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METAPHORIZATION OF PALESTINE IN POLITICAL RHETORIC: INTERPRETING TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF *ISTI'ĀRAH* IN ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI'S SPEECHES

Istiqomah Nur Aqilah[1], **Andi Agussalim**[2]*, **Haeruddin**[3], **Zuhriah**[4]

[1], [2], [3], [4] Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Despite numerous studies have been conducted on contemporary Arab political speeches, the application of *isti'ārah* as an analytical category, particularly in discourse addressing the Palestinian issue, remains underexplored. Furthermore, prior work drawing on Arabic *balāghah* theory has concentrated predominantly on religious texts, poetry, and literary works, leaving the official speeches of Arab leaders largely unexamined. This study addresses that gap by identifying the types and structures of *isti'ārah* and examining the rhetorical and ideological representations they construct across five official Arabic speeches delivered by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Palestine. A qualitative textual analysis grounded in Arabic *balāghah* was employed. Non-literal expressions were identified and classified as either *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* or *isti'ārah makniyyah* through the identification of *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmi'*, and subsequently mapped into representational patterns. Fourteen *isti'ārah* expressions were identified: five instances of *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* (35.71%) and nine of *isti'ārah makniyyah* (64.29%), indicating a predominance of implicit comparison. Four interrelated representational patterns emerged: Palestine as a suffering yet morally central issue; conflict as destructive and dehumanizing violence; morality as historical judgment and lost values; and political resolution as restoration, reconciliation, and reconstruction. Theoretically, the findings demonstrate that *isti'ārah* operates not as mere rhetorical ornamentation but as a structured linguistic strategy that concretizes political realities, intensifies moral evaluation, and legitimizes diplomatic solutions. Practically, the findings affirm the analytical relevance of classical *balāghah* to the study of contemporary Arab political discourse.

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*Corresponding author. Email: agussalim@fs.unhas.ac.id
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INTRODUCTION

Political speeches about Palestine often articulate diplomatic positions, humanitarian concerns, ideological alignments, and moral evaluations (Aslam et al., 2024). The Palestinian issue is framed not only as a territorial or diplomatic matter, but also as a question of justice, historical responsibility, human suffering, regional stability, and international legitimacy (Amaireh, 2024; Barari & Yacoub, 2024; Iqbal & Farukh, 2025; Warshagha et al., 2024). This is evident in Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's speeches, which speak from Egypt's distinct geopolitical and diplomatic position. Egypt's stance on the Palestinian issue positions el-Sisi's speeches as a vehicle for articulating humanitarian concerns, regional stability, and political responsibility (El-Shāfaaʿī, 2025; Ibragimov, 2021; Stein, 2025). These speeches reflect the interplay of formal diplomatic language, humanitarian concern, moral positioning, and figurative expression that characterizes contemporary Arab political discourse. Within this context, language plays a central role in constructing the Palestine-Israel conflict through moral, affective, and ideological narratives (Amaireh, 2024; Faisol et al., 2021; Iqbal & Farukh, 2025; Warshagha et al., 2024).

Previous studies have examined contemporary Arabic political discourse through the lenses of ideology, persuasion, discourse structure, political image construction, and linguistic representation. Research on political imagery, imperative structure, lexical cohesion, and transitivity indicates that Arabic political discourse often employs grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic strategies to organize arguments and reinforce ideological meaning (Dugalich et al., 2023; Khafaga, 2023; Mulović, 2023; Reflinaldi & Faisol, 2023). Studies focusing on el-Sisi's speeches further show that his political discourse has been analyzed in relation to environmental and gender issues, where framing, ecolinguistic devices, metaphors, and ideological representations connect political leadership to broader social, national, and humanitarian concerns (Alhamshary, 2024; Ulfa & Adha, 2023; Zanaty, 2023). Across these works, el-Sisi and contemporary Arabic political discourse emerge as a productive object of political and linguistic analysis. Yet they share a common methodological orientation — critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, corpus linguistics, ecolinguistics, or ideological analysis — and have left largely unexplored the potential of classical Arabic rhetorical theory, particularly *istiʿārah* 'metaphor' in *balāghah* 'rhetoric'.

Within political discourse and media representations of the Palestinian issue, previous studies show that Palestine-related discourse is often constructed through ideological, emotional, rhetorical, and moral frameworks. Faisol et al. (2021) show that digital discourse on the Palestinian conflict is pragmatic and mobilizational, enabling expressions of solidarity, criticism, anger, and resistance. The conflict is also represented through competing narratives, affective language, lexical choices, euphemisms, dysphemisms, and metaphorical framing that shape public understanding and ideological positioning (Amaireh, 2024; Iqbal & Farukh, 2025; Rohmatullah & Degaf, 2025; Warshagha et al., 2024). Other studies demonstrate that metaphors and rhetorical frames function as cognitive and ideological mechanisms for conceptualizing conflict, suffering, resistance, legitimacy, and humanitarian responsibility (Alhirthani, 2024; Eldin et al., 2024; Pratama, 2025; Shiddiq & Rofiuddin, 2024). What emerges from this body of research is a consistent picture: language is not peripheral to the Palestinian issue but constitutive of it. Most of these studies, however, focus on media representations, journalistic framing, or modern discourse analysis rather than on official speeches by Arab leaders.

