



“Fighting for the Floor”: Overlap as A Rhetorical Strategy of Power and Urgency in Geopolitical Debate

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Abstract. Overlap in geopolitical debates, particularly the Israel-Palestine conflict, remains underexplored in conversation analysis research. This study addresses that gap through the case of “Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?”, a debate on the Open to Debate YouTube channel marked by confrontation between speakers holding opposing positions. Using Jefferson's (1983) overlap-onset framework and Schegloff's (2000) resolution mechanisms, this qualitative case study analyzes 133 turns of talk produced by two debaters, Cenk Uygur and Mosab Hassan Yousef, and moderator John Donovan, to identify overlap types and how speakers manage simultaneous talk. The findings reveal 24 instances of overlap onset (18.04%), with recognitional onset as the most dominant type, accounting for 16 instances (12.03%), followed by transitional onset with 8 instances (6.01%), and no progressional onset observed. As for resolution, 22 instances were identified (16.54%), with withdrawal as the most frequent mechanism, accounting for 10 instances (7.52%), followed by persistence with 8 instances (6.02%) and acoustic upgrade with 4 instances (3.01%). These findings demonstrate that overlap functioned as a deliberate rhetorical strategy reflecting power, urgency, and argumentative control in this case, not as a generalizable claim about geopolitical debate.

Keywords: *Conversation analysis, geopolitical debate, overlap, turn-taking*

Abstrak. Tumpang tindih dalam debat geopolitik, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan konflik Israel-Palestina, masih kurang dibahas dalam penelitian analisis percakapan. Penelitian ini mengisi celah tersebut melalui debat “Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?” di kanal YouTube Open to Debate, yang ditandai dengan konfrontasi antara penutur yang berposisi berlawanan. Menggunakan kerangka overlap onset Jefferson (1983) serta mekanisme penyelesaian Schegloff (2000), studi kasus kualitatif ini menganalisis 133 giliran bicara yang diproduksi oleh dua pembicara, Cenk Uygur dan Mosab Hassan Yousef, serta moderator John Donovan, untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis tumpang tindih dan cara penutur mengelola tuturan secara simultan. Penelitian ini menemukan total 24 instansi onset tumpang tindih (18,04%), di mana onset rekognisional merupakan jenis paling dominan dengan 16 instansi (12,03%), diikuti oleh onset transisional sebanyak 8 instansi (6,01%), tanpa ditemukan onset progresional. Adapun resolusi tumpang tindih, sebanyak 22 instansi teridentifikasi (16,54%), dengan penarikan diri sebagai mekanisme paling sering dengan 10 instansi (7,52%), diikuti persistensi dengan 8 instansi (6,02%) dan peningkatan akustik dengan 4 instansi (3,01%). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa tumpang tindih berfungsi sebagai strategi retorik yang disengaja yang mencerminkan kekuasaan, urgensi, dan kontrol argumentatif dalam kasus ini, bukan sebagai klaim yang berlaku umum untuk debat geopolitik.

Kata kunci: *Analisis percakapan, debat geopolitik, tumpang tindih, giliran berbicara*

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing for more than a century. In 1917, under British rule, the Balfour Declaration was issued, stating the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine (Tahhan, 2018). Tensions between the two sides escalated further following the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948, which caused mass displacement of Palestinian civilians in an event known as the Nakba (Naved et al., 2025). The conflict continues to this day and remains one of the most complex and controversial geopolitical issues in the world.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is not only a geopolitical issue but has also evolved into a widespread debate in the global public sphere. In the current digital era, social media has become the primary platform for discussing this debate globally. Social media has grown into a tool for spreading opinions, news, and the latest information (Huda et al., 2021). This conflict has also triggered large-scale demonstrations in various parts of the world. Chenoweth et al. (2024), noted that over eight months, from October 7, 2023, to June 7, 2024, there were nearly 12,400 demonstrations in the United States with at least 1.5 million participants. This shows that the Israel-Palestine issue not only exists in digital spaces but also continues to shape public opinion widely and has become a topic that gives rise to differing perspectives.

