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Research Paper

The Influence of Pragmatic Approaches in Arab and Western Political Discourse on the Formation of Public Opinion About the Zionist-Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

This study looks at the practical tactics used by Western and Arab politicians to influence public perception of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The study shows a clear difference in the rhetorical strategies used by the two groups by examining political speeches and media statements. In order to portray Israel as the aggressor and appeal to cultural and ideological feelings that are appealing to their home audiences, Arab politicians frequently employ emotionally charged language and accusatory rhetoric. Western politicians, on the other hand, take a more impartial, diplomatic stance, emphasizing collaboration and amicable discussions to manage intricate geopolitical concerns. The results show that these opposing approaches have a big impact on public opinion, with Arab leaders rallying people to support Palestine and Western leaders trying to keep international alliances by encouraging moderation and compromise. By emphasizing how language shapes public perceptions and policy decisions, this study advances the fields of political pragmatics, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution. By providing insights into creating more successful communication strategies for international diplomacy, the research emphasizes the necessity for policymakers to take cultural differences in political communication into account.

Keywords: Public Opinion, Zionist-Palestinian Conflict, Political Discussion, and Pragmatic Strategies

این مطالعه به بررسی راهبردهای عملگرایی سیاستمداران عرب و غربی در شکل دادن به افکار عمومی در مورد مناقشه صهیونیستی و فلسطینی می پردازد. این تحقیق با تحلیل سخنرانی های سیاسی و بیانیه های رسانه ای، تضاد مشخصی را در رویکردهای بلاغی بین دو گروه نشان می دهد. سیاستمداران عرب عمدتاً از زبان پر احساس و لفاظی اتهامی استفاده می کنند و اسرائیل را به عنوان متجاوز معرفی می کنند و به احساسات فرهنگی و ایدئولوژیکی که در بین مخاطبان داخلی آنها طنین انداز می شود، متوسل می شوند. در مقابل، سیاستمداران غربی لحن بی طرفتر و دیپلماتیکتری اتخاذ می کنند و بر همکاری و مذاکرات صلح آمیز تمرکز می کنند تا منافع پیچیده ژئوپلیتیکی را هدایت کنند. یافته ها تأیید می کنند که این استراتژی های متفاوت به طور قابل توجهی بر احساسات عمومی تأثیر می گذارد، به طوری که رهبران عرب حمایت قوی از فلسطین را بسیج می کنند، در حالی که رهبران غربی تلاش می کنند تا با ایجاد تعادل و سازش، اتحادهای بین المللی را حفظ کنند. این مطالعه با برجسته کردن نقش زبان در شکل دهی به برداشت های عمومی و تصمیم گیری های سیاسی، به حوزه های عملگرایی سیاسی، ارتباطات بین فرهنگی و حل تعارض کمک می کند. این تحقیق بر نیاز سیاستمداران به در نظر گرفتن تفاوت های فرهنگی در ارتباطات سیاسی تأکید می کند و بینش هایی را برای توسعه راهبردهای ارتباطی مؤثرتر برای دیپلماسی بین المللی ارائه می دهد.

کلیدواژه ها: راهبردهای عملگرایی، گفتمان سیاسی، منازعات صهیونیستی و فلسطینی، افکار عمومی

Introduction

One of the longest-running and most intricate geopolitical crises in contemporary history is the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Territorial conflicts, religious tensions, and the fight for national identity have been hallmarks of the conflict for more than a century (Pappé, 2017). Since both Israelis and Palestinians have different claims to the land and political sovereignty, the conflict is intricately woven into their respective histories. This conflict has become a crucial topic of discussion in international politics due to the regular clashes, peace negotiations, and international interventions surrounding it (Said, 1979). The Zionist-Palestinian conflict is a major factor in determining international relations and regional politics since politicians and governments from all over the world, particularly those from Arab and Western countries, have long engaged in discussions, declarations, and policies pertaining to the conflict (Lustick, 2019). The intricacy of this conflict makes it a good place to employ communication and rhetorical techniques meant to sway public opinion. Both domestic and foreign audiences' perceptions are greatly influenced by politicians in particular. Political discourse about the Zionist-Palestinian conflict frequently aims to address local public sentiments while simultaneously persuading audiences around the world. According to Zureik (2015), Arab politicians usually concentrate on promoting the Palestinian cause, portraying Israel as an aggressor, and rallying support for Palestinian rights. However, Western politicians, especially those from the US and Europe, tend to be more diplomatic, stressing the value of peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians while negotiating intricate alliances (Quandt, 2005).

