

# FROM HOLOCAUST MEMORY TO HOLOCAUST LOGIC: LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF LEGITIMIZED VIO- LENCE IN ISRAELI POLITICAL RHETORIC

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how wartime political speech by senior Israeli officials from October to December 2023 constructs authority and normalizes civilian harm in the Palestinian context. Adopting an exploratory and descriptive approach, the research investigates patterns within a specific curated dataset. We analyze a curated database of public statements using mixed methods to understand how linguistic patterns are associated with the legitimization of violence during armed conflict. Quantitative analysis reveals frequent co-occurrence of rhetorical themes including collective punishment, civilian harm, references to unrestrained force, and dehumanization across multiple speakers. Qualitative discourse analysis identifies specific linguistic strategies: performative declarations of unrestrained force, metaphysical binaries framing the conflict in civilizational terms, and totalizing claims of civilian culpability. These patterns demonstrate how political rhetoric can function to normalize exceptional measures by projecting moral certainty and strategic inevitability. Methodological triangulation combining frequency counts with close textual analysis ensures analytic credibility, while acknowledging substantive limitations in translation fidelity and curation dependence. The findings are interpreted as documenting observable rhetorical associations within the dataset, contributing exploratory insights to early-warning frameworks for monitoring dangerous speech and highlighting the need for more comprehensive, independently sourced research in this domain.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines linguistic patterns in political rhetoric during armed conflict, focusing on statements by senior Israeli officials from October to December 2023. The analysis investigates how language constructs authority and normalizes measures affecting civilian populations in the Palestinian context. This research adopts a descriptive and exploratory lens, analyzing patterns within a specific dataset to contribute to the broader scholarly conversation on political discourse in conflict. Understanding these patterns contributes to frameworks addressing dangerous speech and accountability mechanisms in conflict settings Saslow (2016); Timmermann (Year?). It is crucial to note from the outset that this study does not aim to provide definitive legal conclusions or causal explanations, but rather to document and analyze rhetorical associations as they appear in a defined corpus.

The complexity of this issue stems from intersecting historical narratives, social trauma, and institutional constraints. Historical memory, including Holocaust remembrance, informs contemporary political discourse Moses (2021); Segal (2024). These narratives interact with international legal frameworks that regulate speech during conflict Jansen (2014). The tension between security imperatives and human rights protections presents analytical challenges for examining political rhetoric in this context. Furthermore, the highly polarized nature of the conflict necessitates explicit acknowledgment of researcher positionality and data source limitations, which are addressed in subsequent sections.

We employ a mixed-methods approach to analyze a curated database of public statements. Quantitative analysis examines the frequency and co-occurrence of rhetorical themes, while qualitative discourse analysis identifies specific linguistic strategies. This methodology enables interpretation of how language frames civilian protection and legitimizes violence Weston (2024). The approach acknowledges limitations in translation fidelity and curation dependence while providing systematic examination of rhetorical patterns. To enhance transparency, we detail the provenance of our dataset, its inherent constraints, and the measures taken to ensure analytical rigor within these parameters.

The study addresses three research questions. First, how is authority performed through wartime political speech? Second, what rhetorical patterns build or erode trust in relation to international humanitarian law frameworks? Third, how do institutional and cultural frames shape the reception of this discourse? These questions guide the examination of linguistic constructions in public statements by decision-makers. These questions are addressed with the understanding that the answers are provisional, derived from a limited dataset, and intended to generate hypotheses for future research rather than to establish generalizable truths.

The novelty of this study lies in its application of a structured, mixed-methods analytical protocol to a specific, temporally bounded corpus of political rhetoric from a contemporary and highly salient conflict. While building on established frameworks in discourse analysis and dangerous speech research, it provides a detailed, replicable case study that documents the co-occurrence of specific rhetorical themes and linguistic strategies. Its contribution is therefore methodological and documentary, offering a template for systematic analysis while rigorously acknowledging the boundaries of its dataset.

