

UNRAVELLING GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE 2023 ISRAEL- HAMAS CONFLICT: A DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF TWEETS

Arisha Ghazal

MS scholar, COMSATS University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

E-Mail: arishaghazal294@gmail.com

Dr. Umara Shaheen

Assistant Professor (English), COMSATS University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

E-Mail: ushaheen@cuilahore.edu.pk

Asma Anwar

MS scholar, COMSATS University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

E-Mail: asmaanwararain@gmail.com

Abstract:

The current research focuses on examining the discursive strategies employed in Twitter discourse related to the 2023 Israel-Hamas war; social media content highlights and demonstrates how social, political, and historical contexts shape attitudes and frame ideologies. Using Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), the study examines leading figures of the discourse, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Joe Biden, as well as facilitators from reputable organizations and reactions from the public.

Utilizing four-level triangulatory analysis, the study examined how language on social media has been used to negotiate power dimensions, develop identities, and spread ideologies during global war. The focus of the study resides in examining linguistic elements that shape discursive strategies, in shaping public opinion by legitimizing existing ideologies, and creating moral binaries for competing parties. The critical analysis draws attention to how political figures utilize these linguistic strategies to produce a collective sense of belonging, moral legitimacy and superiority to dehumanize as well as indicating resisting actors. At the public discourse level, the study illustrates how social media platforms like Twitter amplify polarized views by providing a digital space to alter, restyle, and redefine geopolitical narratives in real time. The tweets from various users, categorized into pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, humanitarian concerns, and neutral positions, highlight how hashtags are utilized and how intensification or mitigation strategies are employed to express ideological attitudes more forcefully. The research reveals, through an analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, how historical grievances and cultural memory are continually recontextualized in ways that resonate with emotional appeals and political affiliations. The study enhances our understanding of how perceptions of conflict are shaped and how online discourse can reinforce ideological differences, particularly during a time of rapid geopolitical change.

Key Words: Israel-Palestine, discourse analysis, social media, polarization, Netanyahu, Biden, linguistic strategies, interdiscursivity, public perception.

Introduction:

The research acknowledges the controversial nature of conflicts and the role of social media in raising awareness during global events like the Israel-Hamas conflict, analyzed using Wodak's model. It aims to distinguish discursive strategies that influence public perception, focusing on metaphor, presuppositions, argumentations, triangulation of power, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. DHA, as a comprehensive framework of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), emphasizes historical context, problem-oriented inquiry, and multi-perspective analysis to critique power abuse and promote emancipation through discourse demystification (Wodak, 2015, p. 5; Reisigl, 2017, p. 45).

Background

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most contentious issues in the Middle East in 2023. The Gaza Strip became the epicenter of the conflict, with Israel and Hamas as the main parties involved. There were several rounds of violence, with the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack escalating tensions. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have become powerful sources of real-time discourse. They provide a space where millions express their opinions, shaping political perspectives, public sentiments, and media coverage on international crises (Abunahel, 2023 ; Mehrotra & Upadhyay, 2023). On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an attack with a blitz of at least 3,000 to 5,000 rockets, accompanied by 15,000 militants who invaded Israeli border towns across dozens of points. Within hours, the assault resulted in the killing of 1,400 people, and 240 civilians were taken hostage, marking the deadliest day for civilian life in Israel's 75-year history as a state. In response, Israel retaliated with a devastating crackdown on Gazans, which included land bombardments that cut off essential supplies from entering the Gaza Strip. In just a few weeks, approximately 17,000 Palestinian citizens in Gaza were killed, causing more deaths among Palestinians than at any time since the 1948 Arab-Israel war. Over 1.4 million people were displaced (Antonopoulos, 2023).

Problem Statement:

The extensive research on the Israel-Palestine conflict focuses on tweets utilizing Wodak's DHA (2009). There is meager literature available on the tweets of Israel and Palestine using the CDA framework. The studies by Khan et al. (2021) and Amaireh (2024) have utilized CDA to analyze anti-Muslim remarks on Twitter and highlight the news coverage of the Israel-Palestine crisis, respectively. However, they have not delved into the unique applicability of Wodak's model (2009) to understand the sociopolitical and historical context recognizing the complicated situation of the conflict. Previous research lacks a comprehensive examination of linguistic devices and investigation into how these affect public perceptions and opinions on Twitter. Therefore, this study applies DHA to uncover power narratives, discursive strategies, and ideological hostility by investigating tweets related to Israel-Hamas conflict.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To examine Twitter discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict to understand public opinion and perceptions
2. To analyze tweets from politicians, organizations, and the public, identifying discursive strategies and linguistic features to uncover how they shape perceptions and ideologies surrounding Israel-Hamas conflict.

