

The Role of Language in Understanding Conflict

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7160/KS.2022.190205>

Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech influence our understanding of conflict. It is argued that metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech can do so in several ways: They can portray different sides of a conflict in either positive or negative light, downplay the seriousness of violence and conflict in our minds, and dehumanize people. Because of the use of such language, violence can be normalized. Yet metaphors can constitute new/different ways of looking at (and “manufacture” our perception of) conflict, war, violence, and other related concepts that hold the keys to building empathy for others.

Keywords

metaphor, generative metaphor, patterns of speech, categorization, euphemism, language, conflict.

Introduction

Recently our realities have turned upside down with a global pandemic, which rapidly changed our lives and shifted our ways of thinking. Many people had to start thinking more about serious topics such as health or even death. While thinking about the safety of our families and friends, it is easier to forget about the suffering of others. It is also quite difficult to realize that for many people around the world COVID-19 is not the most imminent threat. Right now, international conflicts and wars occur in many areas of the world. Recent escalations include for instance the situations in Afghanistan, Palestine, Ethiopia, Yemen, and many others. Even-though people care about international relations and conflicts, for an extensive part of the world’s population, some of these regions are very distant. How can we learn about what is currently happening thousands of kilometers from where we live? For the past couple of decades, the media has played a crucial role in providing information to people almost anywhere in the world. Often times, the media are the only source of information that we can reach. We can listen to interviews, speeches, or some forms of expertise. In other words, our options are very limited, and it is precisely for this reason that we should think

critically about the information that we are being provided. It is argued in this paper that one way to address this issue is to look at the language that is being used and its influence on perception. The 2021 outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians is used as a case study to explore how can the type of language used in media coverage and speeches of elites shape our understanding of wars and violent conflicts and the solutions we see as a result.

Relevance to International Peace and Conflict Resolution

Later in the text, the terms generative metaphor, source domain and target domain and the concept of ‘SEEING-AS’ are explained. Critical analysis of distinctive patterns of speech such as generative metaphors and their source domains and target domains is significant to the field of peace and conflict resolution because it allows us to see “realities” in new ways. By using the concept of ‘SEEING-AS’ we are able uncover the limitless potential of our perception, start to think about conflicts differently, and free our imagination in order to develop new means of conflict resolution. It also helps us explore hidden meanings and uncover potential manipulation in media and speeches of important stakeholders.

Literature Review

Several authors have written about the use of metaphors in relation to war and conflict. Perhaps the most prominent academic in the field of metaphors is George Lakoff. His article *Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf* analyses the different “war metaphors” used by media, politicians, and other elites about the first Gulf War. He introduces metaphors such as war as politics, politics as business, state as person, war as violent crime, war as a competitive game, America as hero, and many others.¹

Erin Steuter’s and Deborah Wills’ book called *At War with Metaphor: Media, Propaganda, and Racism in the War and Terror*, provides the reader with insights on the connection between metaphor and war, it follows up with the concepts such as dehumanization, animal metaphors, or orientalism. It also discusses the relationship between metaphors and propaganda.²

¹ LAKOFF, George. *Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf*. *Journal of Cognitive Semiotics*. 2012, 4(2), 5–19.

² STEUTER, Erin a DEBORAH WILLS. *At war with metaphor: Media, propaganda, and racism in the War on Terror*. 1. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009.

Farah Sabbah³ “analyzes and compares the use of conceptual metaphors of war found in 90 news reports taken from The New York Times and the Lebanese newspaper The Daily Star” (p. 155). In Sabbah’s work, “the news reports are analyzed using conceptual metaphors of war and more specifically their metaphorical entailment identified by Lakoff as [THE FAIRY TALE OF THE JUST WAR]” (p. 155).

In 2020, the author Daniel King, published an article called *How Language Is Deployed as a Weapon of War*, in which he focused on metaphors and war euphemisms such as defense, collateral damage, casualty, or controlled escalation⁴.

Bahaa-Eddin Mazid explored “the use of euphemism (and dysphemism) in the Iraq War discourse as found in a small number of relevant documents and news reports”⁵. Mazid describes the beautification of one side and demonization of the other through the use of euphemisms⁶. Another text that explores euphemism in the context of war was written by Nurkhamitov, Zagladina, and Shakhnina in 2019. The authors⁷ “examined the concept and the essence of euphemism and tried to reveal various military-political euphemisms widely used in press”. They analyzed articles from several news sources such as for instance the New York Times, the Sun, the Telegraph, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

Some other texts that have been published about topics relating to this thesis follow. For instance, Daniela Dimitrova and Jesper Strömbäck investigated the framing of the Iraq War in the elite newspapers in Sweden and the USA⁸. In his article called *The War Metaphor in Public Policy: Some Moral Reflections*, James F. Childress focuses on the morality of using war as a metaphor⁹.

³ SABBAAH, Farah. Conceptual Metaphors of War in News Reports Covering the 2003 Invasion of Iraq by The New York Times and The Daily Star. *Papers from the Lancaster University Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics & Language Teaching 2010*. 2010, **5**, 155-172.

⁴ KING, Daniel. How language is deployed as a weapon of war. *Mother Jones* [online]. Mother Jones, 2020 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2020/02/how-language-is-deployed-as-a-weapon-of-war/>

⁵ MAZID, Bahaa-Eddin. Euphemism and Dysphemism in the War-on-Iraq Discourse. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*. 2004, **5**, p. 171.

⁶ MAZID, Bahaa-Eddin, *c. d.*

⁷ NURKHAMITOV, Marsel Radikovich, Elena Nikolaevna ZAGLADINA and Irina Zinov'evna SHAKHNINA. Special aspects of military and political euphemisms usage in modern English press. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. 2019, **8**(2), 83–87.

⁸ DIMITROVA, Daniela V. a Jesper STRÖMBÄCK. Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers. *Media, War & Conflict*. 2008, **1**(2), 203–220.

