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Hell on Earth 2024: Metaphors of Genocide in the Gaza Strip, Palestine

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Abstract

Metaphors play a crucial role in shaping how society understands and responds to conflicts, such as the genocide in Gaza by Israel. Metaphors can illustrate the impact of events, direct global attention to injustices, and deepen the understanding of the scale and intensity of the humanitarian crisis in the region in a way that is more easily comprehensible. In the international media coverage of Al-Jazeera, metaphorical expressions are often used to describe Israel's attacks and the suffering that occurred in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. The purpose of this study is to explain the concepts produced from the use of metaphorical expressions related to Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip in Al-Jazeera news articles. This study applies Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory and Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis. Based on the analysis, four metaphorical concepts of the Gaza genocide were identified: ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE, THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE, PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN, and GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN. The metaphor concepts depict a social reality schema in the form of identity, force, scale, and unity/multiplicity that reflects the social reality of violence, oppression, and dehumanization. The four metaphor concepts show the process of Israel's attacks, a depiction of life in the Gaza Strip, the dehumanization of Palestinians, and the impact of Israel's genocide on Gaza. These are closely related to Israel's colonialism practices which aim to control the region through occupation, land stealing, and the erasure of Palestinian identity and rights.

Keywords: *Metaphor, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gaza Genocide, Israel*

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Introduction

The conflict between Palestine and Israel has persisted since 1948, when Zionist Jews established Israel on Palestinian land. Israel attacks Palestine daily, with tensions peaking on October 7, 2023, after Hamas attacked Israeli territory in the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation, prompting Israel's retaliatory Operation Swords of Iron. These ongoing attacks have claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions. While Israel claims its attacks target Hamas, evidence shows indiscriminate bombings and collective

punishment, worsening conditions in Gaza. Despite International Humanitarian Law prohibiting such actions, Israel has forcibly evacuated Palestinians from northern Gaza yet continues to target them even in designated safe zones.

The international community has identified Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide, defined by the Genocide Convention as acts intended to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Israel's systematic attacks on Palestine target demographics, geography, socio-culture, health, and education (Di-Capua, 2024a) . On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice issued provisional measures on South Africa's request regarding Israel's violations of the Genocide Convention, which Israel ratified in 1950 (International Court of Justice, 2024). Despite this, Israel continues its attacks a year after October 2023. With sufficient evidence, Amnesty International concluded on December 5, 2024, that Israel was committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

Every day, international mass media reports the latest news regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip. Among these international mass media networks is the Al-Jazeera news site. Al-Jazeera is a large mass media network that provides information about the Middle East and the international community. Al-Jazeera is headquartered in Doha, Qatar, and has more than 70 branch offices worldwide. Issues related to the conflict in the Gaza Strip are topics that are presented specifically and up to date on the site, having its own section '*War on Gaza*' on the navigation bar under the main title '*Israel-Palestine conflict*'. The site provides news on the Israel-Palestine conflict, including updates, infographics, photos, and expert opinions on the conflict's developments and impacts. The site's news there are metaphorical expressions to describe Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Using metaphors in news articles can help journalists to communicate complex phenomena. Metaphors are pervasive in daily life, shaping language, thought, and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). They act as a bridge to express life experiences, either explicitly through metaphorical transfer or subtly by narrowing or extending meanings (Goatly, 1997). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize that human thought, largely metaphorical, defines everyday reality. Conceptual metaphors arise from mental constructions based on analogies and guide reasoning and behavior through domain mappings (Lakoff in Croft & Cruse, 2004). Thus, metaphors enhance understanding and simplify complex situations.

Using metaphors, the media can shape the audience's comprehension of the events being reported. Steuter and Wills (2008) explain that metaphors are not merely decorative elements of language; they can represent ideas and influence how we perceive and understand those ideas. For instance, during the Rwandan Genocide, Tutsis were often referred to as "cockroaches," a metaphor that dehumanized them and incited violence against them (Popoviciu, 2024). Likewise, in the Israel-Palestine conflict, metaphors like "horrible, inhuman animals," as stated by the former Israeli ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman (Harb, 2023a) can affect how both international and local communities understand and respond to the conflict.

Based on the aforementioned context, it is crucial to use metaphors carefully, as they can shape narratives and public perceptions of the Israel-Palestine conflict in news articles. Metaphors can highlight one aspect of the subject matter while obscuring other aspects that do not fit the chosen metaphorical depiction. Musolff (2016) states that metaphors related to war not only affect the understanding of an issue but also how the issue is handled. Thus, critically analyzing metaphors in conflict reporting is essential to uncover agendas and assess the impact of metaphorical narratives.

