Weaponizing Words: War Metaphors and Public Persuasion in Al Jazeera's Israel Boycott Discourse

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Abstract

Alongside the *Tūfānu 'l-ʔAqṣā* or 'Al-Aqsa Flood' operation, the phenomenon of boycotting Israel was once again discussed around the world. This boycott caused a decrease in revenue for several Israeli companies in Muslim countries, including Arab countries. Media as one of the institutions that participate in shaping public image and opinion on various matters certainly has a hand in the spread of boycott propaganda. Moreover, media such as Al Jazeera which has a wide reach and high credibility in Arab countries, play a significant role in the spread of boycott propaganda. One of the features used by the media, which can construct a person's concepts and arguments fundamentally, as well as persuade, is metaphor. Moreover, one of the metaphors that is widely used in various fields, especially politics, to attract public attention and create influence is the war metaphor. This study aims to describe the conceptual metaphor of war and to reveal the ideology behind the use of war metaphors in the Israel boycott discourse on the Al Jazeera Arabic online newspaper. This study reveals that the war metaphor is not merely linguistic, but also expresses Al Jazeera's ideological stance, shaping public perception of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, especially regarding the boycott. The news data source was obtained from the Al Jazeera Arabic online newspaper since the *Tūfānu 'l-ʔAqṣā* or 'Al-Aqsa Flood' operation from 7 October 2023 to 31 May 2024. This qualitative descriptive study analyzes metaphors through three stages of Critical Metaphor Analysis: metaphor identification using MIP, interpretation using conceptual metaphor theory, and explanation. A total of 74 metaphorical expressions were identified from 12 war-related lexemes. All war metaphors frame the boycott positively by highlighting its urgency, power, effectiveness, and impact, especially within the context of Palestinian resistance. These findings indicate that Al Jazeera aligns with the ideology of resistance and promotes it through metaphorical framing. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how ideological war metaphors influence public perception and mobilize political action. It sheds light on the rhetorical strategies of Arab media in shaping resistance discourse, offering broader insight into the role of language in geopolitical narratives.

Keywords: Al Jazeera Arabic; critical metaphor analysis; Israel boycott; media discourse; war metaphors

INTRODUCTION

Israel's aggression toward Palestinians remains highly controversial and lacks international consensus (Azzahra et al., 2024). Rooted in conflicting historical claims, Israel's belief in a divine right to the land, and Palestine's longstanding Islamic presence since the time of Caliph Umar bin Khattab (Ma'rufi & Al-Hamid, 2023), the conflict has escalated since the Balfour Declaration. A major turning point occurred on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched the *Ṭūfānu 'l-ʔAqṣā* or 'Al-Aqsa Flood' operation, resulting in Israeli casualties and hostages, followed by extensive Israeli retaliation that killed over 33,000 Gazans and devastated essential infrastructure (Arbar, 2023; Wong, 2024).

This escalation reignited global discourse on the boycott of Israel, which is defined as the refusal to cooperate with a party in protest (Mokobombang et al., 2023). Such boycotts have been shown to negatively impact Israeli economic interests, especially in Muslim-majority countries, including Arab countries (Himalaya, 2023; Mullen, 2021).

The impact of the Israel boycott campaign is certainly inseparable from the role of many parties, one of which is the media. Van Dijk (2008) said that the media has full power over news framing. Therefore, those who have the power can shape public perception through language (Hakim et al., 2024). Likewise, Yuhandra et al. (2024) said that the mass media participates in building public images and opinions on various matters. Thus, it can be said that the media with its power participates in influencing public perceptions of the boycott of Israel. This includes not only Western media but also Arab media, especially Al Jazeera, which has a high audience reach and credibility in Arab countries. Although journalists and media are expected to be objective in delivering news, subjectivity can be involved so that the ideology of the journalists/media can be conveyed which makes the news biased (Yudhi & Tanto, 2022).

Among the various tools the media uses to frame and influence public perception, metaphor stands out as one of the most powerful and pervasive linguistic strategies to its readers (Lapka, 2023). More than that, metaphor is a linguistic feature that is appropriate for building social relationships in order to oppose or legitimize certain social, cultural, political, or ideological representations (Seixas, 2021). Metaphor according to Aljarah (2022) is the likening of one thing to another, or borrowing something to express what is intended in speech. Metaphors were originally only used as a comparative language style, not more than that (Prayogi & Oktavianti, 2020).

Furthermore, the metaphor also involves the cognitive side of humans as well (Fathurrohim & Nur, 2024; Salem et al., 2022). This view was first popularized by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), according to which metaphors permeate everyday human life, not only in language but also in thoughts and actions. This new view is called a conceptual metaphor, which consists of three main components, namely the source domain, the target domain, and the systematic mapping between them (Almulla, 2024; Nisa & Nur, 2024; Nursanti et al., 2024; Puteri & Nur, 2024). In this article, the metaphor is written in capital letters (e.g. ARGUMENT IS WAR), following the convention introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) to denote conceptual metaphors.

This modern perspective on metaphor complements how classical Arabic linguistics has long understood and used metaphor within its own rhetorical tradition. In traditional Arabic linguistics, metaphor is included in the discipline of balāġah. Balāġah itself according to Sardaraz dan Naz (2019) refers to the effective use of language that aligns with the situational context to ensure clear and impactful communication. Metaphor is also called استعارة /ʔistiʕārah/, which means 'borrowing'. The word is a derivation of the root verb استعار /ʔistaʕāra/ which means asking someone to give something to him in the form of a loan (Alnajjar & Altakhaineh, 2023). It is so called because metaphors basically borrow one concept to be used in another concept.

An example as stated by Shamsudin & Aladdin (2024) is found in Al-ʔisrāʔ verse 24, namely "waxfiḍ lahumā janāḥ 'ð- ðulli min 'r-raḥmah..." 'and lower your wings towards both parents with compassion...'. The word جناح /janāḥ/ basically means 'wing'. However, contextually the lexical unit means how one should be humble to parents. Wings are basically feathered and webbed appendages that are movable, and allow bats, birds, or insects to fly. This body part is an important structure for these animals so that they can fly upwards or downwards safely. From these lexical units, the conceptual metaphor HUMILITY IS DOWN is evident. In this case, the bird's wings are likened to a child. Just as a bird's wings can be used to fly to a lower place, a child should humble himself when he is close to his parents.