⁹ CHILDRESS, James F. The War Metaphor in Public Policy: Some Moral Reflections. In: FICARROTTA, Carl J. a . *The Leader's Imperative: Ethics, Integrity, and Responsibility*. 1. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2001, s. 181-197. ISBN 1-55753-184-6.

Theoretical Framework

Metaphor

The key concept in this paper is metaphor and how it shapes our understanding and the solutions we see. What is a metaphor? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines metaphor as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them”¹⁰.

When discussing the history of the concept of metaphor, Andrew Ortony started with Aristotle. He emphasized that “Aristotle was interested in the relationship of metaphor to language and the role of metaphor in communication”. Ortony also suggested that “Aristotle believed that metaphors were implicit comparisons based on the principles of analogy and that their use was primarily ornamental”. He concludes his remarks by highlighting that “Aristotle thought that it is necessary to be wary of the ambiguity and obscurity inherent in metaphors, which often masquerade as definitives”¹¹.

In their text from 2008, Ma and Liu introduce the main approaches to metaphor. One of them is the “traditional view.” The authors explain that “traditionally, metaphor is considered as part of figures of speech, being used mainly in poetry and that it means saying one thing in terms of something else”¹².

According to Davidson “metaphor is the dreamwork of language and, like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator”¹³. He is also of the opinion that “metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight”¹⁴. He sees metaphor as “a legitimate device not only in literature but in science, philosophy, and the law; being effective in praise and abuse, prayer and promotion, description and prescription”¹⁵.

Ortony distinguishes between two approaches to metaphor, constructivist, and non-constructivist. He argued that “while the constructivist approach seems to entail an important

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021

¹¹ ORTONY, Andrew. *Metaphor and thought*. 2. Illinois: Cambridge University Press, 1993. ISBN 9781139173865., p. 3.

¹² MA, Lin and Aihua LIU. A Universal Approach to Metaphors. *Intercultural Communication Studies*. 2008, 17(1), p. 260.

¹³ DAVIDSON, Donald. What Metaphors Mean. *Critical Inquiry*. 1978, 5(1), p. 31.

¹⁴ DAVIDSON, Donald. *c. d.*, p. 47.

¹⁵ DAVIDSON, Donald. *c. d.*, p. 33.

role for metaphor in both language and thought, the non-constructivist position treats metaphors as rather unimportant, deviant, and parasitic on ‘normal usage’¹⁶.

Another distinction of approaches suggested by Ortony are two views of metaphors: microscopic and macroscopic. According to Ortony¹⁷ “in the microscopic approach, the arguments and analyses tend to be based on examples in which metaphors are of words or (sometimes) sentences, whereas the macroscopic approach is more concerned with systems of metaphors, or metaphoric or analogical models”^{18,19}.

Written by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in 1980, one of the most influential books about metaphors is arguably *Metaphors We Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson suggested that “for most people metaphor is a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”. But the authors claimed that “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but thought and action”²⁰. What does that mean? It seems that most people think of a metaphor as something that does not occur very often in an “everyday” language. But Lakoff and his colleague argued that the opposite is the truth. Not only that metaphor occurs in our communication more often than we thought, but we also think and act “metaphorically” or in metaphors²¹.

“Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 4).

If we return to Ortony’s text, we can see that he proposes another two understandings of metaphor. According to him “the first is the idea that something new is created when a metaphor is understood and the second is that metaphors afford different ways of viewing the world”²². The second remark relates to another term that needs to be discussed. It is called the generative metaphor.

Generative Metaphor

The term generative metaphor is most often associated with Donald A. Schön. He proposed that “metaphor refers both to a certain kind of product – a perspective or frame, a way of looking at things – and to a certain kind of process – a process by which new perspectives on

¹⁶ ORTONY, Andrew, *c. d.*, p. 2.

¹⁷ ORTONY, Andrew, *c. d.*

¹⁸ ORTONY, Andrew, *c. d.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ GEERTZ, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. 1. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973. ISBN 465-03425-X.

²⁰ LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON. *Metaphors we live by*. 1. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980. ISBN 0-226-46801-1, p. 3.

²¹ LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON. *c. d.*, p. 3.

²² ORTONY, Andrew, *c. d.*, p. 5.

the world come to existence”²³. The term frame will be discussed later in the text. At this moment it is necessary to discuss the word “generative” and see how metaphors can be generative. Schön explains generativity as “nothing less than the question of how we come to see things in new ways”²⁴. He introduces the expression “SEEING-AS” when referring to generative metaphors. According to Schön “generative metaphor is a special case – special version of ‘SEEING-AS’ by which we gain new perspectives on the world”²⁵.

In a more recent text, authors Ma and Liu argue that “metaphors are generative because the structure of human brain is the same”²⁶. Similarly, like Schön, Barret & Cooperrider see generative metaphor as “an invitation to see anew, to facilitate the learning of new knowledge, to create new scenarios of future action, and to overcome areas of rigidity”²⁷. The use of generative metaphors can be beneficial. Schön explains that “it becomes an interpretative tool for the critical analysis of social policy”²⁸.

Source Domain and Target Domain

To engage with the concepts of source domain and target domain, we need to first mention the term conceptual metaphor, which is connected to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. They described it by using examples from our everyday lives. One of the examples of conceptual metaphor that the authors provided was ARGUMENT IS WAR²⁹. They explained that we often think and talk about arguments in terms of war, and we actually win and lose them - similarly like we win or lose wars.³⁰

Another author that examined the idea of conceptual metaphor was Zoltán Kövecses. He argued that “in the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain, or in another words a conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another”³¹. According to Kövecses “the two domains that participate in conceptual metaphor have special names - the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to

²³ SCHÖN, Donald A. Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy. In: ORTONY, Andrew. *Metaphor and Thought*. 2. Illinois: Cambridge University Press, 1993, s. 137–163. ISBN 9780521405614, p. 137

²⁴ SCHÖN, Donald A. *c. d.*, p. 138.

²⁵ SCHÖN, Donald A., *c. d.*, p. 138.