Various discussion forums have addressed this conflict, both in debates and on podcasts. One such forum is the Open to Debate YouTube channel, which aired the debate “Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?” featuring Cenk Uygur and Mosab Hassan Yousef as opposing debaters, moderated by John Donvan. This debate is particularly suited as a case for examining overlap in geopolitical contexts because it brings together speakers with directly opposing positions on a highly contested issue, with a moderator whose institutional role adds a distinct layer of complexity to turn management, a configuration that has not been examined in prior overlap research. The dynamics among these three parties create a linguistically rich verbal interaction in which overlap, a condition where two or more speakers talk simultaneously, not only appears as a technical disruption but also reflects the dynamics of power, urgency, and the speakers’ attempts to maintain or reclaim their speaking turns.

Several previous studies have examined the phenomenon of overlap in various conversational contexts. Abbas (2020) examined overlap in two psychological therapy sessions. He found that overlap most frequently occurred due to misjudgment of the TRP, with terminal overlap as the most dominant type. Therapists tended to use continuers to encourage patients to continue speaking. Amadi (2020) examined turn-taking and overlap in a Nigerian political interview on YouTube and found that 67 out of 75 overlap cases were caused by disagreement, while also identifying recursive interruptive overlap that had never been previously reported in political interview research. Zayd et al. (2025) examined overlap in the Messi vs Ronaldo football debate on YouTube and found that overlap in emotionally charged debate contexts is not always disruptive but rather functions as a strategy to defend arguments and demonstrate active engagement in the debate. The studies above have made important contributions to understanding the phenomenon of overlap in various conversational contexts. However, research on overlap in debates involving complex and widely contested geopolitical issues such as the Israel-Palestine debate remains limited. Furthermore, no study has simultaneously analyzed overlap onset types and resolution mechanisms.

This research analyzes overlapping talk in the YouTube debate “Can Israel Make Peace With Hamas?”. Conversation Analysis (CA) views conversation as an organized system where participants manage speaking rights through turn-taking (Yule, 1996). As

Jacob L. Mey (2001) notes, conversation is a dynamic social interaction driven by individual choices at every moment. According to Sacks et al. (1974), this system is locally managed, shifting at a Transition Relevance Place (TRP). When multiple speakers simultaneously attempt to take the floor, overlap occurs. In this study, the term floor refers specifically to the right to hold the current turn at talk, not to its common meaning such as a physical space or a metaphor for public attention. This distinction matters because the debate is often described as speakers competing for the audience's attention, whereas the floor in Conversation Analysis refers more narrowly to the turn-by-turn right to speak. Jefferson (1983) categorizes into three types of onset, namely transitional onset occurring at or near TRP, recognitional onset occurring when the trajectory of the current turn can already be projected, and progressional onset occurring well before a projectable TRP as a competitive attempt to seize the floor.

Once overlap occurs, speakers employ various resolution mechanisms identified by Schegloff (2000), including persistence, withdrawal, recycling, hitches or perturbations, and acoustic upgrade, to manage simultaneous talk and regain the floor. In a debate format such as this, the presence of a moderator adds a further layer of complexity to how overlap unfolds, as the moderator's interventions are not only directed at managing turn allocation between the two debaters but also at maintaining the orderly progression of the discussion. Examining how the moderator participates in and resolves instances of overlap, therefore, provides additional insight into how overlap functions within a structured, multi-party debate setting.

