



# Rationalization of Evil through Media: A Twitter Discourse Analysis on Israel's Genocide against Palestine after October 7

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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## Abstract

Israel, which has settled in Palestinian territories since 1948 and has continued its expansionist policies for years, does not recognize the right to life for Palestinians in the region. Most recently, Israel declared war and killed forty-four thousand people in Gaza, citing the deaths and hostage-taking of Israelis in what Hamas called the "Aqsa Flood" attack on October 7. Israel insists that it will continue this war until the hostages are taken back. This study aims to reveal how the tension between Israel and Palestine, which has reached the level of genocide since October 7, has been transformed into a discourse in the Israeli media. The bureaucratic and rational presentation of Israel's conflict with Palestine through antisemitism is effective in legitimizing Israel's victims and actions in the mainstream media. For this reason, since October 7, the tweets of B. B. Netanyahu and US President Joe Biden and the official X accounts of the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel and Israel Defense Forces will be subjected to discourse analysis, limited to October-November. Israel has used many adjectives to appeal to humanitarian sentiments over the Israeli hostages, demonstrating that its security is in danger. Israel emphasized the threat of radical Islam by mentioning ISIS and Iran in addition to Hamas in a way to mobilize past sensitivities. By dehumanizing Hamas with labels such as "terrorist, human-animal", Israel legitimizes everything done to them. With this discursive background, it practices a systematic brutality unique to modernity. Thus, reality is distorted by the discourse constructed by Israel on social media and the world public opinion is forced to look at the Palestinian issue from the framework built by Israel.

**Keywords:** Palestine, Image of Islam, Discourse, Genocide, Threat

## Medya Aracılığıyla Kötülüğün Rasyonelleştirilmesi: 7 Ekim'den Sonra İsrail'in Filistin'e Yönelik Soykırımına Dair Twitter Üzerinden Bir Söylem Analizi

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## Öz

1948'den bu yana Filistin topraklarına yerleşen ve yıllardır yayımlacı politikalarını sürdüren İsrail, bölgedeki Filistinlilere yaşam hakkı tanımıyor. Son olarak Hamas'ın 7 Ekim'de "Aksa Tufanı" adını verdiği saldırıda ölen ve rehin alınan İsrailiileri gerçekçe göstererek savaş ilan etti ve Gazze'de kırk dört bin kişiyi öldürdü. İsrail, rehinelere geri alınana kadar bu savaşı sürdüreceğini ısrarla vurguluyor. Bu çalışma, 7 Ekim'den bu yana İsrail ile Filistin arasında yaşanan ve soykırım boyutuna ulaşan gerilimin İsrail medyasında nasıl bir söyleme dönüştürüldüğünü ortaya koymayı amaçlıyor. İsrail'in Filistin ile yaşadığı çatışmanın antisemitizm üzerinden bürokratik ve rasyonel bir şekilde sunulması, ana akım medyada İsrail'in mağdur ve eylemlerinin meşru gösterilmesinde etkili olmaktadır. Bu nedenle 7 Ekim'den bu yana İsrail Başbakanı Netanyahu ve ABD Başkanı Biden'in yanı sıra İsrail Başbakanlık Ofisi ve İsrail Savunma Kuvvetlerinin resmi X hesaplarından atılan tweetler Ekim-Kasım aylarıyla sınırlandırılarak söylem analizine tabi tutulacaktır. İsrail, İsraili rehinelere üzerinden insani duygulara hitap etmek için birçok sıfat kullanarak güvenliğinin tehlikede olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. İsrail, geçmiş hassasiyetleri harekete geçirecek şekilde Hamas'ın yanı sıra İŞİD ve İran'ı da zikrederek radikal İslam tehdidine vurgu yapmıştır. İsrail, Hamas'ı "terörist, insan-hayvan" gibi etiketlerle insanlıktan çıkararak onlara yapılan her şeyi meşrulaştırmaktadır. Bu söylemsel arka plan ile moderniteye özgü bir sistematik vahşet uygulanmaktadır. Böylece gerçeklik, İsrail'in sosyal medyada inşa ettiği söylemle çarpıtılmakta ve dünya kamuoyu Filistin meselesine İsrail'in inşa ettiği çerçeveden bakmaya zorlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Filistin, İslam imajı, Söylem, Soykırım, Tehdit

