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Dehumanization in the War on Gaza

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Abstract

Objective: Israel's radical policy in the War on Gaza is dehumanizing and absolutely contrary to international norms and standards. Dehumanization refers to the deprivation of humans and other groups of all their basic rights.

Method: This article argues that Zionist discourse has enabled Israel's radical policy through the reproduction of dehumanizing narratives. Such narratives are influenced by Western anthropological perspective, which values Western lives more highly than non-Western ones. Zionist discourse enables such radical policy for Israel by reproducing narratives such as Legitimizing Self and Delegitimizing the Other, Denial of Coevalness, Viewing the Other as an Object, Representation of a Superior Extended 'We', and Belonging to a Different Place.

Results: This radical policy includes elements such as diplomatic weakness, voluntarism, disproportionality between capabilities and actions, maximalism, and reactive behavior. This policy has deviated from realist elements such as prioritizing diplomacy to secure national interests, avoiding risk-centered approaches, respecting the vital interests of others, and operating within the framework of power. Using discourse analysis methodology and examining texts reproduced by Israeli officials and leaders, this article seeks to explain Israel's dehumanizing narratives and radical policy in the War on Gaza.

Keywords: dehumanization, Gaza Strip, narrative, radical policy, value of human life, Zionist discourse

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1. Introduction

Many existing works about the War on Gaza focus on the insecure environment in which Israel has engaged in conflict with Hamas to ensure its security. On this basis, they claim to have a realistic approach to the subject (Flibbert, 2011; Lambeth, 2012; Safdar, 2024; Hussain, 2010). Some other works have addressed the successive wars between Hamas and Israel from a legal perspective, focusing on the concept of war crimes (Feldman, 2009; Rogers, 2014; Tukura & Tukura, 2024). Additionally, there are works that have viewed the subject from a constructivist perspective and are divided into conventional and radical constructivist approaches, with the present research being closer to the radical constructivist approach, particularly discourse analysis (Rynhold & Waxman, 2008; Mansour, 2009; Amer, 2017; Rababah & Hamdan, 2019).

It appears that the Israeli regime's policy throughout its existence has been influenced by Zionist discourse. This semantic system, considering events, reproduction of narratives, and the construction of Zionist subjects' mentality, has created Israel's radical policy. In this context, multiple confrontations with the Hamas militant group at different intervals, and Israel's actions and reactions can be evidence of such a policy.

Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and lost control over it. After Hamas gained power in 2007, a period of intermittent and multiple conflicts began, each with different intensity and scope. The first serious confrontation between Israel and Hamas since Hamas took power in the Gaza Strip dates back to 2008, when after Hamas's rocket attack on southern Israel and the city of Sderot, Israel fought with Hamas for 22 days, resulting in the

deaths of 1,417 Palestinians and 10 Israelis. Eventually, this war ended with a ceasefire agreement (Johnson, 2011, p. 121).

In November 2012, Israel assassinated Ahmed Jabari, Hamas's military wing commander, following eight days of continuous air operations. This assassination led both sides to attack each other's positions. Meanwhile, the Israeli Air Force targeted rocket launching platforms, weapons depots, and buildings claimed to contain Hamas weapons. In response, Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad targeted Jewish settlements near the Gaza Strip. In these attacks, the Fajr-5 missile was used for the first time, with a range of up to 75 kilometers, reaching Tel Aviv. Eventually, both sides reached a ceasefire agreement after exchanges of fire (Zeitsoff, 2016, p. 6).

In July and August 2014, Hamas elements kidnapped three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, leading to a seven-week war between Israel and Hamas. The Netanyahu government determined it needed to attack the West Bank and eliminate Hamas-related elements. The attack on the West Bank led to the imprisonment of many political activists who had no connection to Hamas, and they were not even given fair trials to address their charges. The humiliation of Hamas in the West Bank and political activists gave Hamas the pretext to resort to rocket attacks, and as a result of this war, more than 2,125 Palestinians and 67 Israelis lost their lives (Bregman, 2016, pp. 322-328).

In March 2018, Palestinian protests near the border wall between Palestine and the Arabs turned violent, and Israeli soldiers opened fire on Palestinians. Meanwhile, Hamas also intervened in support of Palestinians, leading Hamas and Israel to enter a new round of conflict that ultimately resulted in 182 Palestinians being killed and about 6,000 wounded (ICG, 2018, p. 2).

In May 2021, the Israeli Supreme Court issued an eviction order for six Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. After this ruling, Palestinians in East Jerusalem staged protests, and Hamas began firing rockets in support of the protests. Israel also conducted air strikes on Gaza citing Hamas rocket launches. This war, which lasted 11 days, led to fighting between the two sides, resulting in 260 Palestinians being killed and nearly 2,000 others wounded. Additionally, 72,000 Palestinians were displaced. On the Israeli side, 13 people were killed¹.

In August 2022, Israeli fighters attacked Gaza, and in response, Islamic Jihad fired dozens of missiles toward Israel. In these attacks, more than 30 Palestinians, including women and children, were killed, and two Islamic Jihad commanders were targeted for assassination (Tukura & Tukura, 2024, p. 9).

What distinguishes these conflicts and mentioned wars from the October 7, 2023 attack is Israel's intensity of action and level of response to it. After Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking 248 Israelis hostage, the regime responded with unprecedented severity compared to previously mentioned aggressive behaviors. This attack occurred in a context where Israel had spent years creating the necessary conditions and grounds for attack through the blockade of Gaza, imposing economic sanctions under the pretext of security, and consistent opposition to peace talks for establishing an independent Palestinian state (Amnesty International, 2024, pp. 50-51).

