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The Cognitive and Ideological Role of Conceptual Metaphors in Framing Post-War Gaza Reconstruction: An Analysis of the U.S. 2025 Proposal

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Abstract

This study investigates the cognitive and ideological functions of metaphor in the *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza*, released by the White House and published by BBC News in 2025. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis, the research applies the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) (Steen, 2007) to the full twenty-point text, comprising approximately 2,200 words. The analysis identifies recurrent metaphorical expressions that conceptualise peace, reconstruction, and governance. Four dominant conceptual domains emerge, ARCHITECTURE, HEALTH/DISEASE, MANAGEMENT, and HEALING, which collectively frame Gaza's post-war future as an externally designed, medically treated, and technically managed project. These metaphors construct a cognitive model that simplifies complex geopolitical realities while legitimising external intervention through the language of care and reconstruction. The study concludes that metaphors in political discourse not only organise thought but also naturalise power relations, thus operating as cognitive and ideological instruments in the legitimisation of peace narratives.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Metaphor Analysis, Gaza, Peacebuilding, Ideology

Introduction

The use of metaphor in political communication is neither ornamental nor accidental. It constitutes a central cognitive mechanism through which complex realities such as war, peace, and nation-building are understood and communicated (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2004). In post-conflict contexts, metaphors serve as mental blueprints that shape the interpretation of social transformation, legitimise intervention, and project visions of the future (Musolff, 2016; Semino, 2008). The United States' 2025 Gaza post-war framework (BBC, Al-Jazeera, 2025) provides an exemplary case in this regard. Presented as a twenty-one-point plan to "deradicalise" and "rebuild" Gaza after the war with Israel, the document draws heavily on metaphorical expressions that conceptualise peace as architecture and governance as engineering. Political texts such as this plan reveal how metaphor mediates between cognition and ideology. Through the language of building, repair, and design, the plan portrays the reconstruction of Gaza not merely as a humanitarian necessity but as a rational project governed by principles of order, efficiency, and technocracy. This metaphoric framing naturalises a hierarchical model of peace-making in which external actors function as architects and engineers, while Gazans are positioned as passive recipients of design (Charteris-Black, 2011).

The present study therefore aims to examine how the *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza* uses metaphor to construct cognitive and ideological representations of peace, reconstruction, and governance. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify the conceptual metaphors that structure the proposal's discourse on post-war peacebuilding.
2. Analyse how these metaphors interact to form a coherent cognitive model of reconstruction and governance.
3. Examine the ideological implications embedded in these metaphorical mappings.

By integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory with Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis, this research contributes to understanding how metaphors in political discourse simultaneously shape thought and sustain ideological persuasion.

Literature Review

Conceptual Metaphor and Political Cognition

The study of metaphor has undergone a radical transformation since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphor is no longer viewed as a mere linguistic ornament but as a fundamental mechanism of thought, structuring how people conceptualise abstract domains through more concrete experiences. In this view, metaphors function as mappings between a *source domain* (a familiar conceptual structure) and a *target domain* (an abstract or complex concept). The mapping process allows abstract notions like peace, governance, or war to be understood through physical, spatial, or mechanical experiences (Kövecses, 2002). Lakoff (1991) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) expanded this perspective to political reasoning, arguing that metaphors form the cognitive basis of ideology. Political concepts such as *state*, *freedom*, and *security* are often metaphorically structured through schemas of family, motion, or construction. Charteris-Black (2004) introduced the notion of *critical metaphor analysis*, which combines cognitive and critical discourse approaches to examine how metaphors influence persuasion and legitimisation in political texts. Similarly, Musolff (2016) showed how metaphors in international relations reveal entrenched conceptual models, such as *NATION AS PERSON* and *POLITICAL UNION AS BODY*.

In contexts of war and peace, metaphors function as cognitive tools for framing moral and political judgments. Semino (2008) observed that metaphors of health and illness are frequently invoked in post-war discourse to represent healing, recovery, or contamination. Lakoff (2004) argued that political leaders employ metaphors strategically to evoke moral frames, such as the *NURTURANT PARENT* versus *STRICT FATHER* model, to justify interventionist policies.