²⁶ MA, Lin and Aihua LIU, *c. d.*, p. 265.

²⁷ MA, Lin and Aihua LIU, *c. d.*, p. 224.

²⁸ SCHÖN, Donald A. *c. d.*, p. 138–139.

²⁹ LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON. *Metaphors we live by*. 1. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980. ISBN 0-226-46801-1, p. 4

³⁰ LAKOFF, George and Mark JOHNSON, *c. d.*, p. 40.

³¹ KÖVECSES, Zoltán. *Metaphor a practical introduction*. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-19-514510-0, p. 4.

understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain”³². In another words Kövecses (2002) proclaimed that “the target domain is the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain”³³.

Nordquist stated that “the terms target and source were introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980)”. His understanding is that “in a conceptual metaphor, the target domain is the quality or experience described by or identified with the source domain”³⁴.

Both Lakoff and Kövecses used the example ARGUMENT IS WAR which is a conceptual metaphor. In this sense argument is the target domain and war is the source domain³⁵.

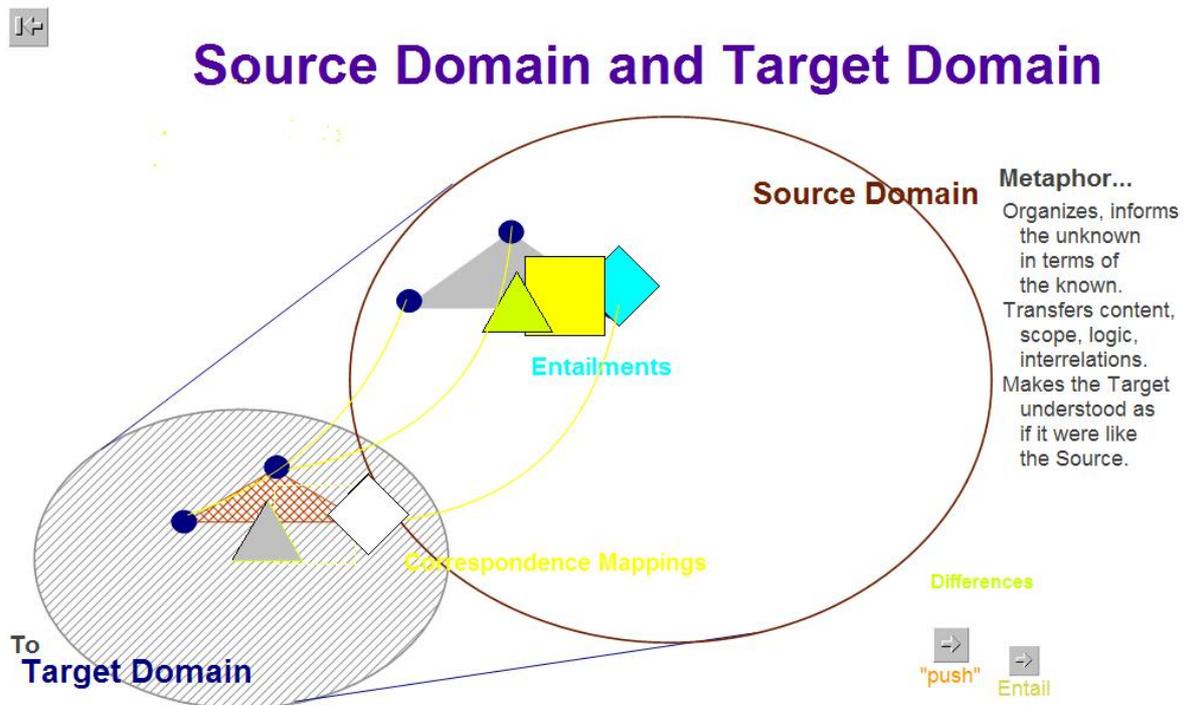


Figure 1: Source Domain and Target Domain, Donald A. Schön

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ NORDQUIST, Richard. What is the target domain in a conceptual metaphor?. *ThoughtCo* [online]. ThoughtCo, 2020 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/target-domain-conceptual-metaphors-1692527>

³⁵ KÖVECSESES, Zoltán. *c. d.*, p. 4.

Frames

Another important term is frame. George Lakoff defines frames as “mental structures that shape the way we see the world”³⁶. He adds that “they also shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions.”³⁷. According to Lakoff “we can't see or hear frames, as they are part of structures in our brains that we cannot consciously access but know them by their consequences such as the way we reason and what counts as common sense”³⁸. He continues by stating that “we also know frames through language, as all words are defined relative to conceptual frames and when we hear a word, its frame (or collection of frames) is activated in our brains”³⁹.

Directly connected to the term frame is the process of reframing. Lakoff argues that “reframing is changing the way the public sees the world and also changing what counts as common sense”⁴⁰.

Social Script Theory

Gioia and Poole indicated that “a script is a schematic knowledge structure held in memory that specifies behavior or event sequences that are appropriate for specific situations”⁴¹. They continue by claiming that “as a knowledge structure, script fits predictable, conventional, or frequently encountered situations, such as for instance going to a restaurant, attending lectures, or visiting doctors”⁴². They conclude that “in short, scripts are schemas for behavior, or for understanding events and behaviors”⁴³.

Important part of Gioia's and Poole's text is the connection between scripts and metaphors. The authors argue that “scripts are viewed as having a metaphorical nature that enables organizations members to understand expected behaviors in terms of the required ‘performances’ in specific situations”⁴⁴. In conclusion, it is proposed that “scripts provide a useful framework for understanding many of the actions, events, and behaviors occurring in organizations”⁴⁵.

³⁶ LAKOFF, George. *Don't think of an elephant! know your values and frame the debate: the essential guide for progressives*. 1. Canada: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2004. ISBN 1-931498-71-7, p. xv.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ GIOIA, Dennis A. a Peter P. POOLE. Scripts in Organizational Behavior. *Academy of Management Review*. 1984, 9(3), p. 449.