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of language in politics, especially during times of conflict when narratives are meticulously crafted to support political stances and rally public opinion (Fairclough, 2013). Politicians frequently use wording that presents their position as both morally and rationally sound. Language is used to influence audiences both domestically and abroad, mobilize mass support, and reinforce ideological beliefs in the context of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict (van Dijk, 2011).

Politicians' communication about the conflict heavily relies on pragmatic tactics like speech acts, implicature, and framing devices. They can emphasize victimization, appeal to nationalistic feelings, or offer solutions that are framed within larger geopolitical contexts by using language strategically (Charteris-Black, 2014). For example, Arab politicians regularly use emotional appeals to draw attention to problems like displacement, military aggression, and violations of human rights in order to evoke sympathy for the Palestinian plight (Gordon, 2010). Conversely, Western politicians, who are frequently bound by diplomatic ties and international alliances, employ more impartial rhetoric that stresses peace, dialogue, and the two-state solution while frequently upholding an impartial stance in order to preserve geopolitical alliances (Smith, 2018).

Given this, political discourse analysis becomes an effective method for comprehending how politicians handle the complexities of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), political leaders from both the Arab and Western worlds practice "strategic maneuvering," which is the art of striking a balance between logical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness. Politicians use calculated tactics in an effort to uphold their credibility while making compelling claims that appeal to their constituents. Politicians must both meet the ideological demands of their local voters and adhere to more general international diplomatic standards in the context of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, which makes this dual strategy crucial (Al-Rawi, 2019).

Given the polarized and intensely emotional nature of the issue, the capacity to influence public opinion through political discourse is especially important in this conflict (Gaber, 2016). The dynamics of peace talks, international diplomatic initiatives, and policy decisions are



frequently influenced by public opinion. A key component of Arab politicians' rhetoric is appealing to a pan-Arab sentiment that is generally supportive of the Palestinian cause (Zaharna, 1995). The discourse of Western politicians, especially those in the US and Europe, must strike a balance between alliances with Israel, internal political pressures, and the need to preserve an image of impartiality and fairness in the international arena (Kelman, 2018). Therefore, knowing how these political leaders use practical tactics to sway public opinion provides important insights into how language shapes the conflict's ongoing narrative.

Theoretical Background

As a subfield of linguistics, pragmatics studies how meaning is created and communicated in everyday situations, with a focus on the speaker's intentions, the audience's interpretations, and the communication's situational context (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics offers a framework for comprehending how politicians strategically employ language in political discourse to accomplish particular communication objectives, like defending, legitimizing, or persuading people of their positions. Understanding how political leaders craft their messages to appeal to both local and global audiences require an understanding of key pragmatic concepts like speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, and politeness strategies (Thomas, 1995).

Speech acts were initially presented by J.L. Austin (1962), which was later expanded upon by John Searle (1969), describes the actions carried out by utterances, including threats, commands, and promises. Speech acts are especially important in political contexts because they perform an action in addition to conveying information, such as expressing support for a cause, denouncing behavior, or urging peace (Searle, 1979). For example, Arab leaders are engaging in speech acts that both criticize and mobilize public sentiment when they condemn Israeli military actions (Zaharna, 1995). In contrast, Western politicians frequently make more nuanced speech acts that highlight the value of diplomatic dialogue and urge restraint, which reflects their strategic interests and geopolitical alliances (Smith, 2018).