Research Questions

The research aims to address the following research questions:

1. What discursive strategies and linguistic features utilized in tweets shape public opinion concerning the conflict?
2. How does analyzing the lexicogrammatical choices and discursive strategies in tweets by prominent politicians (e.g., Benjamin Netanyahu and Joe Biden) and reputable organizations (e.g., United Nations and European Nations) convey ideologies that shape public opinion and interpretation of this complex geopolitical issue?

Significance of the Study

This research examines online discourse, specifically tweets, related to Israel-Hamas conflict that took place on October 7, 2023. The primary focus of this study is to comprehend how media platforms cover conflict and analyze the association between power, ideology, and language (Amer, 2023).

This distinctive connection highlights how digital discourse, interpretation, and bias are executed during ongoing conflicts, emphasizing the powerful role of language in digital conflicts (Sultan & AlKhafaja,

2022).

Moreover, this research provides a comprehensive critical analysis and uncovers innovative opinions for a worldwide audience, specifically regarding the events that took place in the Middle East in October 2023. The study focuses on the ongoing conflict in 2023, analyzing tweets with relevant hashtags such as #FreePalestine, #GazaUnderAttack, #HamisTerrorist, and #IStandWithIsrael. The research employs Wodak's DHA, highlighting the broader sociopolitical and historical context when integrating written or spoken text. The scholarly work aims to distinguish discursive strategies that leverage public perception. Key linguistic features under observation include metaphors, presuppositions, argumentations, triangulation of power, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity in analyzing tweets (Sankaranarayanan et al., 2009). This unique association strengthens the significance of the research. Furthermore, this research discusses multifaceted conflict and how perceptions shape people's understanding of what is legitimate or unjust.

Literature Review

Relevant Studies on Social Media, Conflict, and Perception

This study investigates how Twitter discourse reflects worldwide perceptions of the 2023 Israel- Hamas conflict and how historical narratives and ideologies are amalgamated in these online media. The first part reviews relevant studies on social media discourse, representation of conflict, and public perception. Khan et al. (2021) analyzed selected tweets from Donald Trump, applying CDA to examine “us versus them” ideology and Islamophobic language. They emphasized the development of national identity and discursive strategies used by politicians. The scholars followed the work of Van Dijk (1998) and Wodak (2009), critically exploring how digital discourse shapes ideological attitudes. Wodak (2009) suggested that macro-strategies and DHA help in understanding the construction of identity and meaning in discourse. Hatem and Rijia (2023) explored Boris Johnson's political tweets during the Russia-Ukraine crisis, revealing how language frames ideology and crisis. These studies support that social media platforms like Twitter shape public discourse through real-time interaction.

Impact of Social Media Platforms on Conflict Representation

The second section evaluates how Twitter, as a blogging network, serves as an essential platform during geopolitical crises. Zahoor and Sadiq (2021) emphasized that social media allows symbolic resistance and emotional engagement often absent in mainstream news. Nguyen (2018) referred to Twitter as a tool for counter-hegemonic discourse. Yarchi and Boxman-Shabtai (2023) observed that the “image war” shifted to TikTok and Twitter during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, affecting youth and global reactions. The study analyzed digital responses during the 2023 war and how platforms polarized global narratives (Henri & Chandra, 2022).

CDA, DHA, and Theoretical Approaches in Online Discourse

This study is grounded in Wodak's DHA (2009), which evaluates linguistic patterns through sociopolitical and historical contexts. Wodak (2020) explains how far-right populist discourse has normalized exclusionary language. Amaisreh (2024) applied CDA to Al Jazeera's reporting of the 2021 conflict, revealing ideological bias in news. Fuchs (2021) discussed how algorithmic curation on Twitter fosters ideological bubbles. These scholars confirm DHA's relevance in uncovering power structures and discursive strategies in conflict discourse.

Historical and Ideological Perspectives in Media

This section examines how historical narratives shape ideological perceptions. In the study Mchedlidze (2019) examined the tweets during the Gaza and Israel war along with captured emotionally framed narratives. Maharani (2024) studied digital representation of Palestinian suffering, while Wahid (2024) focused on the continuation of neo-Orientalist representations of Muslims. These work associations with

memory, identity, and ideology in contextualizing through electronic platforms.

Social Media in Political Discourse

The political role of social media platforms, such as Twitter, has been discussed in this section. Wodak (2005) highlighted that political discourse is likely to pass through established control, namely that it is expedited by social media. The rise of public affectives that attracts through shared emotions explained by Papacharissi (2015). Alcaro and Bargués (2024) that connects online discourse to digital diplomacy. These studies present further support to highlight the significance of discourse in forming ideologies during political crises like Israel-Hamas conflict.

Literature Gaps and Current Contribution

However, previous studies have look into CDA and Twitter, which share a context in bringing the Wodak's DHA to the analysis of tweets related to Israel-Hamas conflict-the gap this study has filled. This work has utilized a triangulatory model of DHA to analyze the tweets by political authorities, organizations, and the public. In so doing, ideology, power, and discursive strategies have been uncovered to construct public perception.