Based on the theoretical perspectives outlined above, this study employs Conversation Analysis to examine the occurrence of overlap in the debate "Can Israel Make Peace With Hamas?" on the Open to Debate YouTube channel. Jefferson (1983) The overlap onset framework is used to identify the types of overlap produced by the participants, Schegloff (2000) Overlap resolution mechanisms are applied to analyze how speakers, including the moderator, maintain their speaking turns during overlapping talk.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate occurrences of overlap in the debate "Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?" published on the Open to Debate YouTube channel, which discusses political and social issues and has approximately 280,000 subscribers. According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. This approach is appropriate for the present study because the debate constitutes a naturally occurring conversational event that cannot be manipulated, and understanding overlap in this context requires examining the interaction within its real-world setting. The debate was selected purposively because it addresses a highly controversial geopolitical issue and features direct argumentative interaction between speakers holding opposing viewpoints. At the time of data collection, it had received more than 100,000 views on the Open to Debate channel, indicating substantial public engagement with the topic. The video was published on August 9, 2024, and has a duration of one hour, three minutes, and eleven seconds (1:03:11). It is an episode of Open to Debate on the motion Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?, moderated by John Donvan. Arguing yes is Cenk Uygur, founder and CEO of The Young Turks, one of the largest online news shows in the world, and a vocal advocate for a ceasefire. Arguing no is Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of a Hamas co-founder, turned Israeli intelligence operative and author of the New York Times bestseller *Son of Hamas*. The debate was also re-uploaded on The Young Turks YouTube channel on August 10, 2024, and has received 743 thousand views. As a single case study, this research does not

aim to generalize its findings to other debates or videos. Its scope is limited to the overlap phenomena occurring within this one debate.

The data in this study were transcribed using the CA notation convention system developed by Gail Jefferson (2004) to capture phonetic and interactional details. Although the debate video was originally published in 2024, the present research was conducted in 2025, and the data were collected at that time for analysis. The data consisted of verbal interactions produced by the two debaters and the moderator throughout the discussion, collected through documentation techniques using the debate video and its transcript. According to Sugiyono (2013), data collection constitutes the most strategic step in research, as the appropriate technique determines whether the data obtained meets the required standard. In this study, documentation was selected as the most suitable technique given that the debate is a pre-existing, unmanipulated audiovisual event. The transcript was generated using Tactiq.io on December 18, 2025, and subsequently cross-checked against the original video to ensure transcription accuracy. The researcher repeatedly watched the video while reading the transcript to become familiar with the debate dynamics and interaction patterns between speakers, and to identify all instances of overlapping speech relevant to the research objectives.

The analysis followed the procedure proposed by Kurniasih et al. (2021), beginning with the identification and categorization of patterns within the case, followed by interpretation to determine the meaning of each pattern and its relation to the others. Identified overlaps were classified according to Jefferson's (1983) overlap onset categories, namely transitional onset, recognition onset, and progression onset, to determine the types of overlap produced by the participants. Overlap resolution mechanisms were then analyzed using Schegloff's (2000) framework, comprising persistence, withdrawal, recycling, hitches or perturbations, and acoustic upgrade, to identify how speakers managed simultaneous talk. The coded data were organized into frequency tables for each category, and conclusions were drawn by synthesizing the resulting patterns specific to this debate case. The overall analysis followed the principles of Conversation Analysis proposed by Sacks et al. (1974) to examine turn-taking organization, overlap occurrence, and the management of speaking rights during the debate. To enhance the credibility of the findings, every identified overlap instance was verified by repeatedly comparing the transcript against the original audiovisual recording, ensuring that the timing, onset point, and resolution of each overlap matched the actual spoken interaction.

FINDINGS

The debate “Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?” consists of a series of speaking turns delivered by the three participants: Cenk Uygur, Mosab Hassan Yousef, and the moderator, John Donvan. According to Sacks et al. (1974), a turn refers to an opportunity to speak allocated through a locally managed system, in which a current speaker's talk constitutes a turn constructional unit (TCU) that signals a possible completion point, allowing the transition of speakership to another participant. Based on this framework, each instance of speaker change during the debate was identified as a single TCU. Following this procedure, a total of 133 TCUs were identified throughout the entire debate. It is worth noting that overlap at a TCU's completion point does not carry a uniform interactional meaning, as its function depends heavily on whether the surrounding talk is affiliative or adversarial in nature. The following analysis therefore examines not only where overlap occurred structurally, but how the turn-taking system itself was mobilized as a resource for argumentative control in this adversarial debate setting.