Israel immediately began bombing the Gaza Strip after Hamas's attack. This bombardment was not limited to military personnel but included civilians. In its most severe and extreme form, the regime

1. see: Pratap, 2022

targeted Gaza's hospital on the pretext that Hamas forces were hiding there, killing many civilians and children. The Israeli regime also imposed a complete naval and land blockade of Gaza and sanctioned essential items for people, particularly food, medical supplies, and power plant fuel, and continued bombing Gaza.

In the next phase, Israeli forces entered Gaza and divided it into northern and southern regions, forcing people in northern areas to move south. They declared the southern Gaza area as a safe zone, but occasionally bombed it. Continuous operations in the north, deliberate destruction of residential homes, destruction of infrastructure and shelters, starving people, and forcing their migration to different areas were among the actions carried out by Israel's army during the attack, to the extent that it strengthened the suspicion that Israel was deliberately and consciously carrying out these behaviors. Meanwhile, Netanyahu tried to attribute the casualties from the military attack to war and its unintended consequences. Now, considering the mentioned cases of Israel-Hamas wars and the latest War on Gaza, how Zionist discourse has made such a radical policy possible in the War on Gaza is among the issues that can be addressed.

The main argument of the research is that Zionist discourse has made such a radical policy possible through the reproduction of dehumanizing narratives in the War on Gaza.

In the following, we will first explain the article's conceptual framework, which emphasizes the difference in the value of life in Western and non-Western societies, and then explain the discourse analysis method to understand the dehumanizing narratives of Zionist discourse. After that, we will discuss how the Zionist discourse reproduces dehumanizing narratives. Following this, we

will describe the events related to the War on Gaza and demonstrate empirical cases of Israel's radical policy. Then we will explain Israel's radical policy and its elements, and finally, we will present the discussion's conclusion.

2. Conceptual Framework

This research is derived from a conceptual framework about time and space, emphasizing the difference in the value of life between Western and non-Western societies. Initially, it should be mentioned that time and space have an intertwined relationship, such that imagining one without the other is impossible. In this regard, Fabian introduces the concept of denial of coevalness in contemporary anthropological thinking, which argues that different places exist in different times. Such thinking turns to the construction of the 'other' and holds that the contemporary other has become our past ancestor and lives within the past, while there are also people who live in the present time. On this basis, Arland Thornton argues that contemporary practice tends to divide societies into two types: modern and pre-modern. In this context, Helliwell and Hindess have utilized this division and believe that in modern society, people who are present in the present time, have the ability to make decisions to change the status quo and can bring about major changes. However, in pre-modern societies, people are immersed in their tradition and live in the past. Such individuals do not have the ability to change the status quo and live in a herd-like, collective manner; they are subject to the decisions of the group leader and view the leader as a symbol of a collective tradition that is current and flowing in society¹.

1. see: Helliwell & Hindess, 2013

Given this division, it appears that people who live in the early stages of Western history and tie their identity to the past have less valuable lives. This is because they are old, ancient, and remote, and reside in a time that they should not be (the past), and are different from contemporary individuals who are present in the present time and have the ability to make decisions and think freely and creatively about current developments (Helliwell & Hindess, 2013, p. 78).

Michel Foucault, in his book *The Order of Things*, examines the image of humans in the nineteenth century as a unique event in Western cultural history. He states that in post-Kantian discourse, two types of humans have been constructed: 1) Objects of knowledge, and 2) Subjects who know. Helliwell and Hindess use this classification and connect it to the concept of time. They envision the objects of knowledge as humans who live in the past and are dissolved as objects in their societies and traditions, while in the second category, subjects who know are individuals who live in the present time and are envisioned as subjects capable of interacting with each other and other states (Helliwell & Hindess, 2013, p. 76).

In general, it can be said that according to the discourse of modernity, the value of human life varies for people living in different times. Those who live in the present time and have the ability to make decisions as free subjects have significantly more valuable lives than those who live in past. Such individuals lack mental and individual freedom to properly exercise it as free and creative individuals and are slaves to their culture, tradition, and societies. Meanwhile, the Other, constructed by such discourse, belongs to another place that is different from present-day humans; they are portrayed as remote, separate, isolated, and pre-modern.

Based on this dualism, their lives have less value compared to Western individuals.

Given the points mentioned, it appears that the Zionist discourse is influenced by the Western anthropological perspective that distinguishes between self and Other, wherein it represents itself as civilized people and views the Other as savage and uncivilized. Through identification with Western discourse, the Zionists have constructed an image of an Other (people of Gaza), in which the value of human life is diminished, therefore turning to radical and dehumanizing policies in Gaza.

3. Discourse Analysis as a Method

Discourse is a practice that not only represents the world, but also signifies it. Discourses are constructive and constructing of the world's meaning, and actors can make the world meaningful for themselves under them and gain the ability to understand and comprehend their surrounding environment. Discourses are systems that fix meaning. They make some actions of individuals comprehensible and possible, while other actions outside of discourses become meaningless. This means that individuals cannot convey their purpose and intention from their actions and legitimize their behaviors without being placed within discursive categories (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64), as seen in the Zionism discourse in Israel and the Nazism discourse in Germany during World War II. Additionally, agents use semantic systems from internal legitimizing sources to justify their constructed legitimacy. These sources exist in raw form in the deepest and most hidden cultural layers of a society, onto which discourses grasp in order to legitimize themselves. Thus, in this sense, discourses are society's

organizing patterns that use these legitimizing sources and bring them into the political arena. For this purpose, Fairclough names four legitimizing strategies for these texts: 1) Authority of custom, individuals, law, etc., 2) Rationalization relying on institutions and information society, 3) Moral evaluation, and 4) Mythmaking, which from Fairclough's perspective¹.