## Introduction

Palestine has been occupied by Israeli settlers for decades. Jews are organized around the idea of settling in the promised land (Zionism). Despite the Ottoman efforts to prevent the influx of Jews to the region, Jewish immigration, which began in the 19th century, gained a legal dimension with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Jewish immigration to Palestine increased steadily after World War II due to anti-Semitic practices against Jews. As a result of “Nakba” expulsion by Palestinians and neighboring countries who did not accept the two-state solution proposal, Israel further expanded its expansionism in the region. Palestinians and the Palestinian state, who have become refugees in the lands remaining on the Israeli side, are subjected to Israeli aggression and violence in violation of international law. Recently, tensions between Israel and Palestine have taken a new dimension with the October 7 attack by Hamas, the legal representative of Palestine, which resulted in the deaths of 1200 Israelis. Israel has continued to kill more than thirty thousand Palestinian civilians since October 7, citing the events and Palestinian hostages. The main problem of the article, Palestine’s victimizations which increased dramatically on 7th October, have been reflected as bias in mainstream media.

The tweets reveal how reality is distorted by creating the impression that Israel is right despite Palestine’s victimization through discursive construction. As a result of the outbreak of the Hamas attack, Israel tries to gain the support of international public opinion by declaring its victimization through “anti-Semitism”. On the other hand, Israelis subject Palestinians to systematic dehumanization and genocide. The research aims to make a deconstructive contribution to how Israel develops a discourse to legitimize this genocide against the Palestinian people, who are the main and dominant element of the region. Thus, by revealing the background of the discourse constructed by Israel in the mainstream media, it is stated that reality is distorted. The world public is forced to look at the Palestinian issue through the framework constructed by Israel.

In this framework, it is argued that the modern era, in which the dominance of human beings over things and others has increased, has deepened the dichotomy of self/other. This confrontational structure, which is the basis of national identity, makes it necessary to otherize someone as a threat. The security concerns of the nation-state against this security concern for others, especially nature, have increased nationalist and racist actions.

It tries to prove that it is a “victim” by resorting to adjectives that will mobilize conscience and emotions that are effective in changing people’s attitudes. By hiding behind the anti-Semitic conceptualization, Israel has ignited a holocaust against the Palestinians that has been going on for years. Israel differentiates between the Palestinians and Hamas, describing the latter as racist and fascist. It is classified; that Palestinians are considered civilians and innocent, while Hamas is characterized as terrorists. Going even further, Israel legitimizes the torture of the other by associating them with “personality disorders”. As can be seen, the strong link between language and action reveals that the way to ensure authority is through communication. Today, however, the link between word and action has been broken. Discourse can be constructed in a way that expresses something other than reality, or even the opposite.

National identity is a closed paradigm in conflict with life that believes only in the superiority of its belonging and does not recognize the existence of others. After the Jewish

and socialist threat, Islam, especially its radical part, radical Islam, has been portrayed as the whole of Islam. Radical Islam, symbolized darkly in the tweets, recalls Islamophobic perceptions of the political instability and mistreatment of women in the Islamic world. In the narrative, Israel uses emotionally mobilizing adjectives to portray itself and the hostages held by Hamas as victims and innocents. The conscience of international public opinion is mobilized by stating that the hostages are disadvantaged “women, children, the elderly”. The child hostages kidnapped by Hamas are portrayed as “axis and terrorists”. Adjectives such as “ruthless, fear, and darkness” are used to describe Hamas. Israel criticized the use of civilians as “human shields” against Israel. 16 years of tyranny, cruelly. In order to manipulate public opinion, which does not know Hamas well, Hamas is associated with the unrelated Isis and Iran. Thus, perceptions of radical Islam, which have been used against Islam since 9/11, are recalled by known groups.