So far, metaphors related to conflict, war, and genocide have received attention from researchers, including Klymenko (2020) who investigated how Ukrainian political leaders comprehend events in Donbas, Ukraine by drawing a metaphorical analogy between the Donbas War and World War II. Meanwhile, Nartey (2019) critically investigated how independence leader Kwame Nkrumah, a

pioneer of the Pan-African movement and Ghanaian independence leader, utilized metaphors to construct a discourse of resistance to colonialism and imperialism. However, research on metaphors in the Gaza genocide remains limited; one of which was conducted by Maalej (2024) who analyzed animal metaphors describing Palestinians in the Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip which revealed disturbing patterns of dehumanization. While Maalej's research highlights animal metaphors, other types of metaphors are also employed in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Previous studies have not, in general, answered questions surrounding metaphors in the context of the Gaza genocide in Palestine. Therefore, the novelty of this research is to reveal the use of metaphors related to Israel's genocide against the Gaza Strip in Al-Jazeera news media. In addition, this research also reveals the image schemas in the metaphorical constructions discovered. This research investigates the concepts produced from the use of metaphorical expressions related to Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip in Al-Jazeera news articles. Therefore, the research problem is "what concepts are produced from the metaphorical expressions related to the Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, Palestine in Al-Jazeera news articles?" Furthermore, this research also aims to explain the conditions and impacts of Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip. This research is beneficial for increasing the critical literacy of metaphors in information media and understanding the impact of metaphor usage in framing a conflict.

Methodology

This study uses the qualitative descriptive method. Have (2004) state that qualitative research tends to be based on an interpretive approach, in the sense that the meaning of events, actions, and expressions is not considered as something that already exists or is self-evident; rather, it requires contextual interpretation. This study uses Have's statement to interpret data through the appropriate context. This study applies the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and the critical metaphor analysis approach (Charteris-Black, 2004).

The conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explains how humans understand and organize experiences through metaphors. It involves mental constructions based on analogies (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) According to Lakoff in Croft and Cruse (2004), the theory reveals metaphorical mappings between domains and guides human reasoning and behavior. Conceptual metaphor involves mapping between two domains: the source domain (abstract) and the target domain (concrete). Image schemas, which structure physical and nonphysical experiences, also play a role in metaphors. Croft and Cruse (2004) categorized image schemas as follows.

Image 1. Image Schemas

SPACE	UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, *LEFT-RIGHT*, NEAR-FAR, CENTER-PERIPHERY, CONTACT
SCALE	PATH
CONTAINER	CONTAINMENT, IN-OUT, SURFACE, FULL-EMPTY, *CONTENT*
FORCE	BALANCE, COUNTERFORCE, COMPULSION, RESTRAINT, ENABLEMENT, BLOCKAGE, DIVERSION, ATTRACTION
UNITY/MULTIPLICITY	MERGING, COLLECTION, SPLITTING, ITERATION, PART-WHOLE, MASS-COUNT, LINK
IDENTITY	MATCHING, SUPERIMPOSITION
EXISTENCE	REMOVAL, BOUNDED SPACE, CYCLE, OBJECT, PROCESS

The conceptual metaphor theory was then expanded through the Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) approach by Charteris-Black (2004) which emphasizes the role of ideology and power in the selection of metaphors. Charteris-Black (2004) argues that metaphors are not neutral but serve rhetorical purposes tied to beliefs, attitudes, and actions. The link between the conceptual metaphor theory and CMA approach lies in the understanding that metaphors not only shape the way we think but can also be used strategically to shape perceptions and influence actions in social and political contexts. Metaphors have various roles in language: a semantic role in creating new meanings, a cognitive role in understanding experiences through analogy, and a pragmatic role in providing evaluations (Charteris-Black, 2004).

This study used written data from news articles sourced from the Al-Jazeera news website. The techniques used to obtain data include observing the Al-Jazeera news website,

documentation, and literature reviews. Data collection began with observing news articles related to Palestine and Israel. Next, the metaphorical expressions were recorded based on the definition category of genocide. The data was categorized based on the Genocide Convention (1948), which states that genocide is any act aimed at destroying, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. In all, 130 news articles were selected because they contained elements relevant to the focus of the research, metaphors related to the Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, Palestine for one year, namely October 7, 2023 – October 7, 2024. The next step was to analyze and hypothesize the data based on identifying the meaning of the metaphor based on the Oxford dictionary and literature study. The analysis was conducted using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and the Critical Metaphor Analysis approach (Charteris-Black, 2004), which consists of three stages of analysis, namely the metaphor identification stage, the metaphor interpretation stage, and the metaphor explanation stage.

First, Metaphor identification involves spotting metaphorical expressions in the data by comparing their literal and contextual meanings. The literal meaning is checked through the dictionary, while the contextual meaning is based on how the expressions are used. This stage also identifies the conceptual key to generalizing various metaphorical expressions. Second, metaphor interpretation involves mapping the source and target domains to identify conceptual metaphors based on Lakoff & Johnson's theory (1980). In its presentation, the identification stage and interpretation stage was combined in one sub-chapter. Third, metaphor explanation aims to provide deep understanding of how metaphors reflect and influence social reality and power relations. The final step of the analysis is the conclusion of the research and recommendations was presented based on the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Based on observations of Al-Jazeera news articles about Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, 130 articles were identified as relevant. Using the critical metaphor analysis approach, the study involves three key steps: metaphor identification, interpretation, and explanation.

