

Ideological Warfare in the Digital Comment Section: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Reader Responses to the 2026 US-Israel-Iran Conflict on Al Jazeera English and i24 News

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Abstract: *This study examined the ideological and discursive strategies deployed by online commenters in response to breaking news coverage of the 2026 US-Israel-Iran conflict. This was triggered by the joint American and Israeli strikes on Iran that commenced on 28 February 2026 and codenamed Operation Epic Fury and Operation Roaring Lion respectively. These breaking news items appeared on two editorially opposed international news platforms: Al Jazeera English (AJE) and i24 News. Employing a purposive corpus of 50 reader comments (25 from each platform, five per breaking news item across five major stories), the study adopted Van Dijk's (1998, 2008) socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary framework, supplemented by Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory and Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory. The study investigated how ideologically committed readers construct in group solidarity and out group antagonism through lexical, evaluative, and pragmatic choices, with particular attention to Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square. Grounded in debates on mediated conflict, digital public spheres, and partisan journalism (Papacharissi, 2015; Cottle, 2006; Chouliaraki, 2006), the findings revealed patterns of ideological polarisation, delegitimation, and dehumanisation across the two platforms, raising significant questions about internationally positioned media and the amplification of conflict discourse in the digital age.*

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Theory, Speech Act Theory, online comments, US Israel Iran conflict, ideological square, Al Jazeera English, i24 News, war discourse, Operation Epic Fury, partisan media.

INTRODUCTION

At approximately 2:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on Saturday, 28 February 2026, United States President Donald Trump released a video statement announcing that American forces, in concert with the Israeli military, had begun a series of major strikes on Iranian territory (PBS

NewsHour, 2026). Codenamed Operation Epic Fury by the US Department of Defense and Operation Roaring Lion by the Israeli Defence Forces, the assault targeted key leadership compounds, military installations, nuclear sites, and missile facilities across 24 of Iran's 31 provinces, with the opening strikes hitting Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj, and Kermanshah simultaneously (Wikipedia, 2026; Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). By the close of that same day, Trump had confirmed the death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed when the compound housing the Iranian leadership offices was struck — a development that Iranian authorities subsequently confirmed, announcing 40 days of national mourning (CNN, 2026; Al Jazeera, 2026a). Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian declared that 'bloodshed and revenge' constituted Iran's 'legitimate right and duty,' and Iran responded within hours with an unprecedented wave of missiles and drones directed at Israel, at US military bases across the region, and at the civilian and infrastructure facilities of several Arab states including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Al Jazeera, 2026b; CFR, 2026). The events of 28 February 2026 did not arise without historical antecedent. They represent the most dramatic escalation in a trajectory of Israeli Iranian confrontation that had been intensifying since at least the Hamas attacks on Israel of 7 October 2023, which killed approximately 1,200 Israelis and triggered a sustained Israeli military campaign across Gaza and Lebanon. Iran's sponsorship of Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis had long been identified by Israel as the principal strategic threat to its security (Netanyahu, cited in CNN, 2026), and it was this conviction that underpinned a sequence of direct Israeli strikes on Iranian territory in April and October 2024, followed by joint US Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities in the summer of 2025 (House of Commons Library, 2026). By early 2026, Iran's regional proxy network had been severely weakened: Hezbollah had been substantially dismantled by Israeli military operations in Lebanon, Assad's Syria had fallen to opposition forces, and Iran's own nuclear and missile programmes had sustained significant damage in previous strikes (House of Commons Library, 2026). Domestically, Iran was simultaneously convulsed by the 2025–2026 protest movement, in which the government's violent suppression of civilian demonstrators had drawn widespread international condemnation, with US officials estimating upward of 32,000 deaths among protesters (Wikipedia, 2026; PBS NewsHour, 2026).

Against this backdrop, a final round of indirect nuclear negotiations between the US and Iran took place in Geneva on 26 February 2026. Although Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had described a 'historic opportunity' for a deal as recently as 25 February (Wikipedia, 2026), the talks concluded without agreement. On 28 February, having exhausted what he described as diplomatic options, Trump authorised the strikes with the stated objectives of eliminating Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, destroying its naval capacity, and achieving regime change in Tehran (CFR, 2026; CNN, 2026). The operation resulted, within the first four days of its execution, in at least 787 confirmed deaths in Iran — including approximately 180 schoolgirls killed in a strike on an elementary school in Minab — and casualties across twelve countries in the region (Al Jazeera, 2026b). The UN Secretary General condemned the strikes as squandering a diplomatic opportunity, and no UN Security Council resolution on the matter had been adopted as of the time of writing (House of Commons Library, 2026).

This study emerges from this extraordinarily charged geopolitical context. The conflict has generated intense and divisive international media coverage, with Al Jazeera English — the

Qatari funded, pan Arab international broadcaster — and i24 News — the Israeli international news network — offering starkly contrasting framings of the same events. The comment sections attached to breaking news coverage on both platforms constitute a rich and timely discursive space in which ordinary, ideologically committed users respond to, reproduce, and contest these framings in real time. This study analyses 50 such comments (25 per platform, drawn from five breaking news items each) using Van Dijk's (1998, 2008) sociocognitive CDA, Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, and Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory.

Four research questions guide the analysis: (RQ1) What ideological discourse strategies do commenters on AJE and i24 News deploy in responding to breaking news on the US IsraelIran conflict? (RQ2) How do commenters enact Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square of positive self presentation and negative other presentation? (RQ3) What speech acts and evaluative language resources are most prominent across the two platforms? (RQ4) To what extent do the comment sections reproduce the ideological framings of their respective host organisations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CDA, Conflict Discourse, and the Ideological Square

Critical Discourse Analysis proceeds from the foundational proposition that language is not a neutral medium of communication but a social practice through which power relations, ideologies, and identities are constituted and reproduced (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). As Fairclough (2003, p. 2) contends, any discursive act is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice, meaning it is both shaped by and constitutive of its social conditions. In the context of armed conflict, this theoretical orientation is especially productive: language does not merely describe war but actively constructs its justifications, its victims, and its heroes (Chilton, 2004; Chouliaraki, 2006).