Research Methodology Data Sources

This research primary data source of gathering data is from Twitter, through which the researcher systematically collected a comprehensive dataset of tweets by utterly reviewing online content from several users to gain a diverse range of perceptions related to the conflict. This strategy closely examines the context, tone, and language used in each tweet, pursuing the researcher to identify recurring themes and strategies arising within the discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The dataset accounts for public, political authorities, and organizations whose tweets employ hashtags such as #Israel, #Hamas, #Gaza, #FreePalestine, and #IStandWithIsrael. The time period for collecting the tweets is from October 7, 2023, to December 31, 2023. The period is selected to highlight immediate responses as well as the changing narrative in the days or even weeks after the onset of hostilities (Fawcett, 2016).

Data Collection

Data collection refers to the systematic gathering and measurement of information from various sources to gain insight into subjects, phenomena, or problems (Babbie, 2020). The researcher collected the tweets using the advanced search. For data analysis, the source selection was limited to English-language posts sourced from Google search. The primary source of data includes Twitter data (tweets, pictures) related to the Hamas-Israel conflict, and the secondary source interpreted the study insights derived from scholarly journal articles about the history of the Israel-Palestine issue.

The researcher first used Google Trends to acknowledge keywords that were most related to the Israel-Hamas conflict. The researcher manually selected samples of around 300 tweets, ensuring the relevancy of data for analysis.

The tweets from either political leaders or reputable organizations, and from citizens in general. The researcher noted the text, username, and assumed name as provided by the Twitter application. The data further indicated the time, date, and country, as well as the location of the message source.

Sampling

This collection of data is very useful in addressing research questions. The tweets gathering used purposive sampling. The selection included those kinds of tweets where discursive strategies were used and aligned with Wodak's Discourse-Historical model (Wodak, 2009). This purposive sampling is also referred to as judgmental sampling. This sampling provides a deliberate choice for researchers to reach the data according to its relevancy, objectives, and criteria of a study. In this study, the tweets were manually selected because they are relevant to the Israel-Hamas conflict classification. Olivetti de

França et al. (2023).

Scope of Twitter as a research platform

Twitter, the social media platform based in San Francisco, California, with over 500 million users, is the fifth most frequently visited global website. Twitter users can send and share direct messages, images, audio and video chatting, video posts, bookmark lists, and communities, which are features of X referred to as Twitter (Jenders et al., 2013). This study asserts that Twitter, as a microblogging website, serves as the ambivalent discursive protest spot for Israelis and Palestinians (Celik et al., 2024).

Recent literature on the significance of Twitter in reporting conflict acknowledges the complicated dynamics and implications of this medium for online discourse. In the previous research, Duncombe (2019) similarly stressed emotional mobility, revealing how emotions cause political discourse and escalate conflict. Laor (2022) suggests that for Israeli journalists, Twitter is an echo chamber that enhances existing power structures and diminishes pluralism.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is a contemporary linguistic field of study, but has gained popularity in recent years. CDA views language as social practice, and is essential for understanding the relationship between power and language (Fairclough, 2013). CDA can be a useful analytical tool for studying social media discourse, where the use of language can highlight how social conflicts that construct ideology and social structures are represented (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005). Language in CDA does not exist in isolation as it inherently reflects a worldview, beginning with social interactions and problems that individuals encounter in their lives (Baidoun, 2014). As Fairclough (2003) states, CDA is interested in discourse historically, which means it cannot be understood without context. Its main focus is on political and social concerns, especially the legitimization of power and ideology through language (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). This approach plays an important role in this study, studying the power and ideologies forecast in the media, their impact on public perceptions, and the actions justified within the conflict narrative (Bazzi, 2022).

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

DHA is an influential tool pioneered by Ruth Wodak for Critical Discourse Analysis and is effectively applied to complex issues as the Israel-Hamas conflict. This model is distinguished by its prominence on the setting, historical context, and social context, using interdisciplinary methods which gain insight into an all-inclusive framework for analyzing discourse (Wodak, 2009).

At its core, DHA emphasizes critique, power, and ideology. Critique within DHA involves a context-aware perspective and enhances self-reflection, allowing scholars to believe in their positionality within analysis (Wodak, 2009).

DHA applies text-immanent and socio-diagnostic critique to demystify manipulative discourse aspects using background knowledge (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005). Another prospective critique addresses improvements in the future by communicating language biases or barriers (Reisigl, 2013). DHA views the power as an asymmetric relationship between social actors revealed through language. It reveals how discourse is used to assert or resist control (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2009).