Israel represents himself “victim”. Israel dramatizes that the attacks in /October caused great suffering and that the families of the hostages are worried for their relatives. It continues to claim that it fought the war in self-defense by rescuing hostages, even though it violated international law. Besides Israel claims to have taken precautions for Palestinian civilians to safety and humanitarian aid by using “life-saving” and “the largest, more” adjectives which increase effectiveness. All of these show how words, like magic, cover reality and mislead public opinion.

In research, it's used to discourse analysis as a method, to decipher background under Israel's discourse. Discourse analysis systematically investigates the explicit or implicit causal and deterministic relations between discursive practices, events, and texts and broader social and cultural structures, relations, and processes.

It seeks to reveal how such practices, events, and texts emerge, how they are ideologically shaped by power relations and power struggles, and how the power relations between discourse and society themselves operate as a factor that maintains power and hegemony.

A language constructs words physically, builds new worlds, and directs power relations. With a witnessed absolute domination of positivism, Structuralism gave rise to the interest in communicative methods.

Loss of the reliability of meta-narrative and absolute reality like science, emerged different subjective approaches. Especially in the struggle for the freedom of differences from the 1960s to the 1989s onwards, discourse/pragmatics's rising to prominence has been witnessed. After questioning structuralism, which consists of semantics, syntax, and semiotics in discourse analysis, pragmatics came to the fore under the dominance of poststructuralism. Discourse as carriers of sounds and symbols (word container, literal). focusing on the socio-cultural reality in its background, the structure is linguistics that reveals relationships. Discourse also claims that reality is multi-layered and can change according to the subject. Accordingly, with discourse analysis, deconstruction given structures. In the research, it is deconstructed Israel's formal image by presenting mainstream media like Twitter. It's emerged background of their tweets. What happens?

### **1. Legislation of Antisemitism with Exclusionary Adjectives: Hamas is the Nazis**

Evil has existed since the beginning of humanity. However, modern times have witnessed the systematization of evil. The first mass evil was the massacre of Jews by the Nazis in

1933-1945, which was carried out on scientific grounds. This new situation, which is different from the exclusion of Jews throughout history, is known as the “Holocaust”. On the other hand, the Jews, who have been steadily increasing in Palestine since the 19th century, established a state around the ideology of Zionism for the first time in history.<sup>1</sup> Zionism is the ideal of re-establishing a state in the land of historical Israel, as promised to the Jewish race. Israel pursues an anachronistic attitude at the expense of ignoring the historical presence of Palestinians in the region.

Israel, financed by global capital, is presented as a politically and economically dominant figure in the region with strong media support. Today, the media, which has an undisputed influence on the formation of public opinion, constructs a discourse about Israel’s righteousness.

Jews, who were frequently subjected to exile and displacement throughout the historical process, faced a new exclusion in the 20th century when the uniformist character of the nation-state turned into oppression of differences. In the 1940s, when racist and fascist practices increased, the unique characteristics of Jews were reconstructed through extreme caricature and otherization. In Germany, the Nazis subjected disadvantaged groups such as Jews, disabled people, etc. outside the Aryan race to purges as non-Aryans. Racist ideology was tried to be legitimized based on the data of science (social Darwinism). Therefore, a non-existent relationship was established between the genetic characteristics of Jews and their behavior. By linking personality disorders to the Jews’ direct ethnicity, the crimes committed against them were legitimized. This legitimization was even further extended by recognizing that Jews are inhuman in their very existence. This resulted in a genocide in which the Jewish identity was targeted and destroyed en masse. The 21st century witnessed the irrational applications of modern rationalism that opened an irreparable wound in the conscience of humanity.<sup>2</sup>

The phenomenon of violence, which calls into question the claim that humanity has reached its most advanced and prosperous position in the modern period, reminds us of Adorno’s warnings to reconsider the value catalog of modernity. In the modern world, where relations are defined through conflict and power, powers maintain their sovereignty through discourse constructions. Today, the strong link between language and action reveals that the way to ensure authority is through communication. Power, which has replaced the measure of right and justice among people, has turned into domination over the weak and a function that conceals unjust practices. Jews have won popularity and power on antisemitism. This victimization is used by Israel who show your rightness in front of the public sphere. Its collision with Hamas is based on the enemy’s antisemitic desires against Israel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mîm Kemal Öke, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu (1880-1914)”, *Marifet* 6 / 1 (2006), 263-264.