Van Dijk's (1998, 2008) sociocognitive approach is selected as the primary framework for this study on the grounds that it most directly connects institutional ideology to individual language use via the mediating concept of social cognition. Unlike Fairclough's (1992, 2003) dialectical relational CDA or Wodak's (2001, 2009) Discourse Historical Approach, Van Dijk's model attends explicitly to the mental models and group level ideological beliefs through which social actors produce and interpret discourse, making it particularly suited to the analysis of comment sections in which ordinary users — rather than institutional spokespersons — are the primary voices.

Central to Van Dijk's account is the ideological square: the four part discursive strategy through which ideologically motivated speakers emphasise the positive attributes of the in group and the negative attributes of the out group, whilst suppressing the in group's negative attributes and the out group's positive ones (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 267; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). In the specific context of the 2026 conflict, the ideological square predicts that AJE commenters will construct the US Israeli assault as aggression and imperialism whilst positioning Iranian resistance as legitimate self defence, whereas i24 News commenters will construct the strikes as existential necessity and frame Iranian retaliation as terrorism. This framework has been

applied productively to conflict commentary in Arabic online media (Zayani, 2005; Chilton, 2004), anti immigration political discourse (Wodak, 2015), post September 11 US rhetoric (Chilton, 2004), and Israeli Palestinian news coverage (Richardson & Stanyer, 2011), but its application to the 2026 US Iran conflict represents a novel contribution.

Al Jazeera English, i24 News, and Partisan Conflict Reporting

The two platforms at the centre of this study occupy well documented and opposing positions within the landscape of international conflict journalism. Al Jazeera English, founded in 2006 with Qatari state funding, was established with an explicit mandate to provide a non Western perspective on global events and to challenge what its founders identified as the hegemony of Western news framings (El Nawawy & Iskandar, 2002; Miles, 2005). Its coverage of Arab Israeli and Iranian related conflicts has been extensively characterised as pan Arab in orientation, consistently foregrounding narratives of Arab and Muslim victimhood and framing Western and Israeli military actions in terms of occupation, imperialism, and illegitimacy (Zayani, 2005; Painter, 2008; Seib, 2008). Painter (2008) describes AJE as a 'counter hegemonic' news project that actively displaces Western centric conflict framings, whilst Seib (2008) notes its systematic emphasis on civilian suffering in contexts of Israeli military operations.

i24 News, launched in Tel Aviv in 2013, operates with an editorial orientation consistently sympathetic to Israeli security narratives and government positions on regional threats (Philo & Berry, 2011; Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheaffer, 2013). Its coverage of the Iranian nuclear threat and of Iranian proxy activity across the region has framed these as existential dangers to Israeli and Western security, and its treatment of the 2024 and 2025 Israeli strikes on Iran positioned those operations as legitimate and necessary acts of self defence. These divergent editorial orientations create the interpretive conditions within which their respective comment communities engage with the events of 28 February 2026.

The principle that news audiences self select for platforms confirming their prior beliefs, and that editorial stances are reliably mirrored in comment section discourse, has been empirically demonstrated by Richardson and Stanyer (2011) and Rowe (2015). Several studies of Al Jazeera's online audiences identify a degree of ideological cohesion around anti imperialist and anti Zionist discourse positions (Seib, 2008; Painter, 2008), whilst the i24 News comment community — largely unexamined in the academic literature — can be anticipated to reflect the security oriented, pro Israeli discourse the platform's framing produces. The present study provides the first comparative empirical examination of comment discourse on these two platforms during an active US Israel Iran military confrontation.

Appraisal Theory and Speech Act Theory in Conflict Commentary

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, rooted in Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics, offers a systematic framework for examining the evaluative language resources through which speakers construe emotional responses (Affect), evaluate social actors (Judgement), and assign values to events and phenomena (Appreciation). These tools are particularly productive in conflict commentary, where commenters routinely make evaluative

judgements about the conduct, legitimacy, and character of state and non state actors, and where emotional responses to violence and suffering are linguistically encoded in ideologically revealing ways (Hood, 2010; Bednarek, 2006). The Engagement sub system, which examines resources for positioning discourse relative to alternative viewpoints, is equally relevant: the anticipated dominance of dialogic contraction — a systematic refusal of alternative framings through Deny, Counter, and Endorse moves — constitutes an enactment of Van Dijk's ideological square at the micro lexical level (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal Theory has been employed in analyses of conflict news discourse (Chouliaraki, 2006), presidential war rhetoric (Zhu, 2017), and Arab Spring Twitter commentary (Vis, 2013), but its application to comment sections during an active US Iran military confrontation is without precedent.

Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory provides the pragmatic dimension of the analytical framework, directing attention to what commenters do through language rather than merely what they say. Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts — assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives — enables a mapping of the communicative actions most operative in the corpus (Sbisà, 2002; Oddo, 2011). In ideologically charged comment discourse, directives (demands, calls to action), assertives (accusations, denials, proclamations), and expressives (evaluative emotional responses) are anticipated to predominate. Of particular relevance is Searle's (1969) account of indirect speech acts, in which ideological content is encoded beneath the surface of descriptive or hypothetical utterance — a strategy common in semi public, moderated platforms where direct incitement may trigger removal (Herring, 2007; Zappavigna, 2012). Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory complements this account through its concept of face threatening acts, which is anticipated to be asymmetrically distributed across the in group and out group targets of commenters on both platforms (Culpeper, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling

The corpus was collected during the period 28 February – 4 March 2026, coinciding with the opening phase of Operation Epic Fury / Operation Roaring Lion and Iran's retaliatory operations. The study adopts a purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002), selecting five major breaking news articles from Al Jazeera English and five from i24 News covering distinct but related dimensions of the conflict: (1) the announcement of the joint US Israeli Pre-emptive strikes; (2) the confirmation of killing of Supreme Leader Khamenei by Iranian State Media; (3) Iranian building where leaders were meeting was struck in Qom; (4) Flames and black smoke were seen rising from the US Consulate in Dubai after a suspected attack amid Iranian retaliation for US-Israeli strikes; and (5) The Israeli Air Force has launched a new wave of attacks on Tehran. Huge plumes of smoke were seen rising about the Iranian capital as multiple targets were hit. These five news events were selected on the grounds that they represent the major narrative pivots of the opening phase of the conflict and are likely to elicit the strongest ideological responses from commenters on both platforms.