The study makes several contributions:

- Systematic documentation of rhetorical patterns in political speech during the 2023 Gaza conflict within a defined dataset
- Analysis of how linguistic strategies can function to normalize exceptional measures affecting civilian populations
- A demonstrated methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of dangerous speech applied to a contentious context
- Exploratory implications for early-warning systems monitoring conflict escalation and for scholarly debates on discursive legitimization of violence

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews related work on genocidal speech and discourse analysis. Section 3 provides background on the conflict context and theoretical frameworks. Section 4 details the mixed-methods approach and includes a new subsection on researcher positionality and data source critical appraisal. Section 5 presents quantitative and qualitative findings. Section 6 interprets the results and addresses limitations in greater depth, including comparative context. Section 7 summarizes contributions and suggests future research directions.

The findings have implications for education, humanitarian policy, and cross-cultural understanding. They can inform media literacy programs that critically examine political rhetoric during conflict Maynard (2023). The analysis contributes to policy discussions about monitoring dangerous speech and strengthening accountability mechanisms LeVine (2025). However, these implications are offered tentatively, with the caveat that they are derived from an analysis with acknowledged constraints. Understanding these linguistic patterns may support efforts to prevent escalation and protect civilian populations in conflict settings.

## 2 RELATED WORK

This study builds on extensive scholarship examining dangerous speech and political rhetoric in conflict settings. Research on dangerous speech has established frameworks for identifying language that may incite violence against targeted groups Buerger & Benesch (2024). Seminal work by Benesch established key frameworks for identifying language that may incite violence against targeted groups Benesch (2014). Discourse analysis approaches have examined how political language constructs social reality and legitimizes action during armed conflicts Fairclough (1995); Weston (2024); Burnett (2021). Linguistic patterns in political rhetoric have been analyzed across various conflict contexts,

revealing how language can normalize violence and erode civilian protections Saslow (2016). Studies of genocidal speech have documented specific rhetorical strategies that precede mass violence, including dehumanization, collective punishment justifications, and existential threat framing Landry (2022). The methodological literature emphasizes the importance of source neutrality, intercoder reliability, and translational accuracy in such analyses Torregrosa et al. (2022); González-Recio et al. (2025), standards which present particular challenges in real-time conflict research. The current analysis extends this scholarship by examining linguistic patterns in the specific context of Israeli political rhetoric during the 2023 Gaza conflict, employing mixed-methods to document both quantitative patterns and qualitative linguistic features. It explicitly engages with the methodological challenges inherent in analyzing curated datasets from contested contexts, aiming to transparently navigate the tensions between timely analysis and rigorous, reproducible methodology.

### 3 BACKGROUND

This study is situated within scholarship examining political rhetoric during armed conflict, with particular attention to the Palestinian context. The analysis draws on frameworks that investigate how language constructs social reality and legitimizes political action. Research on dangerous speech provides a foundation for understanding how rhetoric can normalize violence against civilian populations Saslow (2016); Timmermann (Year?).

The interpretive orientation is informed by discourse analysis approaches that examine how language functions in social and political contexts. Speech act theory contributes to understanding how utterances perform actions beyond mere description, particularly in settings of conflict and violence Weston (2024). This perspective helps analyze how political statements can constitute acts of authorization for military measures affecting civilian populations.

Historical memory shapes contemporary political discourse in conflict settings. The transmission of traumatic historical events informs present-day rhetorical patterns and justifications for security measures Moses (2021); Segal (2024). This includes how references to past genocide are mobilized in current conflict rhetoric, creating complex intersections between historical trauma and present-day violence.

International legal frameworks establish parameters for speech during armed conflict. Provisions against incitement to genocide and hate speech represent attempts to regulate language that may lead to mass violence Jansen (2014). These frameworks interact with principles of free expression while seeking to prevent harm to civilian populations in conflict zones. It is critical to distinguish between the scholarly identification of rhetorical patterns that may resonate with legal categories (e.g., dehumanization) and formal legal adjudication, which requires distinct procedures and standards of proof. This study undertakes the former, not the latter.

Research on dehumanization examines psychological and social processes that enable violence against targeted groups Landry (2022). These processes often manifest in political rhetoric through linguistic patterns that deny the humanity of civilian populations. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for analyzing how speech can erode protections for non-combatants during armed conflict.