Metaphor in Peace and Conflict Discourse

The language of peacebuilding is deeply metaphorical. Research across conflict studies and discourse analysis has identified recurring conceptual patterns, including *PEACE AS CONSTRUCTION*, *CONFLICT AS DISEASE*, and *NATION AS HOUSE* (Charteris-Black, 2005; Chilton, 2004; Musolff, 2016). These metaphors render abstract political transformations tangible by framing them in terms of spatial, mechanical, and organic experiences. For example, when policymakers describe post-conflict governance as *rebuilding* or *reconstructing*, they are not only describing physical repair but also conceptualising social and institutional reform as architectural work (Kövecses, 2010). Charteris-Black (2004) noted that metaphors in peace discourse often serve persuasive purposes, legitimising external control and moral authority. In post-war contexts, metaphors of architecture and engineering reinforce narratives of order, stability, and technical rationality, features that align with neoliberal governance ideals (Fairclough, 2001). Through such metaphors, peace becomes a designed and controllable outcome rather than an emergent social process.

Conceptual Metaphor Studies in Middle East Political Discourse

Several studies have examined metaphorical framing in Middle Eastern political rhetoric. Musolff (2010) explored how Western discourses construct the Middle East through metaphors of containment and pathology, presenting it as a diseased or unstable region requiring external treatment. El Refaie (2001) observed that media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict frequently relies on metaphors of morality and purification. More recent works by Charteris-Black (2014) and Koller (2020) have extended these insights to show how metaphors of construction and design appear in Western peace initiatives as cognitive representations of power. Within this context, the U.S. 2025 Gaza plan stands as a paradigmatic example of how political actors deploy metaphor to articulate a vision of post-war order. The linguistic choices, such as “framework,” “rebuild,” “technocratic committee,” and “economic development plan”, invoke domains of architecture, engineering, and design. These are not random stylistic elements but cognitive strategies that frame Gaza's future as an engineered space under external supervision.

Gap in Existing Literature

While substantial scholarship exists on metaphors in war discourse, fewer studies have focused on metaphors in *peace architecture* or *post-conflict reconstruction frameworks*. Even fewer have analysed official U.S. documents through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This study, therefore, fills a critical gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how metaphor constructs the cognitive architecture of post-war peace in Gaza. It demonstrates how linguistic structures both reflect and reproduce ideological assumptions about governance, control, and development.

Theoretical Framework: Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), originally developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), posits that metaphor is a central feature of human cognition. It involves a systematic mapping between two conceptual domains, a *source domain*, which is typically concrete and grounded in physical experience, and a *target domain*, which is abstract or complex. These mappings allow individuals to reason about the target domain using the inferential structure of the source domain (Kövecses, 2002). For instance, in the metaphor *PEACE IS CONSTRUCTION*, the abstract idea of peace (target domain) is structured by the more concrete experience of constructing a building (source domain). This mapping imports entailments such as design, foundation, stability, and maintenance, which shape how people reason about peace processes. Similarly, the metaphor *CONFLICT IS DISEASE* frames warfare as an illness requiring diagnosis, treatment, and cure, implying that external actors may serve as doctors or healers (Semino, 2008).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) outlines several key types of metaphors that are particularly relevant to political analysis. Structural metaphors occur when one concept is comprehensively structured in terms of another, as in the example “POLITICS IS WAR.” Ontological metaphors function by attributing a physical existence to abstract entities, allowing us, for instance, to conceptualize “THE STATE AS A BODY.” Finally, orientational metaphors organize entire systems of concepts along a spatial axis, such as associating “PEACE IS UP” and “CONFLICT IS DOWN” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Together, these categories provide a framework for deconstructing how metaphorical thought shapes political discourse.

Kövecses (2010) further distinguished between *universal* and *culture-specific* metaphors, noting that while the experiential basis of metaphors is universal, their ideological applications vary across contexts. In political texts, metaphors are strategically chosen to align with institutional goals and moral frames (Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2016). The present study adopts this cognitive-linguistic framework to identify and interpret the metaphorical mappings in the U.S. 20-point Gaza plan. By treating metaphor as both cognitive and communicative, the analysis reveals how policy discourse simultaneously frames reality and prescribes action.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The data consist of the full text of the *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza*, officially released by the White House in September 2025 and published by *BBC News* (2025). The twenty-point proposal, totalling approximately 2,200 words, functions as a coherent discursive artefact articulating the United States’ stance on post-war governance, reconstruction, and peacebuilding in Gaza.

Data Collection

The corpus was drawn verbatim from the BBC News article titled *Trump’s 20-point Gaza peace plan in full* (<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o>). The document was selected because it explicitly delineates U.S. expectations regarding the demilitarisation, redevelopment, and governance of Gaza, and it displays a high density of metaphorical expressions relating to building, health, and management.