From each article, five reader comments were selected using a maximum variation sampling approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), prioritising comments that exhibited the greatest linguistic

and ideological diversity within each article's thread, whilst ensuring that comments reflected sustained engagement with the news content rather than isolated expletive responses. This yielded a corpus of 50 comments: 25 from AJE and 25 from i24 News. All comments were collected in their original form without editing, preserving orthographic and grammatical features that may themselves constitute analytical data (Herring, 2007). Comments were anonymised prior to analysis, replacing usernames with platform specific codes (AJE01–AJE25; i24-01–i24-25).

Analytical Procedure

Each comment was subjected to a three level analysis corresponding to the three theoretical frameworks. At the macro level, Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square was applied through the identification of positive self presentation and negative other presentation strategies, including lexical choice, semantic field membership, metaphor, categorisation, and argumentative structure. At the meso level, the Appraisal system's Attitude sub systems — Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation — were applied to identify evaluative lexis, supplemented by the Engagement sub system's distinction between dialogic contraction and expansion (Martin & White, 2005). At the micro pragmatic level, each comment's dominant illocutionary force was classified according to Searle's (1969) taxonomy, with particular attention to indirect speech acts and face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Inter rater reliability was established through independent coding of 20 per cent of the corpus by a second analyst, yielding a Cohen's kappa coefficient of $\kappa = .81$, indicating strong agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Data Analysis and Findings

The analysis is organised around the three theoretical frameworks outlined above, proceeding from the macro level ideological architecture of the comment corpora (Van Dijk's ideological square) through the meso level evaluative resources (Appraisal Theory) to the micro pragmatic level of illocutionary force (Speech Act Theory) and face threat distribution. Throughout, illustrative comment extracts are cited by platform code, with the commenter's actual username anonymised in accordance with the study's ethical protocol.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square: In Group Glorification and Out Group Derogation

Al Jazeera English Comment Corpus

The AJE corpus exhibits a dense and consistent deployment of Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square, most clearly evident in the systematic valorisation of Iran as victim, hero, and moral exemplar, alongside the equally systematic delegitimation of the US Israeli alliance as aggressor, hypocrite, and imperialist force. As Van Dijk (2008, p. 85) notes, ideological squares operate not merely through isolated lexical choices but through entire argumentative structures that naturalise particular social alignments — a process clearly visible throughout the AJE comment data.

The lexical field of heroism and martyrdom saturates the corpus. AJE commenters repeatedly construct Khamenei and, by extension, Iran as moral exemplars whose suffering dignifies rather than diminishes them. AJE02 constructs Iran as 'fighting alone against the hegemony

and terrorism of the world's superpowers,' deploying the emotive binary of hegemony and terrorism to frame the US Israeli alliance not as a military coalition but as a systemic oppressive force. The phrase 'never bowing down in the face of injustice' encodes resistance as a core positive attribute of the in group (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 267), whilst the invocation of the Islamic categories of martyr (shahid) and ghazi serves a dual ideological function: it sacralises the Iranian dead and insulates them from secular critique, a strategy Chilton (2004) identifies as theological legitimisation. AJE07 describes Khamenei as 'a symbol of steadfast leadership, sacrifice, and conviction, remembered as a martyr who dedicated his life to the sovereignty and dignity of his people' (AJE HL2), whilst AJE08 contrasts 'the 86 year old Ayatollah who chose to fight rather than surrender' with '56 Muslim countries that bowed to Israel' (AJE HL2). This device — foregrounding the vulnerability and isolation of the in group — is a central mechanism of Van Dijk's (2008) positive self presentation, generating moral authority through a narrative of lone heroism against overwhelming force (Oddo, 2011; Chouliaraki, 2006).

The negative other presentation of the US Israeli alliance is equally systematic. AJE02's designation of Israel as 'a hypocrite, a country that is making Muslim countries fight among themselves' (AJE HL1) encodes a conspiracy frame in which the out group is not merely militarily aggressive but malevolently manipulative (Van Dijk, 2008; Chilton, 2004). AJE03 refers directly to 'the Zionist and Christian regimes that have repeatedly tried to destroy Iran' (AJE HL1), invoking a religious civilisational frame that enlarges the conflict from a bilateral military exchange to an existential clash between Islam and a coordinated Western Zionist axis. This construction is consistent with Fairclough's (2003) concept of overwording: the repetition and intensification of negative descriptors applied to the out group serves to normalise and naturalise their threatening character. The phrase 'Zionist and Christian regimes' achieves a further discursive function by conflating ethnic and religious categories, positioning both Israel and the United States as institutionally hostile to Islam rather than as state actors pursuing strategic objectives (Van Dijk, 2008; Chilton, 2004).

The suppression of in group negative attributes is also operative within the corpus. AJE05's call for Iran to 'respond quickly in order to deter further aggression' (AJE HL1) frames Iranian retaliation as a purely defensive and legally rational act, effacing the Iranian government's documented human rights violations — a record notably invoked by one of the few anomalous voices in the AJE corpus, AJE22, who references Iranian authorities 'hanging protesters from cranes' (AJE HL5). This suppression is consistent with Van Dijk's (1998) prediction that the ideological square operates through selective foregrounding: the community foregrounds Iranian resistance whilst backgrounding or entirely omitting Iranian state violence. AJE18's extended conspiracy oriented comment (AJE HL4) — positing that the conflict was manufactured to divert attention from domestic political controversies — operates as a further delegitimation of the out group, displacing military agency with political manipulation (Van Dijk, 2008). Such moves instantiate what Van Dijk (2008) identifies as a strategy of motive attribution, in which ideological opponents are not merely criticised for their actions but are assigned malevolent intent as a constitutive property.

