**Metaphors in the Political Discourse of Arab Politicians in the State of Israel**

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***Abstract***

This article shows how Arab politicians in the State of Israel, in particular Arab members of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), rely on metaphor as an important rhetorical tool for conveying their messages, with the goal of advancing their ideological positions and criticizing the policies of the Israeli government, which discriminates against and disenfranchises Arab-Israelis and the Palestinian people.

This article is based on the hypothesis that the way that Arab politicians in the State of Israel use metaphor in their political discourse has unique rhetorical aspects that contribute to sharpening their message, as part of the larger goal of emphasizing the suffering of the Palestinian people and Arab-Israelis, and changing for the better the Israeli government’s discriminatory patterns of action against them.

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1. Introduction

This article deals with metaphors in the political discourse of Arab leaders in the State of Israel, and its goal is to shed light on the characteristics of the metaphors as tools of argument in Arab political discourse in the State of Israel. The article underlines the use of metaphor as a tool of argument in this discourse. This article is based on the hypothesis that the use of metaphor in the political discourse of Arab politicians in the State of Israel has unique, identifiable rhetorical characteristics that have the power to elucidate the ways in which the Palestinian people and Arab-Israelis suffer from the discriminatory action patterns of the Israeli government. Conveying this message through a reliance on metaphor as a rhetorical tool can contribute to the structuring of their message and to social change, reflected in a change for the better of the Israeli government’s treatment of the Palestinian people and Arab-Israelis.

The article makes use of the tradition of critical discourse analysis (CDA), and shows how this approach can be applied to the analysis of metaphors in the political discourse of Arab politicians in the State of Israel, and how they work to construct their messages, contribute to social change, advance their ideological agendas, influence the Israeli government’s discriminatory actions and discourse and change how it relates to Arab-Israelis and the Palestinian people, and oppose the social inequality evident in the lack of rights of the Palestinian people and Arabs in Israel.

The thesis that underlies this article is that Arab politicians do not use metaphors randomly. Instead, their choice of metaphor is intended to serve political ends and to express pointed criticism of the Israeli government for its racist policies against Arab-Israelis and the Palestinian population. Their decision to use certain metaphors rather than others influences how their audience understands and conceptualizes their messages, and forces them to take a stance. For instance, metaphors connected to the historical events of the Holocaust, such as the **crematoria** (example 10), a metaphorical expression that emphasizes the damage that would result from the loss of tens of thousands Arab votes if voter participation significantly drops. This metaphorical expression is manipulative: its goal is to rouse Arabs who intended or intend not to vote in the Knesset elections to take their actions seriously and see that it weakens the Arab parties in the Knesset and threatens their existence. In that sense, voting is just as much an existential threat as the Holocaust was for the Jewish people.

Another example of a military metaphor is the metaphor of **stoning** (example 3) in the sentence “the **stoning** of the racist, nationalist parties with the vavs[[1]](#footnote-1) of the Arab Front (Hadash) Party in the polls.” The metaphor of stoning has a particularly negative connotation because execution by stoning was often the punishment for crimes of adultery. This manipulative metaphor transforms the issue of voting into a war of good versus evil and occupied versus occupiers.

We have adopted a cognitive approach in analyzing these and other metaphors. This approach not rely on random similarities between two objects from different domains, but instead on the conceptualization of one domain by means of another. For example, the metaphors discussed above (examples 3 and 10) reframe and reconceptualize the Israeli government’s discriminatory policies against Arab-Israelis and the Palestinian population through terms borrowed from the domains of the Holocaust and the military. This new conceptualization serves clear political aims. It is worth noting that the use of Holocaust metaphors is a definitive characteristic of the political discourse of Arab-Israelis; it is very rare to find a Jewish politician who criticizes the policies of the Israeli government in such terms.

The metaphors discussed in this article all represent directive speech acts, as explained below. For instance, metaphors of the ghetto and the crematoria reflect a direct speech act indirect in which the content of the metaphors hints only indirectly at the speaker’s intention: Arab politicians mask their true intentions and compare the policies of the Israeli government to the policies of the Nazis against the Jews. Behind these metaphors stands a hidden ideology that justifies the struggle and resistance against the Israeli government in order to refashion reality and to achieve equality and fair treatment for Arab-Israelis and Palestinians. We argue that Holocaust metaphors depict Arab-Israelis and Palestinians as a population worthy of the world’s compassion and clarify the urgency finding a solution to their problem.

Holocaust metaphors reflect a rhetoric of double messages. For example, by using ghettos and crematoria in their metaphors, Arab politicians identify with Jews as the victims of the Holocaust, while at the same time expressing pointed criticism of the policies of the Israeli government against Arab-Israelis and the Palestinian population, as explained in the body of the article (Shakour and Tarabie 2018: 30-52).

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. For the most part, the corpus is made up of examples in Hebrew, gathered at random from different time periods.

The article is based on the following method of collection and categorization: We have gathered examples of metaphors from different fields. The metaphors were classified by field, such as military metaphors, metaphors of daily life, metaphors connected to Jewish history, and others. Following the classification, we have attempted to create a complete outline of metaphors and to determine their rhetorical characteristics, and to show that the metaphors serve as direct speech acts that aim to influence the policies of the Israeli government.

The article was translated from Hebrew to English with care by a native English speaking expert translator and editor.