Table 1. Types of Overlap Onset

Types of Onset	Cenk Uygur	Mosab Hassan Yousef	John Donvan	Freq	%
Transitional Onset	3	2	3	8	6.01%
Recognitional Onset	7	2	7	16	12.03%
Progressional Onset	-	-	-	-	0%
Total	10	4	10	24	18.04%

Table 1 presents the distribution of overlap onset types found in the debate, relative to the 133 total turns identified throughout the entire debate. As shown in Table 1, a total of 24 overlap instances (18.04%) were identified. Recognitional onset emerged as the most dominant type, accounting for 12.03% (16 occurrences) of total turns, followed by transitional onset at 6.01% (8 occurrences), while progressional onset was not found in this debate.

Transitional Onset

Transitional onset occurs when the next speaker begins talking at a point where the current speaker's utterance appears syntactically complete, signaling a possible transition place where speaker change is expected, permissible, or even required (Jefferson, 1983). The overlap arises as a by-product when the current speaker continues talking beyond that completion point while the next speaker has already begun their turn. The three excerpts below illustrate this pattern across different speaker pairings throughout the debate, showing that transitional onset consistently occurred once the current turn reached a projectable point of completion.

Excerpt 5.

21:27 - 21:34

MHY: We ask them why why are you a Palestinian what makes you a Palestinian but they don't know how to answer that it's just a syndrome it's a mental disease it's a mental mental illne[ss.]

CU: [Can] you imagine if I said being Jewish is a mental disease?

In Excerpt 5, MHY's turn approaches syntactic completion with the declarative clause "it's a mental mental illness." The bracket marks the point where CU self-selects, entering right as MHY produces the final syllable of "illness," a point at which the clause is already projectable as complete despite not yet being fully articulated. CU produces "Can you imagine if I said being Jewish is a mental disease?" precisely at this projected completion point. The overlap here is non-competitive, as CU does not cut into the body of MHY's utterance but rather times his entry to the very edge of its completion.

Excerpt 16.

32:00 - 32:12

JD : ...let's just take a breath and take it down 10° I-I understand you're both riled because you both care about [this.]

MHY : [So] there is no need to take the higher Moral Moral ground you know here I speak on behalf of the Arab and the Jewish children.

Excerpt 12.

28:26 – 28:48

CU: Why don't you want them to have a beautiful independent state of Israel and a safe haven for Jew and a beautiful independent state of Palestinians the idea that the Palestinians are the unique people on Earth that cannot get to peace that they are so violent they have such a Savage ideology they can't get to peace is both racist and **ab[surd.]**

JD: **[So I]** I hear mosab saying that Israel really doesn't have a choice and you're saying Israel has a choice

CU: Of course they have a choice

A similar entry point can be observed in Excerpt 16 and Excerpt 12, yet the two instances differ in what motivates the onset. In Excerpt 16, MHY's onset serves a defensive function, as he resists JD's attempt to frame both debaters as equally responsible for the tension in the discussion. In Excerpt 12, by contrast, JD's onset serves an institutional function, as he does not enter the overlap to argue his own position but to summarize and reframe the arguments already made by both debaters, a task consistent with his role as moderator.

Recognitional Onset

Recognitional onset occurs when an incoming speaker begins to talk at a point where the content or meaning of the current turn has been made sufficiently available for recognition, even before syntactic completion has been reached (Jefferson, 1983). Unlike transitional onset, which orients to the completeness of a turn, recognitional onset orients to its adequacy, that is, the point at which what is being said has been understood well enough for a next speaker to respond. The incoming speaker acts upon that recognition rather than waiting for the current turn to reach a TRP. The three excerpts below illustrate this pattern across different speaker pairings, showing that recognitional onset consistently occurred once the trajectory or gist of the current turn had become identifiable, even before it reached syntactic completion.

Excerpt 8.