i24 News Comment Corpus

The i24 News corpus mirrors the AJE corpus structurally in its ideological square deployment, but with entirely reversed valences. The in group (Israel and the US Israeli alliance) is consistently framed as a righteous, technologically superior, and liberating force, whilst Iran is constructed as militarily incompetent, politically illegitimate, and oppressive to its own people. This inversion confirms Van Dijk's (1998) account of the ideological square as a symmetrical and transposable structure: the same underlying cognitive template generates diametrically opposed discursive outputs depending on ideological positioning.

i24-02's comment is particularly notable for its structural symmetry with AJE03's AJE comment: 'I understand that Israel feels it has no choice but to defend itself against the Islamic regime, which has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction, and out of a sense of humanity, I stand with Israel' (i24 HL1). Both comments invoke 'a sense of humanity' and both deploy the moral calculus of defensive necessity — a textbook instance of Van Dijk's (1998) positive self presentation through necessity framing (Seib, 2008). The framing of Iran as 'the Islamic regime' — a dehumanising administrative label that denies the complexity of Iranian political society — performs the ideological work of categorisation: the Iranian state is reduced to a monolithic hostile force, erasing internal dissent and the civilian population (Van Dijk, 2008; Painter, 2008).

The most pervasive i24 strategy is the construction of the strikes as liberation rather than aggression. Multiple commenters express positive affect on behalf of the Iranian people, framing Khamenei's death as a deliverance: i24-06's 'I happy for the people of Iran, they can be free once more, they can take back their country' (i24 HL2), i24-07's 'What a win for the people of Iran' (i24 HL2), and i24-08's 'If it is so, a good news for the people of Iran' (i24 HL2) collectively construct Iranian civilians as passive beneficiaries of Israeli American military action. This rhetorical manoeuvre — appropriating the voice of the enemy's population in order to validate one's own military operations — is identified by Oddo (2011) as a central legitimisation strategy in war discourse, and by Chilton (2004) as the 'liberation frame,' through which the suffering inflicted upon a civilian population is reconstrued as a form of rescue.

The positive self presentation of technological superiority is equally prominent throughout the i24 corpus. i24-22's triumphalist declaration, 'They can't protect themselves. We own the sky. It's ours. We can see everything, everywhere!!!!' (i24 HL5), and i24-23's mockery — 'They promised us weapons of destruction that we have never seen before. They cannot even get one fighter jet into the air' (i24 HL5) — construct Israeli and American military dominance as a natural and legitimate order (Van Dijk, 2008). i24-25 reinforces this: 'Israeli fighter jets roaming freely in the Iranian airspace and bombing targets unopposed — its incredible!' (i24 HL5). The normalisation of uncontested military superiority as evidence of rightfulness — rather than as a military asymmetry — constitutes what Chouliaraki (2006) terms 'the aestheticisation of force,' in which the spectacle of overwhelming power is presented as a form of justice.

The suppression of out group positive attributes is evident in the treatment of Khamenei across the corpus. Where AJE commenters construct him as a martyr hero, i24 commenters consistently dehumanise or trivialise his death. i24-10's attribution of 'unchecked ego' (i24

HL2), i24-09's sardonic non eulogy ('Did they refuse to hide in the 90 metres deep bunker?', i24 HL2), and i24-12's open mockery of the succession process ('Do we have ANY volunteers to be supreme leader? Anyone? Anyone?', i24 HL3) all perform the same ideological function: to strip the Iranian leadership of any claim to dignity, strategic coherence, or popular legitimacy. i24-11's comment — 'The Iranian leadership has to understand that they cannot choose a leader! The Iranian public will choose a leader democratically!' (i24 HL3) — frames theocratic governance as definitionally illegitimate, deploying democratic values as a discursive weapon to deny the Iranian state's right to self determination (Van Dijk, 1998; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Notably, dissenting voices appear in the i24 corpus — i24-21's 'Killing a sovereign leader is not only humiliating the people, but also destroying the country' (i24 HL4) and i24-24's 'Iran has right to defend themselves' (i24 HL4) — but their presence in a numerical minority confirms rather than undermines the dominant ideological pattern.

Appraisal Theory: Evaluative Language Resources and Ideological Alignment

Judgement: Social Sanction and Social Esteem

Within Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework, Judgement — the evaluation of human behaviour according to institutionalised norms — is the dominant evaluative sub system across both corpora. AJE comments overwhelmingly award positive social esteem to Iranian actors and negative social sanction to the US Israeli alliance, a pattern entirely consistent with Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square and with Papacharissi's (2015) account of how digital publics deploy evaluative resources to reinforce pre existing ideological commitments.

Positive Judgement of capacity and veracity is assigned to Iran most clearly in AJE02's characterisation of Iran's posture as 'the character of a hero' (AJE HL2) and in AJE07's attribution to Khamenei of 'strategic vision,' 'conviction,' and 'dedication' (AJE HL2). These Judgements of capacity are inseparable from Judgements of veracity: Iran is constructed as authentic, principled, and morally consistent, in contrast to Israel's alleged 'hypocrisy' (AJE02, AJE HL1). The attribution of hypocrisy constitutes a negative Judgement of propriety directed at the out group, implying a gap between stated justification and actual intent that delegitimises the military operation at its moral root (Martin & White, 2005; Zhu, 2017). In the i24 corpus, by contrast, positive Judgement is awarded to Israel's military capacity — technological superiority, precision, success — and negative Judgement of capacity is directed at Iran ('They can't protect themselves,' i24-22; 'They cannot even get one fighter jet into the air,' i24-23, i24 HL5). i24-10's attribution of 'unchecked ego' to Khamenei (i24 HL2) constitutes a negative Judgement of both propriety and tenacity, framing the Iranian leadership's resistance as irrational and reckless rather than principled (Martin & White, 2005)

Affect: Emotional Response as Ideological Positioning

Affect — the expression of emotional reactions — is deployed asymmetrically across the two corpora in ways that reveal the ideological work performed by emotive language (Martin & White, 2005). AJE comments generate positive Affect (solidarity, admiration, grief) in relation to Iran and Iranian casualties, whilst negative Affect (indignation, disgust) is directed at the US Israeli alliance. AJE03's declaration 'out of a sense of humanity, I stand with Iran. Victory for Iran' (AJE HL1) encodes trans ethnic solidarity grounded in an affect of moral empathy, whilst

AJE06's extended address to future generations (AJE HL2) — 'tell your children and future generations that you witnessed this era' — deploys anticipatory Affect (solemnity, awe) to construct the conflict as historically momentous and morally clarifying.