1. Metaphor Identification and Interpretation

There are 179 sentences identified in 130 articles that contain 21 metaphorical expressions. The following is the metaphorical conceptualization of 21 metaphorical expressions related to the Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, which are classified based on similarities in the topic of meaning, thus becoming four concepts: concept A; Israel's Aggression is Gaza's Genocide, concept B; The Gaza Genocide is a Catastrophe, concept C; Palestinians are not Human, and concept D; Gaza is a Ghost Town. These four metaphor concepts show the process of Israel's attack, a depiction of life in the Gaza Strip, the dehumanization of the Palestinians, and the impact of the Israeli genocide on Gaza.

a. Concept A: Israel's Aggression is Gaza's Genocide

There are nine metaphorical expressions under concept A: '*mowing the lawn'* (A1), '*carpet bombing*' (A2), '*pulse*' (A3), *mass assassination factory*' (A4), '*killing a city* (A5), '*killing home*' (A6), '*killing representation*' (A7), '*killing the environment*' (A8), '*killing knowledge*' (A9), and '*killing a sense of self*' (A10). Examples of metaphor mapping for concept A will focus on A1 and A2. Data A1 shows differences in social reality compared to data A2 to A10, which have similarities in social reality in the underlying image schema.

i. *Mowing the lawn* (A1)

The phrase '*mowing the lawn*' (A1) is a metaphorical expression found in Al-Jazeera news articles. It appears seven times across seven different articles. One example of a sentence containing this metaphorical expression is:

> *Until October 7, Israel upheld its founding aspiration, enforcing a doctrine of endless occupation while oscillating between implicit and explicit forms of genocide, the latter often described as "mowing the*

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lawn" in reference to Israel's periodical attacks on Gaza since its 2005 "withdrawal" from the besieged Palestinian enclave (Al Jazeera, 2024b).

The metaphorical phrase 'mowing the lawn', as a source domain, is formed from the words 'mow' and 'lawn'. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word 'mow' means to cut grass using a machine or tool with a special blade and the word 'lawn' means an area of ground covered in grass in a garden or park. The phrase refers to 'human massacre', as the target area, because based on the context of Israel's deadly and large-scale aggressions against Palestinians in Gaza, resulting in many casualties, which led to the meaning of 'human massacre.' The phrase 'mowing the lawn' consists of the words 'mowing' and 'the lawn', although distinguished by word classes, both have similar characteristics, as shown in the conceptual metaphor mapping table of data A1.

Table 1. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data A.1.

Source Domain	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
Mowing the lawn *Mowing*	Human massacre	
● Yard, area ● Pests and weeds ● Tall grass ● Plant conversion ● Cleaning ● Sickle ● Hoe ● Mower	● Field ● Soul and body ● Civilization ● Murder ● Deletion ● Ethnic cleansing ● Genocide ● Firearms ● Missiles ● Bombs	*Existence (Removal)* and *Force (Compulsion)*
The lawn		
● Area of grass ● Grass ● Bushes		

The phrase '*mowing the lawn*' has several cognitive links to 'human massacre.' First, the phrase '*mowing the lawn*' indicates a location in the form of a yard or area related to the location where a 'human massacre' has taken place, which is a field of aggression. In this context, the yard or location refers to the Gaza Strip. Second, the phrase '*mowing the lawn*' indicates the presence of lots of grass, pests, and weeds which relates to 'human massacre' with the presence of many souls and bodies in an area, as well as a civilization, namely the Palestinians. Third, the phrase '*mowing the lawn*' indicates the activity of plant conversion (replacing existing plants with other plants) and cleaning that correlates with activities of 'human massacre' such as murder, elimination of civilization, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Fourth, the phrase '*mowing the lawn*' refers to tools such as sickles, hoes, and mowers that are related to tools for 'human massacre' such as firearms, missiles, and bombs.

'Mowing the lawn' refers to Israel's strategy of weakening its enemy through repeated attacks in Gaza (Inbar & Shamir, 2014a). This strategy, ongoing since before October 7, 2023, targets militant infrastructure and resources, fearing the enemy (Palestine) could recover, necessitating future attacks (Shkolnik, 2017a). Since Israel blockaded Gaza in 2007, it has launched five wars to 'mow the lawn,' aiming to weaken Hamas. However, Palestinian civilians suffer the most. Therefore, the phrase '*mowing the lawn*' reflects the social reality depicted by the existence (removal) and force (compulsion) image schemas because the Israeli military has the power to systematically obliterate and massacre Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, as stated in the sentence data, and that this strategy is part of the Gaza genocide strategy.

ii. *Carpet Bombing* (A2)

The phrase '*carpet bombing'* (A2) is a metaphorical expression found 24 times in 22 Al-Jazeera articles. An example of the metaphorical expression '*carpet bombing'* in a sentence is as follows.