One of the metaphors that is often used in many types of discourse is the war metaphor because of its prominent, well-known, and widespread nature (Al-Sharafi Ey et al., 2023). Moreover, research conducted by Ling (2010) states that war metaphors are found in five domains of human life, namely politics, business, sports, disease, and love. War metaphors used in different domains can have different meanings, such as the lexeme 'battleground' which metaphorically means 'election' in the political domain, means 'stock market' in the business domain, and means 'field' in the sports domain. Especially in politics, according to Semino (2021), war metaphors can enhance public awareness of an issue's intensity and urgency.

Nowadays, research on metaphor continues to grow. This can be seen with the new approach to researching metaphors proposed by Charteris-Black (2004). He argues that metaphor is not enough to be explored using cognitive linguistics alone, but more than that it can involve other approaches. In his approach called Critical Metaphor Analysis (henceforth CMA), he integrates metaphor research using cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and critical discourse analysis. According to him, metaphors are commonly used persuasively to evoke strong emotional responses because they can prioritize one interpretation over another. This persuasive role underlies the ideology behind the use of metaphors.

This integration is vital because examining metaphors from a purely cognitive standpoint might illustrate how individuals understand an abstract concept like a boycott, but it does not reveal the persuasive motives or ideological roles behind their metaphor selections (Fathurrohim et al., 2025). In political discourse, particularly within the emotionally charged atmosphere of the Israel–Palestine conflict, metaphors function not only as means of conceptualization but also as tools of persuasion. Consequently, merging the cognitive and rhetorical dimensions of metaphor within the framework of CMA allows for a more profound comprehension. It enables researchers to uncover not only how war metaphors define the concept of boycotts but also the reasons they are employed to influence public opinion, elicit emotions, and validate ideological positions. In the case of Al Jazeera Arabic, such metaphors act as subtle yet potent rhetorical instruments to align the audience with a particular ideology and encourage collective action.

CMA is particularly relevant for this study because it allows for a nuanced understanding of how metaphors in media discourse are not only conceptual but also ideologically motivated (Black, 2004). Given that Al Jazeera plays an influential role in shaping Arab public opinion regarding the Israel–Palestine conflict, CMA is instrumental in uncovering the persuasive strategies and ideological positioning embedded in its metaphorical language

CMA is divided into 3 stages, namely the metaphor identification stage which involves identifying candidate metaphors using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) owned by the Pragglejaz Group (2007); the metaphor interpretation stage which involves conceptual metaphors owned by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) by building pragmatic and cognitive factors of metaphor; and the metaphor explanation stage which focuses on identifying social agents involved in the production of metaphors, as well as their roles in persuasive contexts, which can then be used to see the ideology behind their use (Black, 2004). Related to the stage of metaphor interpretation, conceptual metaphors are crucial in influencing and defining public perception, as they not only depict reality but also organize how individuals think, feel, and act in their everyday lives (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

In this regard, understanding ideology becomes central to the final stage of CMA, as it reveals how metaphor use reflects group interests. Ideology according to van Dijk (1998) is an ideology that is a fundamental social representation of group members, and therefore group members can regulate their values and behavior based on their ideology. The dominant group controls the means of reproducing ideology, one of which is the media. More than that, he emphasizes that the media through discourse practices, both oral and written, often spread their ideology, one of the main tools of which is metaphor. As stated by Rumman and Hamdan (2022), in certain contexts, metaphors can play a role in developing ideology in the political realm, which will later have the aim of influencing assessments of something.

One of the important ideas or ideologies in the context of the boycott of Israel is resistance, as it underpins the purpose of the boycott campaigns launched against Israel from around the world (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009). The ideology of resistance opposes all forms of human oppression through resistance and struggle, both in moral and physical forms (Ballard, 2004). In this ideology, freedom is the right of all individuals that must be fought for in the form of resistance.

Several studies that specifically discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been conducted from various scientific perspectives. From an economic perspective, Alqatan (2025) found that several companies in the Middle East affected by the BDS movement boycott experienced reputational risks, financial implications, and operational adjustments. However, several of these companies did several things to mitigate the negative impacts, as well as align with international law and ethical standards. From a communication perspective, Nurfaedah et al. (2025) found that society uses various technologies as a form of resistance to Israel, thus massive boycott calls on social media

resulted in a decrease in stock values and profit levels in boycotted companies. In line with that, research by Abbas et al. (2024) also shows that the selective use of propaganda can shape public opinion and behavior toward boycotts, in addition to other negative impacts such as disinformation that increases hostility and influences consumer movements.

As for the linguistic perspective, there are several previous studies that specifically discuss metaphors in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Maalej & Zibin (2024) found that Zionism lives in the metaphor "Politics is Religion" which justifies military efforts based on biblical interpretations, so they try to destroy the entire Palestinian population. In addition, Israeli officials and sympathizers also use animal metaphors to describe Palestinian society as less than humane, thus justifying acts of discrimination and violence. Their propaganda also spreads amnesia regarding the existence of Palestinians, as if they inherited the country from people who had no land. Next, Al-Minawi's (2024) research on Hamas' speeches uses a conceptual metaphor approach and critical discourse analysis. The results show that in their speeches, Hamas projects their ideology that shows the terrorism of the Israeli party, as well as how they occupy their holy land.

Furthermore, Farah et al. (2025) stated that the metaphor in Nizar Qabbani's poem Manshūrāt Fidā'iyyah 'alā Judrān Isrāīl is used to voice Palestinian resistance against Israel, namely by describing the suffering of the Palestinian people, as well as raising the spirit and optimism of Palestinian independence. Finally, Nurmasyitah et al. (2024) found that the metaphors in Hiba Abu Nada's poetry describe the hopes, desires, and demands of the Palestinian people regarding human rights. Meanwhile, the research that specifically discusses metaphors in the context of boycotts in online newspapers, has not been found at all.