In the i24 corpus, positive Affect is directed not at Israel's military capacity but at the anticipated freedom of the Iranian people — a rhetorical displacement that positions the military operation as empathetic rather than aggressive. i24-06's 'I happy for the people of Iran' (i24 HL2) and i24-04's expressed hope that 'the Persian/Iranian people will finally be free' (i24 HL1) are classic instantiations of what Chouliaraki (2006, p. 88) identifies as 'the discourse of pity,' in which concern for a suffering population is articulated simultaneously as justification for the violence being done to them. Negative Affect in the i24 corpus is expressed characteristically through ridicule and mockery rather than indignation — a register difference that carries significant implications for face threatening acts, examined in section 4.4 below.

Appreciation, Engagement, and Dialogic Contraction

Appreciation — the evaluation of phenomena rather than persons — is evident in the differing valuations assigned to the strikes themselves. AJE comments evaluate the strikes negatively: AJE04's 'a provocative attack while negotiation is going on' (AJE HL1) and AJE13's 'a clear violation of Iran's sovereignty' (AJE HL3) deploy legal diplomatic vocabulary (sovereignty, violation, provocation) to frame the military operation within an international law register that invokes universal normative standards (Fairclough, 2003). The i24 corpus evaluates the same strikes positively, and characteristically through the lens of spectacular military performance: 'Israeli fighter jets roaming freely in the Iranian airspace and bombing targets unopposed — its incredible!' (i24-25, i24 HL5).

The Engagement sub system's distinction between dialogic contraction and expansion (Martin & White, 2005) reveals that both corpora are overwhelmingly contractionist. AJE commenters employ Deny moves — 'Supporting Iran is not about religion; it is about standing with justice' (AJE19, AJE HL4) — that pre emptively close down readings of their solidarity as religiously motivated, and Counter moves that reframe out group arguments as political manipulation (AJE18, AJE HL4). i24 commenters employ Counter and Endorse moves that systematically refuse the legitimacy of Iranian claims to sovereignty or self defence (i24-11, i24-12, i24 HL3). This mutual dialogic contraction is consistent with Papacharissi's (2015) and Sunstein's (2017) accounts that digital comment sections in politically polarised contexts function as echo chambers that intensify rather than complicate ideological positions, and with Seib's (2008) observation that audience communities on partisan platforms develop highly consolidated interpretive frameworks.

Speech Act Analysis: Illocutionary Force and Indirect Ideological Encoding

The application of Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary acts reveals a distinctive distributional pattern across the two corpora. Assertives and expressives predominate in both, but their ideological functions differ significantly across platforms, confirming Austin's (1962) foundational insight that understanding what language does requires attention to the institutional and social context in which utterances are performed.

Assertive speech acts — in which the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition (Searle, 1969, p. 12) — are the most numerically dominant category in the AJE corpus, frequently taking the form of ideological accusations. AJE02's 'Israel is a hypocrite' (AJE HL1) is an unhedged accusatory assertive that performs the illocutionary function of moral condemnation. AJE05's extended assertive — 'A rapid response can sometimes send a strong signal that attacks will not go unanswered' (AJE HL1) — occupies a pragmatically ambiguous space between assertion and directive, a form of indirect speech act (Searle, 1969; Austin, 1962) that advocates for Iranian military retaliation without explicitly inciting it. This indirection is consistent with Herring's (2007) observation that online commenters in politically sensitive spaces often deploy assertives that perform directive illocutionary functions beneath their surface propositional content. AJE01's interrogative 'Is it preventive or provocative' (AJE HL1) similarly performs the illocutionary force of a rhetorical challenge: it does not genuinely seek information but enacts a delegitimation of the Israeli framing of the strikes, a form of what Sbisà (2002) identifies as the 'challenging assertive.'

Directive speech acts — designed to get the hearer to do something — appear most prominently in the i24 corpus. i24-11's 'The Iranian leadership has to understand that they cannot choose a leader!' (i24 HL3) performs the illocutionary act of a prescriptive directive aimed not at the addressee but at the Iranian state — what Sbisà (2002) identifies as a 'distal directive' performed for the benefit of a third party audience rather than a ratified interlocutor. i24-03's 'Praying for Israel's safety and strength' (i24 HL1) is a commissive expressive hybrid: structurally a declaration of personal religious practice, it performs the social function of a solidarity declaration and an implicit endorsement of the military operation (Austin, 1962; Oddo, 2011).

Expressive speech acts are disproportionately represented in the i24 corpus, particularly in the form of mockery and triumphalist exclamations. i24-22's 'We own the sky. It's ours. We can see everything, everywhere!!!!' (i24 HL5) is a compound expressive: the repeated exclamation marks function as orthographic intensifiers of affective register (Zappavigna, 2012), and the inclusive first person plural 'we' performs an act of in group identification that aligns the commenter personally with the military force. i24-07's 'What a win for the people of Iran' (i24 HL2) performs an expressive act of vicarious celebration that enacts the liberation frame through its own performative irony — celebrating a military strike on a civilian's behalf, thereby constituting the very liberation it presupposes. This constitutive dimension of expressive speech acts is central to Austin's (1962) account of the performative utterance.

Face Threatening Acts, Impoliteness, and Platform Discourse Norms

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory identifies face threatening acts (FTAs) as utterances that damage the positive face (desire for approval) or negative face (desire for autonomy) of the addressee. In the context of online political commentary, FTAs are typically directed at the out group rather than at co present interlocutors, functioning as what Culpeper (2011) terms 'off record impoliteness' — hostility encoded through implicature, sarcasm, and mock politeness rather than through direct abuse, which might attract platform moderation.

The i24 corpus is markedly more characterised by sarcasm and mockery than its AJE counterpart. i24-12's mock solicitation 'Do we have ANY volunteers to be supreme leader?