...the Israeli army has undertaken systematic carpet bombing of the Gaza Strip, dropping in a month more than

25,000 tonnes of explosives, the equivalent of two nuclear bombs (Loewenstein, 2023).

The metaphorical phrase '*carpet bombing*' is the source domain that refers to 'large-scale bombing' as its target domain. This is based on the context of Israel's aggressions that have massively bombed the Gaza Strip, which flattened entire infrastructures in the area. The following is a mapping of the conceptual metaphor of data A2.

Table 2. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data A2

<table>
<tr><th>Source Domain</th><th>Target Domain</th><th rowspan="2">Image Schemas</th></tr>
<tr><td>Carpet Bombing

Carpet</td><td>Large-scale Bombing</td></tr>
<tr><td>● House
● Thick and wide fabric
● Large capacity of people

Bombing

● Battlefield
● Bombs
● Kill
● Many casualties</td><td>● Battlefield
● Settlement
● Large area
● Bombs
● Kill
● Destroy
● Strong and wide-ranged explosive power
● Many casualties
● Infrastructure</td><td>Scale and Unity/ Multiplicity (Mass-Count)</td></tr>
</table>

The phrase '*carpet bombing*' has several cognitive links to 'large-scale bombing.' First, '*carpet*' refers to a house location, while '*bombing*' relates to battlefields, settlements, or large areas, all tied to locations of 'large-scale bombings'. Second, the word '*carpet*' indicates a characteristic of a thick and wide fabric, which correlates with the characteristics of the target domain 'large-scale bombing', which is to have a strong and wide-ranged explosive power. Meanwhile, the source domain '*bombing*' also has a similar characteristic to the target domain 'large-scale bombing'; both have a strong and wide-ranged explosive power. Third, based on the second explanation, the '*carpet*' can accommodate a large human capacity, which implies a coverage, while '*bombing'* causes destructive damage that includes many casualties and infrastructure. Both are elements with a large capacity coverage. This correlates with the scope of impact of the target domain of 'large-scale bombing' which causes tremendous destructive power including living creatures and infrastructure.

Based on the data from Al-Jazeera news articles , Israel dropped over 25,000 tons of explosives in one month, equivalent to two nuclear bombs (Loewenstein, 2023). The bombing has devastated the Gaza Strip. A report by the UNESCWA and PCBS stated that from October 7 to April 2024, the amount of infrastructure damaged reached 360,000 buildings, including places of worship, schools, and hospitals. The metaphorical expression '*carpet bombing*' reflects the social reality depicted by the *unity/multiplicity (mass-count)* image schema due to the power and reach of the bombs massively launched, resulting in many casualties and significant infrastructure damage.

The metaphorical expressions of Concept A, consisting of '*mowing the lawn*' (A1), '*carpet bombing*' (A2), '*pulse*' (A3), '*mass assassination factory*' (A4), '*killing a city*' (A5), '*killing home*' (A6), '*killing representation*' (A7), '*killing the environment*' (A8), '*killing knowledge*' (A9), and '*killing a sense of self*' (A10), each refer to the target domains 'human massacre', 'bombing range', 'bombing intensity', 'mass murder', 'urbicide', 'domicide', 'politicide', 'ecocide', 'educide' and 'scholasticide', as well as 'ethnic cleansing'. The metaphor mappings explained above only discuss two metaphorical expressions: data A1 and A2, both chosen to represent the whole data. The metaphorical expression A1 describes the social reality through the *existence* (*removal*) and *force* (*compulsion*) image schemas. Meanwhile, the metaphorical expressions A2 to A10 indicate similarities in social realities using the unity/multiplicity (mass-count) image schema.

The mapping of the metaphorical expressions conceptualizes the large-scale and systematic attacks by Israel against Gaza that

have the potential to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as defined by the 1948 Genocide Convention. Israel's actions in Gaza also involve cultural genocide, including the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and national memory, such as the Central Archives of Gaza City(Abdo, 2024). The destruction of a nation's archives is equivalent to erasing its historical and geographical memory. Israel's genocidal actions today are a continuation of the process that began in 1948 (Abdo, 2024). Thus, the findings of the metaphorical expressions above form the concept that ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE.

Table 3. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data A

ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE			
No.	**Source Domain**	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
A1.	*Mowing the lawn*	Human massacre	*Existence* (*removal*) and *force* (*compulsion*)
A2.	*Carpet bombing*	Bombing range	*Unity/ multiplicity (mass-count)*
A3.	*Pulse*	Bombing intensity	
A.4.	*Mass assassination factory*	Mass murder	
A5.	*Killing a city*	Urbicide	
A6.	*Killing home*	Domicide	
A7.	*Killing representation*	Politicide	
A8.	*Killing the environment*	Ecocide	
A9.	*Killing knowledge*	*Educide* and *scholasticide*	
A10	*Killing a sense of self*	Ethnic cleansing	

b. Concept B: The Gaza Genocide is a Catastrophe

Two metaphorical expressions are classified as concept B: '*hell*' (B1) and '*nightmare*' (B2). The following is an explanation of data B1, which is an example of the metaphor mapping of concept B.

i. *Hell* (B1)

The word 'hell' (B1) is used metaphorically 48 times in 36 articles by Al-Jazeera. An example of a sentence using the metaphorical expression '*hell'* is as follows.