<sup>2</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernite ve Holocaust* (İstanbul: Sarmal, 1995), 133.

<sup>3</sup> Afif Safieh, *In a Search of a Palestinian Identity* (Jerusalem: Passia Publications, 2005), 6.

## 2. Drawing a Conceptual Schema to Exclusion with Rationalization: Nation-State and Increasing Nationalisms

In modern societies shaped by the nation-state model, the state's attempt to strengthen its security by creating a constant perception of threat has led to an increase in nationalist and racist tendencies. These apartheid attitudes that emerge against the homogeneous and uniformist structuring of nations constitute a safety alarm for modern societies. Rational rationality's attempt to purge society of pests through social engineering has been realized through racism, which nationalism has carried to advanced dimensions. In the last two centuries, nationalism has erased the sacred past in which communities of many languages, religions, and races lived together and developed a system that focuses on the nation and its interests, thus excluding ethnic and religious differences. In the traditional universe where the multinational structure was dominant, differences were not perceived as a threat, nor were they forced to accept a superior religious identity. With the nation-state process, societies began to rediscover their own identity (self-respect) instead of the historical and geographical commonality of destiny.<sup>4</sup> The new self-construction also seeks a suitable reference from the past to legitimize it in society (decomposition, reconstruction).

The nation, which henceforth becomes the new source of values and ethics, is legitimized by claiming that communities carry the substance in their essence. But science, which bases its relationship with nature on domination, is the product of a conflictual paradigm in competition with living beings. For this reason, the world has been the scene of war, migration, and displacement for the last century. Contrary to modernity's projection of a prosperous life, the mass, public, and systematic spread of evil has brought criticism of the modern paradigm. World War II, the Gulf Wars, the Bosnian war in the heart of Europe, Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine have all demonstrated nationalist perspectives can harm humanity unless they are registered with a transcendental reference.<sup>5</sup> The latest of these is the massacre in Palestine, where war has been going on for years, which was initiated by Israel after Hamas attacked Israel like holocausts (ethnic cleansing) that threatened Jews in 1941-1945.<sup>6</sup>

One mass threat is the expansionism of communist ideology by the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Another threat was the expansionist policy of the Nazis in the center of Europe and their holocaust against the Jews<sup>7</sup>. As a matter of fact, with the media that developed in 1990, the Islamic geography was reconstructed in accordance with orientalist interests. Accordingly, Islamic countries began to be presented as a new threat to Western public opinion through representations of political instability and mistreatment of women.<sup>8</sup> As far as can be seen, the Muslim society, which takes its reference from Islam, is associated with anarchy and disorder, while Islam is constructed as an identity that is opposed to the

<sup>4</sup> G.E.Van Grunebaum, *Modern Islam the Search for Cultural Identity* (Newyork: Vintahe Books, 1964), 323.

<sup>5</sup> Nagehan Kara, *İnsan-Doğa İlişkisinde Yaşanan Değişimler ve Sanata Yansımaları* (İstanbul: Işık Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2022), 359.

<sup>6</sup> Shabir Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind* (Newyork: Routledge, 2007), 229.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The New Anti-Semitism", *The American Scholar* 75/1 (2004), 25-36.

<sup>8</sup> Sabine Schiffer - Constantin Wagner, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia - New Enemies, Old Patterns." *Race and Class* 52/3 (2011), 81.