⁴² GIOIA, Dennis A. a Peter P. POOLE, *c. d.*, p. 450.

⁴³ GIOIA, Dennis A. a Peter P. POOLE, *c. d.*, p. 450.

⁴⁴ GIOIA, Dennis A. a Peter P. POOLE, *c. d.*, p. 449.

⁴⁵ GIOIA, Dennis A. a Peter P. POOLE, *c. d.*, p. 458.

St. Clair claimed that “scripts dictate what one should be doing at a particular time and in a particular place if one is to play the role characteristically associated with that script”⁴⁶.

Methods

The main method used in this work is a qualitative content analysis, which can further be divided into two types such as conventional and summative content analyses. The approach is conventional in the sense that two main types of documents are analyzed. These include news articles and transcripts of broadcasted news and speeches. It is also summative because interpretations and comparisons are being drawn. In this paper metaphors are the codes of the analysis, and they are extracted directly from the text. One of the exercises in the analysis chapter is to try to categorize metaphors found in the texts. For more information about conventional and summative content analyses see Hsieh and Shannon⁴⁷.

When (later in the text) examining a text or a speech relevant to the case study, metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech are being located. The part of the text or the transcript that contains the important expression is mentioned in *Italic* and the expression itself is marked **Bold**. In order to better understand the metaphors, they are organized into specific categories.

This paper also focuses on asking certain types of questions that can help us view many different concepts and phenomena in new ways. These questions try to enable the reader to start thinking in terms of generative metaphors. They allow us to uncover hidden meanings and new ways of the “seeing as”. Because of these questions we are able see “things” as something else.

Limitations and Reflection

Limitations of the research need to be mentioned. The main limitation is the number of articles, speeches, and broadcasted news analyzed. In total eleven articles and three videos have been analyzed and searched for metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech during this research. It is believed that the number of these sources should be more extensive. Another limitation is the relatively short time period of four months in which the research has been conducted. It is believed that future research should be conducted with more allocated time to explore a more extensive number of sources.

⁴⁶ ST. CLAIR, Robert N. Social Scripts and the Three Theoretical Approaches to Culture. *Intercultural Communication Studies*. 2008, **17**(4), p. 178.

⁴⁷ HSIEH, Hsiu-Fang a Sarah E. SHANNON. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2005, **15**(9), 1277–1288.

Analysis

Introduction to Metaphors in the Language of War

How can analysis of metaphor help us understand conflict? It was mentioned earlier in the text that by focusing on metaphors we can gain new perspectives and understandings of the world. We can look at metaphors in the “language of war” and see what role certain “types” of language used play in our understanding of a conflict. When researching media coverage of a conflict and transcripts of speeches, we soon realize that there is an extensive amount of material suited for analysis. To illustrate this, one can look into the following example. On October 7th, 2001, the President of the United States George W. Bush addressed the nation regarding the US invasion of Afghanistan. On the same day the United States and the Great Britain, began a bombing campaign in Afghanistan, and officially started the military action called the Operation Enduring Freedom⁴⁸.

Three specific words that have already been mentioned in the paragraph above are of great significance. These are “invasion”, “operation”, and “freedom”. In the contemporary discourse the term invasion is often used in reference to the events of 2001 but back then the situation was different. As we will soon realize the US and British officials did not frame their actions as an invasion. They rather used the term operation. In many languages the term operation is commonly used for military actions. In Spanish the name is La Operación Libertad Duradera-Afganistán, in French it is opération Liberté immutable, and in German it is Operation andauernde Freiheit. The point here is not to compare different languages; rather it is to show that the term operation is commonly and internationally accepted to use when referring to an armed invasion of a country. But why should we even think about the term operation? It can evoke the connection to a medical operation, thus something regarded as “good” or “helpful” that can remove something bad or unhealthy. This is how metaphors work. They connect meanings of two often completely different words. The operation conducted by the US and Great Britain was said to bring freedom... the cure for the “unhealthy” and “bad” in Afghanistan. But the question that we should perhaps be asking is who gives the authority to the “western” superpowers to be the “surgeons” and to decide what is unhealthy for the Afghan people, members of a sovereign country?

⁴⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, 2021

On November 21st., 2001 the former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C. Following is a transcription of a part of his speech.

*“Those men are **living the dream**. They're getting to do exactly what they signed up for on the ground, on horseback and working with local forces”⁴⁹.*

The important term in this part of the speech is “dream”. According to Mr. Rumsfeld it was like a dream to serve in Afghanistan. The expression “living the dream” is a perfect example of a commonly used metaphor. It is true that something as subjective as having a dream (and living it) is relative. According to Rumsfeld, the young men and women who served in Afghanistan, lived their dreams.

Donald Rumsfeld’s speech abound with metaphors. When asked about any security measures that would restrict the press from obtaining information about special operations activities, he also mentioned the following.

*“We've got a lot of retired officers and enlisted personnel around the country that are asked on television, ‘What about this? What about that? What's the likely thing that's going to happen next?’ And they begin speculating and speculating and, of course, even a **blind squirrel finds a nut once in a while**”⁵⁰.*

In this particular case, the retired officers and the enlisted personnel were intentionally being mocked and compared to squirrels. In the past two decades, a lot has been written about the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, but the topic of the War in Afghanistan is now perhaps more relevant than ever as the allied forces recently withdrew from the country. During these days people all around the world are trying to understand this conflict and their sources of information about it are limited.

Case Study: The 2021 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In May 2021, the world witnessed an outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. The Israeli media covered extensively the events providing us with information about what was happening. By sharing the information in English, they enabled people from all around the world to learn about the escalating situation. The text below is a critical analysis of the type of language that was being used by the Israeli media and Israeli elites. But what is meant by the term “type of language”? In this thesis it is the use of metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech. It is not the aim of this text to provide the reader with an analysis of the

⁴⁹ Washington Post, 2001

⁵⁰ Washington Post, 2001.

protracted conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, nor is to make any definitive suggestions. In fact, metaphors are used when referring to almost any war or conflict. The 2021 outbreak of violence between the two sides is just one of many possible examples that a person interested in this topic can choose from. The aim is rather to inform the reader about the significance of metaphors used by these subjects and their power to shape our understanding of conflict.