However, discourses need *narrative* to spread at the social level.

Narratives are stories that possess meaning, characteristics, and a specific plot line. Furthermore, they utilize political objectives, meaning they are highly selective and purposefully constructed in a way that each narrative eliminates part of the story and focuses on another part. Narratives are expressive processes that give ideological and emotional value to what we hear and what we select based on our knowledge. Therefore, security agents construct security narratives to have an understanding of the strategic environment around them and understand national security threats. Additionally, narratives show security agents' way of thinking about external challenges and threats, and also cause agents to understand the limitations of political change (Subotic, 2016, p. 612).

In this research, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method is used. This method firstly provides researchers with an effective linguistic tool for analyzing texts, and secondly, given its critical aspect, allows the examination of the relationship between power, knowledge, and ideology hidden within texts. For this purpose, we aim to use this method in the present article to show not only the events and discursive space constructed in the Zionist semantic

1. see: Fairclough, 2003

system, but also to examine the narrative categories and semantic spectrums that these narratives reproduce in this regime's policy.

According to Fairclough's definition, social events shape what is real. Text is part of a social event. Given the high textual nature of speech events, the author examines the statements and speeches of Israeli prime ministers and officials. In this exploration, the discursive space governing the text is examined to show its impact on the audience.

One of the important tools that the author seeks in the text is the use of assumptions. *Assumptions* play an important role in the text because the hidden meaning of the text relates to them, meaning that assumptions are what is hidden in the text without having been explicitly stated by the speaker or writer. This becomes clear given the context of the text, in that presuppositions have been previously assumed implicitly in the text by the speaker, therefore they are not used directly. Furthermore, in a text, to the extent that an individual is committed to the propositions and sentences used, their identity is revealed. This means that the speaker shows his/her level of commitment to the text through the propositions he/she uses (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 41, 118).

One of the important elements that discourses reproduce is narrative. Narratives are stories consisting of three parts: beginning, middle, and end. Without narratives, the history of humans, individuals, and people becomes meaningless. Narratives come in infinitely different forms that make people's experience of their surrounding environment possible. Discourses use different narratives for legitimization, imaging, and propaganda to advance their ideals (Sadriu, 2021, p. 4). Here, dehumanizing narratives in the War on Gaza are examined in five categories: Legitimizing self and Delegitimizing the Other, denial of coevalness, viewing the

Other as an object, representation of a superior extended 'we', and belonging to different place.

One of the characteristics of discourses is the homogenization of elements and floating signifiers in the form of a chain of equivalence. This occurs against another characteristic, which is the exclusion of heterogeneous elements, meaning that elements or signifiers that do not fit in the chain of equivalence enter the chain of difference, meaning they are excluded so that the discourse elements become calibrated. The construction of this duality in discourse analysis is common to portray utopias that speakers attempt to depict without flaw. In the Zionist discourse, dualization occurs in an extreme form. This type of discourse constructs dualities of self and Other such as absolute good/absolute evil, civilized/barbarian, legitimate/illegitimate and presents an image of friend and enemy.

The data for the present research is selected from the collection of speeches by Israeli officials and prime ministers, which have been published in Israeli newspapers. The author refers to internet databases to access the mentioned data. Israeli virtual libraries also make available a collection of speeches by Israeli officials and prime ministers. Regarding the selected texts, the author tries to select a range of texts to show the vast diversity of Israeli officials' dehumanizing mentality. Additionally, the author has tried to show dehumanizing thinking in the totality of the Zionist semantic system by selecting texts from senior political actors and officials such as the prime minister, president of Israel, defense minister, national security minister and finance minister. For this purpose, the author has selected eleven texts that were statements by political actors namely Benjamin Netanyahu, David Ben-Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich, Isaac Herzog, and Yoav Gallant (former defense

minister). From a discourse analysis perspective, when thorough examinations have been conducted in these actors' texts, the content of selected main elements reaches necessary adequacy and is repeatedly reproduced in different forms in the above texts, it can be said we have reached necessary adequacy. In other words, instead of existing formulas regarding sample representation in statistical studies, in discourse analysis if categories and relationships are repeated in a way that we realize that we are not facing a new category and relationship, we can say we have reached a text saturation (or in quantitative methods terms, sample representation)¹.

4. Reproduction of Zionist Discourse's Dehumanizing Narratives

The broader Zionist discourse has presented narratives about the individuals and residents of these areas to align and convince subjects toward their actions, practices, and programs in the invasion of Gaza, in order to use these to pursue their plans for completing a radical policy. Therefore, it needs a foundation to prepare Israeli society and international society for such plans, thus reproducing specific narratives that have unique characteristics.

4. 1. Legitimizing Self and Delegitimizing the Other

Israeli leaders and agents legitimize their actions and behaviors through constructing heroic narratives and mythological and religious imagery. This kind of legitimization causes internal

1. see: Milliken, 1999

subjects to be convinced to carry out any behavior toward the Other, and does not allow them any form of resistance. This is because the construction of legitimizing agents' actions and their commands is rooted in the constructed history of the Zionist discourse, and the sacred words of the *Torah*, therefore resistance against such definitive propositions will be very difficult According to Gallant (2024),

As a duty to the fallen, as a duty to next generations, and part of our moral obligation, we must guarantee the fulfillment of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah: (They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit).