West.<sup>9</sup> This perception, created through the media, is reproduced in a context related to violence and terrorism through certain indicators related to Islam (veil, chador, repressed female image), and the Islamic world is shown as backward, gloomy, unreliable, and a threat to Western values.<sup>10</sup>

The media supported publications that cast doubt on Islam's sources of reference and criticized reactions to them because the Islamic world was an obstacle to free thought. The Gulf War was broadcast live on television, so it was the first time that people watched a war en masse and were indifferent to what was going on. The resistance of Muslims against the ongoing conflict in the region was portrayed as a threat with names such as Islamism and radical Islam. Lastly, the September 11 attacks have caused anxiety.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Discourse Analysis

#### 3.1. Presentation of the “Other”: Hamas as a Threat

Israel associates itself with the Western value world. It can be seen in many tweets. One of them says that “the attack (on October 7) not only be done Israel, but also is in Paris, New York, and the whole world”.

“The crimes being committed today by Hamas - ISIS in Gaza will be committed tomorrow in Paris, New York, and all over the world.”( (Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.2023).

Westerners see Islam as part of the clash of civilizations. In particular, they associate the Islamic concept of jihad with violence and terrorism and characterize it as a threat to the West.<sup>12</sup>

“We both understand that the threat of radical Islam is a real one. It could endanger Europe; it could endanger the world. It certainly endangers us and our Arab neighbors.” (Netanyahu, 19.07.2018).

Israel links Hamas (with Iran), claiming that radical Islam<sup>13</sup> poses a threat to the region. This name, given by Westerners to resistance movements against Western occupations in the Muslim world twenty or thirty years ago, refers to the extreme presentation of historical forms of religion under the name of Islam (Neo-Salafism). Thus, by associating Islam with concepts such as “extremism, violence, jihad” (radical Islam, Islamic Jihad), the negative perception of Islam in the media was reinforced. These forms, which the West occasionally supports in line with its interests despite seeing them as a danger to its civilization, are far from representing the entirety of Islam. The resistance of the Islamic world against the de facto occupation of the West with responses such as “jihad” borrowed from the Salafist

9 See, for many studies on antisemitism and Islamophobia: Enes Bayraklı- Oğuz Güngörmez, “İslamofobi ve Anti-Semitizm Karşılaştırmalarını Anlamlandırmak: Kapsamlı Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi”, *Muhafazakar Düşünce* 14/53 (2018), 125.

10 Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today. A Short Introduction to the Muslim World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 217.

11 EUMC, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, Christopher Allen - Jorgen S. Nielsen, 2002.

12 Bayraklı-Güngörmez, “İslamofobi ve Anti-Semitizm Karşılaştırmalarını Anlamlandırmak”, 125.

13 William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (London: Westview Press, 2000).

tradition functioned to confirm and reproduce Western impressions of this geography. Israel, in turn, resorted to this definition to reactivate this sensitivity in Western societies<sup>14</sup>.

Israel has stated that it will play a role in the reconstruction and future of the region with the Western countries, especially with America as its financier. By stating that the interests of the Middle East are its own, it creates the image that it cares about the security of the region.

“The U.S. and our regional partners are working to build a better future for the Middle East - one where it is more stable and better connected to its neighbors. It benefits the people of the Middle East - and it would benefit us.” (Joe Biden, 25.10.2023).

America's support for Israel in reshaping the region is presented as being in favor of the Palestinians deciding their future.

“The United States remains committed to the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination.” (Joe Biden, 24.10.2023).

The other is an important element in the construction of discourse. Otherization is realized by accepting in advance that the negative characteristics attributed to a nation are an integral part of its identity. The other is dehumanized by associating his/her crime with his/her “ethnic background”. The crime is made a part of the identity of the individual, even though there is no direct relationship between the behavior of the individual and his/her personality. Outgroups are thus subject to special consideration when it comes to crimes, as the community comes to mind as the primary perpetrator.”<sup>15</sup> Below, Hamas, the legal representative of the Palestinians, and therefore the Palestinian people who democratically elected it to power, are humiliated by being reduced to a subhuman (animal) category.