Some of the main Israeli news sources in English include the Times of Israel, the Jerusalem Post, Haaretz, Israel Insider, YNET NEWS, Israel Hayom, i24 News, and others⁵¹. On September 13th, 2021, the Jerusalem Post published an article about the escalation of violence between the two sides. The article contains specific patterns of speech that play an important role in “manufacturing” the readers understanding of the conflict. Some of the passages of the article follow:

*“Rocket sirens went off in the Gaza border area communities of Kissufim and Ein Hashlosha after a **rocket was fired** and was intercepted by Iron Dome, according to the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. Israeli forces **struck four military** outposts containing a number of Hamas assets. These included training complexes, weapons manufacturing and storage centers and a terrorist tunnel. Fighter planes later **struck other targets** after a rocket was fired. The IDF also **struck Hamas targets** in the Gaza Strip on Saturday night after another **rocket was fired from Gaza**”⁵².*

Why is it that when referring to the actions of Hamas, the expression being used is “a rocket was fired”, but in the case of IDF it is “a target was struck”? The two expressions connote two different meanings. While Hamas is ruthlessly firing rockets, IDF carefully hits its targets. What is a target? It is something that is meant to be hit. Hitting or striking a target is perceived as a favorable outcome. Rockets and fires are something less desirable.

The expressions mentioned in the previous paragraph are not metaphors per se. They are rather specific patterns of speech. They are not something unique. In fact, they are used very often in media sources. Silkoff and Reich mentioned them in the headline of one of their articles. Published on September 12th, the article is called “IDF **strikes** Gaza **targets**

⁵¹ Jewish Community Relations Council, 2017.

⁵² JOFFRE, Tzvi a Aaron REICH. IDF strikes targets in Gaza as Rocket Sirens Sound in Southern Israel. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/rocket-sirens-sound-in-sderot-679281>

following **rockets launched** into Israel's South"⁵³. Even-though, the authors used the term launched instead of fired in the headline of their article, they changed it in the actual text:

*“The IDF **struck** multiple **targets** in the Gaza Strip early Sunday morning in response to **rockets** being **fired** into southern Israel on Saturday”⁵⁴.*

Geographical Metaphors

The recently elected Prime Minister of the state of Israel, Naftali Bennet addressed the UN General Assembly in September 2021. He did not mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in his speech but apart from other topics he focused on the situation in the Middle East.

*“Israel is a **lighthouse** in a **stormy sea**. A beacon of democracy, diverse by design, innovative by nature and eager to contribute to the world despite being in the **toughest neighborhood** on earth”⁵⁵.*

In this short part of his speech, Bennet uses multiple metaphorical concepts. A country (Israel) is seen as a lighthouse and the rest of the region is seen as a stormy sea. A question that one is tempted to ask is “what role does a lighthouse play in a stormy sea?”. It guides ships through darkness and helps them to find the “correct” way. The stormy sea expression is a metaphor used to describe the geographical region which the state of Israel is surrounded by. It is not the only one. According to Bennet, the neighboring countries also constitute the “toughest neighborhood” on earth. What meanings do these expressions connote? Well, everyone can ask themselves, if they would want to live in the toughest neighborhood on this planet. How does the life in an environment as hostile as a stormy sea look like? It is not the point of this thesis to create an opinion for the reader about the difficulties of living in the toughest neighborhood of the world or in a stormy sea. The readers can decide on their own. It is rather to argue that the Israeli Prime Minister is trying to persuade us about the negative connotations of the surrounding region and the positive connotations of the state of Israel. He is trying to achieve this by using specific metaphors in his speech. The stormy sea and the toughest neighborhood include for instance the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. By referring to the areas in this way, Bennet shapes our understanding of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, because it portrays the people of Gaza and the West Bank in a negative way and the people of Israel in a positive way.

⁵³ SILKOFF, Shira a Aaron REICH. IDF strikes Gaza targets following rockets launched into Israel's South. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-26]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/rocket-attacks-in-the-south-679218>

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ LIS, Jonathan. Full text: Bennett's UN speech – Iran, Covid, and not one mention of Palestinians. *Haaretz* [online]. Haaretz, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-09-27/ty-article/full-text-bennetts-un-speech-iran-covid-and-not-one-mention-of-palestinians/0000017f-e5c2-da9b-a1ff-edef59c30000>

Seeing Israel as a lighthouse is thinking in terms of a conceptual metaphor. Similar to the example of ARGUMENT IS WAR (mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter), the conceptual metaphor is STATE IS A LIGHTHOUSE. The state, in this case Israel, is a target domain and the lighthouse is a source domain. There is a significant relationship between them. Because of such conceptual metaphor, we can see, think, and talk about a state in terms of a lighthouse, and we can actually see the surroundings of a state as a stormy sea.

A possible way of looking at metaphors is trying to categorize them. The categorization of metaphors can help us orient ourselves better especially when a text or a speech contain an extensive number of these expressions. The toughest neighborhood and the stormy sea can be categorized as geographical metaphors, meaning that they refer to geographical locations.

Another example of a geographical metaphor was mentioned by Raphael Jerusalmy, a former senior intelligence officer of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), during an interview broadcasted by i24 news.

“I don’t think we need either in the West Bank or in Gaza a humanitarian crisis at our door, at our doorstep”⁵⁶.

In this example, the spokesperson is using two geographical metaphors when referring to Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Rather than focusing on the complex issue of the humanitarian crisis and the suffering of the people that live in Gaza and the West Bank, Jerusalem sees the areas only in terms of what these places mean to Israel. The West bank and the Gaza Strip are seen as doors through which the humanitarian crisis can spread to Israel. Several questions arise. What needs to be done? Do we help the people that live in Gaza and the West Bank, or do we just close the “doors” and protect ourselves?