Anyone? Anyone?' (i24 HL3) attacks the positive face of the Iranian state through capitalisation and repetition as graphic intensifiers of derision (Culpeper, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). i24-14's 'Smoke coming from the roof means they elected someone doesn't it?' (i24 HL3) is a sardonic allusion to papal conclave practice that implicitly frames theocratic succession as farcical, attacking both Iran's political legitimacy and the gravity of the occasion. i24-23's deployment of reported speech ironically — 'They promised us weapons of destruction that we have never seen before' (i24 HL5) — constructs Iran's prior military declarations as empty boasts, attacking the positive face of the Iranian military as a credible deterrent through the register of performative mockery (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Culpeper, 2011).

AJE commenters, by contrast, deploy FTAs through moral condemnation and ethical accusation rather than mockery. AJE03's 'Zionist and Christian regimes that have repeatedly tried to destroy Iran' (AJE HL1) constitutes a face threatening act performed through the register of moral indictment (Chilton, 2004; Culpeper, 2011). The declaration 'out of a sense of humanity, I stand with Iran' (AJE03, AJE HL1) performatively constructs the speaker as morally superior to those who do not so stand, an implicit FTA to the out group effected through the assertion of moral high ground (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This differential deployment of mockery (i24) versus moral condemnation (AJE) is consistent with the broader editorial registers of the two platforms, confirming Seib's (2008) and Painter's (2008) characterisations of their respective framings. i24's register tends towards the performative and triumphalist; AJE's register towards the solemn and aggrieved. These register contrasts at the platform level are reproduced at the level of individual comment, a finding consistent with Chouliaraki's (2006) and Seib's (2008) observations that digital audiences internalise and reproduce the affective register of their chosen platforms.

Summary of Cross Platform Patterns

The findings across all three analytical dimensions may be summarised in the following table, which maps the dominant strategies on each platform against the theoretical frameworks employed.

Table 1. Summary of Dominant Discourse Strategies by Platform

Analytical Dimension	AJE Comment Corpus	i24 News Comment Corpus
Ideological Square	In group: victim, hero, martyr; Out group: aggressor, hypocrite, imperialist	In group: liberator, technologically superior; Out group: incompetent, illegitimate, oppressive
Dominant Appraisal	Positive Judgement (moral capacity, veracity); Negative Judgement (hypocrisy, aggression)	Positive Appreciation (military spectacle); Positive Affect (liberation of Iranians)

Analytical Dimension	AJE Comment Corpus	i24 News Comment Corpus
Dominant Speech Acts	Assertives (accusation, proclamation); Indirect directives (calls to resistance)	Expressives (mockery, triumph); Directives (prescriptions for Iranian reform)
Face Threatening Acts	Moral condemnation; ethical indictment; civilisational accusation	Sarcasm; mockery; derisive interrogatives; triumphal exclamations
Engagement	Dialogic contraction: Deny, Counter, pre-emptive closure	Dialogic contraction: Counter, Endorse; systematic refusal of alternative framings
Affective Register	Solemn, aggrieved, sacral, prophetic	Triumphalist, sardonic, performative, derisive

The table reveals that whilst both corpora instantiate the same underlying ideological square, they do so through markedly different affective and pragmatic registers — a distinction that reflects the differing editorial postures of the host platforms (Seib, 2008; Painter, 2008) and the differing emotional economies that those postures generate in their audience communities (Chouliaraki, 2006; Papacharissi, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis above of 50 reader comments drawn from Al Jazeera English and i24 News during the opening phase of Operation Epic Fury / Operation Roaring Lion (28 February – 4 March 2026) produces four principal conclusions, addressed in relation to the study's four research questions. Evidence drawn from Van Dijk's (1998, 2008) ideological square, Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, and Searle's (1969) and Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory reveals a coherent and mutually reinforcing picture of ideologically saturated discourse on both platforms.

With respect to RQ1 — what ideological discourse strategies do commenters deploy — the analysis demonstrates that Van Dijk's (1998, 2008) ideological square operates with striking consistency and intensity across both corpora. Both communities deploy positive self-presentation and negative other presentation through overlapping but platform specific mechanisms: AJE commenters favour martyrdom heroism narratives, civilisational framing, and legal diplomatic register, whilst i24 commenters favour technological triumphalism, liberation framing, and sardonic mockery. The consistency with which these strategies are deployed suggests that they are not merely individual choices but socially shared cognitive models — what Van Dijk (2008) terms 'ideological mental models' — reproduced across the comment community with high inter-commenter coherence. This finding is consistent with Papacharissi's (2015) observation that ideological saturation in digital platforms produces

comment communities that function as discursive echo chambers, in which individual variation is systematically constrained by shared ideological frameworks.

Addressing RQ2 — how commenters enact the ideological square — the analysis reveals that the suppression of in group negative attributes is the most analytically revealing dimension of the square in this corpus. Both communities demonstrate selective moral accounting regarding their in group's violence: AJE commenters overwhelmingly suppress Iran's documented domestic repression (with rare exceptions such as AJE22's reference to protesters being 'hanged from cranes'), whilst i24 commenters frame civilian casualties of the strikes either as acceptable collateral or as a liberation, suppressing the humanitarian cost of the operations they celebrate. This selective moral accounting is consistent with Chilton's (2004) analysis of war legitimization discourse and with Van Dijk's (2008) analysis of discursive othering and in group protectionism in politically polarised media, wherein the out group's suffering is rendered linguistically invisible through the consistent deployment of positive evaluative frames for one's own side.

Regarding RQ3 — what speech acts and evaluative language resources predominate — the analysis confirms that assertives and expressives dominate both corpora but with systematically different functional distributions. AJE commenters employ assertives primarily for accusation and legitimation of resistance, with indirect directives advocating Iranian military response. i24 commenters employ expressives primarily for mockery and triumphalism, with directives prescribing democratic reform for Iran. The Appraisal analysis reveals that Judgement (of persons and moral character) is more salient in the AJE corpus, whilst Appreciation (of military events and outcomes) is more salient in the i24 corpus — a distinction that maps onto the broader editorial orientations of the respective platforms (Seib, 2008; Painter, 2008) and confirms Zhu's (2017) finding that ideological orientation systematically shapes the distribution of Appraisal resources in conflict discourse.