In the Arabic rhetorical tradition, political speech frequently employs *isti'ārah*, which shifts a word's original meaning to another through qarīnah, a contextual indicator that prevents literal interpretation. Recent studies show that Arabic rhetorical heritage remains important for analyzing contextual meaning and the relation between wording and meaning (Al-Dadi, 2025). More specifically, studies on Qur'anic discourse, Arabic poetry, literary texts, and Qur'anic translation show that *isti'ārah* has been productively used to analyze figurative meaning through its types, such as *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* and *isti'ārah makniyyah*, and the semantic relation between literal and non-literal meanings (Ali & Romli, 2021; Amalina et al., 2024; Firdaus et al., 2022; Fitriani & Yusuf, 2022; Murdiono et al., 2022). Related studies on Arabic figurative language, majāz mursal, and broader balāghah analysis further confirm the relevance of classical rhetorical categories in interpreting non-literal and contextual meanings (Amanda & Walidin, 2022; Elmhemıt & Taufiq, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2025). However, these studies remain concentrated on sacred texts, poetry, literary works, translations, and theoretical *balāghah*, while the application of *isti'ārah* to contemporary Arab political speeches on Palestine remains limited. Bridging classical Arabic rhetorical analysis with contemporary political discourse is precisely the direction future research — and this study — needs to take.

Modern linguistics and discourse studies have contributed significantly to the analysis of figurative language in political communication. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2020) argue that metaphor is not merely decorative but a conceptual mechanism for understanding abstract realities through concrete and culturally situated experience. The use of metaphor in political speech can build legitimacy, emotional appeal, and moral evaluation, thereby shaping public discourse (Burgers et al., 2016; Charteris-Black, 2018). Figurative language can also contribute to the construction of political authority, historical memory, collective identity, and ideological positioning (Al-Ghazzi, 2021; Almaani, 2023; Vrabel, 2025; Wiredu, 2021). However, *isti'ārah* in the Arabic rhetorical tradition cannot simply be reduced to the modern linguistic category of metaphor. Although both involve a shift in meaning, *isti'ārah* has its own conceptual structure, technical vocabulary, and analytical procedures through *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmi'*. As a *balāghah*-based analytical category, *isti'ārah* is distinctive in that it connects broader discussions of figurative language in political discourse to classical Arabic rhetorical analysis.

Across the surveyed literature, research on figurative language in contemporary political discourse remains dominated by conceptual metaphor theory, critical discourse analysis, framing theory, and corpus-based approaches, leaving isti'ārah, as a classical balāghah category, largely underexplored. Methodologically, previous studies often identify metaphorical expressions in general but rarely examine their internal rhetorical structure through *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmi'*. Empirically, studies of el-Sisi's speeches have addressed persuasion, ideology, transitivity, lexical cohesion, and ecological discourse, but none have specifically examined how *isti'ārah* operates in his speeches on Palestine. Furthermore, studies of Palestine-related discourse have largely focused on media representations and conflict narratives rather than on official speeches by Arab leaders. What is needed, then, is research that links balāghah analysis to contemporary political discourse — work capable of making a distinctive theoretical contribution while engaging productively with the existing scholarship.

Against this backdrop, two research questions guide the present study: 1) What types of *isti'ārah* are used in el-Sisi's speeches about Palestine? 2) How do these *isti'ārah*

expressions construct representations of conflict in Palestine? Addressing these questions allows for a coherent analysis of *isti'ārah* as both a rhetorical structure and a tool for political meaning-making. Three contributions follow from this. Theoretically, the analysis demonstrates the relevance of classical *balāghah* to the analysis of contemporary political discourse; methodologically, it applies the structural categories of *isti'ārah* to modern speech data; and empirically, it grounds these categories in el-Sisi's speeches as a specific corpus of Arab political discourse on Palestine. Its central argument is that *isti'ārah* in el-Sisi's speeches functions not merely as rhetorical ornamentation but as a linguistic strategy that concretizes abstract political concepts, strengthens moral legitimacy, builds emotional resonance, and frames the Palestinian issue within contemporary Arab diplomatic and humanitarian discourse.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative textual analysis to examine *isti'ārah* and its rhetorical and ideological functions in political discourse. The data consist of five official speeches delivered in Arabic by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on the Palestinian issue. These speeches were purposively selected based on two criteria: they explicitly addressed Palestine and were delivered in official national, regional, or international forums. To ensure data transparency and corpus traceability, the five speeches are listed in Table 1 and included in the reference list as primary corpus sources.

Table 1. Identification of the Corpus of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's Speeches on Palestine

Code	Speech Title	Date	Source	URL
S1	القمة العربية غير العادية "قمة فلسطين" *Al-Qimmah al-'Arabīyah ghayr al-'ādīyah "Qimmat Filasṭīn"* Extraordinary Arab Summit "Palestine's Summit"	04/03/2025	The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency (El-Sisi, 2025)	https://www.presidency.eg/AR/قسم-الأخبار/الفعاليات-والمؤتمرات/event-04-03-2025/
S2	الجلسة الخاصة عن الأوضاع في فلسطين ولبنان *al-Jalsah al-Khāṣṣah 'an al-Awḍā' fī Filasṭīn wa-Lubnān* Special Session on the Situation in Palestine and Lebanon	19/12/2024	The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency (El-Sisi, 2024b)	https://www.presidency.eg/AR/الرئاسة/خطب-الرئيس/speeches19122024-1/
S3	مؤتمر الاستجابة الإنسانية الطارئة في غزة *Mu'tamar al-Istijābah al-Insānīyyah al-Ṭāri'ah fī Ghazzah* Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza Conference	11/06/2024	The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency (El-Sisi, 2024a)	https://www.presidency.eg/AR/الرئاسة/خطب-الرئيس/speeches1162024/
S4	تحيا مصر - استجابة شعب تضامنًا مع	23/11/2023	The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency	https://www.presidency.eg/AR/الرئاسة/خطب-