Game Metaphors

In the Jerusalem Post, the author Anna Ahronheim published an article with the heading “IDF troops preparing for the next round with Gaza”. In her article, the author mentions the following.

*“Along a quiet border in southern Israel, IDF troops held a large-scale drill preparing for the next **round of conflict** with terror groups in the Gaza Strip”⁵⁷.*

⁵⁶ Palestinian people don't want an Intifada, says Israeli former intelligence officer [Video]. *Youtube* [online]. i24NEWS English, 2021a [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Ln_CBT-UY

⁵⁷ AHRONHEIM, Anna. IDF troops preparing for the next round with Gaza. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/idf-troops-preparing-for-the-next-round-with-gaza-681993>

The metaphorical concept of importance is the “round of conflict”. This is an example of a generative metaphor. It is discussed in the theoretical framework chapter that generative metaphors constitute new/different ways of looking at things. By using the metaphor round of conflict, a specific way of looking at the concept of conflict is established. As there are multiple rounds in games, there are rounds in conflict and violence. A new scenario of a conflict seen as a game is, perhaps, established in our minds. Another example follows.

*“As has occurred many times in the last 15 years, Israel is in danger of fighting a war where it ‘wins’ tactically but achieves very little strategically. If Israel uses the same **playbook** as in the past, why should it expect a different **result** with Hamas?”⁵⁸*

In his article from May 2021, Yonah Jeremy Bob decided to use the terms *playbook* and *result*. Especially the term *playbook* (but also the term *result*) implies the analogy between a war and a game. The metaphorical concept of war as a game is established. We begin to perceive war as a game. We begin to think about war in terms of a game. The following example from an article written by Michael Freund and published in the Jerusalem Post illustrates this idea even more evidently.

*“If we wish, we can continue to play **ping-pong Gaza-style**, deploying the IAF and sending in ground troops every few years while paying frequent visits to our bomb shelters”* (Freund, 2021).

Finally, a broadcast of news published by YNET NEWS on their official Facebook page provides us with recording of a speech by the former Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, in which the conflict is directly described as a game. The English translation of Netanyahu’s words published by YNET NEWS follows.

*“Hamas thought it was shooting at Jerusalem and the cities of Israel, and we would respond with business as usual. Instead, it received eleven days and nights of massive blows and a huge crush that changed the **rules of the game**”⁵⁹.*

In this case, the conceptual metaphor is CONFLICT IS GAME. The word conflict is the target domain, and the word game is the source domain. We understand the target domain through the source domain. We understand a conflict in terms of a game. Conflicts no longer have outcomes but have results. They have rules that are created by someone. Who has the

⁵⁸ BOB, Yonah Jeremy. Will this Hamas conflict be different than others?. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/war-with-no-defined-goals-why-this-hamas-conflict-is-different-to-others-668030>

⁵⁹ Likud MP Nir Barkat speaks to i24NEWS about Israel's ongoing battle against Hamas - May 16 [Video]. *Youtube* [online]. i24NEWS English, 2021b [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ31GOYD2Mo>

authority to create such rules and who are the referees? What happens if we break the rules? Who has the power to punish the one that breaks the rules?

The theoretical framework chapter discussed the social script theory. Table 1 provides us with a systematic analysis of a script associated with the game metaphors. It includes four categories. The first category is event frame, and it tells us what event or situation we are analyzing. The social roles category lists the different actors or stakeholders relevant to that situation. The lexicon category provides us with the relevant terminology. The script category describes the set of events in the analyzed situation. It is similar to a movie script. The important attribute of this script is that it describes something that is considered appropriate, normal, or expected.

The Scheme of Conflict in Terms of Game	
Event Frame	War / violent conflict
Social Roles	Players, Israel, Hamas, ...
Lexicon	Game, round, conflict, war, result, playbook, rules, ping-pong, ...
Script	The players follow the playbook and the rules of the game in order to achieve the preferred results.

Table 1: The Scheme of Conflict in Terms of Game

In May 2021, the former mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat explained what needs to be done regarding Hamas. In an interview broadcasted by i24 news several metaphors were used both by him and the interviewer. One of them is the expression hunt down.

*They must not sleep up in the open. No immunity. They must realize that we will **hunt them down** and whenever we feel, we will strike them when they are not ready.*

It is not, by any means, the point of this text to sympathize with any of the sides of the conflict, but it is important to point out this type of language. People historically hunted animals and they did so for multiple reasons. The main point here is that if we use the term hunting in relation to human beings, these people are being dehumanized. Dehumanization of any human being must always be strictly rejected because it denies the very idea of humanity.

Game metaphors can shape our understanding of war and conflict in the way that they diminish the seriousness of these (and related) events.

Medical Metaphors

One of the commonly used war metaphors is the term “operation”. Examples of this metaphors can be military operation, aerial operation, ground operation, etc. Ron Ben-Yishai from the YNET NEWS provides as with the following quote.

*“It is safe to assume that the IDF is less than a day away from achieving all it can with only an aerial campaign and without a **ground operation**”⁶⁰.*

Because the metaphor of operation is so common when referring to military actions, it is often not evident how it influences our view of such actions. As mentioned earlier in the text, the term operation evokes the connection to a medical operation, something regarded as “good” or “helpful”. Anna Ahronheim’s article contains a quote of a testimony of Major Yair Ben-David, operations officer of the IDF.

*“It’s crazy how the technology has advanced. The IDF’s capabilities and intelligence have grown... We have extraordinary strengths to stop threats coming from Gaza. When the IDF hits back with the intelligence and new technology, it’s like **striking with tweezers**”⁶¹.*

What are tweezers usually being used for? How does the fact that this term is being used in reference to military actions influence our perception of such actions? Tweezers are usually used for very precise activities such as for instance medical operations. The metaphor of “striking the threats with tweezers” suggests that the IDF is precise in its actions. It assures the reader that the IDF is being almost doctor-like precise and careful when striking the enemy. A reader can argue that the paragraph above mentions a quote of a military officer and not a of a news author or a political figure. But the reasons why the quote is relevant to the topic of this thesis is that the author of the article (Anna Ahronheim) decided intentionally to include it in her text.