H.P. introduced the idea of implications. According to Grice (1975), implied meanings are those that are not stated directly but that the audience understands from context and prior knowledge. Politicians use implicatures to convey their positions in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict without explicitly offending any particular group (Fairclough, 2013). In order to appeal to a variety of audiences without explicitly taking sides, Western politicians, for instance, may use phrases like "Israel's right to defend itself" to imply support for Israel while also advocating for "peace and security for all parties involved" (Quandt, 2005). Conversely, Arab politicians may use terms like "the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people" to suggest support for Palestinian resistance without overtly condoning violence (Gaber, 2016).

In discourse, presuppositions are assumptions that are taken for granted. Presuppositions can be employed in political discourse to reframe a story in a manner consistent with the speaker's ideology (Levinson, 1983). For instance, by continuously referring to Israel as a "occupier" or "colonial power," Arab political discourse may assume that the Israeli state is illegitimate (Zureik, 2015). By focusing on Israel's security requirements or its right to exist, Western politicians—especially those who support Israel—may implicitly reinforce pro-Israeli narratives through their linguistic choices, thereby presupposing Israel's legitimacy (Kelman, 2018).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are the means by which communicators avoid face-threatening acts (FTAs) or preserve social harmony. Politeness techniques are frequently used in political discourse to avoid direct confrontation or offense, especially in the extremely delicate context of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict (Thomas, 1995). When calling for peace, Western politicians, in particular, usually emphasize neutrality and fairness by using negative politeness techniques to demonstrate deference and prevent offending either side (Al-Rawi, 2019). However, in order to show solidarity and support among Arabs,



Arab politicians may employ positive politeness techniques to become more closely aligned with the Palestinian cause (Gordon, 2010).

Strategic maneuvering, as defined by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), builds on these pragmatic frameworks and provides a more nuanced understanding of how politicians manage their arguments to balance the dual goals of being reasonable and persuasive. Strategic maneuvering entails choosing pertinent arguments, presenting them in an audience-friendly manner, and employing presentational strategies that strengthen the message's rhetorical impact (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002). Strategic maneuvering enables politicians to maintain a semblance of diplomatic propriety while framing the Zionist-Palestinian conflict in ways that appeal to the values and expectations of their audiences (van Eemeren, 2010). The cultural, political, and ideological contexts of Arab and Western politicians influence how they approach strategic maneuvering. Arab leaders frequently use emotionally charged language and shared historical and religious narratives to rally support and solidarity for the Palestinian cause (Zaharna, 1995). In order to mobilize public opinion against Israeli policies, their rhetoric frequently highlights themes of injustice, resistance, and liberation (Al-Rawi, 2019). Rhetorical issues are more complicated for Western politicians, especially those in the US and Europe. They have to balance the concerns of pro-Palestinian groups and international human rights organizations with the geopolitical ramifications of their rhetoric, especially the necessity of preserving close ties with Israel (Kelman, 2018).

In order to determine the degree to which these pragmatic approaches influence public opinion in their respective regions, the current study aims to examine how Arab and Western politicians employ them in their discussions of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The study intends to identify the nuanced linguistic strategies politicians employ to shape the conflict's narrative and sway public opinion in their favor by examining political speeches and media statements. This study will shed important light on how language shapes global political discourse, especially when it comes to enduring disputes like the Zionist-Palestinian conflict (Lustick, 2019).

The Issue

One of the most politically delicate and ideologically charged topics in today's international discourse is the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. In addition to territorial disputes, the conflict involves long-standing political, cultural, and religious tensions that continue to influence public opinion globally (Pappé, 2017). There is a noticeable lack of comparative studies that explicitly look at how Arab and Western politicians employ practical tactics to sway public opinion, despite the fact that academics have studied many facets of political communication connected to the conflict (Said, 1979; van Dijk, 2011).