Additionally, satisfying Jewish collective desires for extreme actions will be easy and simple given heroic and religious propositions. Furthermore, Israeli agents and leaders try to construct extreme dualities, such as good and evil, civilized and barbarian, light and darkness, and brave versus coward to firstly align internal subjects' desires with their own desires, and secondly justify their aggressive and extreme behaviors and actions.

They (the soldiers) are longing to recompense the murderers for the horrific acts they perpetrated on our children, our women, our parents and our friends. They are committed to eradicating this evil from the world, for our existence, and I add, for the good of all humanity. The entire people and the leadership of the people, warmly embrace them and believe in them. 'Remember what Amalek did to you'. We remember and we fight. Our brave soldiers who are now in Gaza, around Gaza, and in the other sector throughout the country, join a chain of heroes of Israel that have resisted for over 3000 years, from Joshua, Judah Maccabee, and Bar Kokhba, to the heroes of 1948, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and Israel's other wars. Our heroic soldiers have one

supreme common goal: to destroy the murderous enemy and ensure our existence in our land ... We will fight and we will win. This will be a victory of good over evil, of light over darkness, of life over death (Netanyahu, 2023c). This kind of dualization is frequently seen in other texts by Netanyahu and Israeli officials.

4. 2. Denial of Coevalness

Israeli officials and authorities continuously represent Hamas and the people of Gaza with markers such as being barbarian, devil, ruthless, criminal, evil monsters, and killers in such a way that their actions against Israel are portrayed as devoid of any civilization.

Hamas terrorist bound, burned and executed children. They are savages. Hamas is ISIS. And just as the forces of civilization united to defeat ISIS, the forces of civilization must support Israel in defeating Hamas. In fighting Hamas, Israel is not only fighting for its own people. It is fighting for every country that stands against barbarism (Netanyahu, 2023b).

They are pre-modern and barbarian people, and this causes their actions to be incomprehensible. Such actions from the perspective of Israeli leaders are violent, aggressive, savage, and far from basic principles of humanity and return to pre-modern societies where the state of nature prevails. Israeli officials believe that Hamas and Gaza's people do not live in the present time, and they cannot recognize such people with these characteristics as human, so they deal with them severely.

These individuals, given the mentioned characteristics, lack human qualities; therefore, their lives as people living in the past have lower value and less importance. They are subject to natural characteristics such as ruthless killing to achieve goals, satisfying

bloodthirst and lust; therefore, one cannot negotiate with them and must treat them as they treat others. "They will regret this moment. Gaza will never go back to what it was ... whoever comes to decapitate, murder women, Holocaust survivors, we will eliminate him with all our might, and without compromise" (Gallant, 2023b).

What happened today is unprecedented in Israel - and I will see to it that it does not happen again. The entire government behind this decision The IDF will immediately use all its strength to destroy Hamas's capabilities. We will destroy them and we will forcefully avenge this dark day that they forced on the state of Israel and its citizens. As Bialik wrote, "Revenge for the blood of a little child has yet been devised by Satan". All places in which Hamas is deployed, hiding, and operating, that wicked city, we will turn them into rubble... I say to the residents of Gaza: Leave now, because we will operate forcefully everywhere (Netanyahu, 2023a).

4. 3. Viewing the Other as an Object

In the dehumanizing narratives of Israeli leaders and officials, the Other (Hamas and Gaza's people) is defined as an object. This means they are not conscious subjects and cannot understand their surrounding world and only think about killing and bloodshed. Such people lack the ability to recognize others and cannot live peacefully. Gaza's people are immersed in their past and have lost the ability to connect with the present time. Therefore, their lifestyle is also like their ancestors. Such humans lack the ability for individual decision-making and blindly follow their leaders without being aware of the consequences of their leaders' actions and behaviors. Law in their societies is based on tradition and pre-modern culture; this itself is an evidence that they live collectively

and tribally and see their leader's commands as current and flowing in all aspects of their lives. Such people no longer have the ability to change the state of affairs because they have a pre-conscious mentality that lacks critical and instrumental rationality to change conditions for the better.

It is an entire nation out there that is responsible. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved. It's absolutely not true They could have risen up, they could have fought against that evil regime which took over Gaza in a coup (Herzog, 2023).

From Israeli officials' perspective, Gaza residents do not have individual rights because they lack the necessary foundations for thinking and choosing representatives. Therefore, the sacrifice of such individuals who share common participation in their leaders' actions is considered normal. "I have ordered the complete siege of the Gaza Strip. There will not be any electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly" (Gallant, 2023a). Additionally, for Israeli leaders and officials, the lives of Gaza residents are at a lower level compared to people who have the ability to think and live in a representative democracy. Furthermore, they believe that by educating future generations of Palestinians, they can eliminate extremism and hatred of Jews and restore peace in Gaza. Such a view not only seeks to eliminate others who currently live in the 'past', but also aims to separate future generations from their tradition to distance them from what is called uncivilized past-orientation, then bring them to the present time to prepare them for a peaceful life.

Gaza should have a civilian administration run by Palestinians who do not seek to destroy Israel. That is not too much to ask.