	فلسطين *Taḥyā Miṣr: Istijābat Shaʿb Taḍāmunan maʿa Filasṭīn* "Long Live Egypt-Long Live Palestine" Event		(El-Sisi, 2023b)	الرئيس/speeches2311202 3/
S5	المؤتمر رفيع المستوى لدعم مدينة القدس *al-Muʾtamar Rafīʿ al-Mustawā li-Daʿm Madīnat al-Quds* Speech at Conference in Support of Al Quds	12/02/20 23	The Arab Republic of Egypt Presidency (El-Sisi, 2023a)	https://www.presidenc y.eg/AR/-خطب-الرئاسة/ الرئيس/speech1222023/

Note: All speeches were retrieved from the official website of the Presidency of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Data were collected using documentary techniques. The five speech texts were read repeatedly to identify words, phrases, clauses, or expressions exhibiting a shift from literal to non-literal meaning, based on the *istiʿārah* framework (Amalina et al., 2024; Nuha & Musyafaah, 2022). The coding process involved marking potential *istiʿārah* expressions, examining them against *balāghah* criteria, and classifying them as *istiʿārah taṣrīḥiyyah* 'explicit metaphor' or *istiʿārah makniyyah* 'implicit metaphor'. The classified expressions were then grouped inductively into four main representational patterns. Data analysis proceeded in three steps. First, each *istiʿārah* expression was structurally analyzed to identify *mustaʿār lahu*, *mustaʿār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmiʿ*, drawing on the theories of Al-Jurjānī (1954), Al-Qazwīnī (2003), and Al-Sakkākī (2000). Second, the classified expressions were grouped into the four representational patterns that emerged from the data. Third, the rhetorical and ideological functions of *istiʿārah* were interpreted in relation to the framing of Palestine, moral legitimacy, collective emotion, and political resolution (Amalina et al., 2024; Fitriani & Yusuf, 2022).

RESULT

This section presents the findings in two parts. The first part identifies the types and structures of istiʿārah found across the five speeches. In contrast, the second examines how these expressions construct representations of Palestine, the conflict, morality, and political resolution.

Types and Structure of *Istiʿārah* in Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's Speeches

Analysis of the five speech corpora identified *istiʿārah taṣrīḥiyyah* in five data sets and *istiʿārah makniyyah* in nine. The frequency and distribution of the data across the five speech corpora are presented in detail in Table 2, and each *istiʿārah* identified was then analyzed according to its classification.

Table 2. Frequency and Distribution of *Istiʿārah* Types in the Five Speech Corpuses

Type of *Istiʿārah*	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Frequency	Percentage
Istiʿārah taṣrīḥiyyah	1	1	3	0	0	5	35.71%
Istiʿārah makniyyah	3	0	0	3	3	9	64.29%
Total	4	1	3	3	3	14	100%

Isti'ārah Taṣrīḥiyyah

Isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah refers to explicit metaphor, in which the *musta'ār minhu* 'the borrowed-from term' is stated directly in the text. Each excerpt below is analyzed by identifying its *musta'ār lahu*, the explicitly mentioned *musta'ār minhu*, the *qarīnah* that blocks a literal reading, and the *al-jāmi'* that grounds the resemblance between the two terms. This phenomenon is evident in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 1 يجمعنا اليوم واقع مؤلم في ظل ما تواجهه منطقتنا من تحديات جسام تكاد تعصف بالأمن والاستقرار الإقليميين، وتبدد ما تبقى من مرتكزات الأمن القومي العربي، وتهدد دولًا عربية مستقرة

yajma'unā al-yawma wāqi'un mu'limun fī ẓilli mā tuwājihuhu minṭaqatunā min taḥaddiyāt jisām takādu ta'ṣifu bi-al-amn wa-al-istiqrār al-iqlīmīyayn, wa-tubaddidu mā tabaqqá min murtakazāt al-amn al-qawmī al-'Arabī, wa-tuhaddidu duwalan 'Arabīyah mustaqirrah.

Today, we are brought together by a painful reality in light of the grave challenges facing our region, which almost sweep away regional security and stability, dissipate what remains of the foundations of Arab national security, and threaten stable Arab states.

Excerpt 2 امتدت نيران الحرب الإسرائيلية إلى لبنان الشقيقة حيث أسفر العدوان الإسرائيلي عن استشهاد ما يزيد على "٤٠٠٠" شخص من بينهم نساء وأطفال

imtaddat nīrān al-ḥarb al-Isrā'īlīyah ilá Lubnān al-shaqīqah, ḥaythu asfara al-'udwān al-Isrā'īlī 'an istishhād mā yazīdu 'alá arba'at ālāf shakhs min baynihim nisā' wa-aṭfāl.

'The fires of the Israeli war extended to sisterly Lebanon, where the Israeli aggression resulted in the martyrdom of more than four thousand people, including women and children.'

Excerpt 1 contains *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* on the phrase *murtakazāt al-amn al-qawmī al-'Arabī* 'the foundations of Arab national security'. Its *musta'ār lahu* is the essential elements that support Arab national security, while the explicitly mentioned *musta'ār minhu* is *murtakazāt* 'foundations'. Its *qarīnah* is *al-amn al-qawmī al-'Arabī*, because national security cannot literally have a physical foundation, and *al-jāmi'* lies in structural support, stability, and dependency. Excerpt 2 contains *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* on the phrase *nīrān al-ḥarb* 'the fire of war'. Its *musta'ār lahu* is the destructive and expansive effects of war, while the explicitly mentioned *musta'ār minhu* is *nīrān* 'fire'. Its *qarīnah* is *al-ḥarb al-Isrā'īlīyah*, because war is not literal fire, and *al-jāmi'* lies in its ability to spread, destroy, harm, and devour whatever it reaches.