Meanwhile, several studies have been conducted on Arabic war metaphors in various domains of human life. Almirabi (2024) conducted research related to Arabic metaphors used during various stages of the Covid-19 pandemic on Twitter. The results show that the war metaphors have the aim of raising awareness of the urgency of the situation and bringing a sense of responsibility. In addition, Al-Sharafi et al. (2023) found that in the official media of the Omani government, war metaphors were not used to convey aggression or violence. Instead, they were employed to intensify social action and promote the implementation of urgent health protection measures.

Although previous studies have examined war metaphors in various domains, including health, politics, and literature, especially in discourses related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, there remains a lack of research specifically focusing on war metaphors within the political discourse of the Israel boycott, particularly in Arab media. Therefore, this study seeks to address that gap by analyzing the use of war metaphors in Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper of the boycott of Israel, using Critical Metaphor Analysis (Black, 2004). Data was obtained from the most popular newspaper in Arab countries, the Al Jazeera Arabic online newspaper.

This Qatar-based media has a high audience reach and credibility, just like CNN media in Western countries (Kusuma et al., 2020; Wahdiyati & Romadlan, 2021). Therefore, the presence of this media participates in shaping public perceptions in Arab countries about the events that are happening. Shaping public perception in the Arab world regarding the Israel boycott is crucial, as it influences collective boycott actions, which in turn affect the broader political situation as a whole. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research problem: how are war metaphors used in the discourse of the boycott of Israel in Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, and what ideology underlies the war metaphors?

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods because it is done by analyzing metaphorical data in the form of words (Nur, 2019). First of all, the data is obtained from the website https://www.aljazeera.net/. Later on, the researcher used the keyword مقاطعة /muqāṭaʕah/ 'boycott' along with its inflections and derivations in the search feature of the media to obtain news on the theme of boycotting pro-Israel. The news was collected from the time of the Tūfānu 'l-ʔAqṣā 'Al-Aqsa Flood' operation on 7 October 2023 until 31 May 2024 because afterward, the frequency of the news appearing decreased drastically from 16 news to 3 news. The total number of news obtained in that time span was 77 news. The data is illustrated in Figure 1.
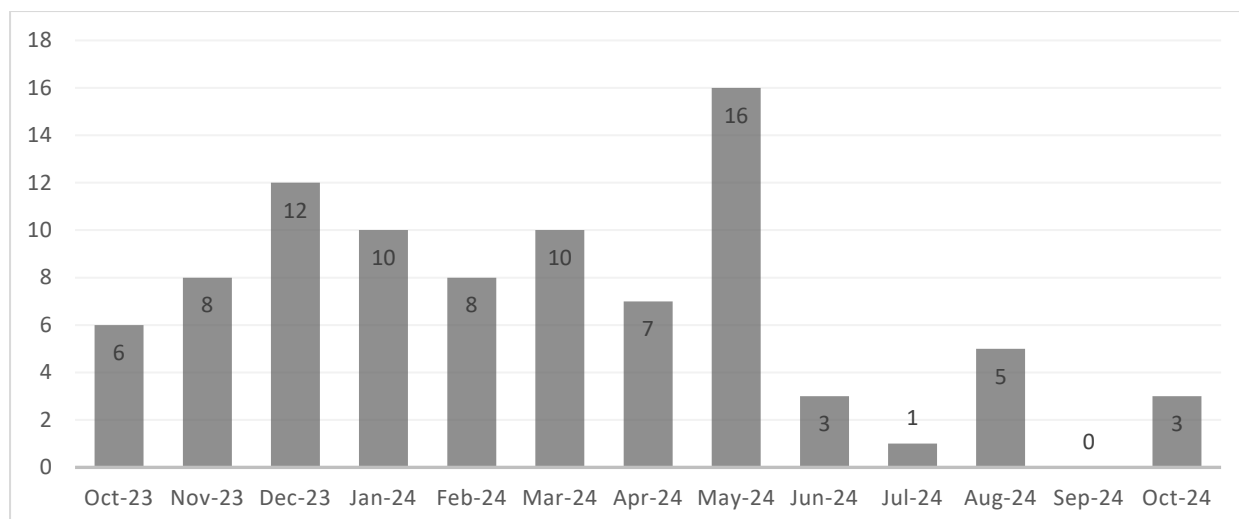
Figure 1. Frequency of Israel Boycott News on Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper in the Year Since the *Tūfānu 'l-ʔAqṣā* 'Al-Aqsa Flood' Operation

Furthermore, in the data analysis stage, the researcher divides this Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) into 3 stages. The first stage is the metaphor identification using Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Group, 2007) by referring to the Al-Maany dictionary (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.), which is a compilation of modern and traditional Arabic dictionaries which includes *lisān 'l-ʕarab*, *al-maʕānī 'l-jāmiʕ*, a*l-ġanī, al-qāmūs 'l-muḥīṭ, al-muʕjam 'l-wasīṭ, al-luġah al-ʕarabiyyah al-muʕāṣirah*, *muxtār 'ṣ-ṣiḥāḥ*, and *ar-rāʔid*. Although Charteris-Black (2004) does not explicitly mention this procedure, it aligns with the first stage of CMA, namely metaphor identification. While MIP provides a systematic method for determining a word that is used metaphorically, CMA extends this by adding stages of interpretation and explanation to uncover ideological meanings. This is proven by the previous studies about Arabic metaphors with the CMA approach which uses MIP in its first stage (Rumman et al., 2024; Al-Sharafi Ey et al., 2023; El-Kanash & Hamdan, 2023; Zibin, 2022). The second stage is the metaphor interpretation based on the conceptual metaphor theory belonging to Lakoff and Johnson (2003). This stage is carried out by classifying the metaphors, mapping the source domain to the target domain, and establishing the context of its use. The last stage is the metaphor explanation, which refers to Charteris-Black's (2004) theory. This stage is carried out by looking at the role of metaphorical persuasion to reveal the ideology behind its use.