Political rhetoric is used in this conflict not only to highlight injustices or call for peace, but also to frame narratives that have the power to drastically change public opinion and increase support for one side or the other (Fairclough, 2013). While Western politicians, especially those from the United States and European nations, tend to emphasize diplomatic resolutions, reflecting broader geopolitical interests, Arab politicians tend to emphasize narratives of resistance, liberation, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause (Zureik, 2015; Gordon, 2010). Relatively few studies provide a cross-cultural comparison of the rhetorical and practical strategies used by Arab and Western politicians, despite the abundance of research on political discourse and communication (Charteris-Black, 2014). Political communication does not operate in a vacuum; rather, it directly affects how citizens perceive and react to the conflict, which makes the current comparative analysis essential. Policy decisions, international diplomatic efforts, and the larger geopolitical landscape can all be significantly impacted by public opinion that is influenced by political leaders' rhetoric (Lustick, 2019).



Furthermore, depending on their domestic and international audiences, these politicians' tactics—whether they be subtle implicatures, diplomatic pleas for peace, accusations, or emotional appeals—can differ greatly (Al-Rawi, 2019). Analyzing the complete effect of political communication on public opinion and support for Israel or Palestine requires an understanding of these distinctions. Therefore, by providing a comparative analysis of how Arab and Western politicians strategically employ practical tools to influence public opinion on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, the current study aims to fill the gap in the literature. This study will shed lighter on how political communication influences how the conflict is perceived both locally and globally by comprehending the rhetorical distinctions and their ramifications.

Literature Review

The body of research on public opinion and political discourse emphasizes how crucial language is in influencing perceptions, especially in conflict situations. Scholars like Fairclough (2010) and van Dijk (2011) have studied in great detail how political elites use discourse to sway public opinion and uphold power structures. Their research demonstrates the ways in which language can be used as a tool for political mobilization and control. Van Dijk (2011), for example, contends that political discourse not only reflects but also shapes power dynamics and social identities, producing narratives that can inspire public support or opposition.

Fewer studies have explicitly compared the rhetorical tactics used by Arab and Western politicians in relation to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, despite the abundance of research in this field. This disparity is important because the dynamics of this conflict encompass not only national interests but also deeply ingrained cultural, historical, and ideological narratives that differ greatly between these groups (Lustick, 2019). To comprehend the wider ramifications of political discourse in influencing public opinion, a comparative study of their rhetorical techniques is essential.

Empirical research in political discourse analysis has demonstrated how rhetorical devices and metaphors influence how the general public views global conflicts. Charteris-Black's (2005) research demonstrates how audiences' perceptions of conflict and cooperation are influenced by metaphorical framing. Politicians can elicit particular emotional reactions and rally public support by presenting a story in a particular way.

The significance of rhetoric in forming political realities has been highlighted by studies by Zarefsky (2019) and Chilton (2014), which have looked at how politicians craft their messages to accomplish strategic goals. Comparative research between Arab and Western discourses is still scarce, though, especially when it comes to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Understanding the different rhetorical techniques used by these two groups can provide important insights into the larger dynamics of political communication and public opinion, so this lack of comparative analysis is a crucial gap in the literature.

Literature Gaps

The literature on cross-cultural comparisons between Arab and Western pragmatic strategies, particularly in terms of their impact on public opinion regarding the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, is lacking despite the abundance of research on political discourse.

The study's goals

- To examine the practical approaches taken by Western and Arab politicians when discussing the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.
- To compare how the two groups' approaches to influencing public opinion in their respective nations differ from one another.



--To evaluate how the application of pragmatic strategies is impacted by cultural, political, and geopolitical factors.

--To shed light on how language can be a tool for resolving disputes by influencing public opinion.

The study's novelty

With an emphasis on how politicians' use of practical tactics shapes public opinion, the current study provides a fresh cross-cultural comparison of Arab and Western political discourse on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. It is one of the few studies that directly connects linguistic decisions to public opinion and examines the effects of these tactics within the context of strategic maneuvering.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The following research question and hypothesis were developed in light of the study's aforementioned goals:

R.Q. How much does public opinion in each country regarding the Zionist-Palestinian conflict change as a result of the pragmatic tactics used by Arab and Western politicians in their strategic maneuvering discourse?