Excerpt 3 إن مسئولية ما يعيشه قطاع غزة من أزمة إنسانية غير مسبوقة... يتم فيها استخدام سلاح التجويع والحصار، لجعل القطاع غير قابل للحياة

inna mas'ūlīyat mā ya'īshuhu qiṭā' Ghazzah min azmah insānīyah ghayr masbūqah ... yutimmu fīhā istikhdām silāḥ al-tajwī' wa-al-ḥiṣār li-ja'l al-qiṭā' ghayr qābil li-al-ḥayāh.

'The responsibility for the unprecedented humanitarian crisis experienced by the Gaza Strip ... in which the weapon of starvation and siege is used to make the Strip unlivable.'

Excerpt 4 إلزام إسرائيل بإنهاء حالة الحصار، والتوقف عن استخدام سلاح التجويع في عقاب أبناء القطاع

ilzām Isrā'īl bi-inhā' ḥālat al-ḥiṣār, wa-al-tawaqquf 'an istikhdām silāḥ al-tajwī' fī 'iqāb abnā' al-qiṭā'.

'Obliging Israel to end the state of siege and to stop using the weapon of starvation in punishing the people of the Strip.'

Excerpt 5 فالسبيل الوحيد لإحلال السلام والاستقرار والتعايش في المنطقة، يكمن في علاج جذور الصراع، من خلال حل الدولتين

fa-al-sabīl al-waḥīd li-iḥlāl al-salām wa-al-istiqrār wa-al-ta'āyush fī al-minṭaqah yakmunu fī 'ilāj judhūr al-ṣirā' min khilāl ḥall al-dawlatayn.

'The only way to establish peace, stability, and coexistence in the region lies in treating the roots of the conflict through the two-state solution.'

In Excerpt 3, the expression *silāḥ al-tajwī' wa-al-ḥiṣār* 'weapons of hunger and siege' is classified as *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* because *musta'ār minhu*, i.e., *silāḥ* 'weapons', is explicitly mentioned. Its *musta'ār lahu* is the coercive use of hunger and siege, while its *qarīnah* lies in the fact that hunger and siege are not physical weapons. *Al-jāmi'* lies in danger, pressure, and the ability to subdue the target. Excerpt 4 contains *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* on *silāḥ al-tajwī'* 'weapons of hunger'. The omitted *musta'ār lahu* is the use of starvation as a coercive, punitive method, while the explicitly mentioned *musta'ār minhu* is *silāḥ* 'weapon'. Its *qarīnah* is *al-tajwī'* 'starvation', because starvation is not a physical weapon, and *al-jāmi'* lies in its capacity to injure, weaken, suppress, and punish. In Excerpt 5, *judhūr al-ṣirā'* 'roots of conflict' is also *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah*. The explicitly mentioned *musta'ār minhu* is *judhūr* 'roots', while its *musta'ār lahu* is the deep causes of conflict. Its *qarīnah* is *al-ṣirā'* 'conflict', which cannot literally have botanical roots. *Al-jāmi'* lies in depth, origin, hiddenness, and causal continuity.

Isti'ārah Makniyyah

Isti'ārah makniyyah refers to an implicit metaphor, in which the *musta'ār minhu* is omitted and conveyed only through a semantic signifier attached to the *musta'ār lahu*. Each excerpt below is analyzed by identifying its *musta'ār lahu*, the omitted *musta'ār minhu* it implies, the signifier that carries this implication, the *qarīnah* that blocks a literal reading, and the *al-jāmi'* that grounds the resemblance. This phenomenon is evident in the excerpts below.

Excerpt 6 إن ذاكرة الإنسانية ستتوقف طويلًا أمام ما حدث في غزة، لتسجل كيف خسرت الإنسانية قاطبة

inna dhākirat al-insānīyah sa-tatawaqqafu ṭawīlan amāma mā ḥadatha fī Ghazzah, li-tusajjila kayfa khasirat al-insānīyah qāṭibatan.

'Indeed, the memory of humanity will pause for a long time before what happened in Gaza, to record how humanity as a whole has lost.'

Excerpt 7 يجمعنا اليوم واقع مؤلم في ظل ما تواجهه منطقتنا من تحديات جسام تكاد تعصف بالأمن والاستقرار الإقليميين

yajmaʿunā al-yawma wāqiʿun muʾlimun fī ẓilli mā tuwājihuhu minṭaqatunā min taḥaddiyāt jisām takādu taʿṣifu bi-al-amn wa-al-istiqrār al-iqlīmīyayn.

'A painful reality brings us together today, in light of the grave challenges facing our region, which almost sweep away regional security and stability.'

Excerpt 8 وأنا أرى الأمل في جمعنا هذا، ونحن نصوغ للمستقبل عنوانًا ونمهد له طريقًا

wa-anā arā al-amala fī jamʿinā hādhā, wa-naḥnu naṣūghu li-al-mustaqbali ʿunwānan wa-numahhidu lahu ṭarīqan.

'I see hope in this gathering of ours, as we formulate a title for the future and pave a road for it.'