“We stand before the next stage, it is coming. You know it and you are part of it; you are part of the vanguard. I greatly appreciate what you know how to do, your fighting spirit, your readiness to save our country from these animals, and I am certain that you will succeed.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 24.10.2023).

“We are fighting against human animals and will act accordingly,” (Israel Defense, 09.01.2023).

The construction of the discourse begins with the definition of the identity and belonging of the other who is seen as a threat. Then, with pronouns such as “the, this” that replace the other (article), the other becomes specific and informs us that the threat to our existence is very close to us. Moreover, in the text, positives are attributed to the self and negatives directly to the other. <sup>16</sup> In a tweet posted on the official page of the foreign affairs website, Hamas is described as a terrorist organization directed by Iran. In the following tweet, Iran is associated with “Satan, danger and terror” and it is claimed that Hamas is an extension of Iran. Thus, the dimensions of the danger increase even more.

“Hamas is an integral part of the axis of terrorism led by Iran, and this axis of terrorism and evil endangers the entire Middle East, and the entire Arab world as

<sup>14</sup> Monica Bobako, “The Palestinian Knot; The ‘New Anti-Semitism’, *Islamophobia and the Question of Postcolonial Europe, Theory, Culture & Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276417708859>,

<sup>15</sup> Barış Çoban- Zeynep Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: Su, 2003), 99.

<sup>16</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 70.

well. I am convinced that many Arab leaders understand this.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 12.11.2023)

In terms of how Israel presents itself, it characterizes its action against Hamas as military, implying that the operation was carried out on legitimate grounds. Israel has characterized its attacks since October 7 as war, even though it is fighting against an irregular army made up mostly of civilians. Israel claims that it is acting following international rules, stating that Palestinian civilians are protected under the law of war. Nevertheless, Israel blames the increasing number of “Palestinian civilian deaths” on Hamas’ use of civilians as “human shields” against Israel.<sup>17</sup> In this way, Israel presents itself as rational, while the Palestinians are presented as a threat.

“While Israel does everything in its power to avoid harming civilians and urges them to leave the battle areas, Hamas - ISIS is doing all it can to prevent them from moving to safe areas and uses them as human shields.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 11.11.2023).

The discourse should reveal the conceptualization of self/other to legitimize its claim to truth. Discourse claiming truth needs the other to construct its own identity. While this exclusion is usually directed against the authorities, sometimes it is directed against migrants and refugees.<sup>18</sup>

In the tweets on Israel’s official page, it is seen that Israel uses the following concepts to express its opponents: The innocent: Civilians, Palestinians, Non-innocent: Hamas-ISIS terrorists, Hamas terrorists.

It is seen that the other is presented differently in the discourse. In its official tweets, Israel differentiates between Palestinian civilians and Hamas; Palestinians are considered civilians and innocent, while Hamas is characterized as terrorist. Israel states that its goal is to make the region safe by cleansing it of the “enemy” that threatens its existence.

“They are fighting an enemy embedded in the civilian population, which places innocent Palestinian people at risk.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 09.11.2023).

On the other hand, Israel claims that the safety of civilians is its top priority, yet it continues to attack mosques, hospitals, and civilian settlements.

“Hamas - ISIS is using schools, mosques, and hospitals as terrorist command centers.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.2023).

However, Israel’s media language makes a distinction between civilians and terrorists. Thus, Israel creates the perception in the world public opinion that it acts following the international law of war and embraces universal human rights. This situation serves a function that conceals Israel’s human rights violations/crimes against Palestinians, which we can define as fabrication.<sup>19</sup>

“Israel is fighting Hamas terrorists, not the Palestinian population, and fully comply with international law” (Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.023).

It is mentioned threat approached. One of how the us-them polarization is expressed in discourse is through the use of words that indirectly indicate the distance between the ingroup (us) and the outgroup (them). Accordingly, the name of the others is not

<sup>17</sup> TÜBA, *Filistin-İsrail Savaşı Raporu* (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Yayınları, 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 61.



consciously mentioned; instead, they are referred to with demonstrative pronouns and labels to create the impression that the public already has a negative attitude towards this group. By referring to Hamas as “they”, Israel is suggesting that this publicly known threat is unpredictable.