The societal context involves asymmetrical power relations between state actors and civilian populations in occupied territories. Institutional settings include government structures, military organizations, and international bodies that shape how political speech is produced and received. This context influences both the production of official statements and their interpretation by different audiences. The reception of discourse is further complicated by digital media ecosystems, which can amplify and decontextualize statements, a factor beyond the scope of this textual analysis but relevant for interpreting the broader impact of the documented rhetoric.

The analysis of political rhetoric in this context has implications for early warning systems and accountability mechanisms LeVine (2025). Understanding linguistic patterns that precede or accompany violence against civilians can contribute to frameworks for monitoring dangerous speech in conflict settings. This research builds on existing scholarship while addressing specific gaps in understanding rhetorical patterns in the Palestinian context. However, it proceeds with the caution that early-warning indicators derived from textual analysis require validation against independent event data and multi-method approaches to establish predictive validity.

## 4 METHOD

### 4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative discourse analysis to examine political rhetoric. The approach systematically investigates both the prevalence of rhetorical themes and their linguistic characteristics in public statements by senior Israeli officials Weston (2024); González-Recio et al. (2025). This design addresses the complexity of political speech during armed conflict through complementary analytical perspectives Torregrosa et al. (2022). The design is explicitly descriptive and exploratory, aiming to map associations within the data rather than to test causal hypotheses or make claims of representativeness beyond the analyzed corpus.

### 4.2 DATA SOURCE AND CRITICAL APPRAISAL

The primary data for this analysis is the curated database titled “Database of Israeli Incitement to Genocide – Decision Makers” compiled by Law for Palestine and dated January 4, 2024. The use of a pre-compiled, thematically tagged database from an organization with a stated advocacy mission presents significant methodological considerations that must be foregrounded. First, the database’s compilation process introduces potential selection bias, as the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of statements are not publicly documented. Second, the pre-assigned topical tags (e.g., “genocidal intent,” “collective punishment”) represent an interpretive layer applied by the database creators. To mitigate the risk of circular reasoning—where we merely quantify the compilers’ pre-existing conclusions—our analytical strategy treats these tags not as validated findings but as an initial, externally provided thematic framework. Our qualitative discourse analysis then operates as a critical check, examining the verbatim text independently to identify linguistic features that may or may not align with these tags. This two-step process acknowledges the dataset’s provenance while seeking to extract analytic value through transparent, critical engagement.

The database contains twenty-two entries representing public statements by four senior Israeli officials: Yoav Gallant, Benjamin Netanyahu, Isaac Herzog, and Benny Gantz from October to December 2023. Each entry includes speaker identification, statement date, verbatim quotation, and pre-assigned topical tags. The database acknowledges potential limitations in translation fidelity from Hebrew originals. The sample size (N=22) is suitable for in-depth qualitative analysis and descriptive quantitative summary but is not sufficient for inferential statistical testing. The temporal bounding (Oct-Dec 2023) captures the initial, high-intensity phase of the conflict, offering a snapshot rather than a longitudinal analysis.

### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION AND PREPARATION

Data collection involved systematic extraction of all entries from the compiled database. Each entry was documented with complete metadata including speaker, date, verbatim text, and assigned topical tags. The topical tags applied by the database compilers include collective punishment, civilian harm, references to unrestrained force, dehumanization, forced displacement, and destruction. For analytic clarity and to avoid prematurely adopting legally freighted terminology within our own analysis, we treated the tag “genocidal intent” as a dataset-specific marker and in our internal coding and reporting refer to this theme as “references to unrestrained force” or “existential threat framing,” which describe the observable linguistic content. The database includes an editorial disclaimer noting that translations may not be exact and that legal adjudication of genocide claims remains the domain of competent courts. We incorporate this disclaimer fully into our analytical limitations.

### 4.4 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY

Given the highly politicized context of this research, explicit consideration of researcher positionality is essential for interpretive transparency. The authors approach this study from a critical discourse studies perspective, with a commitment to analyzing how language legitimizes power structures and potential violence. We recognize that our scholarly orientation predisposes us to scrutinize language for such legitimizing functions. To counter potential confirmation bias, we adhered to a structured analytic protocol: quantitative counts were performed mechanically, and qualitative themes

were required to be supported by multiple clear textual examples. Furthermore, we actively sought disconfirming evidence within the statements—instances where distinctions were made between combatants and civilians or where military action was framed in proportionate terms. The scarcity of such instances within this particular dataset is itself a noteworthy finding. Our goal is not to advocate a specific political outcome but to rigorously document discursive patterns as a contribution to academic and policy dialogues on conflict rhetoric.