3. Conceptual Frame

3.1 Classifying Speech Acts

The most famous classification of speech acts was proposed by philosopher John Searle.Searle classifies speech acts according five groups (Adam et al. 2012: 3:259):

A. Assertive speech acts —the speaker is committing to the reality of something. Examples include: describing, arguing, concluding, denying, confirming.

B. Directive speech acts — the speaker tries to cause the addressee to do something. Examples include: ordering, demanding, recommending, warning, asking.

C. Commissive speech acts — commit the speaker to doing something in the future. Examples include: promising, threatening, proposing, agreeing.

D. Expressive speech acts — express the speaker’s psychological state. Examples include: apologizing, condemning, thanking, welcoming, offering condolence.

E. Declarative speech acts — the speaker causes an immediate change in the world. Examples include: declarations of war, names, court sentences, bans, marriages.

John Austin identified three types of acts that are present in every utterance (Austin 2006: 127-128):

A. The locutionary act — this is the statement itself, producing certain sounds which have meaning. The locutionary act employs language to convey content.

B. The illocutionary act — the act that takes place when the utterance is said, namely an action with the power to perform a certain act. For example: warning, reporting, apologizing, etc. The speech act is expressed in the illocutionary act.

C. The perlocutionary act — when a locutionary act, and hence also an illocutionary act, takes place, our words often affect others’ emotions, thoughts, and actions as well as our own. An extra-linguistic result can be caused through speech. This result is called a perlocution.

It is known that we can distinguish between direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are acts wherein the locutionary act testifies directly to the illocutionary act. That is, the utterance content directly expresses the speaker’s intention. Conversely, in an indirect speech act, the utterance content only hints indirectly at the speaker’s intention and the action he wishes to perform through the utterance. (Livnat 2014: 2:169-173).

3.2 Target Audience

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969: 30) note three types of audiences, a division that can help us judge the rhetorical nature of arguments: the first type consists of the entire human race, or at least all ‘normal’ adults. They refer to this group as ‘the universal audience’. The second type is a single interlocutor whom the speaker addresses in a dialogue. The third type is the subject himself, when he engages in deliberation or gives himself reasons for his own actions.

As a target audience, Jews have a complex status. We see this from the two divergent discourse patterns used by Arab politicians in the State of Israel: the pattern of publically or implicitly recognizing the tragedy that the Jewish people suffered in the Holocaust, and the pattern of harshly criticizing the Israelis, which, as we will see, is reflected in the comparison of Israeli policy towards Palestinians to Nazi crimes against the Jews.

### 3.3 The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Approach

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CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in discourse analysis. It focuses on how social and political power is created and maintained through language. CDA seeks to expose a discourse’s biases and manipulations that serve political interests and advance controversial ideological positions, and highlights 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 approach’s basic premise is that discourse has the capacity to shape social identities and establish relations between groups of people and individuals. Discourse can help maintain the social status quo, but it can also contribute to social change. The CDA approach focuses on the way in which social structures embody the existing balance of power and control in the society through discourse: how does the discourse produce them, approve them, challenge them, or legitimize them. CDA seeks to understand, expose, and ultimately oppose social inequality (Livnat 2014: 2:361; Hart 2010: 13-14; Wodak 2001: 10; van Dijk 2001: 352; Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32; Meyer 2001: 15). The effect of a language’s metaphoric structure on consciousness and opinion-shaping is the main theme of the CDA school (Livnat 2014: 2:126, 369; Gavriely-Nuri 2009: 153-154; Gavriely-Nuri 2011: 91-92).

### 3.4 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, he or she must base his or her 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 his or her speech must adopt the views of his or her audience (Gitay 2010: 137). According to Perelman, the speaker must not start with his or her own truth, but with the accepted consensus of the public he or she wishes to address. (Perelman 1982: 21). According to Eco and van Dijk, it is advisable for the speaker to open by adjusting to the views of his or her audience, and obviously not to mock or annoy it. The speaker must aim to connect with the audience and present the subject in a positive, noncontroversial way. For example, it would be ineffective for Tibi to begin his address by calling his audience in the Parliament ‘fascists’ or ‘racists’ (Eco 2006: 44-65; van Dijk 2008: 189-190).

## 4. Analysis and discussion

### 4.1 Metaphor

Metaphors are the essential core of human thought and creativity. Since the language of politics is characterized by metaphorical themes, metaphors are thus a powerful tool for getting to the heart of political thought. Metaphorical expressions are considered expressions that nourish our worldview, shape our thinking, and, hence, our actual behavior (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3-6; Mio 1997: 117-126; Koller 2012: 25). The examination of the context where metaphorical expressions occur facilitates the understanding of such metaphors and the purpose which it is intended to achieve in that communicative event (Agbo, Kadiri and Ijem 2018: 95-96).

This article applies the cognitive theory of metaphor. One of the most influential works of the semantic cognitive school was George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s groundbreaking work on linguistics, which attracted world-wide attention, establishing the foundation for a cognitive theory of metaphors (2000). Lakoff and Johnson wanted to examine the metaphoric nature of human cognition by focusing on our common, habitual, consensual metaphors. Their work makes clear that metaphors are supremely efficient tools for shaping and creating thoughts. Metaphors frame the world for us. Without metaphors, we cannot really think (Livnat 2014: 2:368; Gavriely-Nuri 2011: 91). Metaphorical linguistic usages reflect how we perceive reality. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3-6; Mio 1997: 117-126; Koller 2012: 25). George Lakoff took this idea a step further and showed that metaphors not only reflect how we see reality, they also influence our perception of it. In January 1991, on the heels of the First Gulf War, he analyzed the US administration’s political discourse and showed how the Bush administration used metaphors to justify going to war. In other words, he demonstrated how metaphor analysis can be critical analysis exposing discourse manipulations and disclosing normally hidden ideologies (Livnat 2014: 2:368-369).