In this research, DHA is applied to tweets to reveal how ideologies of identity and injustice are constructed through language in Israel-Hamas conflict (Wodak, 2009). A key element of DHA is its triangulation of context on four levels: (1) immediate linguistic context, (2) intertextual and interdiscursive links, (3) institutional and social frames, and (4) broader sociopolitical history (Wodak, 2009; Krzyżanowski, 2010).

In this study, the approach of DHA is used to examine discursive events. DHA uses a variety of discursive strategies such as nomination (labeling), predication (stereotyping), argumentation (providing rational support), perceptiveness (taking account), and intensification/mitigation (magnifying or down-playing). As a result, DHA can help researchers analyze the way discourse is structured for social and political dimensions, that is, to legitimize the actions of the state (or state actors) or delegitimize the opponent (Wodak, 2009). In terms of Israel-Hamas conflict, the research could reconceptualize this as how political statements can be gained and reframed, across online platforms, resulting in changes in public perception (Huckin et al., 2012).

Data Analysis

Discursive Strategies Across Actors (Biden, Netanyahu, UN, EU)

Benjamin Netanyahu (Tweet: October 10, 2023 – 9:02 PM)

“Hamas is ISIS. And we will defeat them, just as the enlightened world defeated ISIS. This is a war between the children of light and the children of darkness – between humanity and the law of the jungle.”
Nomination & Predication – Hamas is nominally equated with ISIS, a globally recognized terrorist group, and predicated as “darkness” and “law of the jungle,” demonizing the adversary and justifying retaliation.

Argumentation (topos of history and threat) – references to defeating ISIS evoke a topos of historical precedent and invoke a topos of threat by portraying Hamas as a global danger.

Intensification / Mitigation – intensification occurs via binary oppositions (“children of light vs. children of darkness”) which heighten moral stakes and polarize the discourse.

Perspectivization – “we will defeat them” includes Netanyahu in the collective “we,” aligning himself with the “enlightened world” and constructing a moral in-group.**Joe Biden** (Tweet: October 10, 2023 – 11:17 PM) “We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel.”

Nomination & Predication – Israel is positioned as a unified political entity deserving of solidarity. The verb “stand with” predicates the U.S.’s unwavering support.

Argumentation (topos of responsibility and threat) – repetition implies moral duty to support Israel amidst perceived threat, constructing a defensive stance.

Intensification / Mitigation – repetition of “We stand with Israel” intensifies the commitment and urgency of support.

Perspectivization – the use of “we” aligns the speaker with national and allied sentiment, reinforcing collective identity and shared purpose.

European Union (Tweet: October 9, 2023 – 8:33 PM)

“Indiscriminate attacks on civilians are war crimes. The EU is firm and united in condemning them.”

Nomination & Predication – civilian casualties are nominated, and the term “war crimes” predicates criminality, placing blame while avoiding naming a perpetrator.

Argumentation (topos of law and humanity) – relies on international legal norms to justify condemnation and frame the EU’s position as legally and morally grounded.

Intensification / Mitigation – “firm and united” intensifies the EU’s stance, stressing both clarity and cohesion in response.

Perspectivization – by invoking international law, the tweet adopts a neutral legal perspective rather than aligning with any specific national interest.

United Nations (UN Secretary-General António Guterres) (Tweet: October 24, 2023 – 10:58 PM)

“It is important to recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The Palestinian people

have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation.”

Nomination & Predication – the occupation is nominated as “suffocating,” predicating oppression and victimhood of Palestinians.

Argumentation (topos of history and justice) – the phrase “did not happen in a vacuum” introduces historical context, suggesting that the present violence is rooted in long-term grievances.

Intensification / Mitigation – “56 years” and “suffocating” intensify the perceived severity of the occupation while also mitigating Hamas’s actions by contextualizing them.

Perspectivization – “It is important to recognize...” presents the statement as an appeal for balance, distancing the speaker while guiding reader interpretation.

Discursive Strategies Across Actors (Biden, Netanyahu, UN, EU)