Analytical Procedure

Analysis followed the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and its refined version, MIPVU (Steen, 2010). The process began with a close reading of the entire text to determine its general meaning and communicative purpose. The text was then segmented into lexical units, single words or multi-word expressions representing independent conceptual items. For each lexical unit, two meanings were established: (a) the *contextual meaning* in the proposal, and (b) the *basic meaning*, that is, its most concrete or physical sense as recorded in standard dictionaries such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*. A lexical unit was coded as metaphorical when its contextual meaning contrasted with but could be understood through its basic meaning, thereby exhibiting cross-domain mapping.

To demonstrate the procedure transparently, several lexical units were analysed directly from the proposal. For example, in Point 9, “*This body will set the framework and handle the funding for the redevelopment of Gaza*”, the term *framework* has a contextual meaning of “organised plan” and a basic meaning of “physical supporting structure,” leading to the mapping *PEACE IS ARCHITECTURE*. In Point 7, “*including rehabilitation of infrastructure and hospitals*”, *rehabilitation* denotes restoring functionality but draws on the medical sense of curing a patient, mapping *CONFLICT IS DISEASE* / *GAZA IS PATIENT*. Likewise, Point 1, “*Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone*”, invokes purification and cleansing imagery, producing *EXTREMISM IS CONTAMINATION*.

All identified metaphors were subsequently grouped into broader conceptual domains, ARCHITECTURE, ENGINEERING, HEALTH, and MANAGEMENT, to reveal dominant source–target relationships.

Table 1: Application of MIP/MIPVU to Sample Lexical Units

Lexical Unit (Point)	Direct Excerpt	Contextual Meaning	Basic Meaning (Source Domain)	Conceptual Metaphor	Metaphor-Related?
Framework (9)	“This body will set the framework ...”	Organised plan for governance	Physical support structure (CONSTRUCTION)	Peace is architecture	Yes
Rebuild (10)	“A plan to rebuild and energise Gaza ...”	Restore social and economic order	Construct again after damage (CONSTRUCTION)	Peace is construction	Yes
Rehabilitation (7)	“... rehabilitation of infrastructure and hospitals ...”	Return to functional state	Medical recovery process (HEALTH/DISEASE)	Conflict is disease / Gaza is patient	Yes
Deradicalised (1)	“Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone.”	Remove extremist ideology	Remove impurities (CLEANLINESS/HEALTH)	Radicalism is contamination	Yes
Technocratic (9)	“... temporary transitional governance of a technocratic committee ...”	Rule by experts	Literal usage	—	No

Analytical Framework

Three guiding questions informed interpretation: (a) Which conceptual metaphors structure the proposal’s representation of peace and reconstruction? (b) How do these metaphors interact to form a coherent cognitive model of post-war governance? and (c) What ideological implications emerge from these metaphorical mappings? To enhance reliability, both identification and interpretation were cross-validated using the criteria of Charteris-Black’s (2004) *Critical Metaphor Analysis*, which combines cognitive recognition with rhetorical and ideological evaluation. This dual approach ensured that the metaphors identified were not merely linguistic ornaments but conceptual devices performing persuasive and legitimising functions within U.S. policy discourse on Gaza.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the 20-point proposal through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The text’s recurrent metaphors reveal how political discourse is used to shape cognitive representations of conflict, peace, and reconstruction. Following Charteris-Black’s (2004) critical metaphor analysis and Musolff’s (2016) discourse dynamics approach, each metaphor is examined for its conceptual structure, socio-political implication, and ideological orientation. The analysis is guided by three central metaphor clusters: (a) peace as engineering and architecture, (b) Gaza as a living body, and (c) conflict as disease or contamination.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section analyses the twenty-point *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza* through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The analysis identifies and interprets metaphorical expressions that frame peace, reconstruction, and governance within the proposal (BBC News, 2025). Each metaphor is examined for its linguistic form, conceptual mapping, and ideological implication, following Charteris-Black’s (2004) critical metaphor approach.

Peace as Engineering and Architecture

A prominent metaphorical network in the text conceptualises peace as a technical and architectural enterprise. Expressions such as “*redevelopment of Gaza*” (Point 9), “*framework*” (Point 9), and “*build a better Gaza*” (Point 12) draw directly from the source domain of construction.

For example:

“This body will set the framework and handle the funding for the redevelopment of Gaza until such time as the Palestinian Authority has completed its reform programme...” (Point 9).