Dalia Gavriely-Nuri (2009, 2011), who has studied metaphors in Israeli political discourse, shows how they help to portray war as a normal part of life. Such war-normalizing metaphors aim to naturalize and legitimate the use of military power by creating a systematic analogy between war and objects that are far from the battlefield.[[2]](#footnote-2) 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 about security matters and other central issues. In other words, the ‘kitchen’ metaphor hides what was, in fact, often a ‘war room’ where Israel’s burning security matters were decided. According to the critical discourse analysis approach, the use of such metaphors is manipulative, and helps depict war as a normal, mundane, and unsurprising state of being, expected and commonsensical, just like medicine or business. In this way, the metaphor hides the true, terrible, and violent nature of war. Such patterns of discourse, which repeat themselves time and again in the discourse (as expressed by politicians, military leaders, academics, journalists and internet commentators), help the public accommodate itself to this abnormal situation. In the same way, these metaphors help leaders convince the public of the rationality and necessity of war.

For instance, Tony Blair defended his decision to send British soldiers to the Second Gulf War in 2003 by using metaphors of progress — the successful achievement of goals (in the future) — as opposed to metaphors of regression, which reflect the failure to reach goals (in the past). These metaphors reflect the choices faced by the Labor Party and its leader Blair, and thus establish the expected party policy: always go forward. Blair was only willing to accept progress, and thus presents himself as a strong and reliable leader who will not be moved by difficulty or criticism. (Chilton 2004: 202). 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, it is worth mentioning the rhetorical power of metaphors of movement, which are widespread in political discourse. One example is the metaphor that depicts the European common currency (the Euro) as a train whose cars must move at the same speed and in perfect harmony in order to ensure that it will not derail. This metaphor reflects a specific perspective that sees the need for European governments to adopt the same monetary policy and to act in complete economic harmony in order to ensure the success of the European currency union (Musolff 2004: 30; Charteris-Black 2005: 54-152).

הנמצא באחת הערים בבריטניה כאילו שעבר לפקיסטן. מטאפורות אלה מתארות את בעיית העולים כסכנה coronation streetותיאור ... ראוי בהקשר זה להתייחס גם למטאפורות המביעות עוינות כלפי שפות העולים בבריטניה, למשל תיאור הרחובות של הערים הבריטיות כרחובות הדומים לרחובות בבומביי ובקראצ'י (Semino: 2018 …)

.(Musolff 2018: 14)ממשית המאיימת על התרבות הבריטית ועל השפה האנגלית.

### 4.2 Classification of metaphors

Both single-word metaphors and metaphoric phrases were included when selecting metaphors. The metaphors were classified according to the field from which they were taken. The subjects that the speaker wished to address through the metaphors were examined, as were the metaphors’ rhetorical characteristics.

4.2.1 Military metaphors

The domain of war has remained one of the popular source of metaphor in politics and political activities are perceived as war. The domain of war is usually employed metaphorically for all types of human struggle and conflict (Agbo, Kadiri and Ijem 2018: 95-96).

1. ‘The Palestinians are forced to contend with the American-Israeli **war machine**’ (Azmi Bishara, from a speech intended to be delivered in the plenum of the Israeli Parliament).

The metaphor ‘War machine’ emphasizes that Israel and the United States prefer to embrace the option of war as a continuous political strategy.

2. ‘This government is not searching for an exit from the **killing fields**, but instead in a **witch hunt**’ (Issam Makhoul, Knesset Protocols, July 4, 2001).

‘Killing fields’ serves as a metaphor for the many instances of carnage and death. The metaphoric picture is stained dark red, and is thus emotionally loaded and intended to deter violence.

‘Witch hunt’ is a metaphor for exaggerated fear and the right’s recoiling from holding any negotiations or connections with the head of the Palestinian Authority.

3. ‘… And the second is the **stoning** of the racist, nationalist Zionist parties with the vavs of the Arab Front Party at the polls’ (Emile Habibi, ‘Stone them with vavs’).

The metaphor ‘stoning’ casts a bitter political enemy, meaning the extreme right-wing parties, in a particularly negative light because execution by stoning is generally considered a fit punishment for adultery, and this creates intense feelings among the Arab population and propels them to vote.

4. ‘The settlers are a **bomb** and can endanger the peace process’ (Saleh Saleem, Knesset Protocols, December 25, 1995).

Bomb — a metaphor for the danger and threat posed to the peace process by Jewish settlers.

5. ‘The state jams the history of the Jewish people down the throats of the Arab education system, but our history is not taught at the same time. Why do they **amputate** our national history’? (Taleb el-Sana, Protocols of the Fourteenth Knesset, December 23, 1996).

The metaphorical verb ‘to amputate’ signifies the brutality of the state’s policy to sever Arab-Israelis from their history and to graft the history of the Jewish people onto them.

6. ‘Now they are **clearing out** (lit. ‘shaving’) houses there. This delight in destruction will never be satiated, never satisfied’ (Abdulmalik Dehamshe, Knesset Protocols, November 20, 2000).

Shaving — a metaphor for the brutality of the act of house demolition in the Palestinian territories.