To analyze the data, the researcher employs sorting out the determining elements, as the tool for sorting data is mental and lies within the researcher. Furthermore, the referential sub-method is used to identify conceptual metaphors, as the analysis involves connecting language with something referred to by language (Nur, 2019). In addition, the pragmatic sorting sub-method is also applied to see the context of the use of metaphors and their persuasive impact through the interlocutor's reactions (Nur, 2019).

ANALYSIS

In this section, we divide the discussion into three parts, namely the source of war metaphors that appear in the boycott Israel discourse, the persuasive role of war metaphors, and the ideology underlying the selection of these metaphors.

The Source Domain of War Metaphors

After identifying the data based on Pragglejaz Group's metaphor identification procedure (2007), the researcher found 74 metaphorical unit data derived from 12 war lexemes. The list of these lexemes along with their frequency and percentage is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency of War Lexemes in Israel Boycott Discourse on Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper

No.	War Lexemes	Translation	Frequency	Percentage
1.	*silāḥ*	'weapon'	22	30%
2.	*ʕaduww*	'enemy'	16	22%
3.	*ḍarbah*	'punch'	7	9%
4.	*ḥarb*	'war'	5	7%
5.	*qatala*	'to kill'	5	7%
6.	*mūjiʕ*	'painful'	5	7%
7.	*ʔintiṣār*	'victory'	4	5%
8.	*ḍaḥiyyah*	'victim'	4	5%
9.	*ṣafʕah*	'slap'	3	4%
10.	*hujūm*	'attack'	1	1%
11.	*gazā*	'to invade'	1	1%
12.	*kamīn*	'ambush'	1	1%
	Total		74	100%

Weapon

(1) /naʕam najaḥtu ʔinnahu **silāḥ** fattāk dūna daxāir walā yataṭallabu siwā 'l-waʕya lada 'š-šuʕūbi/
'Yes, I did it. This is a lethal **weapon** without ammunition and only requires public awareness' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 15/12/2023)

(2) /wa daʕā 's-sākit fī ḥadīθihi lil-jazīrah net ʔilā tawsīʕi 'l- muqāṭaʕah 'l-ʔiqtišādiyyah lil-ʔiḥtilāl 'l-ʔisrāʔīlī 'llatī tuʕaddu biraʔyihi ʔaḥada **'l-ʔasliḥah** 'n-nājiḥah.../
'In his speech to Al Jazeera Net, Al-Saket called for expanding the economic boycott of the Israeli occupation, which he said was considered one of the successful **weapons**.' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 13/11/2023)

The first lexeme found by the researcher is *silāḥ/ʔasliḥah* 'weapons' (plural form). Basically, this lexeme means a collection of tools or machines used for fighting, whether on land, sea, or air (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). From the dictionary definition, it is clear that this lexeme is commonly used in the context of war because it is a tool or machine used for fighting. Contextually, the lexeme in data (1) and (2) is not interpreted as a tool of war because there is no war going on. Based on the context of the news, the sentence is a netizen comment on social media regarding the boycott that occurred. He considers that the boycott is a deadly 'weapon without ammunition' against Israel. Both weapons and boycotts in this case are both used to attack. The contextual meaning that emerges can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning, and therefore the lexeme is included in the metaphorical unit.

Enemy

(1) /wa raʔat yāfiṭāṭ kutiba ʕalayhā qāṭiʕ **ʕaduwwa**ka wa lā tusāhim bidafʕi θamani rašāš tuqtilu ʔaṭfāla ġazah/
'and he saw the signs written on them "Boycott your **enemies**" and "Do not contribute to paying the price of the bullets that kill the children of Gaza."' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 24/11/2023)

(2) /wa ḥarramū mumārasata kulli 'n-našāṭāt 'l-ʔiqtišādiyyah maʕa 'l-**ʕaduwwi** 'llatī tašmulu ʔistīrād baḍāʔiʕihim.../
'and it is forbidden to "carry out all economic activities with the **enemy** including importing their goods..."' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 07/04/2024)

The lexeme *ʕaduww* 'enemy' in data (3) and (4) is also metaphorical. The lexeme basically means enemy, the opposite of friend. Although it is used in many contexts, it is often used in the context of war to describe the enemy being fought, as in the sentence "*waḍaʕa 's-silāḥ ʕalā 'l-ʕaduwwi*" 'put the weapon on the enemy/kill him' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.).

Contextually, the lexeme *ʕaduww* 'enemy' in the data does not indicate an enemy in war, but a boycott target. Both meanings are related to the party being fought against. The contextual meaning can be understood through its basic meaning, and therefore, the lexeme is included in the metaphorical unit.

Punch

(3) /*mubīʕātuhā tahwī… al- muqāṭaʕah tuwajjihu **darbatan** ʔilā dūmīnūz bītzā ʔl-ʔamrīkiyyah*/
'Sales are down 9%... The boycott dealt a knock-out **punch** to American Domino's Pizza' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper 29/01/2024)

(4) /*…ʔinna ʔiʕlāna turkiyā waqfa ʔl-ʕalāqāt ʔt-tijāriyyah maʕa ʔisrāʔīl yuʕtabar **darbatan** ʔiḍāfiyyah liqiṭāʕ ʔl-bināʔ…*/
'…"Türkiye's announcement to halt trade relations with Israel is seen as an additional **punch** to the construction sector….' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 03/03/2024)

Furthermore, the fifth and sixth data also show metaphorical expressions found by researchers in the boycott Israel discourse. The lexeme *ḍarbah* is an *ism ʔl-marrah* (noun denoting a single occurrence) of the noun *ḍarb* which basically means punch. It is also commonly used in the context of warfare or fighting with reference to the physical act of hitting. As in the example sentence "*talaqqā ʔl-ʕaduwwu ḍarbāt mūjiʕah min rijāl ʔl-muqāwamah*" 'the enemy received a painful punch from the resistance people' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). However, the contextual meaning of the lexeme in data (5) and (6) does not indicate a physical punch, but rather the effect or impact of the boycott on pro-Israeli companies. Both have similarities in terms of causing negative effects on the company's body or finances. Therefore, although the two meanings are different, the contextual meaning can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning and therefore belongs to the metaphorical unit.