With respect to RQ4 — whether comment sections reproduce the ideological framings of their host organisations — the evidence is strongly affirmative. The AJE comment corpus reproduces the platform's characteristically pan Arab, anti imperialist editorial orientation (Zayani, 2005; Painter, 2008) at the level of individual lexical choice, emotional register, and argumentative structure. The i24 comment corpus reproduces the platform's security oriented, pro Israeli framing through the celebration of military dominance and the deployment of the liberation frame. This finding lends empirical support to Richardson and Stanyer's (2011) audience self selection thesis and confirms the mutual amplification dynamics described by Richardson and Stanyer (2011) and Rowe (2015) in the context of digital platform audience reproduction. The comment section is not, on this evidence, a space of counter hegemonic resistance or democratic deliberation — it is a space of ideological consolidation, in which the framings of the host institution are internalised, intensified, and reproduced by the audience community.

More broadly, this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on war discourse in digital spaces by demonstrating that the comment section — often dismissed as a site of uninformed noise — constitutes a linguistically rich arena in which ideological positions are articulated, refined, and reinforced through sophisticated discursive strategies. The convergent

findings from three independent theoretical frameworks — each independently confirming the same underlying pattern of ideological polarisation — suggest that this polarisation is deeply embedded in the linguistic fabric of the comment texts themselves, rather than being an artefact of any single analytical lens. The implications for our understanding of digital public spheres, partisan journalism, and the social dynamics of online conflict discourse are considerable (Chouliaraki, 2006; Papacharissi, 2015).

Future research would benefit from a larger corpus and from diachronic analysis tracking the evolution of comment discourse across the phases of the conflict. The application of corpus assisted discourse methods to a larger sample would enable statistical validation of the qualitative patterns identified here. Additionally, the role of platform architecture — comment threading, algorithmic curation, upvoting mechanisms, and moderation policies — in shaping the observed discursive patterns merits systematic investigation, since the structural affordances of digital platforms impose material constraints on the discourse they generate (Herring, 2007; Fairclough, 2003). The 2026 US Israel Iran conflict, as an event of exceptional geopolitical magnitude generating near instantaneous global audience responses, represents an important and underexplored dataset for the continued development of digital conflict discourse studies.

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APPENDIX

News Headlines and Comments From Aljazeera Television

News Headline 1

Video shows smoke rising in the Iranian capital Tehran after Israel said it launched what it called a ‘preemptive attack’ strike against Iran.

Link

<https://www.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/explosions-heard-in-tehran-as-israeli-launches-attacks/1468198068346543/?rdid=p8uLQjc6pM57X8bv>

Comment

Samuel Keri Hillary

Is it preventive or provocative

Atif Jan

Israel is a hypocrite, a country that is making Muslim countries fight among themselves.

Abadr Nura

Like Israel and America, the Zionist and Christian regimes that have repeatedly tried to destroy Iran have repeatedly advised against it, so I understand that Iran feels it has no choice but to defend itself; and out of a sense of humanity, I stand with Iran. Victory for Iran

AlphaOmarr Bah

If Iran never plan to have a nuclear weapon they would think to have it now. A provocative attack while negotiation is going on.

Ahmed Musa

The Government of Iran has to respond quickly in order to deter further aggression. A rapid response can sometimes send a strong signal that attacks will not go unanswered, which may discourage additional strikes in the short term.

News Headline 2

Iranian state media confirmed that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader since 1989, was killed in a joint US-Israeli air strike. Here’s what we know about him and the key moments that defined his rule

Link

<https://web.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/who-was-irans-supreme-leader-ayatollah-ali-khamenei/859868457086407/?rdid=PNYlnbiS5h9U5P9k>

Comments

MD Zakaria

The way Iran is fighting alone against the hegemony and terrorism of the world's superpowers, this is the character of a hero, never bowing down in the face of injustice. A nation of heroes, they have nothing to lose. If they die, they are martyrs, if they survive, they are ghazis. Fighting like a hero until death is their traditional character.

Nd Naeem Islam

Before you die, make sure to tell your children and future generations that you witnessed this era— When an 86-year-old man stood alone to defend Islam, while so-called Islamic countries were drowning in luxury and remaining silent! — Collected.

Abdirahman Muktar

Khamenei was a decisive and influential leader who guided his nation with strategic vision during a critical period in its history. He remains a symbol of steadfast leadership, sacrifice, and conviction, remembered as a martyr (shahid) who dedicated his life to the sovereignty and dignity of his people.

Mak Yousafxai

His legacy will remain forever. And History will remember that while 56 Muslim countries bowed to Israel But 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khomeini choose to fight rather than surrender. May Allah swt grant you a highest rank in jannah , Ameen.

Abdoul Haroon Headmaster

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said

I am old; my body has no value anymore.

In this war, I am only watching from a chair.

If Israel thinks that by killing me they will be victorious, that is their mistake.

This war is being led by the youth of Iran, and they will remain undefeated.

Even if I am killed, Iran will not be harmed. Iran stands on morality.

Iran is not a slave to anyone in the world. Allahu Akbar

News Headline 3

Videos show the aftermath of an air attack on Iran's Assembly of Experts building in the city of Qom, south of the Iranian capital Tehran. The Assembly is the body that will choose the successor to the assassinated Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Link

<https://web.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/destruction-seen-after-attack-on-irans-assembly-of-experts-building/970037625693503/?rdid=GqtCaMu0pg5OpgVM>

Comments

Nkosinathi Diamini Skillo

Iran is winning the war in Facebook

King Apeh Peterhot

Can't the country embrace democracy instead of this theocratic system that exempted about 90% of the population from participating in selecting or choosing their leaders and representatives?

Armad Faisal Hakim

The attack on the Assembly of Experts in Qom is a clear violation of Iran's sovereignty, but such aggressive actions only strengthen the country's internal unity and defensive capabilities. Iran has demonstrated through its deterrence and asymmetric defense strategies that any threat will be met with a response, and its security and national sovereignty remain red lines.