7. ‘This law is anti-citizenship, anti-peace, anti-democracy. This is an **apartheid** law’ (Mohammad Barakeh, Knesset Protocols).

8. ‘The Expulsion Law that passed tonight in the Knesset, according to which a special majority can expel a member of Knesset if his behavior deviates from what is expected, is a patently anti-democratic law. Member of Knesset Dichter wants to create a **smokescreen** so that people will talk about this and not about the central issue: the ongoing erosion of the democratic sphere’ (Ayman Odeh, Ynet News interview, Feburary 29, 2016).

A smokescreen is a combat tool that uses smoke deliberately released into the air in order to mask the movement, activity, or location of a military force such as ground troops, tanks, aircraft, or ships. This phrase has been borrowed as an idiom for an intentional diversion.

9. ‘The government is attempting to pass the Nation-State Law, which invalidates every Arab because of his identity and his affiliation. We are still **bleeding** from the Jewishness of this state’ (Masud Gnaim, Knesset Protocols, November 24, 2014).

The metaphoric verb ‘bleeding’ is a metaphor for discrimination, suffering, and the lack of the full equality enjoyed by Jews. The Nation-State Law can be seen as putting salt in the open wound of the Arab population of the State of Israel.

4.2.2 Metaphors Connected to Historical Events

10. ‘… raising the voter turnout among the Arabs, in order to prevent the incineration of tens of thousands of votes in the **crematoria**’ (Emile Habibi, ‘Stone them with vavs’).

**Crematoria**is a metaphor that emphasizes the magnitude of the damage that could result from the loss of tens of thousands of Arab votes if voter turnout is significantly low.

11. ‘**A well-oiled machine** has overrun the loftiest of human values — the right to life of entire peoples’ (Ahmad Tibi, speech given on the anniversary of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2010).

Ahmad Tibi used the phrase ‘a well-oiled machine’ as a metaphor for the brutality of the Nazi regime against the Jews. Ahmad Tibi identifies explicitly with the Jews as the victims of the Holocaust.

12. ‘This is the moment when a person has to take off his national or religious hat, shed any difference, and wear just **one form** (lit. **‘**cloak’): **that** **of** **humanity**’ (Ahmad Tibi, speech given on the anniversary of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 1, 2010).

The form (‘cloak’) of humanity is a metaphor for how people relate to themselves as human beings, removed from politics and religious, racial, and gender considerations.

In his references to the Holocaust in examples 11 and 12, Tibi uses keywords that reflect a style of *dugri* speech (‘straight talking’ in Hebrew) (Katriel 2016: 747).

13. ‘The second demand concerns Ikrit and Biram. While it has been announced in principle that they should be returned, the size of each village has been reduced by 600 *dunam* and each parent can only bring back two children. This means that the families will be broken up and return to **ghettos**’ (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, December 25, 1995).

Taleb el-Sana indirectly compares the government’s policy towards the residents of Ikrit and Biram to the Nazis’ treatment of Jews in the Holocaust. ‘Ghettos’ is a metaphor for the government policy to reduce the area of the villages of Ikrit and Biram and to break up the families of villagers from ‘Ikrit and Biram’, and to limit their movement.

In examples 10-13, Habibi, el-Sana and Tibi try to construct their ethos through a generally implied identification with the Jewish people as victims of the Holocaust. In order to persuade the universal audience that they identify with what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust, use words associated with the Holocaust, such as the words ‘cloak of humanity’, ‘well-oiled machine’, ‘crematoria’, and ‘ghettos’. In other words, the fact that they do not deny the Holocaust can rehabilitate their ethos in the eyes of the universal audience and soften their anti-Zionist image, even though this is only hinted at, without having recourse to overt declarations of empathy and identification. The main objective for Habibi and Tibi is not to express their identification with the Jewish audience but to lambast Israel for racism against the Palestinian people and the Arab population in Israel.

Habibi, el-Sana and Tibi use keywords (topics or commonplaces accepted by the audience) to establish strong feelings of identification in their Jewish audience, while at the same time endowing them with critical content. Their goal is to weaken their Jewish audience’s preconceived resistance to their militant anti-Zionist ethos. We should clarify that in using keywords, the speaker aims to connect with the audience and present his subject in a positive and noncontroversial way. For example, it would be ineffective for Habibi, el-Sana and Tibi to begin by calling their Jewish audience ‘fascists’ or ‘racists’. The metaphors in examples 10-13 show that Habibi, el-Sana and Tibi have a dual message: empathy and identification with Jews as victims of the Holocaust, coupled with harsh criticism for racism against and hatred of Palestinians. (See further, Shakour 2018: 30-52).

The statements in sentences 10-13 are indirect speech acts. Their content indirectly hints at the goals of Arab politicians and the act that they aim to perform through them. The sentences reflect illocutionary speech acts that go beyond the utterance itself, and through which Arab politicians produce more than one speech act. Sentences 10-13 hint at assertive speech acts: the Arab politicians indirectly compare Nazi aggression towards the Jews and South Africa’s apartheid policies to the aggressive treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli government. Additionally, sentence 12 reflects a committed speech act in which Tibi proposes to discard his political hat and to cloak himself solely in human form.