#### 4.5 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis examined frequency distributions of topical tags across the dataset and by individual speakers. Frequency counts identified prevalent rhetorical themes, while cross-tabulation analysis examined relationships between speakers and specific rhetorical patterns. The analysis documented co-occurrence patterns where multiple tags were applied to individual statements. This approach provided systematic documentation of rhetorical theme prevalence. Given the non-random, curated nature of the sample, these frequencies describe the composition of this specific dataset and should not be interpreted as population parameters or rates of occurrence in the officials' overall speech. They are useful for identifying internal patterns and co-occurrences within the corpus.

#### 4.6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis employed discourse analysis techniques to examine linguistic and rhetorical features of the statements. Close reading of representative quotations identified specific rhetorical strategies and speech acts Weston (2024). The analysis focused on performative declarations, metaphorical constructions, binary framing devices, and justificatory patterns. Each statement was examined for its pragmatic function in constructing authority and normalizing measures affecting civilian populations. To enhance robustness, the qualitative analysis was conducted iteratively. Initial open coding identified recurrent linguistic features, which were then organized into thematic categories (e.g., "performative declarations of force," "metaphysical binaries"). These emergent categories were then checked against the entire dataset to ensure consistent application. While formal intercoder reliability metrics were not calculated due to the single-analyst design, this iterative process and the provision of extensive verbatim excerpts aim to make the coding logic transparent and auditable.

#### 4.7 ANALYTICAL INTEGRATION AND ROBUSTNESS CONSIDERATIONS

Methodological triangulation integrated quantitative frequency counts with qualitative discourse analysis to enhance analytical credibility. This involved comparing numerical patterns of rhetorical theme prevalence with detailed linguistic analysis of specific statements. The integration identified convergent findings where quantitative patterns aligned with qualitative evidence of rhetorical strategies, addressing potential limitations in database curation through multiple analytical perspectives. As a robustness check, we conducted a sensitivity analysis by temporarily disregarding the pre-assigned tags and conducting a blind qualitative coding of a 50% random sample of statements. The emergent themes from this blind coding showed substantial overlap with the original tag categories, though with differences in emphasis (e.g., the blind coding highlighted "strategic inevitability" as a frequent frame). This convergence suggests that while the source tags introduce a specific nomenclature, the underlying rhetorical patterns they point to are discernible through independent close reading.

#### 4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND LIMITATIONS

Several procedures ensured analytical trustworthiness. Methodological triangulation combined quantitative and qualitative approaches for complementary insights. Analytical transparency was maintained through systematic documentation of coding decisions and procedures. The study acknowledges dependence on the original database compilation and tagging, noting that independent re-coding could provide additional perspectives. Translation limitations were explicitly recognized as constraints on analytical precision. A primary limitation is the inability to verify the accuracy and completeness of the source translations from Hebrew. Nuances of modality, tense, or connotation may be altered. Furthermore, the dataset does not include broader contextual utterances (e.g., preceding or following sentences from the same speech) that might qualify the interpreted meaning. These

are inherent constraints of secondary analysis of curated material in real-time conflict settings. Our findings are therefore explicitly conditioned on the fidelity and contextual adequacy of the provided translations.

#### 4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research involved secondary analysis of publicly available statements by government officials, consistent with standard practices for discourse analysis. The database compilers provided appropriate disclaimers regarding translation accuracy and legal adjudication. No personal identifiers beyond public officials were involved. Quotations were used for scholarly criticism and commentary in accordance with academic fair use principles, maintaining focus on linguistic patterns rather than individual characteristics. We have taken care to use quotations specifically to illustrate analytical points about language use, not to attribute motive or character. In presenting findings, we emphasize the documented linguistic patterns and their potential functions, avoiding speculation about psychological intent.

### 5 RESULTS

This section presents findings from the mixed-methods analysis of political rhetoric, employing systematic approaches to discourse analysis that combine quantitative and qualitative perspectives González-Recio et al. (2025).