It's fundamental thing that we have a right to demand and receive. A new generation of Palestinians must no longer be taught to hate Jews but Rather to live in peace with us. Those twin words, demilitarization and deradicalization were applied to Germany and Japan after World War II and led to decades of peace, prosperity, and security (Netanyahu, 2024).

4. 4. Belonging to a Different Place

Time and space usually have an intertwined relationship. In such a way that one can say time is always a function of space and visual-spatial manifestations where an event occurs. In this case, also, from the perspective of Israeli officials and leaders, the people of Gaza and the regime ruling over it must be destroyed for having characteristics and markers such as barbarism, savagery, jungle law prevailing in the Gaza Strip, and the presence of dark forces in a demonic space. They are messengers of evil, madness, and barbarism and stand against forces of good that seek progress in the Middle East; therefore they must be eliminated so that Israel's promised paradise can remain in a sacred, ideal, and spiritual space. "Thousands of young Israelis were celebrating at an outdoor music festival. And suddenly, at 6:29 AM, as children were still sleeping soundly in their beds in the town and kibbutzim next to Gaza, suddenly heaven turned into hell" (Netanyahu, 2024). Such forces have acquired a demonic nature because of living in the space of evil; therefore one cannot reach a compromise with them or educate them. Furthermore, one cannot teach them how to live peacefully because their nature stems from barbarism and savagery, and only through elimination or integration into civilized nations can one be rid of them. "This war presents an opportunity to concentrate on encouraging the migration of the residents of

Gaza; such a policy is a correct, just, humane solution” (Ben-Gvir, 2024).

The correct solution to the ongoing Israeli Palestinian conflict is to encourage the voluntary migration of Gaza’s residents to countries that will agree to accommodate the refugees. Israel will permanently control the territory of Gaza Strip. Jerusalem could not allow Gaza to remain a hothouse of 2 million people who want to destroy the State of Israel As long as I am the minister of finance, not even one shekel will be given to the Nazi terrorists in Gaza (Smotrich, 2024a).

Trump's new presidency presents an important opportunity to apply Israeli sovereignty to the settlements of Judea and Samaria. We were one step away from applying sovereignty to the settlements of Judea and Samaria, and now is the time to do it. The year 2025 will, with God's help, be the year of Israel's sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. The only way to remove the danger of a Palestinian terror state form the agenda is to apply sovereignty to Jewish settlements in the entire Judea and Samaria (Smotrich, 2024b).

4. 5. Representation of a Superior Extended ‘We’

Israeli leaders believe that the ‘Jewish people’ are at the center of the fight against Hamas. This is because Hamas is part of the axis of evil led by Iran. They believe they hold the helm of leadership of civilized nations and are on the front line of fighting against barbaric and uncivilized nations. Israeli leaders set the scene in such a way that the world appears divided into two parts - civilized nations and barbaric/uncivilized nations, and now that they stand against Hamas, they must protect the progressive/civilized front.

“In fighting Hamas, Israel is not only fighting for its own people. It is fighting for every country that stands against barbarism. Israel will win this war, and when Israel wins, the entire civilized world wins” (Netanyahu, 2023b).

In fact, Israeli leaders try to establish a mission for the Jewish people by creating an identification between the part (Israel) and the whole (civilized nations), while warning the civilized world that if Israel is defeated, dark forces will come for other nations. Such identification takes shape in a past-oriented temporal-spatial situation (glorious past) in such a way that Israelis imagine themselves like Britain on the front line of fighting against Nazis and their partners. Such staging and symbolic actions by Israel are firstly to make the conflict in the Middle East appear larger than normal, suggesting that international peace is at risk, and secondly to attract cooperation from other countries, especially America, for military aid and international support.

My friends, if you want to remember just one point from this speech, remember this: our enemies are your enemies, our war is your war, and our victory will be your victory. Ladies and gentlemen, that victory is in sight... In World War II, as Britain fought on the frontlines of civilization, Winston Churchill appealed to Americans with these famous words: 'Give us the tools, and we'll finish the job.' Today, as Israel fights on the frontline of civilization, I too appeal to America: 'Give us the tools faster, and we'll finish the job faster (Netanyahu, 2024).

5. Israel's Radical Policy

Given our understanding of the collective mindset of the Israeli state, we can better comprehend Israel's radical policy in the War

on Gaza. We aim to analyze Israel's actions in Gaza across five broad categories: the conflict in Gaza, forced displacement, siege and collective starvation of Gaza residents, conflict with Hezbollah, relations with Arab states, and illegal extraterritorial operations. We will demonstrate how these actions go beyond what realists¹ consider appropriate and proper policy. In this context, a realist policy involves calculating costs and benefits, increasing power, pursuing security, and striving for survival. A key foundation of realist policy is rational behavior, where caution and prudence are essential elements. Yet, what characteristics define a prudent policy? From Morgenthau's perspective, a prudent policy minimizes risk-taking, while maximizing the benefits of achieving vital state objectives. While prioritizing diplomatic rules, he argues that states can resolve many of their problems by adhering to these principles.