CDA theory is reflected in sentences 10-13, insofar as Arab politicians construct their assertative meaning through these illocutionary speech acts and decide how they wants to perceive the behavior of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians, and their own opinion on the subject. They show how one should relate to the Israeli government’s behavior towards Palestinians, thus restricting alternatives for knowledge construction in this regard.

tries to influence the Israeli government’s treatment of the Palestinians through his illocutionary speech acts. He expects that Jews, who themselves suffered in the Holocaust, should show more compassion and sensitivity towards Palestinians and be considerate of the suffering of others. Arab politicians try to influence the Israeli government’s treatment of the Palestinians through their illocutionary speech acts. They expect that Jews, who themselves suffered in the Holocaust, should show more compassion and sensitivity towards Palestinians and be considerate of the suffering of others.

14. ‘Is it possible to conceive that the Israeli author Amos Oz would demand, justly, that the German government act against Neo-Nazis, and that the Israeli street would remain apathetic to the activities of **Israeli Neo-Nazis**?’ (Taleb el-Sana, 13th Knesset, November 18, 1992).

15. ‘Worst of all is that on the **Kristallnacht[[3]](#footnote-3)** of the Palestinian village of Duma, perpetrated by **Neo-Nazis** who live in the settlements, the Prime Minister was not here to repent for the sin’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, August 4, 2015).

Tibi brings the reader back to the historical events of Kristallnacht, and points out that the incident in Duma is no less serious than the events of Kristallnacht. The metaphoric description of the perpetrators of the horror in Duma as ‘Neo-Nazis’ is a direct appeal to the Jewish audience to remember the events of the Holocaust. Tibi does not deny the reality of the Holocaust, and he mentions historical events related to the Holocaust. Tibi directly compares the settlers to Neo-Nazis, and thus breaks the ground rules of the topos and slams his thesis in public. Mentioning the historical events of Kristallnacht is a metaphoric that advances the political idea at issue: learning lessons and justifying — or refusing to justify — certain behaviors on the basis of the past, because the truth hidden in historical events does not need substantiation.

16. ‘This law[[4]](#footnote-4) is an **apartheid**’ (Muhammad Baraka, Knesset Protocols).

Muhammad Baraka compares the Nation-State Law to apartheid laws in so far as it is based the principles of racism against the Arab population in the State of Israel.

In examples 12-15, el-Sana and Tibi directly compare Nazi aggression towards the Jews to the aggressive treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli government. They use the metaphoric phrase ‘Israeli Neo-Nazis’ and ‘Kristallnacht’ in order to emphasize the threat that Kahanists and settlers pose to the lives and property of the Arab population in the occupied territories. Moreover, Tibi compares the murder in the village of Duma to Kristallnacht. These metaphoric phrases catch the audience’s attention and raise awareness of the need to take more harsh measures against Kahanists and extremists and to act against them with an iron fist.

In the metaphors connected with historical events (in examples 10-13), the topos of Arab politicians in the State of Israel is characterized by the fact that they sometimes avoid direct comparison between Israel’s treatment of Arabs in Israel and the Nazis’ treatment of Jews, although this is his allusive intention. When Tibi says, ‘This is the moment when a person has to take off his national or religious hat, shed any difference, and wear just one form: that of humanity’, he is ostensibly speaking as a human being and not as a politician. But his intention is to convey his view that the lesson of the Holocaust is that Jews must assume the values of humanity and stand beside the weak and the downtrodden, the depressed and the exiled; in other words, beside Arabs, the victim of the victims.

On occasion, Arab politicians make very direct and bald comparisons between Israel’s behavior towards Palestinians and that of the Nazis during the Holocaust and of the apartheid regime in South Africa (examples 14-15), saying that Israel believes Jewish victimhood gives it the right to harm the Palestinian population in the territories.

4.2.3 Animal Metaphors

17. ‘…and for social justice and the struggle against those **yellow, sharp teeth**, bared and ready to carry out their fascist, racist, aggressive policy against the Arabs and democracy…’ (Emile Habibi, ‘Stone them with vavs’).

Yellow teeth as a metaphoric identification of the extreme right-wing parties. This metaphor conveys themes of aggression, racism, and fascism against Arabs, themes that characterize the extremist right-wing parties. Moreover, this metaphor paints the racist policy of these parties against Arabs as resembling a wild predator with dangerous teeth. Yellow teeth are a symbol of impurity, something that in Habibi’s eyes characterizes the impure policy of the right-wing, reflect in its adoption of racism against Israeli-Arabs and Palestinians as one of the guiding lines of its policy.

18. ‘An American intelligence source says: Iran has not yet decided whether it will develop chemical weapons. So what is all this “Iranophobia”? What is this **horse** that the prime minister is riding out of some divine inspiration, some mission; has become prime minister only in order to save the People of Israel from Ahmadinejad, the Hitler of the 21st century’? (Masud Ghnaim, Knesset Protocols, March 19, 2012).

Former member of Knesset Masud Ghnaim compares the prime minister’s fervor and compulsion to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities, and his unwillingness to listen to other opinions on the topic, to an untamed, runaway horse.

19. ‘Smiling artistically, member of Knesset Benny Elon is responsible for harsh incitement. Your proposed law — one cannot capture a fine, cultured, smiling, and quiet **shark** of incitement like this’ (Abdulmalik Dehamshe, Knesset Protocols, July 9, 2001).

Former Member of Knesset Abdulmalik Dehamshe compares Benny Elon and others who incite against Arabs to sharks because they are strong and others do not dare demand that they pay for their racist behavior. The proposed law was intended to punish those whom it is convenient to punish.