21:45 – 21:58

MHY : Palestine and Palestinian is an ideology it was born just yesterday Judaism was born 5,000 years ago it's the most ancient ↑NATION on the planet.

CU : What are you?

MHY : **>What are you talking about? What is [Palestinian?]<**

CU : **[What are you?]**

MHY : **<I am an Arab>** I was born in Judea and Arab this is my ethnicity this is my ↑language okay.

In Excerpt 8, an exchange unfolds between CU and MHY about Palestinian identity. MHY advances the argument that Palestinian identity is a recently constructed ideology, drawing a contrast with Judaism, which he characterizes as an ancient nation thousands of years old. Before MHY can complete this line of reasoning, CU interjects with the question “What are you?”, effectively redirecting the argument toward MHY's own ethnic identity. MHY responds defensively, “What are you talking about? What is Palestinian?” Before he can finish this utterance, however, CU repeats his question at the point marked by the

bracket, overlapping with MHY's word "Palestinian?" CU does not wait for MHY to reach syntactic completion before reclaiming the floor. As Jefferson (1983) argues, recognitional onset occurs when an incoming speaker orients to the adequacy rather than the completeness of the current turn, initiating talk at the point where the trajectory of the ongoing utterance has already become sufficiently available for recognition. CU's onset here reflects this orientation, as his recognition of where MHY's response is heading prompts him to cut back in and reassert his own question before MHY's turn reaches its completion point.

Excerpt 2.

18: 54 - 19:07

CU : you said well we can't negotiate with Hamas they don't
even recognize our right to exist and then you turn
around and said the Palestinians don't exist anyway
doesn't occ[upation] [anyway]

MHY : [I said Palestine] [as a country]

CU : [who cares] okay so and by the way you're wrong you said that uh

MHY : [Arab exist]

Excerpt 1.

10.04 - 10. 14

CU: I think they are a bunch of lunatics and I think that they've
oppressed the Palestinians I think their ideology is toxic but
of course I would negotiate with them who el[se am I going-]

JD: [alright let] me stop
stop you there and same question to you Mosab. What did you
hear from your opponent that you think is their weakest- his
weakest point?=-

A similar pattern of recognitional onset is found in Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 1, though the two speakers enter the overlap for different reasons. In Excerpt 2, MHY cuts in three times before CU can finish accusing him of contradicting himself, recognizing where CU's argument is headed and moving quickly to prevent his position from being misrepresented. In Excerpt 1, JD enters CU's turn mid-word, not to argue against CU's point but to end the turn and direct the question to Mosab, consistent with his role in managing the pace of the discussion. Taken together, these excerpts show that recognitional onset was employed not only by the debaters to contest each other's arguments, but also by the moderator, whose entry served a different, task-based purpose.

Table 2. Overlap Resolution Device

Mechanism	Cenk Uygur	Mosab Hassan Yousef	John Donvan	Frequency	%
Acoustic Upgrade	-	4	-	4	3.01%
Recycle	-	-	-	-	0%
Withdrawal	2	6	2	10	7.52%
Persistence	3	5	-	8	6.02%
Hitches	-	-	-	-	0%
Total	5	15	2	22	16.54%

Table 2 presents the overlap resolution mechanisms employed by the speakers during simultaneous talk, relative to the 133 total turns identified throughout the debate. As shown in Table 2, a total of 22 overlap resolution instances (16.54%) were identified. Withdrawal emerged as the most dominant mechanism, accounting for 7.52% (10 occurrences) of total turns, followed by persistence at 6.02% (8 occurrences) and acoustic upgrade at 3.01% (4 occurrences). Meanwhile, recycle and hitches were not found in this debate.

Acoustic Upgrade

An acoustic upgrade occurs when a speaker in overlap suddenly increases the volume and/or pitch of their talk to assert a stronger claim to the contested turn space (Schegloff, 2000). This practice shifts the speaker’s talk from ordinary, solo-style production into what Schegloff terms competitive production, in which the deflection in volume or pitch functions less as a by-product of simultaneous talk and more as a deliberate resource deployed to outlast or override a co-participant’s overlapping utterance.

