) The children of the stones confront the Israeli occupier, who is equipped with advanced fighter planes, tanks, and other advanced weapons of destruction, and in so doing bring back to memory the iron image of the **lone unarmed David** confronting **Goliath, armed from head to toe**.

(Arafat’s speech to the U.N., 13.12.1988)

The target domain—the Palestinian children who confront the Israeli army—is conceptualized through the source domain of the lone David is his fight against the heavily-armed Goliath.

The children of the stones confront the Israeli occupier. They confront planes and tanks, risking their lives, and they do not give up. They are like the Israelite David, who was a shepherd. Despite the fact that Goliath, the Philistine giant, was armed from head to toe with offensive weaponry, including a spear, a warrior’s shield, a sword, and a copper javelin, and despite his immense height, David overcame him with no offensive weapons at all. He merely used a stone, which he threw directly at Goliath’s forehead, killed him, and then beheaded him. Before the battle, Goliath mocks David’s clothes and weaponry, and claims that David will be defeated. In contrast, David insists that he will be victorious, because he is the messenger of God. And, through this battle, the greatness of God becomes evident to all, because it is not by David’s own strength that he emerges victorious, but through the strength of God.

Arafat uses the myth of ‘the few against the many,’ which is deeply entrenched in Israeli culture, and transports his audience to this biblical story (1 Samuel 17-18). This situation reflects a clear victory of the few over the many, of justice over evil, of paucity over affluence, and thus emphasizes that despite the obvious military superiority of the Israeli government, with its advanced tools of destruction, the Palestinian people will emerge victorious because of their moral superiority, because their rights to an independent state and to the return of the occupied territories are justified.

There is a reason that Arafat chose a biblical story. His purpose is to emphasize that in the Bible—the sacred book of the Jewish people—which reflects the word of God and the prophets, solid proof can be found that, in the end, justice prevails over military might. Israel’s many wars, in which the Jewish people confronted much larger armies and yet prevailed because justice was on their side, are solid proof that the Palestinian people will be victorious in their battle against the Israeli government because of their moral superiority.

**4.2.10 Metaphors from medicine**

Sometimes, the purpose of appealing to metaphors from the field of medicine is to encourage the patient to overcome a specific disease, as is the case with the metaphor of the ‘rearview mirror’ that might be useful in medical contexts. This metaphor articulates how recovery and the process of detoxification from drugs and alcohol require us to learn from our past mistakes and regrets, but not to dwell on them. If one drives and places all one’s attention on what is behind one, one will become stuck and fail to move forward. In contrast, good drivers focus on what is in front of them, but also constantly check their rearview mirror. For Arafat, the use of metaphors from the field of medicine serve to describe the aggressive actions of the Israeli government against the Palestinians.

***Examples***

(41) Our region is now **pregnant** because of the many dangerous events that occur. (Interview with Arafat, 14.12.1977)

The target domain—the many conspiracies devised by the United States and Israel against the Arab world and Middle East in general, and against the Palestinian people in particular—are conceptualized through the source domain of a pregnant woman.

(42) Israel is planning an **abortive** war against the Palestinian people, and the United States is helping it in this war.

(Interview with Arafat, 21.10.1974)

The target domain—Israel’s war against the Palestinians and its destructive views—is conceptualized through the source domain of an abortion procedure.

Arafat appeals to a medical metaphor precisely to reflect a difficult medical procedure. The Israeli government is planning a war against the Palestinians with the purpose of crushing them and depriving them of their rights. Such a war is akin to an abortion because its purpose is to suppress the peace process and to essentially bury it.

### 4.2.11 Sport metaphors

Given the worldwide popularity of sports, sport metaphors are likely to create common ground with the public and foster and strengthen common national sentiments. The former Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, for example, regularly relied on soccer metaphors in his 1994 election campaign; for example, referring to the right-wing camp that he intended to establish as a “winning team” (Semino 2008: 99).

(43) There is no efficient solution to the problem of the Middle East without taking into account the number of Palestinians. This is not a number that we can **jump** over.

(Interview with Arafat, 14.12.1977)

The target domain—solving the problems of the Middle East without addressing the Palestinian issue—is conceptualized through the source domain of jumping.

Arafat rejects any solution to the problem of the Middle East that does not include a just solution to the Palestinian problem. The attempt by the United States and Israel to ignore the existence of the Palestinian people and to reach agreements with Arab countries in a way that ignores the Palestinian population is like going over the head of the Palestinian Authority.

# 5 Discussion and Conclusions

Arafat conceptualizes mainly the Israelis, but also the Palestinians, through the following source domains: animals, trade, military, travel, the supernatural, historical events, religion, the myth of the “few against the many”, medicine, and sport.

Through these source domains, Arafat conceptualizes the Israelis variously as: living in an illusion and with the mistaken idea that the Palestinian Authority can be ignored; reluctant to exercise the Palestinian right to return; a cruel occupier; creating obstacles to the advancement of the peace process with the Palestinians and thwarting any chance of realizing it; unwilling to make painful concessions for the sake of peace; hatching a plot to build the Third Temple in place of the Al Aqsa Mosque on Temple Mount in Jerusalem; and of adopting a Nazi-like policy toward the Palestinians.