20. ‘It is impossible to be against racism and at the same time to be in favor of another racism. Racism is **the vermin of humanity**’ (Muhammad Barka, Knesset Protocols, January 11, 2012).

The aim of the metaphor ‘vermin of humanity’ is to warn against racism and its destructive consequences. Vermin is a symbol of impurity, something that, in Muhammad Barka’s eyes, characterizes the impure policies of the right-wing parties and reflects their adoption of racism against Israeli-Arabs and Palestinians as one of the guiding lines of their policy.

4.2.4 Musical metaphors

21. ‘…What shocked me, and greatly saddened me, was that part of the “left” joined the **chorus of incitement and distortion**’ (Azmi Bishara, from a planned speech to the Knesset plenum).

Bishara heightens the exaggeration of those who incite the public against him and distort his words by his use of the phrase ‘the chorus of incitement and distortion’. This phrase puts Bishara in the position of one who is unjustly attacked, and emphasizes the unbridled aggression against him and his attackers’ desire to excoriate and cast him as an enemy, rather than on the content of his words — thus heightening the addressees’’ identification with his position. This metaphoric phrase emphasizes the fact that those who incite and distort are acting in concert, in an organized fashion, against Bishara with the aim of removing him from office.

22. ‘We are not talking about rogue elements (lit. ‘weeds’), this **broken record** of rogue acts, we are talking about a whole botanical garden, we are talking about rainforests of hilltop youth who have political and conceptual backing from the government’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, August 4, 2015).

A broken record—as a metaphor for the fact that Arab-Israelis have become tired of hearing this excuse, which is offered again and again, as if every moral crime by settlers is defined as the act of a marginal, extremist group. The believability of this claim has become worn-out in the eyes of the Arab public, and the metaphoric phrase ‘broken record’ rejects it out of hand.

23. ‘The prime minister condemns, takes a phone call, and then two days later returns pre-determined **refrain** — again to attack the Palestinians’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, August 4, 2015).

The refrain is a metaphor for the repeated attacks by Benjamin Netanyahu against Palestinians and his shirking of responsibility for those attacks. Benjamin Netanayhu’s attacks against Palestinians have become a foreboding pre-determined refrain.

4.2.5 Metaphors from Daily Life

24. ‘Tomorrow the day of settling accounts with the Zionist parties of exploitation and racism for the crimes they have committed against the **crushed** cooperative societies of the workers and poor pensioners, and against the **dearly departed** who went by the name of social justice’ (Emile Habibi, ‘Stone them with vavs’, March 27, 2006).

The metaphoric descriptions ‘crushed’ and ‘dearly departed’ emphasize the suffering of the Arab Palestinian minority and the trampling of their rights as a result of the destructive Israeli policy. This description is a metaphor for the lack of social justice and the impossibility of its realization.

25. ‘The security of the Palestinian people and the security of the Israeli people are **Siamese twins**’ (Issam Makhoul, Knesset Protocols, July 4, 2001).

Siamese twins as a metaphor for the close connection between the security of the Palestinian people and the security of the Israeli people.

26. ‘we will hold marches and festivals not in order to revive the memory of the Nakba, but instead with the aim of reviving the **wedding** of the return of our Palestinian people’ (Raed Salah, speech delivered at Tel Aviv University).

Wedding — as a metaphor for the celebration of the return of Palestinian refugees. Raed Salah emphasizes through this metaphor that the dream of return of Palestinian refugees will soon be realized and will be a concrete fact.

27. ‘Only Avigdor Patputin understands Hebrew’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset speech, 2012).

The description ‘Patputin’ is a metaphor for the unstable political views of Member of Knesset Avigdor Liberman.

28. ‘Palestinians have the right to oppose the Israeli occupation, but you want to **strangle** **them’** (Taleb el-Sana, Knesset Protocols, October 20, 2000).

The metaphoric phrase ‘to strangle’ emphasizes the brutality of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people.

29. ‘We will not allow you to sell us **damaged goods** that have been proven to be a failure’ (Masud Ghnaim, Knesset Protocols, November 24, 2014).

Damaged goods as a metaphor for the stench that arises from the proposed racist Nation-State Law.

30. ‘The final clause of the property tax law specifies which owners are exempt from paying property tax. **Through the back door**, they have added a clause that discriminates against the Arab sector, because it provides an exception to owners who are not Arabs’ (Knesset Protocol, year and date not indicated).

The phrase ‘through the back door’ is a metaphor for the indirect way that a clause discriminating against the Arab population was included in the property tax law.

31. ‘In the State of Israel there are signs of a democracy, but this is a **sick** democracy that discriminates against twenty percent of the population’ (source unknown).

The State of Israel is defined as a democratic state, but its treatment of the Arab population does not reflect that of a true democracy.

32. ‘Ms. Social Justice, member of Knesset Stav Shaffir, who has never spoken with me, not even to say hello. I am **transparent** to her; Arabs do not exist; a racist, **a racist of silence, a racist of quiet, of disregard**’ (Jamal Zahalka, Knesset speech, 2015).