Discursive Strategy	Description	Biden Example	Netanyahu Example	UN Example	EU Example
Nomination	Names social actors, groups, or countries to establish in-groups and out-groups.	Biden uses terms like “terrorists ” for Hamas, establishing them as a hostile out-group.	Netanyahu labels Hamas as “barbaric terrorists,” emphasizing a clear out-group.	The UN refers to “all parties” and “civilians” to avoid taking sides, promoting neutrality.	The EU uses “partners” and “neighbors” to foster an inclusive and diplomatic tone, avoiding divisive language.
Predication	Assigns qualities (positive or negative) to groups, individuals, or actions.	Biden calls Hamas’s actions “sheer evil,” attributing highly negative traits to legitimize strong countermeasures.	Netanyahu frequently uses “murderous ” to describe Hamas, positioning Israel as morally superior.	The UN predicates terms like “indiscriminate rocket fire” as “violations of humanitarian law,” assigning negative traits to violent acts.	The EU describes violent actions as “unacceptable,” encouraging a non-violent, positive solution.
Argumentation (Topoi)	Uses common themes or arguments (topoi) to justify or legitimize certain actions or views.	Biden applies the topos of “self-defense” to justify U.S. support for Israel’s actions.	Netanyahu uses the topos of “existential threat” to portray Israel’s military actions as essential for survival.	The UN uses the topos of “humanitarianism,” stressing the need to protect civilians under international law.	The EU applies the topos of “peace,” justifying dialogue as necessary for regional stability.
Intensification	Amplifies certain aspects to emphasize	Biden intensifies by stating, “We cannot let terrorists	Netanyahu intensifies by comparing Hamas to ISIS,	The UN uses phrases like “severe humanitarian impact” to highlight the	The EU uses terms like “urgent need for dialogue” to stress the

	urgency or severity.	like Hamas win,” emphasizing the stakes of U.S. support for Israel.	heightening the sense of immediate danger to Israel.	urgency of protecting civilians.	importance of a diplomatic solution.
Mitigation	Softens language to downplay or reduce perceived hostility or severity.	Biden emphasizes support for civilians in Gaza, softening his stance by acknowledging their plight separately from Hamas.	Netanyahu’s use of “we didn’t want this war” mitigates Israel’s actions by portraying them as reluctant participants	The UN employs phrases like “calls upon all parties” and “urges restraint,” avoiding direct blame while promoting de-escalation.	The EU’s language often “encourages dialogue” and “supports peaceful solutions,” maintaining a diplomatic tone to avoid taking sides.
perspectivization	The strategy of positioning one’s viewpoint to frame events, actors, or actions in a specific light, guiding audience interpretation and emphasizing particular narratives or values.	Biden’s statement, “We cannot—and will not—let terrorists like Hamas and tyrants like Putin win,” positions the conflict as part of a global battle between democracy and tyranny, situating the U.S. as a leader in upholding freedom.	Netanyahu invokes historical figures like “Joshua and Judah Maccabee” to align the IDF’s actions with a legacy of heroic defenders, thereby portraying the conflict as part of Israel’s enduring fight for survival and self-determination.	The UN frequently highlights “indiscriminate rocket fire” as violations against “international humanitarian law,” prioritizing a balanced approach that stresses the need to protect civilians and respect legal standards on both sides.	The EU uses language like “urgent need for dialogue” and “constructive solutions,” framing its perspective around diplomatic solutions and regional peace, thereby maintaining a neutral stance to encourage mediation and de-escalation.

DHA Levels of Context: A Triangularly Analysis of Netanyahu, Biden, UN and EU Tweets

President **Joe Biden's** tweet on October 18, 2023, at 4:45 PM reads: "We will not walk away. We will continue to stand with Israel. We also must ensure life-saving humanitarian assistance reaches innocent Palestinians in Gaza."

Immediate Co-text

The phrase "We will not walk away" reflects a strong intensification strategy, reaffirming commitment. "Stand with Israel" signals a clear alliance, while "innocent Palestinians" uses positive predication, portraying empathy. Through nomination, Israel is legitimized as a state actor, and Hamas is implicitly framed as the aggressor. The tweet attempts to balance support for Israel with humanitarian concern.

Intertextual/Interdiscursive Level

The message draws on past U.S. presidential discourses, especially post-9/11, maintaining the U.S.-Israel alliance. It echoes broader narratives about terrorism and support for democratic allies.

Social/Institutional Context

Biden speaks as the U.S. President, targeting both domestic and global audiences. The tweet provides reassurance to Israel while acknowledging criticism by addressing Palestinian civilians.

Historical/Political Context

The tweet follows the October 7, 2023 Hamas-Israel escalation. It reflects longstanding U.S. policy aligning with Israel while trying to address global concerns over civilian casualties.

Israeli PM **Netanyahu** tweeted on October 18, 2023, at 1:02 AM: "An analysis of IDF operational systems indicates that a barrage of rockets was fired by terrorists in Gaza, passing near the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza at the time it was hit... Islamic Jihad is responsible for the failed rocket launch which hit the hospital in Gaza."

Immediate Co-text

Nomination is used with labels like "terrorists" and "Islamic Jihad." Predication places direct blame on them for the hospital blast. Perspectivization is evident through referencing "IDF operational systems" and "multiple intelligence sources," reinforcing credibility.

Intertextual/Interdiscursive Level The statement echoes prior Israeli military narratives from 2014 and 2008, attributing civilian harm to militant actions and relying on intelligence reports to justify Israeli innocence (Khalidi, R. 2020).

Social/Institutional Context

As Prime Minister and military leader, Netanyahu addresses national and international audiences, defending Israel's image and mitigating diplomatic fallout.