> *"The guards greeted us sarcastically: 'Welcome to hell,'" he says* (Humaid, 2024).

The metaphorical expression *'hell'* is the source domain that refers to 'misery' as its target domain. This is based on the context of Israel's aggressions and colonization that have caused misery to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The following is a mapping of the conceptual metaphor of data B1.

Table 4. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data B1

THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE			
No.	**Source Domain**	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
B1.	*hell*	Misery	*Force* (*compulsion and restraint*)
B2.	*nightmare*	Horror	*Identity*

The term '*hell*' has several cognitive links to 'misery.' First, the word *'hell'* refers to a realm in the afterlife, a place of accountability for all sins where there is hellish torture, which in the target domain 'misery' resulted from the hardships generated by Israel's aggressions. Second, the word *'hell'* indicates the feeling of being tortured and suffering from torture that is related to the target domain 'misery' which also shows the feeling of torture and suffering experienced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. According to the context of the data, Israel carries out bombings, shootings, and arrests of Palestinians, who are not free from torture while in Israeli detention, daily. The absence of safe shelter, no access to clean water, no access to health services, and the prevention of international aid distribution form an illustration of hell on earth. Palestinians are suffering from the systematic genocide by Israel. Thus, the metaphorical expression '*hell*' reflects the social reality of the force (compulsion and restraint) image schema through acts of cruelty and repression in the Gaza Strip.

The metaphorical expressions of Concept B, namely '*hell*' (B1) and '*nightmare*' (B2) represent the target domains of 'misery' and 'horror,' reflecting the force (compulsion and restraint) and identity image schemas. In 'hell' there is 'misery' that represents the Israeli attack destroying all aspects of life, causing fatalities, and damaging the physical and mental health of Palestinian (K., 2024). Stitches and amputations have left marks on their bodies, as has the trauma on their minds. Meanwhile, 'nightmare' creates a feeling of 'horror' that represents the Israeli genocide which has an impact on the psychological disorders of Palestinians, thus causing an identity crisis. The misery of physical and mental is a catastrophe for Palestinians because it has a lasting effect even after the bombing stops, it wounds will persist and likely worsen (Fernández, 2023). These expression depict the reality in Gaza due to Israel's arbitrary attacks that create physical and mental suffering which constitutes a systematic disaster and catastrophe. Thus, these metaphorical findings align with the 1948 Genocide Convention's definition, formulating the concept THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE.

Table 5. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data B

Source Domain	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
Hell	Misery	
● A place of accountability of sins ● Punishment ● Torture ● Suffering	● Aggression ● Distress ● Torture ● Suffering	*Force (compulsion* and *restraint)*

c. Concept C: Palestinians are not Human

Concept C includes five metaphorical expressions: '*animal*' (C1), '*weeds*' (C2), '*snakes*' (C3), '*beastly people*' (C4), and '*villa in the jungle*' (C5), along with '*monsters hunting prey*' (C6). Below, data C1 will be elaborated on as an example of how metaphors map to concept C.

i. *Animal* (C1)

The metaphorical expression '*animal*' (C1) appeared 16 times in 11 Al-Jazeera news articles. Among these articles, an example of a sentence containing the metaphorical expression '*animal*' is as follows.

> *Israel's former ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, for example, was allowed to refer to Palestinians, as "horrible, inhuman animals" during an interview with Sky News* (Harb, 2023).

The metaphorical expression '*animal*' is the source domain, referring to 'dehumanization' as its target domain in the data. This is proven based on mapping the conceptual metaphor of C1 with the data context, as follows.

Table 6. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data C1

Source Domain	Target Domain	Image Schemas
Animal	Dehumanization	
● Mindless ● Uncivilized ● Wild ● Savage	● Deprivation of human dignity ● Defamation ● Humiliation ● Degradation	*Identity*

The term '*animal*' has several cognitive links to 'dehumanization.' The word '*animal*' indicates a mindless, uncivilized, wild, and savage creature, indicating the deprivation of human dignity, defamation, humiliation, and degradation. Based on the context of the data, Palestinians were referred to as inhumane animals. Aside from animal-like characteristics, such as being mindless, uncivilized, wild, and savage; the intention of the use of the metaphorical expression '*animal*' is to refer to Palestinians as enemies that should be hunted down because Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced a total siege of Gaza by stating "*We are fighting against human animals*" (Al Jazeera, 2023).