Member of Knesset Zahalka attacked member of Knesset Stav Shaffir and accused her in metaphoric terms of being ‘a racist of silence’, ‘a racist of quiet’, and ‘a racist of disregard’. Through these descriptions, Zahalka shines a spotlight on polite racism, which accepts you only under certain conditions, and makes clear that this kind of racism is no less disgusting than calls of ‘death to Arabs’. Stav Shaffir’s blatant disregard for a member of Knesset

4.2.6 Ironic metaphors

Dascal and Weizman (1987: 31-46) and Weizman and Dascal (1991: 18-30) suggest a model that aims to describe how indirect expressions are interpreted, which takes into account the fact that irony is an implicit expression. The model describes two types, or stages, of contextual information that are necessary for interpreting an indirect message: extra-linguistic information and meta-linguistic information. In the first stage, the listener must recognize that there is some kind of mismatch: he or she needs to understand that the explicit meaning of the utterance was not what was meant by the speaker. In other words, he or she must reject the explicit meaning of the utterance. In the second stage, the listener works out the alternative meaning of the speaker’s statement, which is, of course, its implied meaning.

Livnat emphasizes that this model serves as a general framework for analyzing ironic utterances. The model distinguishes between the functions of the contextual information. When that information is used for recognizing a ‘problem of interpretation’, it is called a ‘cue’, and when it is used to understand the speaker’s implied meaning, it is called a ‘clue’. When we want to describe how to interpret ironic utterances we need to identify both those cues that signal the presence of indirect meaning to the listener and those clues which can guide the listener towards the indirect meaning which the speaker intended, in other words, to fully interpret what the speaker meant (Livnat 2003: 141).

33. ‘The member of Knesset Israel Katz, who has transformed himself into the **chief rabbi of political *kashrut*** [Jewish dietary law] states which Knesset members will be elected and which will not be elected according to his criteria’ (Taleb el-Sana, 15th Knesset Protocols, May 16, 2001).

The direct meaning of the metaphoric phrase ‘rabbi of political *kashrut*’ is not identical with the meaning of the speaker. The speaker is sharply critical of Katz, who appointed himself as the rabbi who determines the political fitness of other Knesset members according to his personal, racially inspired parameters.

34. ‘An American intelligence source says: Iran has not yet decided whether it will develop chemical weapons. So what is all this “Iranophobia”? What is this **horse** that the prime minister is riding out of some divine inspiration, some mission; has become prime minister only in order to save the People of Israel from Ahmadinejad, the **Hitler of the twenty-first century’**? (Masud Ghnaim, Knesset Protocols, March 19, 2012).

Ghnaim uses the metaphoric phrase ‘Hitler of the twenty-first century’ to compare Ahmadinejad to Hitler, with the aim of presenting the prime minister’s behavior and anxiety in an ironic light.

35. ‘… Anastassia the **spiller** (lit. ‘urethra’).[[5]](#footnote-5) Anastassia **whose plumbing burst** grew up there, in the trash heaps of Yisrael Beiteinu. Anastassia, seized by *amuk* poured a cup (Heb. *kos*) of water on her colleague, and so I’m calling things as they are: *kos amuk*’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset speech).

The description ‘spiller’ and the phrases ‘whose plumbing burst’ and ‘*kos amuk*’[[6]](#footnote-6) are metaphors reflecting indirect speech acts. These phrases have sexual connotations that are meant to shame member of Knesset Anastassia Michaeli. The phrase ‘her plumbing burst’ reflected uninhibited behavior.

Tibi explained the phrase *kos amuk* to the Knesset. Amuk is the name, he said, of a region in Malasia in Southeast Asia, and anyone who contracts that mental illness begins to run ‘amuk.’ This is the origin of the name. *Kos* is ‘a plastic cup that usually holds 250 cubic centimeters of water for drinking or pouring’. The purpose of the metaphoric phrase *kos amuk* is to describe Michaeli’s hysterical behavior, namely pouring a cup of water on member of Knesset Raleb Majadele, as reflecting that typical of the mentally ill.

The statements in sentences 32-34 are indirect speech acts. Their content indirectly hints at the intentions of Arab politicians and the act that they aim to perform through them. The sentences reflect illocutionary speech acts that go beyond the utterance itself, and through which Arab politicians produce more than one speech act. Sentence 32, 34 hint at assertive speech act. Sentence 33 hint at directive speech act in which Masud Ghnaim wonders at and warns against the anxieties of the prime minister regarding Iran’s development of nuclear weapons.

4.2.7 Agricultural Metaphors

36. ‘Anastassia, **whose plumbing burst,** grew up there, in the trash heaps of Yisrael Beiteinu, or should we say Russia Beiteinu’? (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, 2015).

The behavior of member of Knesset Anastassia Michaeli is not the act of rogue elements. This is the behavior of a politician who was groomed in the hotbeds of hate and racism.

37. ‘We are not talking about rogue elements (lit. ‘weeds’), this **broken record** of rogue acts, we are talking about a whole botanical garden, we are talking about rainforests of hilltop youth who have political and conceptual backing from the government’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, August 4, 2015).

The metaphoric phrases ‘botanical garden’ and ‘rainforests’ strengthen the speaker’s view that these murderers were nurtured in ideal conditions by their leaders, and they are constantly fed hate and racism against the Palestinians.

38. ‘The **rogue elements** (lit. ‘weeds’) **have taken over the entire field**. **They have covered the main path**’(Aida Touma-Sliman, Knesset Protocols, August 4, 2015).

Touma-Sliman rejects the argument that the murderers of the Dawabshe family are rogue elements, part of a marginal, extremist group, because their extremist ideas are taking over a large group of settlers.