Excerpt 6 contains *istiʿārah makniyyah* because *dhākirat al-insānīyah* 'human memory', is given the action of stopping and recording. Its *mustaʿār lahu* is memory, while the omitted *mustaʿār minhu* is a human witness or historian. The signifiers are *sa-tatawaqqafu* 'will stop' and *li-tusajjila* 'to record'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of memory literally stopping or writing, and *al-jāmiʿ* lies in preservation and witnessing. Excerpt 7 contains *istiʿārah makniyyah* because *al-taḥaddiyāt al-jisām*, 'great challenges', is given the action of sweeping away security and stability. Its *mustaʿār lahu* is those great challenges, while the omitted *mustaʿār minhu* is a destructive storm or a fierce gale. The signifier is the verb *taʿṣifu bi-* 'to sweep' or 'to strike'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of political challenges literally acting like the wind, and *al-jāmiʿ* lies in its destructive, dangerous, and destabilizing power. Excerpt 8 contains *istiʿārah makniyyah* because *al-mustaqbal* 'the future', is represented as a written work with a title and as a journey destination with a prepared path. Its *mustaʿār lahu* is the future, while the omitted *mustaʿār minhu* consists of a written work and a journey or destination. Its signifiers are *ʿunwān* 'title' and *ṭarīq* 'path'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of the future literally having a title or a physical path, and *al-jāmiʿ* lies in its purposeful planning, direction, formation, and preparation.

Excerpt 9 بل دارت آلة القتل بلا عقل يرشدها ولا ضمير يؤنبها

bal dārat ālat al-qatl bilā ʿaqlin yurshiduhā wa-lā ḍamīrin yuʾannibuhā.

'Rather, the killing machine kept turning, with no reason to guide it and no conscience to rebuke it.'

Excerpt 10 لقد أوهنت الممارسات اللاإنسانية التي تعرض لها أهلنا في فلسطين عزائم البعض

la-qad awhanat al-mumārasāt al-lā-insānīyah allatī taʿarraḍa lahā ahlunā fī Filasṭīn ʿazāʾim al-baʿḍ.

'The inhuman practices to which our people in Palestine have

been subjected have weakened the determination of some.'

Excerpt 11 نبحث عن الإنسانية المفقودة بين أطلال صراعات صفرية

nabḥathu 'an al-insānīyah al-mafqūdah bayna aṭlāl ṣirā'āt ṣifrīyah.

'We search for the lost humanity among the ruins of zero-sum conflicts.'

Excerpt 9 contains *isti'ārah makniyyah* in the phrase *ālat al-qatl ... bilā 'aqlin yurshiduhā wa-lā ḍamīrin yu'annibuhā* 'a killing machine ... without reason to guide it and without conscience to rebuke it'. The *musta'ār lahu* is *ālat al-qatl* 'killing machine', which refers to an organized system of violence. In contrast, the omitted *musta'ār minhu* is a human moral agent capable of reason and conscience. The semantic markers of the omitted human image are *'aql* 'reason', *ḍamīr* 'conscience', *yurshiduhā* 'guides it', and *yu'annibuhā* 'rebukes it'. Humans, not inanimate machines, usually possess these attributes. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of a machine literally possessing an intellect or moral conscience, and *al-jāmi'* lies in the behavior that should be governed by awareness, deliberation, and ethical control.

Excerpt 10 contains *isti'ārah makniyyah* because the word *'azā'im al-ba'ḍ* 'the determination of some people' is treated as a physical body or structure that can be weakened. Its *musta'ār lahu* is determination, while the omitted *musta'ār minhu* is the body, pillar, or structure. The signifier is the verb *awhanat* 'to weaken'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of determination literally becoming physically weak, and *al-jāmi'* lies in the loss of strength, steadfastness, and endurance under pressure. Excerpt 11 contains *isti'ārah makniyyah* because *al-insānīyah* 'humanity' is represented as a person or valuable object that can be lost and sought. The *musta'ār lahu* is humanity, while the *musta'ār minhu* that is lost is a lost person or a lost object. The signifiers are *nabḥathu 'an* 'we seek' and *al-mafqūdah* 'the lost'. Another metaphor appears in *aṭlāl ṣirā'āt ṣifrīyah*, 'the ruins of zero-sum conflicts', in which conflict is represented as a destroyed building. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of humanity being literally lost or conflict-producing physical ruins, and *al-jāmi'* lies in loss, destruction, and the need for restoration.

Excerpt 12 وستواصل - من أجل هذا الهدف - العمل مع طرفي الصراع، لإعادة إحياء المسار السياسي

wa-sa-tuwāṣilu min ajli hādhā al-hadaf al-'amala ma'a ṭarafay al-ṣirā' li-i'ādat iḥyā' al-masār al-siyāsī.

'It will continue, for the sake of this goal, to work with both parties to the conflict to revive the political track.'

Excerpt 13 فقد مددنا أيدينا، بالمبادرة العربية للسلام، التي تضمن تحقيق ذلك، وفقًا لسياق عادل وشامل فدعونا نضعها معًا، موضع التنفيذ ولنطوي صفحة الآلام، من أجل الأجيال القادمة.. الفلسطينية والإسرائيلية على حد سواء

fa-qad madadnā aydīnā bi-al-mubādarah al-'Arabīyah li-al-salām allatī taḍmanu taḥqīqa dhālika wafqan li-siyāqin 'ādilin wa-shāmil; fa-da'ūnā naḍa'uhā ma'an mawḍi' al-tanfīdh, wa-l-naṭwi ṣafḥat al-ālām min ajli al-ajyāl al-qādimah al-Filasṭīnīyah wa-al-Isrā'īlīyah 'alá ḥaddin sawā'.

'We have extended our hands through the Arab Peace Initiative, which guarantees the achievement of that goal within a just and comprehensive framework; so, let us put it together into implementation and fold the page of pain for the sake of future generations, Palestinian and Israeli alike.'