“They were abducted & murdered in cold blood by human animals.” (Israel Defense, 09.01.2023).

Israel, technically superior and backed by the West, portrays itself as a victim under pressure and threat from the Palestinians, even though it is the innocent Palestinian people who suffer the most in the war.

The general validity of these typical or representative statements is expressed through the use of words indicating quantity (most, all) or time and frequency (always, constantly) or (everywhere). Generalization provides a convenient political basis for legitimizing the fight against threats and for manipulating the media, the electorate, and the police or the military to intervene. Israel’s concern for the region is expressed in broad terms below. The 16-year rule of Hamas has been characterized as tyranny, an expression of a long, oppressive period.

“To the leaders of the Arab states, leaders who worry about the future of their countries and the Middle East: You must come out against Hamas. In its 16 years of tyranny, Hamas has brought disaster to Gaza. It has brought only 2 things to the residents of Gaza: Blood and poverty.” (Netanyahu, 11.11.2023).

### 3.2. Presentation of Self: Israel Under Threat

The discourse utilizes figures and statistics to legitimize its claims.<sup>20</sup> Even if the number of people killed/wounded in the war does not even constitute one percent of the population, it reveals the extent of its victimization by sharing real figures with the public. The tweet below, without mentioning the number, is meant to express that Hamas’ attack had an impact on all people.

“Hamas - ISIS is cruelly holding our people hostage - women, children, the elderly - and thus committing a crime against humanity.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 11.11.2023).

It is applied for storytelling to “dramatize” painful memories. To make the narrative effective, the discourse resorts to narrativization in which actions, experiences, and situations are described in their entirety.<sup>21</sup> For example, in short narratives, we encounter generalizations about what those who are under occupation and attack have to endure. The following is a narrative about children taken hostage by Hamas. In his tweet, the Israeli official shared his observations that children in need of protection were whispering in fear, hungry, thirsty, and facing mental/physical problems.

“I heard about thirst, about hunger, about mental and physical abuse, about young children who are still whispering out of fear, about the great darkness in which their loved ones are being held.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 05.12.2023).

In time, the excluded outgroup becomes a threat to the existence of the ingroup, and the ingroup becomes the victim of this threat. Israel, in the face of the attacks it is exposed

<sup>20</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 82.

to in these lands that it acquired as a result of struggle, also encourages its people to endure, and declares itself as a “victim” through suffering and victimization. Thus, through these victimizations, it receives the support it needs from public opinion.<sup>22</sup>

“The faith and strength, and with everything that your family has endured and that you are enduring today, this is the challenge for the people of Israel. The land of Israel is acquired by tribulations. The pain is very great, but we will win thanks to this spirit.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 09.11.2023).

Israel’s starting attacks after Hamas’s threat, Israel says that behaves as an international law which saves civilians. This tweet mentions Israel’s creation of a safe space for wounded Palestinians and foreign citizens and the removal of foreigners from Gaza. This community, most of whom are American citizens, has a special meaning for Israel. Because Israel was founded with the support of Western powers. Serving the interests of these powers in the region, Israel has mostly usurped Palestinian lands. Israel bases its de facto presence in the region on a theological foundation and presents it as Zionism with an esoteric content. This ideology, mostly financed by American evangelicals, seeks to overcome obstacles to the establishment of the Great State of Israel.

“Today, thanks to American leadership, we secured safe passage for wounded Palestinians and for foreign nationals to exit Gaza. We expect American citizens to exit today, and we expect to see more depart over the coming days. We won’t let up working to get Americans out of Gaza...” (Joe Biden, 01.11.2023).