Excerpt 24.

56:43 - 57:08

MHY : What so-called Palestinians had an opportunity and they missed it but I tell him the truth that the Palestinians or the Arab I had so many opportunities because back in 1948 when the Jews declared their independence the Arabs had equal opportunity to declare their independence but instead of declaring their independence they declared war against the Jewish people.

CU : It's absurd [I can't—]

MHY : **[IT'S ↑NOT] ABSURD! It's a fact!**

In Excerpt 24, MHY responds to CU’s overlapping talk by sharply increasing both volume and pitch on the phrase “IT’S NOT ABSURD.” The capitalization signals increased loudness, while the upward arrow before “NOT” indicates a rise in pitch. This heightened production serves as a persistence strategy, allowing MHY to assert a stronger claim to the floor rather than yielding to CU’s incoming talk. Under this acoustic pressure, CU withdraws, as indicated by the dash after “I can’t,” and MHY retains control of the floor.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal refers to the practice in which a speaker stops talking upon recognizing that simultaneous talk is occurring, thereby ceding the turn space to the other party (Schegloff, 2000). According to Schegloff, this is in fact the most common way overlaps get resolved: the great majority of overlaps end very quickly, often within a single beat, precisely because one of the two parties withdraws from the talk almost as soon as the overlap becomes evident, without escalating to any form of competitive production. The three excerpts below present this practice across the three speakers, showing that while withdrawal always involves yielding the floor, what it signals can differ from one instance to another.

Excerpt 13.

31:22 - 31:30

CU : I’m not excusing a single child that Hamas killed but it seems like you’re saying a 15,000 Palestinian kids so what Israel had to do it we have to eradicate **Ha[mās.]**

MHY : **[DON’T] PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH DON’T PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH...**

This excerpt describes a withdrawal by CU following an acoustic upgrade by MHY. The overlap occurs just as CU is about to complete his statement, “we have to eradicate Hamas.” At this moment, MHY interjects with a strongly emphasized upgrade, marked by the fully capitalized “DON’T,” which is repeated twice with increasing intensity. Although CU’s turn has reached a point of grammatical and intonational completion, the immediacy and force of MHY’s upgrade leave no room for CU to respond. CU does not attempt to finish his point, add more information, or challenge MHY’s entry, and instead allows MHY’s heightened production to take over the conversational space without contest. This lack of a countermove from CU can be interpreted as a form of withdrawal, where he gives up the turn entirely rather than competing for the floor with his own upgraded response.

Excerpt 10.

22:57 - 23:10

CU : <What do you want to do with them> if you dont want to make peace?

MHY : You need to to ask what they **<need to do>** [in order to achieve]

CU : **[oh we have to so they]** have to please their occupiers.

MHY : **NO**

CU : Okay let me please you oppressors of mine I would love I'm begging you I will pass all of your tests.

Excerpt 23.

53:44 - 54:11

MHY : ...until the moment Yasser Arafat brought his sick ideology and started the an this is when everything went [wrong]

JD : **[that's not] answering my question about you're talking about the leadership again and I'm asking about the the [common]**

MHY : [but yeah I] 'm giving you an example that it is possible Arabs and Jews can get along definitely...

Withdrawal took a different shape in Excerpt 10 and Excerpt 23, depending on who performed it and why. In Excerpt 10, MHY’s withdrawal is only partial, as he abandons the floor to CU’s completion but goes on to challenge it with a following ‘NO,’ showing that his withdrawal does not equate to agreement. In Excerpt 23, by contrast, JD’s withdrawal is not a response to being overpowered but follows the completion of his institutional task as moderator, allowing him to step back once his purpose in cutting in had been achieved.