War

(5) /*lam tuʕaddu muqāṭaʕah bal hiya **harb**/*
'This is not a boycott, but a **war**' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 15/12/2023)

(6) /*kamā ʔanna ʔl-**harb** ʔl-ʔisrāʔīliyyah ḍidda ḥarakah ʔl- muqāṭaʕah miθlu ḥaẓr duxūl ʔn-nušaṭāʔ ʔilā falisṭīn…*/
'Israel's **war** against the boycott movement, such as banning activists from entering Palestinian territories…' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 02/01/2024)

Data (7) and (8) show two metaphorical expressions in the boycott Israel discourse. The lexeme *ḥarb* in the data basically means war and fighting between two camps, and the opposite word is *silm* or peace (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). Therefore, it is clear that this lexeme is commonly used in the context of war between two camps. However, the lexeme in data (7) and (8) contextually cannot be interpreted as two camps fighting each other but is interpreted as the phenomenon of boycott, which is the act of boycotting each other between two camps. Therefore, it appears that the contextual meaning can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning. Therefore, the lexeme can be classified as a metaphorical unit.

To Kill

(7) /*hal **qatalta** ʔl-yauma falisṭīniyyan rawājun wāsiʕ liḥamlah kuwaytiyyah tadʕū lil- muqāṭaʕah*/
'Would you **kill** a Palestinian today?.... Kuwaiti campaign calling for boycott is widespread' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 28/10/2023)

(8) /*risālah ʔl-ḥamlah jāʔat ʕalā šakl suʔāl huwa hal **qatalta** ʔl-yawma falisṭīniyyan…*/
'The campaign message came in the form of a question: "Did you **kill** a Palestinian today?"…' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 28/10/2023)

Furthermore, data (9) and (10) also show two of the metaphorical expressions found in the boycott Israel discourse. To be precise, it is found in the lexeme *qatala* which basically means the act of killing others (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). This lexeme is indeed widely used

in various contexts of life, but the most important one is the context of war. This is because war consists of killing each other between two groups using war tools/machines. Contextually, the lexeme cannot be interpreted as the act of killing other people, but as the act of consuming Israeli products. In this case, the act of consuming Israeli products is equated with the act of killing Palestinians. Although the two meanings are different, the contextual meaning can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning, and therefore it is a metaphorical unit.

Painful

(9) */kamā ẓahara taʔθīru 'l-muqāṭaʕati **'l-mūjiʕi** fī manšūrin lirraʔīsi 't-tanfīðī liširkati makdūnald krīs kīmbinskī našrihi ʕalā mawqiʕi līnkd ʔin…/*
   'The **painful** impact of the boycott is also evident in McDonald's CEO Chris Kempinski's LinkedIn post...' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 14/01/2024)

(10) */wa qāla 'r-raʔīs 't- tanfīðī wa mālik šabakah ʔādam frīdilir ʔinna hāðihi ḍarbah **mūjiʕah** lisūq 'l-muntajāt 'l-ʔistihlākiyyah…/*
   'Good Pharm chain CEO and owner Adam Friedler said, "This is a **painful** punch to the consumer products market...' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 04/05/2024)

The eleventh and twelfth war-related lexeme found in the boycott Israel discourse is *mūjiʕ* 'painful'. Basically, this lexeme is the *mafʕūl bih* (object) form of the verb *ʔawjaʕa-yūjiʕu fī* which means to hurt. This lexeme is also often used in the context of war, to describe someone who has been injured as a result of war. For example, as in the dictionary in the sentence "*ʔawjaʕa fī 'l-ʕaduwwi*" 'he hurt his opponent/enemy' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). However, if we look at the meaning contextually, we will not find someone who is injured, but rather the impact of the boycott felt by the company. In this case, the company is likened to someone who can be hurt. Therefore, the lexeme can be marked as a metaphorical unit.

Victory

(11) */… wa **intiṣāru** liḥarakati 'l-muqātaʕah wa saḥbi 'l-ʔistiθmārāt wa farḍi 'l-ʕuqūbāt/*
   '... and a **victory** for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 14/05/2024)

(12) */wa maʕa ðālika ʔaddā hāðā 'l-**ʔintiṣār** fī 'l- muqātaʕah ʔilā ḥudūθ taḥawwul malḥūẓ fī bīʔah 'l-ḥaram 'l-jāmiʕī…/*
   'However, the **victory** of this boycott led to major changes in the campus environment.' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 14/03/2024)

Furthermore, the *intiṣār* 'victory' lexeme in data (13) and (14) is also two of the metaphorical units found by the researchers. The lexeme basically means victory. As we know, the concept of winning and losing is usually found in the context of warfare. An example is found in the dictionary in the sentence "*intiṣārāt 'l-jayši ʕalā ʕaduwwihi*" 'the victories of the army over its enemy' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). The lexeme in data (13) and (14), if interpreted contextually, is not in the context of a war involving two parties with weapons of war, but in the context of a boycott carried out by the boycott movement. Although the contextual meaning is different, it can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning. Therefore, the lexeme *intiṣār* 'victory' belongs to the metaphorical unit.

Victim

(13) */wa ʕaddat yadīʕūt ʔaḥrūnūt 'l-majmūʕah 'l-ʔamrīkiyyah ʔaḥdaθa **ḍaḥiyyah** tanḍamu ʔilā qāʔimah mutazāyidah mina 'l-ʕalāmāt 't-tijāriyyah 'l-ʔamrīkiyyah…/*
   'Yedioth Ahronoth considers the American group to be "the latest **victim** to join a growing list of American brands..."' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 29/01/2024)

(14) */ʔakbaru **ḍaḥāyā** 'l-muqātaʕah/*
   'The biggest boycott **victim**' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 12/02/2024)

Then, the lexeme *ḍaḥiyyah/ḍaḥāyā* 'victims' (the plural form) in data (15) and (16) also show two of the metaphorical units of war in the boycott Israel discourse. Basically, the lexeme means victim, an innocent person who died unjustly. It is also commonly used in the context of warfare, as in the sentence "*ðahaba ḍaḥiyyah lil'ʕudwān*" 'he became a victim of aggression' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). When viewed contextually, the meaning of the lexeme in data (8) does not occur in the context of war at all, but in the American company that was boycotted. Both meanings share the concept of a victim being negatively affected by something. Therefore, although the two meanings are different, the contextual meaning can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning. Therefore, the lexeme *ḍaḥiyyah* 'victim' is a metaphorical unit.