In another tweet, it is mentioned that “humanitarian aid vehicles are being deployed to the region for Gazan civilians, giving the message that civilians are being protected following the international law of war. Throughout the passage, the impact of humanitarian aid is increased with the adjectives “life-saving” and “the largest, more”.

“Yesterday saw the largest delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance into Gaza so far, and more trucks are being cleared to enter today...But many more are needed...I’m not done pushing for more aid and will continue to support safe passage for Gaza civilians seeking safety.” (Joe Biden, 01.11.2023).

## Conclusion

The set-up of the discourse is that of the dominant (me) and the weak (the other). Western domination of the world over the last two centuries has entailed a broad acceptance of the superiority of the Western paradigm. The perception of Muslims is that they are marginal, criminal, violent, victims, and sometimes unequal collaborators. Security is crucial for the construction of a new national identity. Another is needed to declare the outside as a threat. By completely dehumanizing the other, and the evil he/she has done, all kinds of violence and extermination are legitimized. The colonialism to which the Islamic world, the historical other of the West, was subjected, the bloodshed of the Arab lands, and the tragedy of Palestine, where the tragedy never ends, are all examples of this.

The colonialism to which the Islamic world, the historical other of the West, was subjected is responsible for the bloodshed in Arab lands and the tragedy in Palestine. In this study, based on the tweets of B.B. Netanyahu, Joe Biden, the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel, and the Israel Defense Forces on the X platform, the discursive background of the

<sup>22</sup> Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 107.

genocide attempts and attacks against the civilian population in Gaza and how hate speech is constructed through the opposition of “self and other” are revealed. In the tweets, Israel presents itself as a victim under threat, while on the other hand, in its responses to Hamas, it expresses that it is making the utmost effort for the protection and safety of civilians. Israel manipulates the media by associating Hamas, the legal representative of the Palestinians, with the terrorist organization Isis, which is identified with radical Islam, even though Hamas is characterized as an enemy. Humanitarian adjectives (the elderly) are used when Israel expresses concern for the safety of the families of hostages held by Hamas, while such adjectives are the only ones used to describe the abundance of aid provided to Palestinian civilians. The adjective “innocent” was appreciated by the Palestinians, while Hamas was claimed to be jeopardizing the security of civilians by using them as “human shields”. Furthermore, Israel is alleged to have violated the international law of war by waging war on a civilian population, causing the deaths of thousands of innocent Palestinians. In contrast, Israel claims to be in favor of peace, security, and dignity for both communities, where Palestinians decide their future. It is seen to use humanitarian expressions while creating a public image that supports peace. Israel characterizes the Hamas attack that killed 1,400 people as “ethnic cleansing” and tries to portray its war to retrieve the hostages as “self-defense”. Israel says it will continue the war until the hostages are released.

Although Israel is de facto waging war against Hamas, from time to time it makes references to ISIS, Iran, and other anti-Western organizations that are well known in the public opinion, making foreign parties a party to the issue. At the same time, these references show that the war will not be limited to Palestine and serve as evidence that the Middle East, which is seen as the origin of radical Islam, will be reshaped. On the other hand, Israel makes frequent references to the US and Western countries and talks about their support.

Israel appreciates the struggle of its people for the Palestinian territories, which it says it acquired with difficulty. Claiming that it is the owner of this land where Palestinians have lived for centuries, Israel claims its rights to this land.

These discourse constructions that Israel used in the mainstream media to support its image of being right meant distorting/reconstructing reality in line with its interests. Therefore, while values such as rights and justice were mentioned, on the other hand, inhumane crimes were committed against Palestinians. With an image that consists of the rhetorical expression of values, Israel is trying to overcome the obstacles in front of the establishment of the Greater State of Israel following the ideology of Zionism and is dehumanizing the region by producing rational justifications for war.

Despite the mainstream media's support for the justification of Israel's attacks, the diversification of the media and the prevalence of social media has led to international reactions, mainly at the civilian level, to the centuries-old Palestinian tragedy and the recent massacre. These developments strengthen the hope that the mirror presented by the media and global powers will shatter and increase the search for the truth.

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