Excerpt 14 نعم، لقد طالت معاناتكم، وتأخرت حقوقكم، وزادت أزمات المنطقة إلا أن قضيتكم، لازالت أولوية لدى مصر والعرب

na'am, la-qad ṭālat mu'ānātukum, wa-ta'akhkharat ḥuqūqukum, wa-zādat azamāt al-minṭaqah, illā anna qaḍīyatakum, lā zālat awlawīyah ladá Miṣr wa-al-'Arab.

'Yes, your suffering has indeed lasted long, your rights have been delayed, and the crises of the region have increased; yet your cause remains a priority for Egypt and the Arabs.'

Excerpt 12 contains *isti'ārah makniyyah* in the expression *i'ādat iḥyā' al-masār al-siyāsī* 'reviving the political path'. Its *musta'ār lahu* is *al-masār al-siyāsī* 'political path', namely the abstract diplomatic process. In contrast, the *musta'ār minhu* is a living being that can lose its vitality and then be revived. The semantic marker of the omitted living being is *iḥyā'* 'reviving', which literally belongs to the semantic field of life and death. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of a political process literally dying and then being revived, and *al-jāmi'* lies in the restoration of activity, vitality, and effectiveness after inactivity or cessation. Therefore, this expression is classified as *isti'ārah makniyyah* because the living being, as *musta'ār minhu*, is omitted, while one of its attributes, the ability to be revived, is attached to the political process. Rhetorically, this metaphor presents the continuation of negotiations as restoring life to a diplomatic process that had been dormant.

Excerpt 13 contains *isti'ārah makniyyah* in two expressions. In *madadnā aydīnā* 'we extend our hands', the *musta'ār lahu* is a political offer for peace, while the omitted *musta'ār minhu* is a human act of reconciliation; its signifier is the gesture of extending the hand. In *naṭwi ṣafḥat al-ālām* 'we fold the pages of suffering', the *musta'ār lahu* is the accumulated suffering, while the omitted *musta'ār minhu* is the written page or record. The signifiers are *naṭwi* 'we fold', and *ṣafḥah* 'page'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of a political initiative becoming a physical hand or suffering becoming a literal page. *Al-jāmi'* lies in the openness and reconciliation of the first expression, and the closure and transition of the second. In Excerpt 14, *ta'akhkharat ḥuqūqukum* 'your rights have been delayed' is classified as *isti'ārah makniyyah*. Its *musta'ār lahu* is *ḥuqūq* 'rights', while the omitted *musta'ār minhu* is a traveler or an expected arrival. Its signifier is *ta'akhkharat* 'delayed'. Its *qarīnah* lies in the impossibility of rights literally traveling or arriving late, and *al-jāmi'* lies in delayed realization or postponement.

Isti'ārah and the Representation of Palestine in Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's Speeches

Data analysis reveals that Palestine is represented through expressions emphasizing suffering, delayed rights, and collective solidarity. Excerpt 10, *awhanat ... 'azā'im al-ba'ḍ* 'weakening the resolve of some people', portrays Palestinian suffering as a pressure that weakens inner resolve, while the phrase *ahlunā fī Filasṭīn* 'our people in Palestine' places Palestinians within a shared moral community. Excerpt 14 reinforces this pattern through *ta'akhkharat ḥuqūqukum* 'your rights have been delayed', which

frames Palestinian rights as legitimate yet unrealized. The phrase *qaḍīyatakum lā zālat awlawīyah ladá Miṣr wa-al-'Arab* 'your cause remains a priority for Egypt and the Arab nation' further links Palestine to Arab political and moral responsibility. Overall, this representational pattern constructs an image of Palestine not as a passively suffering entity, but as one whose rights are actively defended within the discourse of Arab solidarity. This suffering is consistently accompanied by an affirmation of moral and collective attachment, which forms the basis for the subsequent representation of the conflict itself.

Unlike Palestinian suffering, which is represented through moral attachment, the conflict is represented through imagery of fire, weapons, storms, and machines that emphasize its destructive force. Excerpt 2 uses *nīrān al-ḥarb* 'the fire of war', to depict war as a pervasive, all-consuming force. Excerpts 3 and 4 use the terms *silāḥ al-tajwī' wa-al-ḥiṣār* 'weapons of hunger and siege' and *silāḥ al-tajwī'* 'weapons of hunger' to depict starvation and siege as coercive instruments, while Excerpt 9 adds the image of *ālat al-qatl* 'killing machines' lacking reason and conscience. What these images share is an insistence that the conflict is not a neutral military event but destructive, coercive, and morally uncontrolled violence. The subsequent representations then shift toward morality, constructed through expressions that personify humanity and memory. In Excerpt 6, *dhākirat al-insānīyah sa-tatawaqqafu ... li-tusajjila* 'humanity's memory will pause ... to record' represents humanity's memory as a witness or historian, lending the Gaza crisis a historical and moral dimension while providing a narrative counterbalance to the preceding violence.

This moral counterbalance is reinforced in Excerpt 11, which presents *al-insānīyah* 'humanity' as *al-mafqūdah* lost' amidst the ruins of the conflict. Together with the description of *al-mumārasāt al-lā-insānīyah* 'inhumane practices' in Excerpt 10, these data construct the Palestinian issue as a crisis involving the loss of human values, judgment on that loss, and the prospect of restoration. From this moral judgment, the narrative shifts toward a political resolution represented through images of healing, revival, movement, reconciliation, and closure. Excerpt 5 uses the metaphor of *'ilāj judhūr al-ṣirā'* 'treating the roots of conflict', linking peace to the need to address the underlying causes of conflict and to the two-state solution. Excerpt 12 represents diplomatic engagement through *i'ādat iḥyā' al-masār al-siyāsī* 'reviving the political path'. In contrast, Excerpt 8 represents the future through the title and the road, and Excerpt 13 presents peace as an outstretched hand and the folding of the pages of suffering. Each of these images casts the political settlement as an active process of healing, preparation, reconciliation, and transition. This narrative arc moves from suffering through conflict and moral judgment toward resolution.