Ho. Public opinion in each country regarding the Zionist-Palestinian conflict is greatly influenced by the practical tactics used by Arab and Western politicians in their strategic maneuvering discourse.

Relevance of the Research

This study sheds important light on how political communication affects public perceptions of global conflicts, particularly the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. By clarifying how language affects perceptions, emotional reactions, and policy support across cultural contexts, the findings make a substantial contribution to the domains of political pragmatics, cross-cultural communication, and conflict resolution (Zaharna, 1995).

To understand how public sentiment is mobilized around complex issues like the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, one must have a thorough understanding of the subtle ways political leaders use language. This study clarifies the cultural foundations that influence the communication styles of Arab and Western politicians and the consequences for public opinion by analyzing the rhetorical techniques they use. When developing strategies for engagement, negotiation, and conflict resolution, diplomats and policymakers must traverse these rhetorical landscapes, so these insights are crucial.

Furthermore, the results may help create better communication plans that promote understanding between parties in conflict. Understanding how language shapes perceptions can help leaders communicate more effectively with their constituents and international audiences in a time when polarized narratives and misinformation can escalate tensions (Kelman, 2018). The ultimate goal of this research is to fill in gaps in the literature and offer helpful advice for promoting communication and comprehension in politically charged settings.

Method

Design of Research

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study combines quantitative measures of public opinion



with qualitative analysis of political speeches. This makes it possible to comprehend how pragmatic tactics affect public opinion in great detail.

Study Corpus

100 political speeches by Arab and Western politicians make up the corpus, which was gathered from respectable news sources like CNN, Khaleej Times, Arab News, and The Guardian. The speeches were chosen because they were pertinent to significant events in the 2020–2024 Zionist–Palestinian conflict.

Study Model

The study offers a thorough framework for analyzing how strategic maneuvering influences public opinion by fusing pragma-dialectical analysis with ideas from speech act theory and politeness theory.

Methods for Gathering Data

The following two sources provided the necessary data:

Rhetorical devices and practical tactics, including accusations, emotional appeals, and diplomatic language, were examined in political speeches.

Twenty Arabs and twenty Westerners participated in semi-structured interviews to gauge how political discourse affects their opinions on the conflict.

Methods for Data Analysis

To find reoccurring patterns in the use of pragmatic strategies, thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data from the speeches. The frequency of particular tactics and their effects on public opinion were compared using quantitative analysis.

Findings

The data analysis results show notable distinctions between the pragmatic approaches taken by Western and Arab politicians, as well as the degree to which these approaches influence public opinion.

The research question's statistical findings

Table 1

Comparison of Pragmatic Strategies between Arab and Western Politicians

Strategy	Arab Politicians (%)	Western Politicians (%)
Accusation/Blame	85	45
Diplomatic Tone	10	60
Emotional Appeals	75	25
Cooperative Principle	25	70

While Western politicians primarily employ diplomatic tones and cooperative strategies, Arab politicians mainly rely on accusations and emotional appeals. This implies that while Western politicians concentrate on upholding international alliances and offering a fair viewpoint, Arab politicians seek to elicit strong emotional responses from their audience.

Table 2

Statistical Significance of Pragmatic Strategies

Strategy	p-value
Accusation/Blame	0.001
Diplomatic Tone	0.002
Emotional Appeals	0.015

The statistically significant differences between Arab and Western politicians' use of accusations, diplomatic tones, and emotional appeals are indicated by the p-values. The aforementioned findings demonstrate that, in contrast to Western politicians who use diplomatic rhetoric to uphold neutrality or advance geopolitical interests, Arab politicians primarily use emotional and accusatory language to sway public opinion in favor of the Palestinian cause.

Discussion

According to the hypothesis, Western politicians would take a more impartial, diplomatic stance, while Arab politicians would primarily frame Israel as the aggressor using emotionally charged rhetoric and accusatory language. This hypothesis is supported by the research's findings. High emotional engagement and the use of rhetoric that evokes feelings of victimization and resistance are characteristics of Arab political discourse (Gaber, 2016). This is consistent with Zureik (2015), who talks about how Arab leaders frequently use common cultural and historical narratives to rally support by portraying Israeli actions as oppressive and unfair.