The quantitative analysis revealed distinct patterns in the frequency and distribution of rhetorical themes across the twenty-two statements. As per the database tags, themes of collective punishment appeared most frequently, occurring in fourteen entries, followed by civilian harm and references to unrestrained force, each appearing in twelve entries. Dehumanization was present in six statements, while forced displacement and destruction appeared less frequently, in two and one entries respectively. These frequencies demonstrate the prevalence of themes that normalize exceptional measures affecting civilian populations within this specific corpus.

Cross-tabulation analysis by speaker revealed variations in rhetorical emphasis. Yoav Gallant's nine statements emphasized civilian harm and collective punishment, each appearing six times. Benjamin Netanyahu's nine statements showed high frequency of references to unrestrained force and civilian harm. Isaac Herzog's three statements consistently featured collective punishment, while Benny Gantz's single statement included civilian harm, collective punishment, and references to unrestrained force. These patterns indicate both shared rhetorical strategies and speaker-specific emphases across the political leadership cohort. The co-occurrence of multiple tags within single statements was common; for instance, 8 of the 22 statements carried tags for both "collective punishment" and "civilian harm," suggesting these themes are frequently linked in this discourse.

Qualitative analysis identified specific linguistic strategies that construct authority and normalize civilian harm. Performative declarations such as "I have removed all restraints" and "complete siege" function as speech acts establishing operational authority through claims of unlimited force. Metaphysical binaries including "people of the light versus people of darkness" and scriptural invocations referencing "Amalek" create civilizational and religious framing that sacralizes violence. Totalizing claims such as "There are no innocent civilians in Gaza" remove distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, functioning as justificatory mechanisms for undifferentiated harm. A fourth, recurrent strategy identified was the invocation of strategic or historical inevitability, exemplified by phrases framing actions as "what must be done" or as the inevitable response to past trauma, thereby discursively foreclosing alternative courses of action.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals systematic co-occurrence patterns. Statements tagged with multiple themes, particularly the combination of collective punishment, civilian harm, and references to unrestrained force, demonstrate how rhetorical strategies interconnect to normalize exceptional measures. Qualitatively, these co-occurrences often manifest as a logical sequence within a statement: a totalizing claim (erasing civilian distinction) justifies a performative declaration of unrestrained force, which is then framed within a metaphysical binary (e.g., civilization vs. barbarism). These patterns show how political rhetoric projects moral certainty and strategic inevitability while constructing authority through linguistic performance.

Analysis of temporal patterns across the October to December 2023 period shows consistent employment of these rhetorical strategies, with no significant diminution in frequency or intensity over the observed timeframe. The persistence of these patterns suggests their functional role in maintaining political authority and justifying ongoing military operations throughout the conflict period. It must be reiterated that this temporal consistency is observed within the provided sample; a more comprehensive collection of statements might reveal different dynamics.

## 6 DISCUSSION

This study examined how wartime political speech by senior Israeli officials constructs authority and normalizes civilian harm in the Palestinian context. Based on the analysis of a specific curated dataset, the analysis reveals systematic co-occurrence of rhetorical themes including collective punishment, civilian harm, references to unrestrained force, and dehumanization in public statements from October to December 2023. These findings address the research questions concerning authority performance in political speech, rhetorical patterns in relation to international humanitarian law frameworks, and the role of institutional and cultural frames in discourse reception. The discussion situates these findings within the broader literature while rigorously acknowledging the methodological constraints that qualify their scope.

The quantitative analysis documented frequent co-occurrence of rhetorical themes across multiple speakers. The prevalence of collective punishment, civilian harm, and references to unrestrained force labels across statements suggests these themes function as interconnected elements in political authority construction during armed conflict within the sampled discourse. Cross-tabulation analysis indicates that certain speakers employed specific combinations of rhetorical themes with varying frequency, revealing distinct patterns across the political leadership cohort.

Qualitative analysis identified linguistic strategies that perform authority and normalize exceptional measures. Performative declarations such as “I have removed all restraints” and “complete siege” function as speech acts that construct operational authority through claims of unlimited force. Meta-physical binaries including “people of the light versus people of darkness” and scriptural invocations referencing “Amalek” create civilizational and religious framing. Totalizing claims such as “There are no innocent civilians in Gaza” remove distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, functioning as justificatory mechanisms for undifferentiated harm. These strategies align with established patterns of “dangerous speech” documented in other conflict settings Benesch (2014), though their specific cultural and historical resonances (e.g., Biblical references) are context-dependent.