4.2.8 Athletic metaphors

The popularity of sports worldwide means that athletic metaphors are likely to create common ground with the public and to foster and strengthen the feeling of common nationality. Silvio Berlusconi, for example, regularly relied on soccer metaphors in his 1994 election campaign, calling, for instance, the right-wing camp that he intended to establish a ‘winning team’ (Semino 2008:…)

39. ‘The prime minister is establishing a **Beitar state** that disqualifies every Arab because of his identity and affiliation, and only views Jews as legitimate’ (Masud Ghnaim, Knesset Protocols, November 24, 2014).

Supporters of the Beitar Jerusalem football team are known to be racist and extremist fans. After the passage of the Nation-State Law, the state will become a ‘Beitar state’, that is, a state that disqualifies every Arab because of his identity and affiliation.

4.2.9 Natural Metaphors

40. ‘Guns have **flooded** some of the Arab communities’ (Ahmad Tibi, Knesset Protocols, March 19, 2012).

The verb ‘to flood’ serves as a metaphor for the ineffectiveness of the police in dealing with the problem.

41. ‘The **black hole** in Israeli democracy is the discrimination against the Arab population’ (Ayman Odeh, interview with Ynet News, Feburary 29, 2016).

Black hole — as a metaphor for the defect in Israeli democracy.

42. ‘A **march** of the stars of racism, which we have experienced recently, is expanding’ (Esawi Frej,Knesset Protocols, November 24, 2011).

The metaphoric description ‘march’ emphasizes the seriousness of the phenomenon and its dimensions.

5. Conclusion

Arab politicians in the State of Israel tend to weave metaphors into their political discourse, metaphors conveying semantic power and force as a rhetorical strategy that serves their message. These politicians see 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 the ongoing disenfranchisement and discriminatory policies against Arab-Israelis. It is worth nothing that the use of military metaphors comes from an awareness of and familiarity with the power of such metaphors to sharpen the message: the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians and Arab-Israelis is a kind of war, with all that that implies. It is worth nothing that some of these metaphors are considered unusual, such as examples 3 and 35, and their function is to heighten the statements’ rhetorical effect (see Eubanks 2000: 28).

Most of the metaphors gathered here relate to daily life, war, and history, especially the Holocaust. Arab politicians see Holocaust metaphors as possessing great persuasive power. By using metaphors like ‘ghetto’, ‘a well-oiled machine’, ‘crematoria’, and others, Arab politician convey a dual message: empathy and identification with Jews as victims of the Holocaust, coupled with harsh criticism for racism against and hatred of Palestinians.

Arab politicians sometimes use keywords (topics or commonplaces accepted by the audience) to establish strong feelings of identification in their Jewish audience and to persuade the universal audience that they identify with Holocaust, while at the same time endowing them with critical content (sentences 9-12). We should clarify that in using keywords, such as the words ‘ghetto’, ‘the human form’, ‘a well-oiled machine’, and ‘crematoria’, Arab politicians aim to connect with the audience and present their subject in a positive and noncontroversial way, even though this is only hinted at, without having recourse to overt declarations of empathy and identification. The main objective for Arab politicians is not to express their identification with the Jewish audience but to lambast Israel for racism against the Palestinian people and the Arab-Israeli population. At the same time, Arab politicians sometime make very direct and bald comparisons between Israel’s behavior towards Palestinians and that of the Nazis during the Holocaust (examples 13-15) and of South Africa during the apartheid regime, saying that Israel believes Jewish victimhood gives it the right to harm the Palestinian population in the territories.

Animal metaphors have considerable influence over the internalization of the message, for example, the metaphor ‘shark’ as a description of those who incite others against the Arab population and who are not forced to pay a price for their racist behavior. This influence lies in the fact that the emotional element in these metaphors and the descriptiveness of the message aid in convincing the listener of the speaker’s position.

The use of metaphors with a clear sexual connotation, such as the metaphors used by Ahmad Tibi in his verbal attacks of member of Knesset Anistasia Mikhalei (example 34) are rare and uncommon. Such metaphors are personally offensive, and, in essence, are aimed at all the politicians who share the racist views of member of Knesset Anistasia Mikhaeli.

Some of the metaphors express direct speech acts and some indirect speech acts, in which the utterance content only hints indirectly at the speaker’s intention and the action he wishes to perform through the utterance.

CDA theory is reflected in the metaphors discussed in this article in that all the metaphors, whether they express direct speech acts or indirect speech acts, aid in formulating the message and determine the way in which the speakers wish to characterize the behavior of the Israeli government towards Palestinians and Arab-Israelis and their personal views on the subject. Arab politicians show how one should relate to the behavior of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians, and thus they limit other possibilities of how knowledge of that topic is constructed. By means of the metaphors discussed in this article, Arab politicians attempt to influence the course of action of the Israeli government towards Palestinians and Arab-Israelis, and expect that a nation that suffered during the Holocaust should express more empathy and humanity towards Palestinians and be cognizant of the suffering of the other.

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1. The Hebrew letter vav is the symbol of the Hadash party. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See further, Lakoff 1991: 25-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kristallnacht is the Nazi German term for the night of 9-10 November, 1938, which saw an anti-Jewish pogrom throughout the Third Reich (Germany and Austria). The Germans called the event by this name because of the many shards of glass that gathered on the ground as a result of the shattering of the windows of so many German-Jewish homes, public buildings, and businesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Meaning the Nation-State Law. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The reference is to the incident when Member of Knesset Anastassia Michaeli poured a cup of water on Member of Knesset Raleb Majadele. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This expression means ‘son of a bitch’. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)