Historical/Political Context

Amid backlash over the Gaza hospital incident, the tweet forms part of Israel's defensive discourse, shifting responsibility to militants and maintaining legitimacy.

EU Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** tweeted on October 16, 2023, at 12:14 AM: "There is no justification for Hamas' heinous act of terror... This is why we are tripling our humanitarian aid for Palestinians in need."

Immediate Co-text

The term “heinous act of terror” constructs strong predication against Hamas. The nomination strategy distinguishes civilians as “victims of Hamas.” “Tripling our humanitarian aid” utilizes intensification to amplify moral action.

Intertextual/Interdiscursive Level

This tweet reflects the EU’s traditional stance of supporting Israel’s right to defense while advocating humanitarian assistance. It resonates with previous EU conflict statements.

Social/Institutional Context

Speaking as EU Commission President, von der Leyen addresses European and global audiences, maintaining diplomatic balance and ethical positioning.

Historical/Political Context Aligned with EU’s two-state support and humanitarian values, the tweet continues efforts to manage strategic relations while promoting civilian welfare.

UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** tweeted on October 19, 2023, at 2:11 PM: "My appeal today from the Middle East: Immediate, unrestricted & sustained humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza... Immediate & unconditional release of all hostages..."

Immediate Co-text

Repetition of “Immediate” three times exemplifies intensification and dramatization, underlining urgency. Nomination of “civilians in Gaza” and “hostages” reflects a humanitarian tone. Modal verbs like “must” imply moral obligation.

Intertextual/Interdiscursive Level

This reflects consistent UN humanitarian appeals during past crises. It connects with prior Security Council resolutions and ceasefire efforts.

Social/Institutional Context

As UN Secretary-General, Guterres speaks from a multilateral platform to various actors, reinforcing the UN’s neutral and peacekeeping role.

Historical/Political Context

In response to criticism over UN inaction, this tweet reasserts its humanitarian commitment and advocates for de-escalation.

DHA Levels of Context: A Triangulatory Analysis of Netanyahu and Biden Tweets
(Examples)

DHA Level	Description	Examples
1. Immediate Language (Text-Internal Co-text)	Examines word choice, syntax, and rhetorical strategies directly in the text.	Netanyahu uses terms like "murderous Hamas" to create a hostile image of Hamas, intensifying the perception of threat. Biden employs phrases like "sheer evil" and "tyrants like Putin," creating a strong emotional appeal in his discourse.
2. Intertextual and Interdiscursive Relationships	Analyzes how different discourses interact, drawing on previous events, historical references, or other texts.	Netanyahu references historical figures like Joshua and Judah Maccabee, linking contemporary IDF actions to Israel's past heroes, thereby legitimizing their actions as part of a historical continuum.
3. Extralinguistic Social and Institutional Frames	Considers the broader societal and institutional context shaping the discourse.	Biden's references to Hamas as "terrorists" align with U.S. foreign policy on terrorism, situating his discourse within the larger context of U.S. anti-terrorism and pro-Israel policy.
4. Sociopolitical	Focuses on the wider historical and geopolitical factors	Biden's advocacy for a two-state solution reflects long-standing U.S. foreign policy aims, while Netanyahu's language constructs an "us vs. them" dichotomy,

DHA Levels of Context: A Triangulatory Analysis of UN and EU Tweets (Examples)

DHA Level	Description	EU Discourse Example	UN Discourse Example
1. Immediate Language (Text-Internal Co-text)	Focuses on the choice of words, syntax, and rhetorical strategies directly in the text	The EU frequently uses terms like "dialogue" and "peaceful resolution," reinforcing a neutral stance.	the UN refers to "indiscriminate rocket fire" and "violations of humanitarian law," directly condemning aggressive actions without aligning with one side, upholding a neutral tone.
2. Intertextual and Interdiscursive Relationships	Analyzes references to historical events, other texts, or discourses that interact with the current discourse.	EU statements often reference previous peace agreements, like the Oslo Accords, positioning their current stance as consistent with historical efforts for peace.	The UN draws on international humanitarian law, specifically citing the Geneva Conventions, to contextualize its stance on protecting civilians amid conflict.

3. Extralinguistic Social and Institutional Frames	Examines the influence of societal and institutional contexts shaping the discourse.	The EU positions itself as a global mediator and supporter of human rights, framing its discourse within institutional values of diplomacy and neutrality.	The UN emphasizes its role as an international body committed to peace, which shapes its balanced discourse that seeks accountability from all parties in conflict without favoring sides.
4. Sociopolitical and Historical Context	Considers the historical and geopolitical factors influencing the discourse.	The EU's discourse is influenced by its commitment to regional stability, with language that supports a two-state solution and emphasizes diplomatic solutions.	The UN's discourse reflects a commitment to upholding international peace and stability, with references to past conflicts and the importance of upholding international law to prevent escalation.