Persistence

Persistence describes a speaker’s orientation toward continuing their talk despite being in overlap with another speaker, rather than withdrawing (Schegloff, 2000). Schegloff distinguishes two forms of this orientation, persistence to completion, in which a speaker pushes through to articulate the entirety of their turn constructional unit regardless of the ongoing overlap, and persistence to projecting the thrust of the turn, in which a speaker need not complete the full unit, but persists only until the upshot or main point of the turn has become recognizable to the co-participant. The two excerpts below present this orientation across different speakers, showing that persistence can succeed even when the co-participant attempting to enter the overlap is the moderator

Excerpt 22.

46:30 - 46:46

CU : ...who are we negotiating with if we're not negotiating with our
enemies and this idea that oh they're uniquely crazy **and—**
JD : **[but but i think]**
CU : **[hold on hold on]** I got to say this so
they oh my God they hate us...

Excerpt 3.

20:17 - 20:33

MHY : well I think your uh narrative is absurd because you choose to be in denial
I just told you that there was no country **[of Palestine]**
JD : **[I- I]**
MHY : excuse me this is very important all right I admit that there are Arabs as
ethnic group...

Excerpt 22 and Excerpt 3 both illustrate persistence as a strategy for floor retention, although the two speakers face different points of entry from JD. In Excerpt 22, the overlap emerges as CU experiences a hitch in the form of a self-interruption on the word “and,” and at that same point JD self-selects with “but but I think.” Rather than withdrawing, CU immediately reasserts his claim to the floor through the repeated directive phrase “hold on hold on,” reinforced by the meta-communicative statement “I got to say this,” and completes his turn constructional unit (“so they oh my God they hate us”) while JD does not continue his utterance beyond “but but I think.” A similar pattern emerges in Excerpt 3, though MHY’s persistence rests more on asserting the importance of his point than on directly claiming his turn. As MHY approaches the completion of his utterance, JD attempts self-selection with “I- I,” but MHY holds his ground through the meta-communicative statement “excuse me this is very important” and completes his argument, while JD, unable to move past “I-I,” is again the one who withdraws. In both cases, persistence proves effective for the debaters, with JD consistently the party that yields, though the two speakers frame their claim to the floor differently, CU through an explicit bid for turn space and MHY through an appeal to the significance of what he is saying.

The findings of this study show that overlap in the debate “Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?” was shaped by two interrelated layers, how overlap was initiated (onset) and how it was managed once it occurred (resolution). The dominance of recognitional onset, 16 occurrences (12.03%), over transitional onset, 8 occurrences (6.01%), together with the complete absence of progressional onset, indicates that overlap in this debate was rarely the product of careless or premature interruption. As shown in Excerpts 8, 2, and 1, speakers consistently entered overlapping talk only once the trajectory of the current turn had become recognizable, responding to the emerging gist of an argument rather than waiting for it to reach grammatical completion. This pattern reflects Jefferson's (1983) notion of recognitional onset as oriented to interactional adequacy, and it suggests that in adversarial debate, speakers stay closely attuned to where an opponent’s argument is heading, ready to step in the moment a potentially damaging claim becomes identifiable.

At the level of resolution, withdrawal was the most frequent mechanism, with 10 instances (7.52%), followed by persistence with 8 instances (6.02%) and acoustic upgrade with 4 instances (3.01%), at the same time, recycle and hitches did not occur at all. However, withdrawal here did not function uniformly according to Schegloff's (2000) framework. John Donvan's withdrawal, as seen in Excerpt 23, followed the completion of his

communicative purpose as moderator, redirecting the debaters back to the question, rather than reflecting a loss of competitive ground. By contrast, withdrawal performed by CU and MHY more often followed an opponent's acoustic upgrade, as in Excerpt 13, where CU withdraws only after MHY sharply raises both volume and pitch on "DON'T PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH." Persistence, meanwhile, was used only by the two debaters and worked in every instance examined (Excerpts 22 and 3), with the persisting speaker completing his turn while the co-participant withdrew instead.