Slap
(15)   /aš-šarikāt 'l-ġarbiyyah wa xāṣṣah tilka 'l-latī taḥtakiru 'l-maʕlūmāt wa taʕtabiru muntajātihā mutamayyizah wa ðāta farādah talaqqat **ṣaffatan** šadīdatan min xilāli ḥamlātil 'l- muqāṭaʕah/
'Western companies - especially those that monopolize information and consider their products to be different and unique - received a **slap** in the face through the boycott campaign' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 11/05/2024)
(16)   /al-muqātaʕah liʔajli gazah tuwajjihu **ṣaffāt** ʔiqtišādiyyah…/
'Boycott of Gaza deals economic slap to Israel's supporters…' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 11/05/2024)

Data (17) and (18) also show two of the metaphorical expressions in the boycott Israel discourse. The lexeme *ṣaffah* in the data is also the *ism 'l-marrah* of the noun *ṣafʕ* which basically means the act of hitting someone's back or body using an open or clenched hand (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). Unlike *ḍarbah*, this lexeme is more specific in its meaning to the act of hitting one's body using the hand. However, it is also commonly used in the context of warfare. The contextual meaning of the lexeme in data (17) and (18) does not indicate a physical punch, but rather the impact of the boycott. Both basic and contextual meanings are related to the negative impact of an action. Therefore, the lexeme can be characterized as a metaphorical unit.

Attack
(17)   /wa bisababi tilka 'z-ziyāratu taʕarraḍa seinfield li**hujūmin** šadīd…/
'Because of the visit, Seinfeld was subjected to severe **attacks**…' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 19/05/2024)

Likewise, the bolded lexeme *hujūm* in data (19) basically means the act of physically attacking the enemy suddenly without realizing it. The lexeme is commonly used in the context of war, such as the example found in the same dictionary, namely "*hajama ʕalā ʕaduwwihi*" 'he attacked his enemy' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). However, if we look at the contextual meaning, the meaning that emerges is not in the context of war, but boycott. Based on the context of the news, Seinfeld is an American comedian artist who appears to be pro-Israel because he visited an Israeli army camp. Then, he shared photos of his visit on his social media. Afterward, netizens attacked him by boycotting him on social media. The contextual meaning that emerges can be understood by looking at the basic meaning and therefore can be marked as a metaphorical unit.

To Invade
(18)   /…iḥðar 't- tumūr l-ʔisrāʔīliyyah 'llatī **gazat** ʔaswāqanā 'l-ʕarabiyyah wa 'l-ʔislāmiyyah…/
'…Beware of Israeli dates which have **invaded** our Arab and Islamic markets…' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 28/02/2024)

Next, the lexeme *gazā* 'to invade' in data number (20) is also included in the metaphorical unit. Basically, *gazā* means walking to fight the enemy in its area, as in the sentence "*gazā 'l-ʕaduwwa*" 'he

attacked the enemy' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). However, contextually, there is no war found as in the basic meaning, but Israeli products will attack the Arab and Islamic markets. The contextual meaning can be understood by looking at the basic meaning and therefore can be marked as a metaphorical unit.

Ambush

(19)   */maʕa ʔiqtirābi ramaḍān nušaṭaʔ yataraṣṣadūna 't-tumūr 'l-ʔisrāʔīliyyah bi**kamīn muqāṭaʕah**/*

'Ahead of Ramadan... activists monitor Israeli dates with "boycott **ambushes**"' (Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, 28/02/2024)

Then, the lexeme *kamīn* 'ambush' in data (21) is also included in the metaphorical unit. Basically, the lexeme means a group of people who hide and wait for the enemy to pass and then attack unnoticed. In the context of warfare, this lexeme is commonly used to refer to the tactics used by the military. For example, the sentence "*naṣaba 'θ-θuwwār kamīnan lil-ʕaduwwi*" 'the rebels prepared an ambush for the enemy' (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Meaning, n.d.). The contextual meaning of the lexeme in data (21) refers to an act of boycott carried out suddenly and unnoticed by the enemy. Both meanings refer to actions that are done suddenly. Although different, the contextual meaning can be understood by comparing it with the basic meaning. Therefore, the lexeme is included in the metaphorical unit.

The lexemes mentioned in data (1) to (21), namely *silāḥ* 'weapon', *ʕaduww* 'enemy', *ḍarbah* 'punch', *ḥarb* 'war', *qatala* 'to kill', *mūjiʕ* 'painful', *intiṣār* 'victory', *ḍaḥiyyah* 'victim', *ṣafʕah* 'slap', *hujūm* 'attack', *gazā* 'to invade', and *kamīn* 'ambush', are all commonly used in the context of warfare. However, in these data, the lexemes are not used in the context of warfare, but in the context of boycotts. Therefore, the lexemes are all metaphorical in meaning. Furthermore, these lexemes are used to represent the concept of boycott through the actual concept of war. This is based on the principle of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), specifically the conceptual mapping from the war domain as the source domain to the boycott domain as the target domain.