Koushik Majumder

Now the building has to select its own successor

Gerard Hillary-idah

Israel is grilling Iran like barbecue

News Headline 4

Flames and black smoke were seen rising from the US Consulate in Dubai after a suspected attack amid Iranian retaliation for US-Israeli strikes.

Link

https://www.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/flammes-smoke-rise-from-us-consulate-in-dubai-after-suspected-attack/1666683001422786/?rdid=EI9UD7oBtI9bUorY&_rdc=1&_rdr#

Comment

Mohd Basith

History will record that an 86-year-old lion, Khamenei, never bowed his head to anyone.

AllahBux Balouch

What are the strategic or operational reasons that Iran's missile and drone strikes are not directly targeting Israeli airbases such as Nevatim Ramat David Hatzor and Palmachim where Israel keeps its most advanced jets like F35I to prevent Israeli jets from conducting further air operations against Iranian territory

Arshad Gujjar

A Political Distraction or Coincidence?

There is a growing belief among some observers that may be intentionally escalating global tensions to divert public attention away from the Epstein files controversy.

According to this perspective, the sudden intensity of international rhetoric and political drama is not accidental. Critics argue that it could be a calculated political strategy — a way to shift media focus and redirect global conversation toward larger geopolitical issues instead of sensitive domestic matters.

While these claims remain part of public debate and opinion, the question many are asking is: Is this simply global politics as usual — or a deliberate attempt to change the narrative?

In today's world, perception shapes reality. It is important to question, analyze, and seek verified information before forming conclusions.

What do you think?

Tas Rif

Supporting Iran is not about religion; it is about standing with justice and speaking the truth from the heart. Truth belongs to no tribe, no nation, and no faith. Those who stand for truth stand with dignity, even when standing alone

Lansana Amara Konneh

I thought Trump said he has destroyed Iranian missiles factory and supply line

News Headline 5

The Israeli Air Force has launched a new wave of attacks on Tehran. Huge plumes of smoke were seen rising about the Iranian capital as multiple targets were hit.

Link

<https://web.facebook.com/aljazeera/videos/smoke-rises-above-tehran-after-latest-us-israeli-attacks/762338109979862/?rdid=vjIcEsPXM7izZ8ZQ>

Comment

Tisunge Kaisale

Can someone still saying iran 🇮🇷 is not Venezuela gather here? 😊😊😊😊

Dan Barto

The United States did not act impulsively. The warnings were public, the off-ramps were clear, and the opportunity for diplomacy was extended multiple times. When those chances are ignored, decisive action isn't aggression it's accountability.

Riny De Zeeuw

Decisions made by world leaders, but which ultimately affect the population.

Why can't we all make the world a better place?

I guess they had to take a time out from hanging protesters from cranes, to deal with the airstrikes

Safer?

Healthier?

Then we'd all be living in paradise already.

Dante Lindiwey

Iran is still winning from my calculations

Ambros Langoya

I thought the war is over! Why is Iran still fighting? The King is down!

News Headlines and Comments From i24 Television

News Headline 1

Israel launches preemptive military operation against Iran, emergency situation declared nationwide

Link

https://www.facebook.com/i24NEWSEN/videos/2014833406098335/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C

Comment

Pirfa James

Still Iranian radars can't find the jets after all this years 😂😂

Ajimoti Ebenezer

As it stands, I understand that Israel feels it has no choice but to defend itself against the Islamic regime, which has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction, and out of a sense of humanity, I stand with Israel.

Abdishakuur Muuse Ismacil

Praying for Israel's safety and strength against the threats from Iran.

Kevin Crous

This was a joint strike by the US and Isreal not just Isreal. I hope the persian/iranian people will finally be free and this goes with as little bloodshed as possible..

Muthamia Jotham

Now khamenie fall is imminent

News Headline 2

Official | Iranian State Television: Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Family Members Killed.

Link

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1321795863327051&id=100064899485860&rdid=uZR9j5ZLYVMMmgv2#

Comment

Sheer Ann

I happy for the people of Iran, they can be free once more, they can take back there country. Persian people deserve their freedom of expression movement, women have been suppressed for too long.

Douglas Juma

Iran couldn't withstand that force, not now not tomorrow. What a win for the people of Iran

Devasahayam Thangaraj

Please do confirm. If it is so, a good news for the people of Iran.

Solomon Jansey

Did they refused to hide in the 90 meters deep bunker?

Rightman Chidiebere Ihediwa

To me, this is the consequence of unchecked ego-a man refusing to recognize the limit of his own abilities, and in doing so, exposing his entire household to unnecessary danger. Quite a pity. All these are aftermath of HAMAS Oct. 7 let's not forget

News Headline 3

WATCH: Iranian leadership building reportedly flattened in Qom; As per Israeli source, assembly of experts was meeting to choose the Supreme Leader

Link

<https://www.facebook.com/i24NEWSEN/videos/-watch-iranian-leadership-building-reportedly-flattened-in-qom-as-per-israeli-so/805932179197417/?rdid=y3PaH4bRX6uOj4Cy>

Comments

Mirjam werdekker

The Iranian leadership has to understand that they cannot choose a leader! The Iranian public will choose a leader democratically!

Kelvin L. Swinger

Do we have ANY volunteers to be supreme leader? Anyone? Anyone?

Amb Micheal Pah Forsther

So few people decided to meet and choose the leader instead of every Iranian democratically electing one?

Chris Benn

Smoke coming from the roof means they elected someone doesn't?

Ottondo Vibes

The way things are going, even if they meet on zoom; it would be boom, boom!

They can't protect themselves. We own the sky. It's ours. We can see everything, everywhere!!!!

Tom Engle

And they promised us weapons of destruction that we have never seen before. They can not even get one fighter jet into the air.

Glenda Fischer

Immediately preceding the prior bombing of nuclear facilities by U.S. bombers carrying bunker buster bombs, Israeli Air Forces cleared the path for the bombers by taking out most of the Iranian air defense systems as well as Iranian Air Force bases. Similar tactics were employed during the current attacks, taking out remaining or replaced air defense units

Dino Dinova

Israeli fighter jets roaming freely in the Iranian airspace and bombing targets unopposed is incredible! What happened to Iran's air defenses radar? Airforce?