Glaser contends that states acting rationally and employing foresight only pursue their strategic and vital objectives. This observation demonstrates his awareness of the importance of giving vital space to others' interests. Such behavior results from his prudent thinking. Many structural realists, including Waltz, consider prudence within the framework of the international system

1. It should be noted that many of the policies proposed by realists, including the primacy of diplomacy over war, pertain to relations between states, and the author is aware of this matter. However, since paramilitary groups Hamas and Hezbollah have demonstrated throughout their history of conflict with Israel that they represent a segment of their society and possess the legitimate monopoly of force within a specific territory, and given that Israel has also engaged in negotiations with these groups and reached multiple agreements, the author, with some level of tolerance, extends the concepts employed in interstate politics to these groups as well. Furthermore, it should be added that realist concepts can be beneficial in the formation of Israel's policy, and their application can illuminate the distinctions between this regime's radical policy and its elements versus realist policies.

and argue that states capable of recognizing their limitations and opportunities within the international structure can achieve the highest levels of profit and security in the international system. This requires such states to practice self-restraint and tolerance.

Stephen Walt, another defensive structuralist, also supports the elements of prudence and caution in rational policy. He argues that states should determine their friendships and enmities based on considerations and according to their interests, rather than considering any state a permanent friend or enemy, as such thinking could seriously damage their interests. Even offensive realists like Mearsheimer emphasize the importance of prudence and its elements. According to Mearsheimer, although states pursue security under anarchy, which can lead to war, they prioritize peace and seek strategies that avoid war; containment and respect for other states' spheres of influence are among such strategies¹.

As a result, behaviors that deviate from these so-called "realist" characteristics can be considered radical, meaning they do not align well with realist prescriptions: Elements such as weakness in diplomacy, voluntarism, disproportion between capabilities and actions, imbalance between costs and benefits, preference for costly solutions like war despite the possibility of avoiding it, superiority complex or pride resulting in maximalism in interests, reactive behavior, and similar traits. As we will see, such behaviors are also evident in Israel's policy. In the next section, we will present evidence of Israel's radical policy in the War on Gaza and related events, demonstrating how Israelis, through their radical behaviors, have not only distanced themselves from realist politics, but have also, in some cases, jeopardized their own security to enable their radical policy.

1. see: Schmidt & Wight, 2023; Walt, 2018; Morgenthau, 1955

5. 1. The War in Gaza

At 6:29 AM on October 7, 2023, Hamas breached Israel's defensive walls and simultaneously attacked Israel by land and sea. In this attack, approximately 1,200 Israeli civilians and military personnel were killed, and 248 were taken hostage. However, Israel's response was disproportionate to Hamas's attack and resulted in the death of approximately 50,000 people in Gaza. In response to Hamas's attack, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced the objectives of the Gaza offensive: destroying Hamas and assassinating its leaders, clearing out forces loyal to this group in Gaza, and ultimately eliminating any extremism that could threaten Israel in coming years. Given these objectives, Israel began its devastating attacks.

In the first phase, Israel heavily bombarded the Gaza Strip; it targeted both military and civilian objectives, using cluster bombs and white phosphorus, which are prohibited weapons, to strike military personnel (Human Rights Watch, 2024). At times, Israel also targeted civilian facilities such as Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital, claiming Hamas elements were present and had built tunnels underneath these buildings. From Israel's total attacks thus far, more than fifty thousand people, mostly women and children, have been killed and tens of thousands more wounded (Aljazeera, 2014).

In the second phase, on October 28, Israel launched a ground invasion of Gaza to completely overthrow Hamas. They went through neighborhoods searching for Hamas elements, killing many and taking many others prisoner¹. The Israelis initially entered northern Gaza and gradually moved into southern Gaza, continuing their clearing operations. To date, Israel's policy appears

1. see: HRC, 2024

realist since both classical and offensive realists emphasize the necessity of military superiority and argue that in the international system, the stronger state is the one with more powerful military forces that can set its objectives according to its preferences and interests.

However, what appears non-realist is that the Israeli regime has no political program for controlling Gaza. Although there have been some differing statements - including Benjamin Netanyahu saying they plan to first control Gaza themselves and then hand it over to a moderate civilian Palestinian organization (Netanyahu, 2024) - on the other hand, Israel's Defense Minister believes Israel itself will maintain control of Gaza (Times of Israel, 2023). This indicates that Israel lacks a coherent program for controlling the Gaza Strip. In this case, one can point to Israel's maximalist policy, meaning that without considering the vital interests of the opposite side or even giving the smallest concession, Israel seeks to achieve absolute security through controlling the Gaza Strip, which appears to be an unrealistic and radical policy.

This maximalist view of policy stems from Israelis' conception of denying contemporaneity with Gaza residents. Those who live in the past deserve such aggressive and radical treatment because, like human-like animals devoid of civilization, they only seek to harm and kill others. Gaza residents are portrayed as bloodthirsty criminals who are complicit with their leaders in killing Jews; Consequently, it is imperative that they be subjected to the most stringent measures permissible. It is worth noting that Israel also sought to control the Gaza strip in 2002, but was unable to maintain control due to Hamas's resistance, withdrawing from the area in 2005. Additionally, Hamas has not yet been completely destroyed, and Israel is still fighting with this paramilitary group in various

areas and intricate tunnels; claims of Hamas's destruction therefore currently lack credibility.

5. 2. Forced Displacement, Siege and Collective Starvation

On October 13, Israel ordered Gaza residents to evacuate northern Gaza and move to the southern part of the strip, which they claimed was a safer area, promising not to attack this region. However, as Israel's attacks expanded, they not only destroyed many non-military homes and infrastructure in the north, but also attacked southern Gaza areas that had been designated as "safe zones", killing many civilians. After clearing the north, Israeli forces moved south, forcing Gaza residents to constantly relocate to save their lives. Israel even attacked international aid organizations and their protected locations for civilian support, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). Israeli soldiers also destroyed Gaza's mosques and symbols, and attacked hospitals and schools where civilians had taken shelter.