Humans are often understood or assumed within their relations to animal traits (Kövecses, 2010, p. 19). However, animal metaphors are mostly used to evaluate others in a negative light. As in previous studies, these negative aspects were then used to degrade them (Li & Dreyfus, 2023; Maalej, 2024). This is implemented in data C1 and other data, as source domains, namely the words '*weeds*' (C2), '*snakes*' (C3), '*beastly people*' (C4), '*villa in the jungle*' (C5), and '*monsters hunting prey*' (C6). Therefore, these data refer to the target domains 'dehumanization', 'disturber', 'savage', 'backwardness', and 'target'. The metaphorical expressions C1 to C5 construct the *identity* image schema and the metaphorical expression C6 constructs the *force* (*enablement*) image schema.

Those who commit genocide or crimes against humanity often degrade the dignity of their victims. In this case, Israel often degrades and treats Palestinians inhumanely. One such case that went viral was the mass arrest in Beit Lahia, where men were blindfolded, stripped, forced to kneel, and humiliated by Israeli soldiers (Üngör, 2024). In Israeli prisons, Palestinian prisoners are also frequently tortured and deprived of human rights. Based on the testimony of former prisoner Faraj (39 y.o.), he was beaten during interrogation, denied food and water for days, and witnessed prisoners with blistering skin from hot water poured directly on them at the Sde Teiman Detention Camp in the Naqab Desert (Negev) (Al-Jazeera, July 7, 2024). This incident shows Israel's inhumane treatment and dehumanization of Palestinians. Dehumanization allows perpetrators to view victims as less than human, enabling cruel acts without guilt (Michel, 2023). Thus, the metaphorical mapping forms the concept that PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN.

Table 7. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data C

PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN			
No.	**Source Domain**	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
C1.	*Animal*	Dehumanization	*Identity*
C2.	*Weeds*	Disturber	
C3.	*Snakes*	Disturber	
C4.	*Beastly people*	Savage	
C5.	*Villa in the jungle*	Backwardness	
C6.	*Monsters hunting prey*	Target	*Force (enable-ment)*

d. Concept D: Gaza is a Ghost Town

Two metaphorical expressions are classified as concept D: the words '*ghost town*'

(D1), '*grave*' (D2), and '*haunt*' (D3). Data D1 will be explained below as an example of the metaphor mapping of concept D.

i. *Ghost Town* (D1)

The phrase '*ghost town'* (D1) is a metaphorical expression found 7 times in 5 Al-Jazeera articles. Among these articles, an example of a sentence containing the metaphorical expression '*ghost town'* is as follows.

> *Since then, the area has been turned into a ghost town, with life only getting more difficult for the town's 8,000 residents since October 7, after which Israel killed over 15,000 Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, the majority of them women and children* (Al Tahhan, 2023)..

The metaphorical expression '*ghost town'* is the source domain that refers to 'graveyard' as its target domain. This is based on the context of Israel's massive aggressions in the Gaza Strip which have claimed many lives and have created a vast graveyard. The following is a mapping of the conceptual metaphor of data D1.

Table 8. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data D1.

Source Domain	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
Ghost Town	Graveyard	
●Mass death of a population ●No life ●Corpses ●Funeral ●Graveyard ●Destruction of city	●Death ●Corpses ●Funeral	*Identity*

The phrase '*ghost town*' has several cognitive links to 'graveyard'. First, it represents widespread death, leaving a place lifeless, which connects to the target domain of the 'graveyard,' which is also associated with death. Second, '*ghost town*' shares referential similarities to corpses, aligning with the target domain of the 'graveyard.' Third, both '*ghost town*' and 'graveyard' evoke images of funeral processes and large areas designated for burying the dead.

The data quoted above states that Israel has killed more than 15,000 Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip, most of them women and children, and has exacerbated access to basic needs. However, as time goes by, the death toll continues to increase. Over more than a year, specifically until the end of November 2024, the death toll has reached 46,000, according to the PCBS. Others also mentioned that Israel's bombing has destroyed cities in the Gaza Strip. One of these is Beit Hanoun, once called "the basket of fruit" for its orchards, now a ghost town filled with debris (Al-Jazeera, April 16, 2024).

Concept D includes the metaphorical expressions '*ghost town*' (D1), '*grave*' (D2), and '*haunt*' (D3), which relate to the target domains 'graveyard,' 'massacre,' and 'traumatic.' The metaphorical expression D1 with its target domain 'graveyard' reflects the mass death of the Gaza population due to Israel's attacks, resulting in the emergence of mass graveyards everywhere and a crisis of life-supporting facilities. This constructs the social reality of data D1 and D2 through the identity image schema. The expressions D2 and D3, with target domains 'massacre' and 'traumatic,' describe how Israel's attacks remain on the mind and disturb the psyche. Psychological torture continues beyond the war, affecting future generations through the epigenetic transmission of trauma (Javanbakht, 2024). These realities are conveyed through the existence image schema for D2 and D3.

The mapping of the metaphorical expressions of the data states that the impact of Israel's genocide has reduced life expectancy in Gaza. The siege has been designed to reduce the population of Palestinians in Gaza by making the situation so horrible that Palestinians are forced to leave. There is no longer a habitable area because

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Israel has destroyed all access to life in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, the findings of the metaphorical expressions D1, D2, and D3 form the concept that GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN.