These four representational patterns, namely Palestine as the suffering yet morally central party, the conflict as destructive and inhumane violence, morality as historical judgment for the loss of humanity, and the political settlement as restoration, operate through five intersecting rhetorical and ideological strategies. Abstract political realities are first rendered concrete through imagery of foundations, roots, weapons, roads, machines, and pages. The destructive force of conflict is then intensified through fire, weapons, ruins, and uncontrolled machinery — imagery that morally and politically delegitimizes violence against the Palestinian people. References to memory, humanity, conscience, and loss further reposition Palestine as a matter of collective Arab moral responsibility rather than merely an external diplomatic concern. Images of healing, rebirth, a prepared path, and the closing of a painful page then legitimize the negotiated political settlement as a process of moral and political healing. Finally, these

metaphorical representations are reinforced by appeals to international law, United Nations and Security Council resolutions, the 1967 lines, the two-state solution, and international institutions. Through these five strategies, el-Sisi is discursively positioned as a rational and morally responsible Arab statesman, and Egypt as a central mediator between Palestinian rights, collective Arab responsibility, and international legitimacy.

The conflict is presented not only as a security crisis but also as a moral and legal failure demanding coordinated Arab action and an internationally supported political settlement. Other Arab actors are positioned as partners in a shared responsibility to protect the Palestinian cause, while international institutions provide legal, humanitarian, and diplomatic legitimacy for the proposed settlement. Thus, *isti'ārah* does more than concretize abstract issues: it aligns emotional and moral identification with Palestine alongside Egypt's diplomatic program of a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, reconstruction, Palestinian statehood along the 1967 lines, and a just and comprehensive peace. What the analysis reveals, in the end, is that *isti'ārah* in these speeches consistently unites their rhetorical and ideological dimensions into a coherent narrative framework.

DISCUSSION

Across the five speeches examined, *isti'ārah* in el-Sisi's speeches related to Palestine functions not only as a figurative ornament but also as a structured rhetorical and ideological device. The corpus yielded 14 data items, comprising 5 cases of *isti'ārah taṣrīḥiyyah* and 9 cases of *isti'ārah makniyyah*. That el-Sisi's speeches rely more often on implicit metaphorical structures — in which abstract political concepts are rendered through attributed actions, qualities, or semantic markers — points to a preference for suggestion over declaration. More important than this distributional pattern, however, is that *isti'ārah* constructs four interrelated representations: Palestine as a suffering yet morally central issue; the conflict as destructive and coercive violence; morality as the judgment of history and lost humanity; and the political solution as healing, rebirth, reconciliation, and closure. These representations show that isti'ārah functions as a meaning-making device through which political crises, humanitarian suffering, and diplomatic solutions are rendered rhetorically concrete.

When read against prior scholarship on el-Sisi and contemporary Arabic political discourse, the present findings confirm certain established conclusions while pushing beyond them. Studies by Dugalich et al. (2023), Khafaga (2023), Mulović (2023), and Reflinaldi & Faisol (2023) show that Arabic political discourse employs linguistic, pragmatic, semiotic, and grammatical strategies to construct political imagery, persuasion, cohesion, transitivity patterns, and ideological meaning. Studies more directly concerned with el-Sisi's speeches, such as Zanaty (2023), Alhamshary (2024), and Ulfa & Adha (2023), demonstrate that his discourse draws on ideological framing and representation in discussing environmental, social, and national issues. The present study departs from these approaches by examining *isti'ārah* as a classical Arabic rhetorical category, showing how political meaning is shaped through *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmi'*. What emerges is a *balāghah*-based perspective on el-Sisi's political discourse.

These findings also align with studies on Palestine-related discourse and media representation. Previous research has shown that the Palestine-Israel conflict is often framed through ideological, emotional, metaphorical, and moral language (Amaireh, 2024; Iqbal & Farukh, 2025; Rohmatullah & Degaf, 2025; Warshagha et al., 2024).

Similarly, semantic analysis of the term *taḥrīr* 'liberation' in Al Jazeera's online news coverage shows how a single politically loaded term can carry shifting ideological weight depending on context (Aini & Idris, 2024). Broader studies of Arab media discourse also show that media representation can construct political actors and international conflicts through ideological strategies of inclusion, exclusion, categorization, and actor positioning (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). More specifically, studies have argued that metaphors and rhetorical framing shape how conflict, suffering, resistance, legitimacy, and humanitarian responsibility are conceptualized (Alhirthani, 2024; Eldin et al., 2024; Pratama, 2025). Across this scholarship, moral, ideological, and representational framing emerge as organizing principles in conflict discourse. The present study departs from these works by focusing on official speeches by an Arab leader and examining representational construction through classical Arabic rhetorical categories rather than relying solely on modern discourse analysis. The metaphors of delayed rights, weaponized hunger, lost humanity, and the roots of conflict demonstrate that el-Sisi's speeches frame Palestine as a matter of moral responsibility, humanitarian urgency, and legitimate political rights.