Here, *framework* and *redevelopment* evoke physical design and reconstruction, mapping the abstract process of peacebuilding onto the concrete process of building a structure. This supports the conceptual metaphor PEACE IS ARCHITECTURE. Similarly, Point 12 reinforces this mapping:

“We will encourage people to stay and offer them the opportunity to build a better Gaza.”

Through this expression, peace is portrayed as a collective construction project requiring technical skill and materials. The architectural metaphor frames peace as something designed, measurable, and externally manageable. As Charteris-Black (2014) observes, such imagery legitimises technocratic intervention by presenting complex social processes as engineering tasks rather than moral negotiations. The repeated emphasis on *framework*, *redevelopment*, and *build* constructs a discourse of precision and control. This aligns with Fairclough’s (2001) argument that technical metaphors in political texts convey authority and rationality, thereby depoliticising sensitive issues.

Gaza as a Living Body

A second metaphorical pattern frames Gaza as a body requiring medical treatment. Direct quotations reinforce this conceptualisation:

“Upon acceptance of this agreement, full aid will be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip... including rehabilitation of infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage), rehabilitation of hospitals and bakeries...” (Point 7).

“Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.” (Point 1).

The lexical choices *rehabilitation* and *deradicalised* both originate in medical and therapeutic domains. *Rehabilitation* implies recovery and healing, while *deradicalised* suggests cleansing or detoxification. These expressions map onto the metaphor GAZA IS A PATIENT and the corollary CONFLICT IS DISEASE. Semino (2008) notes that illness metaphors in political discourse frequently evoke empathy and moral responsibility while maintaining power hierarchies. In this proposal, the United States and allied actors implicitly assume the role of doctors or healers, while Gazans are positioned as passive patients. This mapping therefore carries ideological significance, it legitimises external intervention under the guise of humanitarian care. Musolff (2016) cautions that such metaphors can obscure agency by attributing conflict to pathology rather than policy. The phrases “*rehabilitation of hospitals*” and “*terror-free zone*” present conflict as a medical condition requiring external treatment, thereby depersonalising political accountability.

Conflict as Disease and Contamination

The health metaphor extends to the representation of conflict as a disease or contaminant. This is seen in:

“Gaza will be a deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.” (Point 1);

“Upon acceptance of this agreement, full aid will be immediately sent into the Gaza Strip. At a minimum, aid quantities will be consistent with what was included in the 19 January 2025 agreement regarding humanitarian aid, including rehabilitation of infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage), rehabilitation of hospitals and bakeries, and entry of necessary equipment to remove rubble and open roads.” (Point 7);

*“ Hamas and other factions agree to not have any role in the governance of Gaza, directly, indirectly, or in any form. All military, terror, and offensive infrastructure, including tunnels and weapon production facilities, will be destroyed and not rebuilt. **There will be a process of demilitarisation of Gaza under the supervision of independent monitors**, which will include placing weapons permanently beyond use through an agreed process of decommissioning, and supported by an internationally funded buy back and reintegration programme all verified by the independent monitors. New Gaza will be fully*

committed to building a prosperous economy and to peaceful coexistence with their neighbours.” (Point 13).

The cluster of terms, *deradicalised, rehabilitation, demilitarisation, stabilization*, evokes curative and cleansing actions. The underlying conceptual mapping RADICALISM IS CONTAMINATION and WAR IS DISEASE presents military and ideological conflict as ailments that must be cured through purification. Lakoff (1991) explains that such moral-pathological metaphors create a persuasive moral frame: if conflict is a disease, intervention becomes a moral obligation. Consequently, the proposal constructs Gaza’s political instability as a pathological abnormality rather than a symptom of structural injustice.

Governance as Management and Control

Beyond construction and health imagery, the proposal frames governance through the metaphor of management and technical supervision. For instance:

“Gaza will be governed under the temporary transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee... with oversight and supervision by a new international transitional body, the ‘Board of Peace’...” (Point 9).

“A Trump economic development plan to rebuild and energise Gaza will be created by convening a panel of experts...” (Point 10).

Terms such as *technocratic, committee, board*, and *panel of experts* originate from organisational and managerial contexts. The mapping GOVERNANCE IS MANAGEMENT frames political authority as an administrative function based on technical expertise. Charteris-Black (2011) observes that this kind of metaphor supports the ideological position that social order can be achieved through technical rationality rather than political negotiation. This metaphor also interacts with the architectural one: the *Board of Peace* becomes the “engineer” or “project manager” of Gaza’s reconstruction. The repeated use of managerial vocabulary, *oversight, supervision, standards*, and *milestones*, produces a cognitive model where peace is a controlled and measurable outcome.