The lexeme *ḥarb* 'war' describes the two opposing parties in the boycott; the lexeme *ʕaduww* 'enemy' describes the enemy in war, that is mapped as the target of the boycott (Israel and its affiliates); the lexemes *hujūm* 'attack', *gazā* 'to invade', *silāḥ* 'weapon', *ḍarbah* 'punch', and *ṣafʕah* 'slap' describes an attack and its tools, which are mapped as an act of attack Israel by boycotting them in various domains; the lexeme *kamīn* 'ambush' describes one of the combat strategies, which is mapped as a boycott strategy aimed at weakening Israel economically and politically; the lexeme *intiṣār* 'victory' describes victory in war, which is mapped as the success of the boycott movement in bringing down Israel; the lexeme *qatala* 'to kill' describes the act of killing in war, which is mapped as the act of consuming Israeli products; and the lexemes *ḍaḥiyyah* 'victim' and *mūjiʕ* 'painful' describe the wounded victims of war, which is mapped as Israel in pain due to being hit by a boycott (company, person, or institution). Based on the identified lexemes, each metaphorical expression involves a conceptual mapping between a source domain (e.g., war) and a target domain (e.g., boycott). Table 2 summarizes how these mappings reflect the metaphorical structure underlying Al Jazeera's Arabic Online Newspaper.

Table 2. Conceptual Mapping of the BOYCOTT IS WAR Metaphor

Source Domain (War)	Target Domain (Boycott)
Enemy	Israel and its affiliates as the target of the boycott
Military attack with weapons	Boycott action as an aggressive attack against Israel
Combat strategy	Boycott strategy aimed at weakening Israel economically and politically
Victory	Success of the boycott movement in weakening Israel
Killing	Buying Israeli products as contributing to the oppression
War casualties	Israeli companies or institutions suffering losses due to the boycott

Through these metaphors, the conceptual metaphor BOYCOTT IS WAR is formed. The concept of war according to Almirabi (2024) basically involves a conflict between opposing sides, with one

representing allies and the other viewed as the enemy. That war typically results in one side emerging victorious while the other suffers defeat.

The concept of war according to Al-Sharafi Ey et al. (2023) in this case is used by Al Jazeera media because it is prominent, easily recognized, and widely spread among the public or readers. Moreover, the spread of the concept of war according to him is due to two things, namely direct experience of war and exposure to the experience of war. In this case, the use of war metaphors is also influenced by the historical background of the boycott phenomenon, which originated from the war between Palestine and Israel. The compatibility between the concepts of war and boycott, its wide distribution, and its more concrete nature make the metaphor effectively used by the media in describing the concept of boycott which is very abstract and complex.

The Persuasive Role of War Metaphors in the Boycott Israel Discourse

This section will examine the persuasive role that emerges in the use of war metaphors in the boycott Israel discourse. This is based on Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis which says that metaphors are basically persuasive in nature so that they can evoke a strong emotional response due to the priority of one interpretation over another. This persuasive role is the basis of the ideology behind the use of metaphors. In the Israel boycott discourse on the Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper, researchers found 74 war metaphors, in which the lexeme silāḥ 'weapon' is the most metaphorically used war lexeme, namely 22 data. In contrast, the lexemes hujūm 'attack', gazā 'to invade', kamīn 'ambush' is the least metaphorically used war lexemes in this discourse, totaling only 1 data.

By conceptualizing the boycott as a war, it will bring some new awareness to the readers. First, the boycott is not an ordinary phenomenon, but an emergency and urgent one, which therefore must be addressed directly and seriously. This is reflected in the lexemes ḥarb 'war', ʕaduww 'enemy', hujūm 'attack', gazā 'to invade', intiṣār 'victory' which are used metaphorically. The definition shows that in a boycott there are two camps that fight each other (attack each other) as happens on the battlefield, so that in the end there will be winners and losers. The use of this metaphor can convince readers to view the boycott as an emergency and urgent action that must be taken immediately and seriously.

Secondly, the boycott by the public, whether against pro-Israeli companies, pro-Israeli figures, or Israeli researchers, has a real impact that can damage or injure its targets. This is reflected in the metaphorical use of the lexemes silāḥ 'weapon', ḍarbah 'blow', ṣafʕah 'slap', ḍaḥiyyah 'victim', and mūjiʕ 'painful'. The use of these lexemes highlights the aggressiveness of the boycott. As a result, the metaphor can reassure readers who may still be skeptical of the power and impact of the boycott. In addition, the metaphor also indirectly ignores the negative effects of the boycott, namely the dismissal of innocent company employees.

Thirdly, the boycott is not a random act that some people might think, but rather one of the organized and planned tactics arranged as effectively as possible by a movement to bring down its enemy or target, namely the Israeli side, as there are tactics or strategies arranged by the military to deal with its enemy effectively. This is reflected in the metaphorical use of the lexeme kamīn 'ambush'. The use of this metaphor can convince readers indirectly that the boycott is one of the right tactics implemented in an organized and planned manner by the boycott movement. The lexemes can help readers realize this, which might not have happened if the author had used other source domains.

Finally, boycotting or not consuming pro-Israel products, will result in the indirect killing of Israeli citizens, just like the genocide committed by Israel against Palestinians so far. This is reflected in the use of the lexeme qatala 'to kill' which is used metaphorically in the boycott discourse. The use of this metaphor highlights the reality suffered by Palestinians due to one's consumption of Israeli products. As a result, this metaphor can convince readers to completely stop consuming pro-Israel products.

These four points all highlight the phenomenon of boycotting Israel positively because it is considered a form of resistance against Israel. The persuasive effect of the war metaphor that affects readers is to view boycotts as the right tool to attack Israel urgently to be done. This strategy is carried out by Al Jazeera to persuade its readers to participate in a collective boycott.

As previously explained, metaphor is the most powerful and main tool of persuasion that can shape public perception in political discourse, which also includes boycott discourse (Lapka, 2023; Nasihah & Ni'mah, 2024; Truc, 2024). Moreover, the persuasive role that emerges is even stronger with the use of war metaphors. This is because war metaphors can evoke fear in the intended party (George et al., 2016). In addition, according to Semino (2021), war metaphors can enhance public awareness of an issue's intensity and urgency, and can create a sense of collectivity in dealing with the issue. From these two quotes, it appears that great power is created from the use of war metaphors in this boycott discourse.

The Ideology of Resistance Behind the Use of War Metaphors in the Boycott Israel Discourse

As previously explained, the Critical Metaphor Analysis developed by Charteris-Black (2004) aims to reveal the ideology behind the use of metaphors. In this sub-chapter, researchers will describe the ideology that emerges behind the use of war metaphors in the boycott discourse on the Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper. Based on the persuasive role that has been described in the previous sub-chapter, it appears that the corresponding ideology behind the use of these metaphors is the ideology of resistance. To be precise, the ideology can be seen in the choice of metaphorical expressions in the discourse.