The present findings extend prior work on *balāghah* and *isti'ārah*, which has shown the productivity of *isti'ārah* in analyzing Qur'anic discourse, Arabic poetry, literary texts, and translations (Ali & Romli, 2021; Amalina et al., 2024; Firdaus et al., 2022; Fitriani & Yusuf, 2022; Murdiono et al., 2022). At the same time, they support broader arguments that classical Arabic rhetorical frameworks remain useful for interpreting contextual and non-literal meaning (Al-Dadi, 2025; Elmhemıt & Taufiq, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2025). What the present corpus adds is an application to contemporary Arabic political speeches, showing that *isti'ārah* is not limited to literary or sacred texts but also functions in modern diplomatic discourse. Expressions such as *silāḥ al-tajwī'* 'weapons of hunger', *ta'akhkharat ḥuqūqukum* 'your rights have been delayed', and *i'ādat iḥyā' al-masār al-siyāsī* 'reviving the political path' demonstrate that classical rhetorical concepts can analyze contemporary political meaning, especially when discourse relies on moral evaluation and figurative representation.

At the theoretical level, this analysis positions *isti'ārah* as a bridge between classical Arabic rhetoric and modern political discourse analysis. Modern metaphor studies by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Charteris-Black (2018), Kövecses (2020), and Burgers et al. (2016) emphasize the cognitive, persuasive, and framing functions of metaphor, while Azis et al. (2025) show the role of balāghah in persuasion, aesthetic force, and meaning intensification in Arabic texts. Unlike conceptual metaphor, which relies on source–target mapping, *isti'ārah* offers a more structurally specific vocabulary through *mushābahah* 'resemblance' and the identification of *musta'ār lahu*, *musta'ār minhu*, *qarīnah*, and *al-jāmi'* (Al-Jurjānī, 1954; Al-Qazwīnī, 2003; Al-Sakkākī, 2000; Nasser et al., 2023). These formally differentiated analytical categories are not employed in the same way within Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor framework.

On a more practical plane, the analysis offers a model for analyzing Arab political speech using *balāghah*-based categories. Researchers working in Arab rhetoric, political discourse, and Palestine-related communication will find in these data a demonstration of how figurative expression organizes political meaning in official diplomatic speeches. The study also offers pedagogical value, showing that the teaching of *balāghah* is relevant not only to Qur'anic texts, poetry, or literature but also to contemporary political language. This is a point with direct implications for how *isti'ārah* is taught. It can help students and researchers alike understand how political speech uses figurative language to frame humanitarian crises, legitimize political solutions, and establish

collective moral responsibility, thereby contributing to both the study of Arab rhetoric and the broader analysis of political communication in the contemporary Arab world. For all these reasons, *istiʿārah* should not simply be subsumed under the general category of modern linguistic metaphor, as it has its own conceptual structure and analytical procedures in *balāghah*.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies two types of *istiʿārah*: five cases of *istiʿārah taṣrīḥiyyah* and nine cases of *istiʿārah makniyyah*. *Istiʿārah taṣrīḥiyyah* operates through explicitly stated comparative images, whereas *istiʿārah makniyyah*, which appears more frequently, operates through implicit comparison. In constructing Palestinian representations, the structure of *istiʿārah* yields four interrelated patterns: Palestine as a morally central suffering victim; the conflict as destructive, coercive, and dehumanizing violence; morality as judgment on history and lost humanity; and the political settlement as healing, rebirth, movement, reconciliation, and closure. Through these representational patterns, el-Sisi is constructed as a rational and morally responsible Arab statesman, and Egypt as a mediator linking Palestinian rights, collective Arab responsibility, and international legitimacy. *Istiʿārah* in el-Sisi's speeches thus functions not simply as rhetorical ornamentation but as a structured linguistic strategy for organizing political meaning, moral evaluation, and diplomatic legitimacy.

Several limitations bear acknowledgment. The corpus is confined to five speeches from Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's political discourse related to Palestine, and the analytical lens is specifically *istiʿārah* as understood in Arabic *balāghah*. Its findings, therefore, cannot be generalized to all Arab political discourse or to other forms of figurative language. Given the marked dominance of *istiʿārah makniyyah*, future corpus research could examine whether implicit figurative comparison characterizes a specific variety of Arab summit and diplomatic discourse, or whether it appears with similar frequency in press conferences, interviews, and social media communications. Conceptual metaphor research might further investigate whether recurring images of fire, weapons, machines, medicine, life, streets, and pages form a systematic source-target mapping across a larger corpus. At the same time, critical discourse analysis could more systematically examine how these metaphorical patterns legitimize Egypt's diplomatic role, construct Arab collective responsibility, delegitimize violence against Palestinians, and position the two-state solution within international legal and political legitimacy.

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All authors contributed to the conceptualization and development of the analysis in this study. Throughout the research process, the first author played a primary role in data collection, data provision, preparation of analytical instruments, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. The second author also contributed to the drafting of the

manuscript. In addition, the second, third, and fourth authors were involved in the final editing stage, providing constructive comments and suggestions to improve the manuscript's clarity and overall quality.

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AUTHORS' SHORT BIODATA

Istiqomah Nur Aqilah is an undergraduate student in the Arabic Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. Her research interests focus on linguistics. Email: aqilahnuristiqomah@gmail.com.

Andi Agussalim is a lecturer in the Arabic Study Program at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. His research interests include linguistics, computational linguistics, and digital humanities. Email: agussalim@fs.unhas.ac.id.

Haeruddin is a lecturer in the Arabic Study Program at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. His research focuses on linguistics, Arabic phonology, and morphology. Email: haeruddin@unhas.ac.id.

Zuhriah is a lecturer in the Arabic Study Program at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. Her research interests include Arabic linguistics, Arabic literature, stylistics, and applied linguistics. Email: zuhriah@unhas.ac.id.