In an article published in YNET NEWS, the author Ron Ben-Yishai uses medical terminology while referring to post-conflict activities in the Gaza Strip. These activities include financial help from Qatar and unspecified infrastructure projects and are labeled as economic and social rehabilitation. Ben-Yishai mentioned the following.

*“If Hamas does not agree to this, Israel will not permit full **economic and social rehabilitation of the Strip**”⁶².*

The metaphors of operation, rehabilitation, and tweezers can be categorized as medical metaphors.

⁶⁰ BEN-YISHAI, Ron. Israel's 3-step program for Gaza stability. *Ynetnews* [online]. Ynetnews, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/BkqMJwGtO>

⁶¹ AHRONHEIM, Anna. IDF troops preparing for the next round with Gaza. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/idf-troops-preparing-for-the-next-round-with-gaza-681993>

⁶² BEN-YISHAI, Ron. Israel's 3-step program for Gaza stability. *Ynetnews* [online]. Ynetnews, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/BkqMJwGtO>

Simplifying Metaphors

In an YNET NEWS broadcast from May 18th the news presenter Aaron Poris and the guest speaker Israel ‘Relik’ Shafir mentioned the term collateral damage. When referring to killed Palestinian civilians in during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, Shafir argued that *“this is a collateral damage that you cannot know ahead of time”*⁶³.

The expression collateral damage is problematic because it does simplify reality. The term collateral suggests something minor and secondary. The term damage suggests perhaps vandalism or harm but not something as severe as killing of civilians. The generative metaphor, or in other words the new “SEEING AS”, in this case is: **“death as damage”** and more importantly **“civilian death as a collateral damage”**. Because of this metaphorical concept we begin to see the deaths within a certain civilian population as unimportant, minor, or secondary. The conceptual metaphor in this case is DEATH IS DAMAGE, with death or killing of civilians being target domains and damage being a source domain.

Similar to collateral damage is the expression humanitarian damage. Used in an YNET NEWS article by Ron Ben-Yishai, this term is another example of what can be categorized as a simplifying metaphor.

*“When Israel is assured beyond all shadow of a doubt that a ceasefire really is in effect, it will need to implement a carefully thought-out plan to minimize the humanitarian damage in the Gaza Strip, in cooperation with international elements”*⁶⁴.

On May 15. Herb Keinon published an article in the Jerusalem post in which he uses a metaphor through which he attributed heroism and bravery to one side of the conflict.

*“A change in thinking led to the **Herculean** effort to develop a three-tiered anti-missile umbrella over the country – Arrow, David’s Sling, Iron Dome – so that if the enemy fires for your soft **underbelly** – your civilian population – you can protect it to a large degree, though not hermetically”*⁶⁵.

It is not the intention of this thesis to deny the facts that Hamas often attacks civilians in Israel nor that the anti-missile system helps to save innocent Israeli lives. What is important about this quote, and the rest of the article (that can be accessed by the hyperlink in the list of references), is that one side is being portrayed as heroic and brave while the other is

⁶³ Palestinian people don't want an Intifada, says Israeli former intelligence officer [Video]. *Youtube* [online]. i24NEWS English, 2021a [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Ln_CBT-UY

⁶⁴ BEN-YISHAI, Ron. Israel's 3-step program for Gaza stability. *Ynetnews* [online]. Ynetnews, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/BkqMJwGtO>

⁶⁵ KEINON, Herb. Factoring in the Israeli psyche when rockets stop falling from Gaza. *The Jerusalem Post* [online]. The Jerusalem Post, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/factoring-in-the-israeli-psyche-when-rockets-stop-falling-from-gaza-668269>

characterized as cowardly for attacking “the soft underbelly” – the civilians. Even-though, it is confirmed that during the 2021 clashes Israel killed more civilians than Hamas did⁶⁶, the Israelis are portrayed as Heroes and Hamas as cowardly murderers of civilians. It is through the use of metaphors that this notion is created. In fact, Palestinian civilians being killed by Israelis are not mentioned in the article at all.

Different metaphors can be found in articles published by the Times of Israel. On May 15, the TOI: staff written the following.

*“Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday that Israel had no plans to relent in its attacks against Hamas in Gaza, as the military kept up its bombardment of terrorists in the Palestinian enclave and **rockets rained down** on Israeli cities”⁶⁷.*

The former Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu describes the bombardment of Israeli cities in terms of a weather condition. The rockets are seen as rain. Later in the text the authors mention the Iron Dome defense system and call in an umbrella.⁶⁸ A new category of “weather metaphors” emerged. While bombardments conducted by both sides of the conflict are mentioned, the weather metaphors are used only while referring to the rockets fired by Hamas. The same article contains more metaphors.

*“They attacked our capital, they fired rockets at our cities. They’re **paying** and will continue to **pay dearly for that**”⁶⁹.*

In this case, the use of a specific metaphor suggests the view of conflict and violence in terms of economic transactions. The former Prime Minister uses the metaphor of payment when referring to acts of violence. It is considered normal or appropriate to pay for something we have caused. This “economic metaphor” suggests that in this case violence is something appropriate or normal. The Times of Israel is of course not the only media source that uses this economic metaphor. Ron Ben-Yishai uses the metaphor of “paying the price” in his article published by YNET NEWS.

*“The IDF must pummel them until they cease fire and understand the **price** Israel will make them **pay** is far greater than any ideological or psychological benefits from continuing the rocket fire”⁷⁰.*

⁶⁶ OCHA. Occupied Palestinian territory: Protection of civilians report: 24 - 31 May 2021 - occupied Palestinian territory. *ReliefWeb* [online]. ReliefWeb, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/occupied-palestinian-territory-protection-civilians-report-15>

⁶⁷ TOI staff. Netanyahu vows unrelenting response to Hamas; Arab-jewish violence spreads. *The Times of Israel* [online]. The Times of Israel, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-26]. Available from:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-vows-unrelenting-response-to-hamas-arab-jewish-violence-spreads/>

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

This example relates to the social script theory. The fact, that during a conflict some people have to pay a price for something that they have done, becomes expected and normal. Paying a price for something that those people did becomes an expected behavior. It fits within the script (scheme) of conventional and expected conduct during a conflict or a war and for that reason it is considered appropriate.