Interfaith Dialogue as Cognitive Healing

Point 18 extends the medical metaphor into the psychological domain:

“An interfaith dialogue process will be established... to try and change mindsets and narratives of Palestinians and Israelis by emphasising the benefits that can be derived from peace.”

Here, *change mindsets* evokes therapy or mental healing, mapping UNDERSTANDING IS HEALTH. The metaphorical sequence, WAR IS DISEASE → PEACE IS HEALING → RECONCILIATION IS THERAPY—presents the peace process as cognitive treatment rather than political transformation. Kövecses (2010) notes that such metaphors individualise responsibility by implying that peace depends on psychological adjustment instead of structural reform.

Synthesis of Conceptual Patterns

Across the proposal, four dominant conceptual metaphors emerge:

1. PEACE IS ARCHITECTURE – constructs peace as a designed artefact.
2. GAZA IS A PATIENT – portrays the territory as a body needing healing.
3. CONFLICT IS DISEASE/CONTAMINATION – pathologises political violence.
4. GOVERNANCE IS MANAGEMENT – legitimises expert-led, technocratic control.

These metaphors collectively create a coherent cognitive model where Gaza’s reconstruction is imagined as an externally engineered and medically supervised project. The metaphors work synergistically to rationalise intervention, transferring agency from local actors to international authorities. This aligns with Charteris-Black’s (2004) view that metaphor simultaneously reflects cognition and serves ideology by framing power relations as natural and necessary.

Ideological Implications

The metaphors identified reveal how linguistic choices reinforce a Western technocratic worldview. By transforming abstract political realities into concrete, controllable entities, buildings to construct, bodies to heal, systems to manage, the proposal constructs a moral narrative of rescue and expertise. This echoes Lakoff’s (1996)

“strict-father model,” in which authority, discipline, and order are valued over mutual negotiation. Ultimately, the U.S. plan’s metaphorical architecture conceals asymmetrical power relations under the language of care and progress. Peace is rendered an engineered product rather than a negotiated social process. The ideological effect is to depoliticise Gaza’s reconstruction, presenting it as a technical necessity rather than a political dialogue.

Discussion

The metaphors identified in the *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza* collectively reveal how language functions as both a cognitive and ideological mechanism for framing post-war realities. Through the interaction of architectural, medical, and managerial metaphors, the proposal linguistically constructs peace as a project of engineering, therapy, and control.

Metaphorical Framing and Cognitive Structuring

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not mere stylistic devices but fundamental mechanisms through which people conceptualise abstract experience. In this proposal, abstract notions such as peace, reconstruction, and governance are systematically mapped onto concrete, embodied experiences, building, healing, and managing. Expressions like “*framework*,” “*redevelopment*,” and “*rebuild Gaza*” (Points 9–10) activate the ARCHITECTURE schema, enabling readers to visualise peace as something that can be designed, funded, and physically completed. Similarly, metaphors drawn from HEALTH and DISEASE, such as “*rehabilitation*,” “*deradicalisation*,” and “*stabilisation*”, restructure conflict as a pathological condition requiring treatment. The MANAGEMENT domain, seen in “*technocratic committee*,” “*oversight*,” and “*standards*,” positions governance as an exercise in technical rationality. These metaphorical mappings simplify complex geopolitical realities by projecting them onto familiar cognitive frames. In doing so, they render the proposal’s vision of peace intuitive and persuasive. Steen (2010) notes that metaphorical discourse compresses complexity into experiential imagery, allowing abstract policy goals to be understood through everyday conceptual systems.

Ideological Implications of Metaphorical Choice

The interaction of these metaphors carries significant ideological weight. By conceptualising Gaza’s reconstruction as a building project, the proposal frames peace as a technical achievement rather than a moral or political process. The architectural metaphor implies external design, planning, and supervision, implicitly assigning agency to external actors while relegating Gazans to the role of beneficiaries or labourers. This reinforces the cognitive pattern of top-down control, consistent with what Charteris-Black (2004) identifies as “metaphorical legitimisation,” where authority is naturalised through metaphorical reasoning. The health and disease metaphors intensify this asymmetry. When Gaza is represented as a patient, “*rehabilitation of hospitals*” (Point 7) and “*deradicalised terror-free zone*” (Point 1), the proposal positions the United States and its allies as doctors or healers possessing the cure. The ideological consequence is to moralise intervention, constructing it as humanitarian care rather than geopolitical control. Musolff (2016) observes that medical metaphors frequently conceal political motives by reframing domination as therapy. Likewise, the management metaphor, embodied in phrases such as “*technocratic governance*,” “*oversight*,” and “*international transitional body*” (Point 9), recasts governance as a domain of expertise. This legitimises technocracy and marginalises participatory politics. The “*Board of Peace*,” chaired by external leaders, becomes both architect and manager of Gaza’s reconstruction. Fairclough (2001) warns that managerial metaphors depoliticise governance by substituting technical solutions for democratic dialogue.