Furthermore, after the October 7 attacks, Israel placed Gaza under complete land and sea blockade, preventing humanitarian goods including food, fuel, and basic medical supplies from entering the area to meet residents' essential needs¹. Such radical behaviors led the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for committing war crimes in Gaza, which was welcomed by many countries and damaged Israel's credibility and prestige².

1. see: Albanese, 2024; UN, 2024; Fakhri, 2024

2. see: ICC, 2024

Additionally, upon South Africa's request, the issue of genocide and war crimes was brought before the International Court of Justice, receiving support from many countries, and in its latest ruling, the court ordered a halt to actions violating the Genocide Convention (ICJ, 2024). A regime that had always considered itself a victim of Nazi genocide in World War II now faced accusations of genocide, damaging its international reputation. As a result of such policy, the UN General Assembly, through a vote of member states, recognized Palestine as a state (UN, 2024). Such behavior appears to have no place in any realist approaches, and Israel merely engaged in radical and extreme actions that damaged its credibility. This demonstrates a lack of prudence emphasized by various realists such as Morgenthau. None of these behaviors incorporate elements of realist policy and instead reflect a radical policy.

It is worth noting that beyond the legal implications of such crimes, Israelis continue to pursue genocide in Gaza as a result of what their officials describe as a lack of civility and the portrayal of animal-like humans. They believe that Hamas and Gaza residents are pre-modern humans who lack basic rights to live; hence they indiscriminately attack civilian areas and needlessly destroy essential infrastructure such as hospitals and residential homes, attempting to make the Gaza Strip uninhabitable. This is because they aim to force the region's people to migrate to other parts of the world. From Israeli leaders' perspective, Gaza's people must be eliminated for Gaza to become a secure region for Israel, as due to their savage and barbaric nature, one can neither educate them, nor negotiate with them.

5. 3. Conflict with Hezbollah

Following Israel's attack on Gaza, Lebanon's Hezbollah, another group in the resistance front, declared war on Israel in support of Hamas. Hezbollah conducted daily attacks on northern Israel, forcing Israel to evacuate 80,000 residents from the area and relocate many of them to hotels and other locations. After gaining relative control in Gaza, Israel turned to confront Hezbollah in the north and attempted to destroy this group. However, the battle on the northern front continues even after Israel eliminated all high-ranking and mid-level commanders, with the regime suffering numerous casualties and losses while achieving few objectives.

It is worth noting that such a policy is radical and unrealistic both in its objectives and outcomes, because Israel seeks to destroy Hezbollah and inflict massive damage on this group, in a similar way to Hamas (Gritten, 2024). However, Hezbollah is a significantly stronger enemy than Hamas and receives support from Iran. Hezbollah possesses an arsenal of over 100,000 missiles and has the capability and experience of ground warfare with Israel (Shapir, 2017, p. 71). They also previously defeated Israel in the 33-day war of 2006, thus setting such objectives demonstrates a policy of disproportionate means and actions.

In this type of policy, Israel imagines that it can achieve any goal it desires, thus setting no limitations for itself and consequently taking actions beyond its power and disproportionate to its capabilities. This policy results from a superior 'we' perspective that sees itself without any limitations at the center of affairs, and envisions the scene empty of other actors.

Israel could have ended the northern war at a lower cost - according to Lebanon's Foreign Minister, Syed Hassan Nasrallah

had accepted a temporary ceasefire plan before his death (Lockwood & Suri, 2024). A temporary ceasefire could have been the beginning of accepting the UN Resolution 1701, a plan where Hezbollah forces would return to pre-October 7 attack borders, and Israel could resettle its 80,000 displaced people in settlements. It should be noted that Israel and Lebanon reportedly reached a ceasefire agreement on November 27, 2024, under which the Lebanese Army would be responsible for controlling the shared borders between Israel and Lebanon, and Hezbollah forces would need to withdraw to the mutually agreed-upon Blue Line. What weakens this agreement is Netanyahu's statement regarding Israel's freedom to conduct military strikes against potential targets, with numerous violations having been reported in this regard (BBC, 2024). Additionally, the Lebanese Army lacks the capability to control and disarm Hezbollah forces. Israel should have attempted to reach an agreement with Hezbollah leadership, rather than repeating the previously failed agreement and basing it on Resolution 1701. Such a policy demonstrates weakness in diplomacy, meaning if Israel had acted based on realist policy, it could have secured its interests through effective diplomatic pursuit; however, they had a different idea that led to radical policies of diplomatic weakness, voluntarism, and disproportion between actions and capabilities.

5. 4. Relations with Arabs

Israel's relations with Arab states have always been contentious. After numerous wars with Arabs, particularly Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, Israel managed to reach relative agreements with these states. Notable among these are the 1979 Camp David

Accords with Egypt and the 1994 agreement with Jordan. However, in recent years, particularly during the Trump administration, the Abraham Accords were introduced and received support from certain Arab countries; States including the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Sudan, and Bahrain joined the Abraham Accords. The fundamental principle of this agreement was normalizing relations between Israel and these states.