The findings situate within scholarship on dangerous speech and international legal frameworks. The observed rhetorical patterns align with research on how language can normalize violence against civilian populations Saslow (2016); Timmermann (Year?). The systematic co-occurrence of dehumanization with references to unrestrained force and collective punishment supports literature on dangerous speech escalation in conflict settings. These patterns contribute to understanding how political discourse can erode protections afforded to civilian populations under international humanitarian law Jansen (2014). However, a critical comparative perspective is necessary. While similar rhetorical devices (dehumanization, collective guilt) have been documented in the rhetoric preceding the Rwandan genocide or during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the institutional, media, and geopolitical contexts differ profoundly. The presence of similar discursive patterns does not equate to identical outcomes, underscoring that discourse is one factor interacting with many others.

The analysis reveals tensions in how rhetorical patterns build or erode trust across different audiences. For audiences oriented toward international humanitarian law and civilian protection frameworks, trust is likely eroded by dehumanizing generalizations and collective culpability claims. For domestic wartime audiences, the same patterns may build trust by signaling resolve and moral clarity. This dual function reflects the complex interplay between internal legitimacy-building and external accountability mechanisms in conflict settings. This Janus-faced quality of wartime rhetoric presents a fundamental challenge for early-warning systems, as the very language that mobilizes domestic support may simultaneously trigger external alarms.

Institutional and cultural frames shape the reception and interpretation of political discourse. Religious invocations and civilizational binaries position the conflict within existential registers that can legitimate exceptional measures. These framing devices influence domestic reception while

complicating external trust-building efforts. Cultural and religious references in political speech function as mechanisms for constructing in-group solidarity and out-group differentiation during armed conflict. The mobilization of Holocaust memory and Biblical analogy, in particular, taps into deep cultural narratives that can render criticism of policy morally fraught within the in-group, framing military action as a sacred duty or a repetition of historical trauma that must be actively resisted (Moses (2021); Segal (2024)).

The study acknowledges and reflects upon researcher positionality in interpreting political discourse. As secondary analysts of compiled statements, our interpretation is shaped by methodological commitments to systematic analysis of linguistic patterns. The mixed-methods approach provides transparency while acknowledging dependence on database compilation and tagging. This positionality emphasizes documentation of observable linguistic features rather than attribution of intent or legal characterization. We have sought to mitigate interpretive bias through structured analysis and the search for disconfirming evidence, but the politically charged nature of the material means absolute neutrality is an aspiration rather than a guarantee.

The findings have implications for documentation practices in conflict settings. The systematic analysis of rhetorical patterns supports early-warning frameworks for monitoring dangerous speech (LeVine (2025)). Documentation of co-occurrence patterns across speakers and time periods can contribute to accountability mechanisms by providing evidence of rhetorical escalation. However, for such documentation to be maximally credible, it must be based on comprehensive, transparently sourced corpora and employ validated, reproducible coding protocols. This study highlights both the value and the profound challenges of such an endeavor in real time. These implications extend to educational contexts where examples of political rhetoric can facilitate critical analysis of how language frames civilian protection during armed conflict.

The analysis contributes to understanding how historical memory informs contemporary political discourse. References to historical events and scriptural narratives demonstrate how collective memory functions as rhetorical resource in conflict justification (Moses (2021); Segal (2024)). These findings highlight the importance of contextual analysis in interpreting political speech during armed conflict, particularly regarding the mobilization of historical trauma in contemporary justification frameworks.

The study's limitations are substantial and shape the interpretation of its findings. First, the dependence on a single, advocacy-curated database represents a critical constraint. While our analytical strategy sought to engage critically with the pre-tagged data, an ideal study would be based on a comprehensive, independently compiled corpus drawn from multiple verified sources. Second, the sample size, while adequate for qualitative exploration, is small and non-random, limiting generalizability. Third, the inability to verify translation accuracy remains a significant caveat. Fourth, the analysis is purely textual and does not account for paralinguistic features (tone, delivery) or the multimodal circulation of these statements on social media, which significantly affect reception. Fifth, the study lacks a comparative control, such as analysis of rhetoric from other conflict parties or from Israeli officials in different historical conflicts.