DISCUSSION

These competitive patterns point to a broader breakdown of the turn-taking order that a structured debate is expected to maintain. In a moderated debate, turn allocation is ideally managed by the moderator, with each speaker waiting for their turn before taking the floor. However, the consistent use of recognitional onset combined with persistence and acoustic upgrade shows that both debaters regularly bypassed this institutional order, claiming the floor through competitive means rather than waiting for proper allocation. The fact that persistence and acoustic upgrade worked more often than withdrawal further suggests that both debaters treated control of the floor as something to fight for rather than something to share, prioritizing argumentative dominance over orderly turn exchange. As a result, overlap in this debate did not occur as mere conversational accident but served as a recurring mechanism through which the structured turn-taking system of the debate was actively disrupted.

The present findings differ markedly from overlap found in other kinds of interaction. In Abbas (2020) study of therapy sessions, overlap was mostly terminal and handled through continuers, a non-competitive pattern that fits the supportive, low-stakes nature of therapy talk. A similar supportive pattern shows up in an analysis of the Jay Shetty Podcast (J & Magria, 2024), where overlap was used to agree with and support what the other person was saying rather than challenge it, and in Zain et al. (2026) study of a family vlog, where overlap helped bring speakers closer together instead of competing for the floor. The findings of this study stand in clear contrast, since the frequent use of recognitional onset together with competitive resolution strategies like acoustic upgrade and persistence points to a debate that is fundamentally adversarial, where overlap works as a way to challenge rather than support what the other speaker is saying. This is closer to what Amadi (2020) found in a Nigerian political interview, where overlap was mostly linked to disagreement, and it supports Zayd et al. (2025), who argued that overlap in an emotionally charged sports debate works as a way to defend one's argument and show active engagement rather than simply disrupt the conversation.

What makes this study different from those before it, however, is the presence of a third party, the moderator, whose overlap behaves differently from that of the two debaters. While CU and MHY move between competitive strategies (acoustic upgrade, persistence) and withdrawal when pressured, John Donvan's overlap is resolved only through withdrawal, always tied to finishing a specific task as moderator. This suggests that overlap in a moderated geopolitical debate is not one single pattern, but is shaped by two different logics working side by side, a competitive logic between the debaters, and a task-based logic for the moderator, a distinction that previous studies on either two-person conversation (Abbas, 2020; J & Magria, 2024; Zain et al., 2026; Zayd et al., 2025) or two-party political interviews (Amadi, 2020) have not addressed.

CONCLUSION

This study examined overlapping talk in the YouTube debate "Can Israel Make Peace with Hamas?" using Jefferson's (1983) framework for overlap onset and Schegloff's



(2000) framework for resolution mechanisms, applied to both debaters and the moderator. The fact that recognitional onset was the most common type, along with the complete absence of progressional onset, shows that overlap was produced through close attention to where the opponent's argument was heading rather than careless interruption, suggesting that while speakers oriented to the turn-taking system, their competitive strategies ultimately disrupted its institutional order.

At the level of resolution, withdrawal was the most common mechanism overall, but it worked differently depending on the speaker's role. For the moderator, withdrawal came after finishing a short institutional task, while for the debaters, it usually came after failing to keep up a competitive response against an opponent's acoustic upgrade. Persistence, on the other hand, was used only by the debaters and worked in every instance examined, allowing the persisting speaker to keep control of the contested turn.

Compared to non-adversarial settings such as therapy sessions (Abbas, 2020), podcast interviews (J & Magria, 2024), and family conversation (Zain et al., 2026), as well as adversarial two-person settings such as political interviews (Amadi, 2020) and sports debate (Zayd et al., 2025), this study reveals a pattern specific to a moderated, three-party geopolitical debate. Overlap onset and resolution work together as part of a competitive strategy between the debaters, while the moderator's overlap follows a separate, task-based logic.

As a single-case study, these findings are not meant to be generalized beyond this debate. Future research could apply this framework to other geopolitical debates, other moderated formats, or look at how audiences from different cultural backgrounds perceive overlapping talk in these settings.

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