The initiative, launched by the United States, sought to bring other major states like Saudi Arabia into the agreement, but Hamas's October 7 attack disrupted all equations. Many states, including Sudan and Morocco, tried to remain in the agreement due to the benefits they received, but their regional role and domestic societal demands placed them in a precarious position (Abudllayev, 2024, p. 48). Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which had implicitly expressed interest in joining the agreement, changed its decision after the October 7 event and made normalizing relations with Israel contingent upon the establishment of a Palestinian state (Congressional Research Service, 2024)

Israel was unwilling to negotiate with Hamas or make concessions, such as recognizing a Palestinian state within defined borders. Given the losses that they suffered from the October 7 attack, Israelis decided to completely destroy Hamas and turned Gaza City into ruins. Through extreme portrayals of Hamas as Nazi terrorists, evil regime, demonic, criminal, barbaric, and pre-modern, they decided to handle the situation with an iron fist without considering other actors or seeing their interests at a macro level.

One could argue that regardless of the fact that Hamas is not yet eliminated, Israelis could have significantly weakened Hamas with devastating strikes and then met minimal Arab demands through an

agreement with this paramilitary group. Such behavior would have allowed Israel to benefit from reviving the Abraham Accords and perhaps even convince Saudi Arabia to normalize relations. However, weakness in diplomacy, a maximalist view and warrior spirit, preference for costly solutions including war when it could be avoided, and arrogance and pride in this regime led them to continue fighting Hamas and Hezbollah without having a clear plan for the future.

5. 5. Illegal Extraterritorial Operations

Throughout the War on Gaza, Israel repeatedly resorted to assassination policies in various countries. While such policies have always been on this regime's agenda, they became more apparent during the War on Gaza and took on a radical form. On April 1, 2024, Israel attacked Iran's consulate building in Damascus, killing seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members. Attacking a country's consulate is an illegal action that violates the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations regarding consular relations between states and their immunity¹.

On July 31, 2024, Israel assassinated Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's political leader, in Tehran. Iran, in accordance with the UN Charter, called such action a violation of its sovereignty and promised to respond. Apart from Tehran's response that severely endangered Israel's security, Israel decided to take this action contrary to the UN Charter and the principle of non-aggression between countries, demonstrating that this regime gives no importance to the UN's basic principles and violates other states' territorial sovereignty whenever it desires.

1. see: United Nations, 2005

Such behavior appears to be a radical policy because Ismail Haniyeh was pursuing peace negotiations and agreement with Israel through Egyptian mediation. However, Israeli officials assassinated him without considering the consequences of such assassination because they had portrayed Haniyeh as absolute evil and a criminal. This assassination demonstrates that Israel has adopted a reactive behavior and assassinates Hamas's political and non-political leaders wherever possible, while disregarding UN principles.

One could claim that Israel's reactive behavior stems from constructing extreme dualities of Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and their leaders as uncivilized nations, absolute evil, criminals, murderers, etc., resulting in illegal extraterritorial operations. Additionally, Israel, adopting a radical maximalist policy, seeks absolute security and tries to eliminate all Hamas political and non-political leaders, wherever they are, disregarding international laws, to take steps toward controlling the Gaza Strip.

Israelis believe that by controlling this region, they can eliminate the threat forever. However, firstly, given Hamas's ideology of not recognizing Israel and this group's years-long resistance against Israel, their destruction will be difficult to achieve. Secondly, such a policy would not be realistic because given the extensive bombings and loss of many Palestinian civilians, they will seek revenge and retribution. Furthermore, Palestinians will consider Gaza's occupation a form of disrespect to their dead, thus leading to maximum resistance and defense, turning the War on Gaza into a war of attrition that will be very costly for Israel with no clear horizons.

6. Conclusion

The main argument of this article was that the Zionist discourse has enabled Israel's radical policy in the War on Gaza through reproducing dehumanizing narratives. Dehumanizing narratives, including self-legitimization and delegitimization of the other, denial of coevalness, viewing the other as an object, belonging to a different place, and representation of a superior extended 'we' have made this radical policy possible for Israel. Such a policy consists of elements including weakness in diplomacy, voluntarism, disproportion between capabilities and actions, disproportion between costs and benefits, preference for costly solutions like war despite the possibility of avoiding it, maximalism in interests, and reactive behavior. This stands in contrast to realist policy, which includes elements of prioritizing diplomacy to secure interests, avoiding risk-taking, respecting others' spheres of influence, attention to limitations, and acting within the framework of power.

Furthermore, when the Zionist discourse identifies with a Western anthropological perspective, it diminishes the value of Gazan lives and seeks to eradicate them from the earth. The reproduction of such narratives exists both consciously as an instrument to achieve the goal of destroying Hamas, and unconsciously within the Zionist culture (superiority complex), leading to disproportionate behaviors that violate international norms and standards, and are sometimes emotional and irrational. These radical behaviors impose heavy material and moral costs on the Israeli regime, whereas Israel could avoid such ambitious behaviors and pursue more practical solutions, such as diplomatic measures and acting within the framework of international laws and institutions, while providing a proportionate response.

However, this regime insists on its radical behaviors, which have not yet yielded any results for Israel.

Therefore, texts produced by Israeli officials and authorities demonstrate that their mindset is influenced by the Zionist discourse. Such discourse, through configuration with elements of Western discourse regarding human life and construction of the Other (Gaza people and Hamas), places lower values on the lives of the people of Gaza, and accordingly makes its radical policies possible.

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This article was not authored by artificial intelligence.

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The author certifies that he has NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs affecting authors' objectivity) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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The author avoided data fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, double publication/submission and any form of misconduct against publication ethics. The Authors has properly cited all sources of ideas, words, and materials including pictures, charts, tables and statistics used in their paper.

Data Availability Statement

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the author on reasonable request.

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