Interplay of Cognitive and Ideological Systems

The proposal’s discourse demonstrates that metaphor functions simultaneously at cognitive and social levels. Cognitively, metaphors organise understanding; ideologically, they shape consent and conceal power asymmetries. Lakoff’s (1996) “strict-father model” helps explain the moral logic underpinning this text: external authority assumes the duty to discipline, correct, and protect a dependent subject. Through this frame, Gaza is infantilised and external control is normalised. Furthermore, the seamless interaction between ARCHITECTURE, HEALTH, and MANAGEMENT metaphors constructs an integrated conceptual network:

- i. *Design* (architecture) provides structure.
- ii. *Treatment* (health) ensures recovery.
- iii. *Supervision* (management) guarantees stability.

Together, these domains create a cognitive gestalt where peace becomes a system engineered, cured, and administered by experts. As Charteris-Black (2014) notes, such metaphorical convergence enhances rhetorical coherence while reinforcing institutional authority.

Broader Discursive Consequences

By naturalising external involvement through metaphorical reasoning, the proposal aligns with broader Western discourses of peacebuilding that equate development with intervention. The recurrent image of rebuilding, “*build a better Gaza*” (Point 12), frames reconstruction as both physical and moral restoration. Yet this framing also suppresses local agency, presenting Gazans as passive recipients of care rather than active negotiators of peace. This metaphorical logic echoes Semino’s (2008) finding that metaphors of healing and building in humanitarian discourse often mask structural inequalities. In this sense, the proposal’s cognitive architecture operates ideologically to legitimise foreign management under the rhetoric of benevolence. The metaphors of design, therapy, and control converge to produce a single overarching schema: PEACE IS A PROJECT.

Conclusion

The analysis of the *Proposed Post-War Framework for Gaza* demonstrates that metaphor serves as both a cognitive structure and an ideological tool in the articulation of post-war peace discourse. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and the analytical procedures of MIPVU (Steen, 2007), four dominant metaphorical domains were identified, Architecture, Health, Management, and Healing, each contributing to the construction of a coherent cognitive model of peace as an externally managed project. The architecture metaphor depicts peace as a tangible structure to be designed, built, and supervised, reducing political complexity to technical design. The health metaphor conceptualises Gaza as a patient in need of rehabilitation and cleansing, positioning international actors as benevolent healers. The management metaphor frames governance as an administrative process dependent on expertise and oversight, legitimising technocratic authority. Finally, the healing metaphor in the call for interfaith dialogue translates reconciliation into psychological recovery, shifting responsibility for peace from institutions to individual mindsets. Together, these metaphors function cognitively by mapping abstract political concepts onto familiar experiential domains and ideologically by legitimising external control through the rhetoric of order, care, and rationality. As Charteris-Black (2004) argues, such metaphors do not merely describe reality but construct it, embedding moral and political assumptions into linguistic form. The *Proposed Framework* thus enacts what Lakoff (1996) terms a “strict-father morality,” presenting peacebuilding as discipline imposed by an authoritative agent upon a dependent subject. The study’s findings highlight the dual function of metaphor in global political discourse: it simplifies and clarifies complex issues while simultaneously naturalising asymmetrical power relations. In the case of Gaza, metaphors of construction, healing, and management conceal geopolitical domination beneath the language of humanitarian concern. Recognising these patterns offers insight into how international policy documents use metaphor to blend technical rationality with moral legitimacy. Theoretically, this research affirms the value of combining cognitive and critical approaches to metaphor analysis. Practically, it suggests that linguistic awareness is essential for interpreting the ideological dimensions of peacebuilding discourse. Future studies may extend this framework to comparative analyses of other post-conflict reconstruction narratives across regions, assessing how metaphor continues to shape perceptions of peace, sovereignty, and global order.

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