Critique, power and Ideology in Israel Hamas conflict Twitter Discourse

The Twitter discourse surrounding the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict unveils how power and ideology are discursively exercised and contested (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Political elites like Biden, Netanyahu, von der Leyen, and Guterres employ discursive strategies such as nomination, predication, and intensification to legitimize their ideological positions—often portraying Israel as a victim of terrorism and Hamas as the aggressor (Reisigl, M. 2017). These strategies reinforce ideological alignments and power structures, simplifying public understanding and legitimizing actions in a way that serves the interest of those in power (Alnwihe & AlAbbas, 2023).

Reception Discourse:

Biden's Statement and Immediate Public Reaction Biden's tweet (18 Oct 2023) reiterating support for Israel while pledging aid to “innocent Palestinians” triggered a polarized response: supportive replies intensified alignment — “Thank you for standing with Israel, Mr President” — whereas critical voices employed predication to accuse the U.S. of “double standards” and “funding war crimes,” thus immediately contesting the moral legitimacy of the presidential stance.

Humanitarian Concern & Calls for Ceasefire

Two highly-liked comments center humanitarian discourse: “Children in Gaza need water more than words – declare a ceasefire now!” and “Civilians are not collateral; open humanitarian corridors.” Both use intensification and moral-obligation models (“need,” “must”) to problematize violence and foreground victim nomination, thereby reframing the conflict around civilian suffering.

Public Mobilization & Calls to Action Comments also operationalise online mobilisation: “Email your representatives – demand an immediate arms embargo” and the hashtag cluster “#CeasefireNow #StopArmingIsrael” galvanise collective agency. These performative directives demonstrate how reception discourse moves beyond observation, moving spectators to actors and accountability built into institutions.

Ideological Framing of the Conflict Counter ideological frames emerge pro-Israel commenters use

collateralized metaphors — “wipe out terror nests” — while pro-Palestinian voices use colonial analogies — “this is apartheid.” These competing nominations and metaphors reproduce and contest hegemonic narratives, providing evidence of Twitter’s role as a battlefield of meaning-making.

Role of the International Community & Calls for Accountability

Finally, reception discourse extends beyond binary blame, invoking international law: “Invoke the ICC – war crimes must be prosecuted” and “UN resolutions mean nothing without enforcement.” Such utterances assign agency to transcendental institutions, demanding structural accountability and thereby casting the conflict within a global justice framework.

Distribution of Reaction Types in (%)

Reaction Type	Percentage of Tweets (%)	Example Theme/ Message
Humanitarian Concern	30%	Call for immediate ceasefire and protection of civilians.
Public Mobilization	25%	Urging Participation on in global protests and strikes for ceasefire and justice.
International Accountability	15%	Criticism of international inaction and calls for enforcement of international law.
Condemnation of Violence	10%	Strong condemnation of violence by both sides, especially targeting civilians.
Ideological Framing	10%	Framing the conflict in terms of occupation, apartheid, and justice for Palestinians.
Support for Peace	5%	Advocacy for long-term peace talks and a negotiated solution.
Mobilizing Collective Action	5%	Calls for immediate collective action, strikes, and demonstrations for a ceasefire.

Findings:

Strategic Construction of Binary Identities

The discourse surrounding the conflict often constructs binary identities through nomination and predication strategies. This reflects an "us vs. them" framework common in polarized narratives (Van Dijk, 2017), simplifying complex realities and reinforcing ideological divides.

Political Leaders' Discursive Strategies

Netanyahu's tweet uses nomination and cultural references (e.g., Yehoshua ben Nun, Judah Maccabee) to legitimize the IDF's actions, drawing on historical symbolism to bolster national identity (Van Dijk, 2006). Biden's language frames Hamas as "terrorists" and Israel as a "democratically," mirroring longstanding U.S. foreign policy stances and constructing a moral binary. This reflects how power asymmetries in global discourse may marginalize opposing voices (Zartman, 2007).

International Organizations and Geopolitical Framing

The UN and EU frame the conflict through humanitarian and security lenses. Guterres emphasizes humanitarian aid and neutrality, though institutional constraints limit the UN's influence (Bouris, 2022). Von der Leyen's EU stance supports Israel's security while sidelining Palestinian narratives, reflecting Western geopolitical priorities (Chen & Ferrara, 2023).

Social Media Amplification and Hashtags

Hashtags like #FreePalestine and #IStandWithIsrael serve to mobilize opinion and intensify ideological polarization (Zappavigna, 2012; Richardson, 2017). These digital symbols help construct collective identities and reflect online activism (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Omena et al., 2020).

Ideological Spectrum of Public Posts

Public tweets are often classified as pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, humanitarian, or neutral. Each category employs distinct linguistic strategies—e.g., predication and nomination—to influence perception (Chouliarakis, 2008).