The Scheme of Conflict in Terms of Economic Transactions	
Event Frame	War / violent conflict
Social Roles	Culprit, payer, collector, ...
Lexicon	Pay, price, conflict, war, cause, effect, ...
Script	We must pay the price for something that we did or caused.

Table 2: The Scheme of Conflict in Terms of Economic Transactions

In an interview with the former mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat broadcasted by the i24 news, the interviewer mentioned the expression boots on the ground when referring to a possible military action against Hamas. Barkat responded with a metaphor as well.

“Interviewer: *They are hoping for some kind of solution, at least for now, would you... boots on the ground, is that a possibility?* Nir Barkat: *You know I want to leave everything on the table*”⁷¹.

Both boots on the ground and everything on the table can be categorized as simplifying metaphors, because they simplify reality. Rather than talking about a possibly violent military action, much more “aesthetical” term is used. The everything on the table metaphor is a similar example. Rather than listing all possible actions that might affect the lives of Palestinians, the speaker chose to use an expression that not only simplifies reality but also does not provide specific answers. This example also illustrates that a metaphor can fit into multiple categories. Everything being on a table could also be categorized as a game metaphor as it is primarily used in card games.

Implications for International Peace and Conflict Resolution

Such analysis of language and metaphor can be conducted in case of any other violent conflict or war. Other instances that can be mentioned is the NATO attack on Libya. In 2011, the ABC News published an article that quotes the speech of Barack Obama in which the former US president mentioned *America's responsibility to fellow human beings* as one a reason for

⁷⁰ BEN-YISHAI, Ron. Israel's 3-step program for Gaza stability. *Ynetnews* [online]. Ynetnews, 2021 [cit. 2022-10-24]. Available from: <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/BkqMJwGtO>

⁷¹ i24 news, 2021b, c. d.

the military action, while labeling the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi a *tyrant*⁷². The responsibility of the US (and its allies) to get rid the people of Libya of a brutal tyrant is metaphorical concept that aims to justify an attack on a sovereign country. The metaphor simplifies the dynamics of the complex situation into categories of the responsible actor and the evil ruler that needs to be overthrown. The operation metaphor (discussed earlier in the text) was being used as well.

An extensive number of metaphors have been used by the US media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. A notable example is the The New York Post article headline *Axis of Weasel: Germany and France Wimp out on Iraq*^{73, 74}, that labels the Germans and the French as weasels, which can be seen as rather sneaky animals.

Another evidence of the power that metaphors have when used by media is the genocide in Rwanda. Allan Thompson⁷⁵ mentions the role *The Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM)* played during the genocide through the dehumanization of the Tutsi people. These people were often labeled as *cockroaches* (inyenzi) and *snakes* (inzoka) in the radio broadcasts⁷⁶. The media was directly used as a tool to support the extermination of one ethnic group, which led to deaths of hundreds of thousands of people.

Conclusion

The role of language in our understanding of a conflict can be quite significant if metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech are used. Metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech used in media coverage and speeches of elites can portray one side of a conflict in a positive light and the other side in a negative light and thus shape our understanding of the conflict. The use of such language can lead to dehumanization of people and can also downplay serious actions such as violence against civilians.

Several types of metaphors have been located in Israeli media articles, broadcasted news, and speeches by elites. The metaphors have been organized into categories including geographical metaphors, game metaphors, medical metaphors, and simplifying metaphors.

⁷² TRAVERS, Karen a Byron Z. WOLF. Obama Libya Speech: U.S. 'Interests and Values' at Risk. *ABC News* [online]. ABC News, 2011 [cit. 2022-10-26]. Available from: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/target-libya-president-obama-explain-mission-gadhafi-forces/story?id=13239367>

⁷³ STEUTER, Erin a Deborah WILLS. *At war with metaphor: Media, propaganda, and racism in the War on Terror*. 1. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7391-2198-6, p. 78.

⁷⁴ ORIN, Deborah. Axis of Weasel – Germany and France Wimp Out on Iraq; Colin Raps French, German Wimps. *The New York Post* [online]. The New York Post, 2003 [cit. 2022-10-25]. Available from: <https://nypost.com/2003/01/24/axis-of-weasel-germany-and-france-wimp-out-on-iraq-colin-raps-french-german-wimps/>

⁷⁵ THOMPSON, Allan. *The Media and the Rwanda genocide*. 1. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

⁷⁶ THOMPSON, Allan. *c. d.*, p. 55.

The categorization of metaphors can help us explore their meanings and better understand their implications.

Geographical metaphors can shape our understanding of locations relevant to a conflict and “manufacture” our perception of such places. Through this process they can also influence how we view the people living in those places, which arguably is a way of shaping our understanding of the conflict itself. The analysis of game metaphors shows us that they can imply analogy between a war/conflict and a game, and thus diminish the seriousness of war and related acts in our minds. Medical metaphors (such as for instance the term operation) are common when referring to military actions. This led to the fact that they became “normal” in the language of war. Simplifying metaphors have the ability to portray serious actions (such as violence against civilians, or bombings) as unimportant, minor, or secondary.

The social script theory applied to the analysis of metaphors uncovers that metaphors and other distinctive patterns of speech used in reference to a conflict (and related actions/events) can make violence seen as appropriate or “normal”. If we take the generative character of metaphors into consideration, we realize that they can constitute new/different ways of looking at conflict. The analysis of the relationship between a source domain and a target domain within a conceptual metaphor shows us that people can see, think, act, and talk about something in terms of something else.

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