Referring to van Dijk (1998) who defines ideology as a fundamental social representation of group members, and therefore group members can regulate their values and behavior based on their ideology, this study reveals the existence of an ideology of resistance behind the metaphor of war in the discourse of the Israeli boycott. The idea of this ideology is quoted from Frederick Douglas, an American reformer who was once a slave who fought for the freedom of black people through resistance in the United States (Ballard, 2004). This ideology emphasizes the importance of resistance to maintain one's humanity because freedom is a right for all individuals. This ideology also suggests that belief in struggle and resistance (moral and physical) will lead to mutual respect, racial identity, and individual freedom. In this respect, Douglas's idea of resistance remains relevant today.

The ideology of resistance in the context of slavery in the United States is in accordance with the idea of Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonization. These ideas are reflected in the metaphor of war in the discourse of the Israeli boycott. The metaphorical use of the lexeme ḥarb 'war', hujūm 'attack', intiṣār 'victory' in the data to frame the boycott as a war can enhance the reader's perception of its seriousness and urgency, while also evoking a sense of solidarity and collective social responsibility. This framing ultimately reinforces the idea of Palestinian resistance against Israel through collective boycott action. Furthermore, the lexeme ʕaduww 'enemy' and gazā 'to invade' in the data is used to portray Israel and its affiliates as enemies that invade the market that must be confronted. This depiction encourages readers to align with the Palestinian resistance through boycott participation.

Furthermore, the use of lexeme silāḥ 'weapon', ḍarbah 'blow', ṣaffah 'slap', ḍaḥiyyah 'victim', and mūjiʕ 'painful' in the data highlights the aggressiveness of the boycott action against Israel, prompting readers to perceive the boycott as a means of Palestinian resistance aimed at weakening Israel, which is framed as a victim. Meanwhile, lexeme kamīn 'ambush' in the data represents the boycott as a deliberate resistance strategy. Finally, lexeme qatala 'to kill' metaphorically portrays those who consume Israeli products as murderers who must therefore be opposed.

This finding is consistent with Semino (2021), which states that war metaphors serve to heighten public perception of the seriousness and urgency of an issue, justify radical changes in social life, and foster a sense of collective social responsibility and solidarity. In the context of a boycott of Israel, these metaphors align with the idea of Palestinian resistance to Israel through boycott actions. Al Jazeera did this by highlighting the urgency of the boycott, its aggressiveness, its effectiveness, the impact it produces, and the reality of rejecting it, using war lexemes, which previously may not have been widely recognized and believed by most people.

In line with the ideology behind the use of the emerging war metaphor, Al Jazeera media appears to side with Palestine, thus using lexeme choices that attack Israel. The New Humanitarian Media (2024) said that Al Jazeera, which is based in Qatar, tends to be more sympathetic to Palestine and condemns Israel. This is different from Western media, which of course tends to be pro-Israel.

Although Al Jazeera does not explicitly state that they are pro-Israel, this bias is evident in the tendency of news reports related to the boycott of Israel in the media. They often report positive things for Palestine, ranging from the significance of the impact of the boycott on Israel to criticism of Israeli policies regarding Palestine. This also supports Al Jazeera's goal of opposing Western domination (Rinaldy, 2023), where Israel is supported by the domination of Western countries.

This study supports previous research by Almirabi (2024), which found that war metaphors serve to raise awareness of the urgency of a situation and foster a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, it also aligns with Farah et al. (2025) and Nurmasyitah et al. (2024), who found that metaphors in Arabic poetry reflect Palestinian resistance against Israel, as well as the hopes, desires, and demands of the Palestinian people regarding human rights. Almost similar to the metaphorical narrative of Hamas, which portrays Israel as a terrorist entity (Al-Minawi, 2024), this study finds that Al Jazeera depicts Israel as an enemy that must be resisted, with particular emphasis on framing the boycott as a tool of resistance against Israel.

In contrast to the animal metaphors used by Zionists to dehumanize Palestinian society (Maalej & Zibin, 2024), Al Jazeera in this case focuses instead on war metaphors to emphasize the urgency, aggressiveness, and impact of the boycott—without dehumanizing Israel. However, this study differs from the findings of Al-Ruba'iey et al. (2023), which suggest that war metaphors are not used aggressively to convey violence, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, by contrast, war metaphors are employed to highlight the aggressiveness of the boycott and its damaging impact on Israel.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe the conceptual metaphor of war in the discourse of the boycott of Israel in the Al Jazeera Arabic Online Newspaper and to uncover the ideology underlying its use. The use of war metaphors to frame the Israeli boycott campaign appears to be an effective strategy to conceptualize and communicate the seriousness, urgency, aggressiveness, effectiveness, and impact of the boycott on Israel. Al Jazeera adopts this metaphor to portray Israel as an enemy that must be confronted through collective boycott action. Such metaphors serve to mobilize readers by inviting them to perceive the boycott as a form of active resistance. These findings highlight the rhetorical power of war metaphors in shaping ideological narratives in Arab media, particularly in conflict-related discourse.

A closer examination reveals that these war metaphors consistently reflect the broader narrative of Palestinian resistance against Israel. This idea resonates with the ideology of resistance as popularized by Frederick Douglass, which emphasizes the necessity of resistance to uphold human dignity, as freedom is a right for all individuals. These findings align with previous studies that highlight how war metaphors are frequently used to symbolize Palestinian resistance across various discourses and to raise awareness about the urgency of specific issues. Furthermore, the results support prior research indicating that Al Jazeera tends to adopt a pro-Palestinian stance.

However, this study is limited to a single metaphor domain (war) and one media (Al Jazeera Arabic). Therefore, future research is encouraged to explore other metaphorical domains (e.g., disease, journey, nature) and examine how different social actors, such as political figures or other influential media, construct the discourse surrounding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

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