Table 9. Conceptual Metaphor Mapping of Data D

GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN			
No.	**Source Domain**	**Target Domain**	**Image Schemas**
D1.	*Ghost town*	Graveyard	*Identity*
D2.	*Grave*	Massacre	*Existence*
D3.	*Haunt*	Traumatic	

2. Metaphor Explanation

Based on the mapping of metaphorical expressions found in Al-Jazeera news articles, the results reveal several conceptual keys: ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE, THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE, PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN, and GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN. The most discovered conceptual key is THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE, which was found 84 times in Al-Jazeera articles. Meanwhile, GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN was the least discovered, with only 26 metaphorical expressions found in Al-Jazeera articles. The table below presents the conceptual keys and the corresponding number of metaphorical expressions identified.

Table 10. Key Concepts of Metaphor

Key Concepts of Metaphor	Metaphorical Expressions
ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE	44 Metaphors
THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE	84 Metaphors
PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN	25 Metaphors
GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN	26 Metaphors
Total	179 Metaphors

Table (10) shows that the target domain ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION is largely mapped with the source domain GAZA'S GENOCIDE, the target domain GAZA GENOCIDE is mapped with the source domains HELL and NIGHTMARE, the target domain PALESTINIANS is mapped with the source domain NOT HUMAN, and the target domain GAZA is mapped with the source domain GHOST TOWN.

The conceptual key ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION IS GAZA'S GENOCIDE indicates the rhetoric of the process of Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip, which greatly impacted Palestinians, causing the International Court of Justice to suggest that the aggressions have violated the Genocide Convention (1948). Israel claims that they are targeting Hamas, who were hiding in civilian infrastructures. Therefore, it became a justification for the total siege of Gaza. Israel gave leeway to target civilians, including children (Samudzi, 2024). This is a form of collective punishment, a war crime, which violates Article 33 (1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that "*collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited.*" Israel's aggression in Gaza and the Holocaust has fundamental similarities in that both involved systematic violence driven by ideologies of domination, dehumanization, and territorial seizure. The Holocaust refers to the extermination of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II (Klymenko, 2020), and this event remains a powerful historical reference to illustrate the worst moral limits of human cruelty. Former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon (2013–2016) also admitted that Israel has committed war crimes and ethnic cleansing in Gaza (Al Jazeera, 2024c).

Israel frequently uses illegal weapons such as white phosphorus, causing indiscriminate attacks (Amnesty International, 2023) , and AI-based systems such as *Habsora* (*The Gospel*), a system that gives recommendations for airstrikes by matching machine identification with human verification. This system processes a variety of data sources, including drone footage, intercepted communications, surveillance, and patterns of movement and behavior of individuals or groups suspected to be Hamas (Davies et al., 2023). Israel also uses starvation as a weapon of war. Aid trucks sent to Gaza have been prevented entry by Israeli forces. Hundreds of trucks are delayed at the Rafah border crossing due to arbitrary security checks. In mid-March 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reported that all of Gaza's population faces "high levels of acute food insecurity". More than 70% of Gaza's 2.3 million residents face "catastrophic hunger" (Al Jazeera, 2024a).

According to a report by the Israeli Human Rights group B'Tselem, also released by ReliefWeb OCHA, Israel claims to warn civilians before carrying out attacks but ignores the lack of protection for them. Israel also claims to target military sites but has bombed thousands of civilian homes since the war began. Although Israel claims to follow the principle of proportionality, the deaths of thousands of children due to their attacks are referred to as "collateral damage." In July 2024, US doctors and nurses in Gaza estimated the death toll exceeded 92,000, more than double the 40,265 reported by the Palestinian Health Ministry as of August 22, 2024 (Devi, 2024). Therefore, the metaphorical expressions in Al-Jazeera articles formulate the conceptual key THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE.

The conceptual key THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE indicates a rhetoric of the devastating living conditions in the Gaza Strip. Israel's attacks and total sieges have created a food crisis as well as a shortage of clean water, medical supplies, and fuel in Gaza. The aid entering Gaza is insufficient, with less than one kilogram of food per person for an entire. Palestinians also face attacks when trying to gather food for their families. In addition, the lack of clean water, overcrowding in refugee camps, as well as sanitation and hygiene conditions in the camps have led to the rapid spread of diseases. Between October 7, 2023, and July 7, 2024, the WHO recorded 990,000 cases of acute respiratory infections, 574,000 cases of acute watery diarrhea, 107,000 cases of jaundice, and 12,000 cases of bloody diarrhea in Gaza, along with the first polio outbreak in 25 years (Mahase, 2024). Therefore, it can be said that life in the Gaza Strip has been ruined and has become a catastrophe for the Palestinians.