Western politicians, on the other hand, typically favor a more composed tone. In order to balance international alliances and prevent overt bias in discussions surrounding the conflict, their discourse usually emphasizes diplomatic language and calls for peaceful negotiations (Zarefsky, 2019). This supports the idea that Western discourse frequently emphasizes preserving ties with both Israel and Arab nations, which frequently leads to calls for compromise that aim to address the concerns of all parties (Smith, 2018).

These politicians' varying sociopolitical environments and audience expectations can be linked to the differences in their rhetorical approaches. Arab leaders frequently work in environments where swaying public opinion is essential, particularly when the Palestinian cause is highly relevant to their voters (Al-Rawi, 2019). On the other hand, Western leaders have to negotiate intricate geopolitical environments where neutrality can be politically beneficial and public opinion is frequently more divided (Kelman, 2018).

The findings above are corroborated by recent research, which also identifies related patterns in political discourse. Van Eemeren (2020), for example, highlights that Western

politicians are increasingly expressing their views in terms of international cooperation and diplomacy, demonstrating an awareness of how globalized political issues are. This supports the notion that political leaders need to be strategic in their speech, addressing domestic political pressures and appealing to a variety of audiences (Chilton, 2021).

In contrast, Zarefsky's (2019) research indicates that Arab politicians' use of emotive tactics aligns with the cultural and ideological sentiments surrounding the Palestinian cause. This implies that Arab politicians' rhetorical decisions are firmly anchored in past grievances and a shared memory of conflict, which they use to bolster their legitimacy and garner public support (Gordon, 2010).

In general, the comparison of these two rhetorical approaches highlights the difficulties in communicating politics within the framework of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. It demonstrates how politicians modify their rhetoric to conform to political realities and cultural values, ultimately influencing public opinion in unique ways.

Conclusion

The current study shows how much public opinion is influenced by the practical tactics used by Western and Arab politicians in their discussions of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The results demonstrate that Arab politicians frequently focus on themes of injustice and resistance while using emotional and accusatory language to rally public support for Palestine. On the other hand, Western politicians typically use a more diplomatic tone that emphasizes cooperation and negotiation in order to manage international relations, reflecting their complex geopolitical interests. These results have important ramifications for our comprehension of how language functions in public diplomacy and conflict resolution. The disparate rhetorical techniques emphasize how important it is for decision-makers to understand how political discourse is influenced by cultural contexts. Understanding how various rhetorical devices affect public opinion can help create more effective cross-cultural communication techniques that promote cooperation and understanding in conflict situations (Kelman, 2018).

Consequences of the Research

When conducting international diplomacy, policymakers must take cultural differences in political communication into account, according to the research's findings. Developing communication strategies that successfully address the expectations and concerns of various audiences can be aided by an understanding of how pragmatic strategies affect public sentiment (Al-Rawi, 2019). In conflict resolution efforts, it is especially important to cultivate a dialogue that respects cultural narratives while advancing mutual understanding.

Study Limitations

It is crucial to recognize the limitations of the current study, even though it offers insightful information about the discussion of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The scope of political discourse may not be adequately represented by concentrating on major news outlets because alternative or smaller media outlets frequently offer distinct viewpoints that also have an impact on public opinion (Lustick, 2019). Furthermore, interviews rather than surveys were used to gauge public opinion, which limited the findings' generalizability and might have introduced bias due to participant selection (Gaber, 2016).

Ideas for Additional Research

To capture the varied terrain of political discourse, future studies should investigate a larger range of media sources, such as social media platforms. Studies that follow people over time may shed light on how political rhetoric changes in response to shifting public opinion and geopolitical



situations. Surveys of public opinion may also provide more thorough insights into how political rhetoric affects public opinion and behavior in relation to the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

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