DHA as an Analytical Lens

Using DHA enabled analysis of historical references and ideological strategies, such as Netanyahu's invocation of Jewish legacy to legitimize current military actions. This demonstrates how DHA exposes embedded power structures (Hall et al., 2024; Brinkmann, 2019).

Media Influence on Policy and Public Opinion

Social media acts as a powerful influence on public perception and political communication, often reinforcing polarized views (Couldry, 2012; Castells, 2007). Tweets by political leaders help sustain ideological support while public comments reflect contestation.

The Power of Language and Digital Diplomacy

Discursive strategies on Twitter turn geopolitical realities into simplified moral binaries, reinforcing ideological divisions and shaping conflict narratives (González-Esteban et al., 2024, p. 49). Language becomes a tool for legitimization and identity formations (Fairclough, 1992).

Discussion:

Discussion of Discursive Strategies in Biden and Netanyahu Tweets

Both Biden and Netanyahu employ nomination, predication, intensification, and perspectivization to frame the conflict in binary moral terms. Biden's repetition of "We stand with Israel" constructs unwavering solidarity, predicating Israel as a democratically while labeling Hamas as "terrorists," thereby reinforcing a moral boundary between freedom and oppression. Netanyahu, by equating Hamas with ISIS and invoking historical figures such as Yehoshua ben Nun and Judah Maccabee, strengthens Israeli national identity and legitimises military action as a continuation of historical defense. These linguistic choices convert complex geopolitics into simplified moral binaries of light versus darkness, mobilising domestic and international support (Farkas & Xia, 2023; Ramdhani et al., 2023).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen adopt humanitarian and legal framing. Guterres highlights "56 years of suffocating occupation," employing intensification and the topos of history to contextualise violence and advocate for civilian protection. Von der Leyen condemns "heinous acts of terror" while stressing Israel's right to self-defence, using nomination and predication to balance legal condemnation with geopolitical alignment. Both actors influence international law-based argumentation for neutral positioning, though their language illustrates tensions between humanitarianism and political realities.

Discussion of Discursive Strategies in Biden, Netanyahu, UN, EU Twitter Discourse: A Four-Level DHA Triangulatory Analysis

Through four contextual layers, all actors extend their use of discourse to legitimise positions: (1) Immediate co-text shows heightened moral differences; (2) Intertextual layers draw on previous conflicts and resolutions; (3) Institutional components expose power inequalities shaping rhetorical positions; (4) wider social-political frames contextualise tweets within global alliances. This triangulation illustrates how the practical elements of nomination, predication, argumentation, and intensification intersect to produce hegemonic discourses, while selective reduction mitigates accountability and sustains geopolitical interests (Joseph, 2006).

Discussion of Reception Discourse

Twitter public posts seek to amplify and challenge dominant authoritative narratives with hashtags (#CeasefireNow, #FreePalestine) and moral appeals ("Children in Gaza need water, not more words"). Intensification strategies ("war crimes", "genocide") dramatize suffering that goes unnoticed while mitigation strategies honor state violence through justifiable action. When they call on identifications of in-group/out-group reminders polarize discourse and reference intertextual differences that push against historical grievances sustain ideological divides. Acts of reception discourse manages as a site of digital contest where power dynamics are negotiated and representation of the conflict is present in the sphere of the public as revealed on social media (Massa & Anzera, 2023).

Conclusion:

Political leaders, such as Netanyahu and Biden, employed historical memory and representatives of ideals to legitimate their state's existence, while institutions like the UN and EU invoked humanitarian discourse shaped by geopolitical events (Pešičková, 2023). Public discourse that

was proliferated and propelled through hashtags and performative comments also provided the space to challenge and reshape dominant narratives. Overall, this research supports the concept that language on digital platforms is not neutral, but a significant source of discourse informing perception, policy, and power (Raza, Hakimi, & Malik, 2023).

Future Directions and Recommendations

The research examined Twitter discourse regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict (7 October - December 2023) within Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA) triangulatory framework, identified how the elements of nomination, predication, intensification, and mitigation shape public perceptions. In future this research recommends that researchers take the triangulatory analysis described in this dissertation to other moments of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and use quantitative tools - tweet frequency, sentiment analysis, and engagement analysis - to capture how narratives are evolved over time. The research recommend that researchers could more broadly explore consideration of social media narratives across platforms (e.g., Facebook, X), in a longer time frame, involving discourse across different regions (e.g., Middle East, Asia, US, Europe), the role of 'big voices' or influential voices in influencing public discourse, and algorithmic enhancements to increase the visibility of narratives examined. Engaging in this wider range of online data would inform a more comprehensive understanding of how social media can influence ideological stances and shape or alter public perceptions.

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