The findings suggest clear directions for future research. First, extended temporal analysis could examine how rhetorical patterns evolve over longer conflict durations. Second, comparative analysis across different conflict settings (e.g., Ukraine, Myanmar, Ethiopia) using a standardized analytical framework could identify universal versus context-specific features of dangerous speech. Third, investigation of audience reception through empirical methods (surveys, experiments, digital ethnography) could provide evidence for how different communities interpret and respond to political rhetoric during armed conflict. Fourth, research integrating textual analysis of rhetoric with event data on violence could help establish the empirical relationship between specific discursive patterns and operational outcomes on the ground.

The analysis has implications for policy frameworks addressing dangerous speech in conflict settings. Documentation of rhetorical patterns can inform monitoring systems that track escalation in political discourse. Educational applications could use these findings to develop materials for critical media literacy regarding political rhetoric during armed conflict. For policymakers and NGOs, the study underscores the importance of investing in independent, multilingual media monitoring capacity that adheres to principles of source transparency and methodological rigor. These implications remain grounded in documented patterns observed through systematic analysis of public statements.



This discussion has interpreted findings through multiple theoretical lenses while maintaining focus on documented linguistic patterns. The analysis demonstrates how mixed-methods examination of political rhetoric can provide insights into authority construction and normalization of civilian harm during armed conflict. The findings contribute to scholarship on dangerous speech while suggesting practical applications for documentation, education, and policy frameworks in conflict settings, all presented with the necessary humility imposed by the methodological boundaries of the study.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study examined linguistic patterns in political rhetoric by senior Israeli officials from October to December 2023. Using a curated dataset and a transparent mixed-methods protocol, the analysis documented systematic co-occurrence of rhetorical themes including collective punishment, civilian harm, references to unrestrained force, and dehumanization across multiple speakers. Qualitative discourse analysis identified specific linguistic strategies that construct authority and normalize exceptional measures affecting civilian populations. These findings contribute to understanding how political speech can operate to legitimize violence in conflict settings Saslow (2016); Timmermann (Year?), while rigorously circumscribing the claims to the analyzed corpus.

The primary contribution of this work is twofold: methodological and documentary. Methodologically, it demonstrates a structured approach for critically engaging with pre-compiled, thematically tagged data from contested sources, using qualitative analysis as a check on quantitative summaries derived from external tags. Documentarily, it provides a systematic account of rhetorical patterns within a specific, temporally bounded corpus of public statements, offering a detailed case for comparative analysis. The approach provides systematic documentation of rhetorical patterns that can inform frameworks for monitoring dangerous speech. The analysis contributes to understanding how language frames civilian protection during armed conflict. This methodology supports educational applications that examine political rhetoric and policy discussions about accountability mechanisms LeVine (2025). The mixed-methods design demonstrates how analysis of linguistic patterns can inform early-warning systems in conflict settings, though it also highlights the stringent requirements for data quality and analytical neutrality that such systems demand.

Future research could extend this analysis through comparative studies across different conflict contexts to identify universal versus context-specific features of dangerous speech. Longitudinal examination of rhetorical patterns could track escalation dynamics over extended time periods. Investigation of audience reception through empirical methods could provide evidence for how different communities interpret and respond to political rhetoric during armed conflict. Research could also explore connections between linguistic patterns and humanitarian outcomes in conflict response frameworks. A paramount priority is the development of comprehensive, open-source archives of conflict-related rhetoric that are compiled with transparent, documented criteria, enabling more reproducible and credible scholarly analysis.

This study demonstrates the value of mixed-methods approaches for analyzing political rhetoric in conflict settings while also foregrounding the significant methodological and ethical challenges involved. The findings contribute to scholarship on dangerous speech while providing practical applications for documentation, education, and policy frameworks. Future work should address limitations in database curation and translation fidelity while expanding the temporal and comparative scope of analysis to enhance understanding of how language functions in armed conflict. Ultimately, scholarly analysis of conflict rhetoric must navigate the tension between the urgency of documenting potentially harmful discourse and the imperative of maintaining scientific rigor; this study represents one attempt to engage with that tension transparently.

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