The conceptual key PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN demonstrates Israel's dehumanizing rhetoric toward the residents of the Gaza Strip. The use of animal metaphors for humans suggests degradation toward other humans by implicating that they are not human. Such language not only distorts reality but can also dull empathy and normalize brutality. The concept of dehumanization is often used to explain the extreme levels of cruelty and savagery experienced by the victims, particularly in the context of mass violence and armed conflict (Michel, 2023). Israel's dehumanization of the residents of Gaza is reflected in actions and policies that systematically disregard their humanity. The representation of the residents of Gaza as a threat or enemy regardless of their civilian status is often used to justify military attacks, economic blockades, and restrictions on access to necessities.

The conceptual key GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN indicates the rhetoric of the impact of Israel's large-scale aggressions on Gaza. The attacks by the Israeli forces for a year have claimed tens of thousands of lives, 70% of which are women and children, and wounded hundreds of thousands (Üngör, 2024) UNICEF even stated that Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children (UNICEF, 2023). The attacks have also forced more than 1.9 million residents of Gaza to flee, leaving areas in Gaza uninhabited. The environment of Gaza has also been damaged. Nearly 50% of trees and agricultural land have been destroyed; large-scale bombings and demolitions have contaminated the soil and groundwater, making it difficult for the agricultural sector to recover in the future (Sah & Dawas, 2024). Attacks on hospitals, schools, journalists,

universities, and other civilian infrastructures are efforts to make Gaza uninhabitable.

The four conceptual keys indicate that the Gaza Strip conflict has had a major impact on all aspects. Unlike some previous studies that used metaphors to construct a discourse of resistance, the metaphors in Al-Jazeera news articles reflect the reality of the situation in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. These metaphors reflect how Israel treats Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, framing it as a crime of genocide. They highlight the process of Israel's attacks, the depiction of life in the Gaza Strip, the dehumanization of Palestinians, and the impact of Israel's genocide on Gaza. Using metaphor is not merely a style of language, but also serves an ideological function in highlighting suffering, complicity, and the failure of global response. People tend to become emotional when discussing colonialism and imperialism due to the issues of exploitation, suffering, etc. that accompany these topics (Nartey, 2019), making metaphors in the context of Gaza powerful tools for evoking empathy and framing violence within a broader history of oppression. It is thus unsurprising that the UN described Gaza as a hell on earth due to its worsening conditions (UNICEF, 2023). Genocide is a fundamental characteristic of the structure of Israeli settler colonialism. Since 1947, Israeli colonialism has carried out relentless military, legal, geographical, economic, ideological, psychological, and cultural violence against the indigenous Palestinians (Abdo, 2024) The genocide in Gaza is inseparable from the history of settler colonialism in Palestine, continuing the destruction that began with the 1948 Nakba (Nijim, 2023).

Conclusion

This study has looked at the Al-Jazeera news articles that frequently use metaphors to describe the reality of Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip. The investigation shows that metaphors can provide deeper understanding and describe complex situations in a more understandable way. This study emphasizes the importance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) approach in uncovering the meanings of metaphors that emerge in news articles. Through the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and CMA, this study provides an explanation of the conceptual meanings derived from metaphorical expressions related to Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip, Palestine, as presented in Al Jazeera articles.

Based on the analysis results of the news related to the Gaza Genocide published in Al-Jazeera's news website, four metaphorical concepts were found: ISRAEL'S AGGRESSION GAZA'S GENOCIDE, THE GAZA GENOCIDE IS A CATASTROPHE, PALESTINIANS ARE NOT HUMAN, and GAZA IS A GHOST TOWN. These four concepts are identified from 21 metaphorical expressions. The four metaphorical concepts portray the schemas of social reality in the Gaza Strip using strong and emotional language. The image schemas that appear most often in this study are *identity, force*, *scale,* and *unity/multiplicity* which reflect the social reality of violence, oppression, and dehumanization. These image schemas help strengthen the message of the intensity and destructive impact of the genocide in Gaza.

The overall analysis indicates how metaphorical language shapes public perceptions of global events and plays a key role in framing social realities and influencing understanding and empathy. The four metaphorical concepts highlight the process of Israel's attacks, the depiction of life in the Gaza Strip, the dehumanization of Palestinians, and the impact of Israel's genocide on Gaza. These align with Israel's colonialism practices, which aim to control the region through occupation, land stealing, and the erasure of the identity and rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, Gaza has become the embodiment of hell on earth due to Israel's never-ending genocide. Through Al-Jazeera's coverage, these metaphors vividly illustrate the devastating effects of Israel's actions, portraying the conflict as not just a military issue but a human tragedy destroying a nation's lives and identity. There are still many metaphors related to the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip circulating in news articles, moreover as the genocide is still ongoing, there may be other metaphorical concepts emerging from the evolving social realities, which constitutes a

limitation of this study. Therefore, future studies can explore the impact of metaphor use on public perception and international responses to genocide to provide a more comprehensive understanding. They help readers grasp the complexity of the conflict and the suffering of Palestinians.

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