The Palestinians are conceptualized variously as: seekers of peace clinging to their dreams and yearning to reach a just peace with the Israelis; possessing greatness of mind and an extraordinary ability to stand firm against the Israeli occupiers and fight against them; an elder brother aware of the need to end the war with Israel and ready to make painful concessions for the sake of peace; someone who regards the war with Israel as a religious and holy war and fights bravely against the Israelis despite the meager means of warfare at their disposal.

Arafat’s metaphorical discourse has several prominent rhetorical characteristics. At times, Arafat adopts the simple-message rhetoric through the use of nature metaphors and at times he appeals to the implicit message rhetoric as when he uses Holocaust metaphors whose purpose is to indirectly compare the behavior of the Nazis toward the Jewish people during the Holocaust to that of the Israeli government toward the Palestinian people. The Holocaust metaphors also reflect the double message rhetoric, because through them, he identifies with the suffering of the Jewish people while at the same time indirectly criticizing their behavior through the implicit comparison to the Nazis. Furthermore, Arafat utilizes the rhetoric of incorporating biblical metaphors that reflect absolute truths, the rhetoric of adopting myths that are deeply rooted in Jewish culture, as well as the rhetoric of positioning the war against Israeli occupation as a holy war.

Arafat tends to weave metaphors into his political discourse, metaphors conveying semantic power and force are used as a rhetorical strategy that serves his message. Arafat sees metaphor as a positive tool for argument. It is worth noting that all the metaphors analyzed in this article were intended to cast a spotlight on the suffering of the Palestinian people under a policy of occupation and settlement and to emphasize that Israel does not truly desire peace but rather an ongoing occupation and the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people. Additionally, these metaphors emphasize that Arafat adheres to the peace process, and is fully committed to it, while Israel imposes unreasonable conditions and creates difficulties for the Palestinians, as a condition for restarting the peace process, with the goal of preventing the peace process from ever starting.

Arafat uses metaphors relating to travel and transport, such as ‘a dead-end street,’ ‘delays and obstacles,’ and ‘a red line,’ to emphasize the clearly unreasonable conditions that Israel has set for renewing the peace process with the Palestinians. These conditions create disruptions and obstacles to the peace process, and stall negotiations. Other world leaders of great renown have used such travel metaphors to convey various messages, as in the example of Tony Blair, presented earlier.

Arafat is voicing a dual message through the use of metaphors: empathy and identification with the Jewish people as victims of the Holocaust, while at the same time harsh criticism of Israel for its racism and hatred of the Palestinian people. Implicitly and explicitly, he uses keywords, topics like ghetto and furnace, with which Jews identify, while at the same time loading them with critical content. Arafat studiously avoids direct comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany, although this is his implicit intention.

Arafat chose biblical metaphors with a purpose: emphasizing that in the Bible, that is, the sacred book of the Jewish people, which reflects the word of God and the prophets, solid proof can be found that justice ultimately prevails over military might. In Arafat’s messaging, this serves as convincing proof that because of their moral superiority, the Palestinian people will be victorious in their battle against the Israeli government.

Arafat appeals to metaphors that reflect the myth of the “few against the many,” which is deeply rooted in Jewish culture. The victory of the unarmed David over Goliath, who was armed from head to toe, reflects the many wars of Israel, in which the Jewish people faced armies that were far superior militarily and numerically, and yet prevailed because justice was on their side. In Arafat’s messaging, this serves as firm proof that because of their moral superiority, the Palestinian people will be victorious in their battle against the Israeli government.

One of Arafat’s most noteworthy metaphors is the metaphor in which he transposes the audience into the moment when God freed the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt and before they entered Israel. During this time, they wandered the desert for forty years. The wanderings of the Palestinian people around the world and their suffering, from inhumane conditions in refugee camps in Israel and abroad, are like climbing mountains and getting lost in the desert. Arafat’s intention is that the Palestinian people suffer from brutal living conditions under the Israeli occupation. They are also dispersed across the world, just as the Jewish people wandered the desert for forty years. In fact, there is a common denominator between Palestinians and Israelis that is reflected in the fact that they have both suffered from wandering and from being far from their homeland. The expectation is that a people who suffered for forty years of wandering in the desert and during their long period of exile would have sympathy toward, and solidarity with, the Palestinians, but what actually happens is the exact opposite.

This article, relying on conceptual metaphor theory to demonstrate how Arafat used metaphor as a manipulative rhetorical tool to convey his messages, and drawing on the concept of topos, shows that Arafat used metaphor as a manipulative rhetorical tool to convey his messages and avoided direct comparisons between Israelis and Nazis and other negative references.

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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-2)
2. See also: Shakkour & Mari, 2020: 299-331; Shakkour & Qasim, 2021: 111-126 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See further in Lakoff (1991: 25–32). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
4. This metaphor appeared in *The Independent* (UK) in January 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
5. Many people think that it is possible to find true friends, and the khel al-wafi is therefore not an impossible concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. The 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement was a [secret treaty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_treaty) between the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland) and [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Third_Republic) in which they defined their agreed-upon areas of interest and control in the future partition of the besieged [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_the_Ottoman_Empire" \o "Partition of the Ottoman Empire). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)