Political and ideological tensions in Israel: a critical language analysis of news reporting of the 2014 Gaza war

التصدعات الفكرية والسياسية في اسرائيل: تحليل لغوي نقدي للخطاب الاعلامي الاسرائيلي خرة 2014

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that the struggle over media representation within the Palestinian-Israeli struggle is no less important than the struggle on the ground (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Although the role of the media in this struggle has been a focal interest for researchers, the vast majority of studies are based on content analyses (see Kempf & Shinar, 2014). They mostly adopt top-down approaches with macro-level tools of analysis which lead to a dichotomous positive 'Self' and negative 'Other' representation. This study, in contrast, is a qualitative language-based analysis of three Israeli online newspapers during the 2014 Gaza war. The study analyses a limited number of news articles from newspapers that are indicative of the Israeli media landscape. The choice of these outlets is intended to present a range of possible views from the right, centre, and left. The study adds to the effort which approaches media discourse to detect fissures and dissonances rather than identifying stabilities and symmetries. To achieve its aims, the study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis as a general framework and takes account of transitivity (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), the social actor model (van Leeuwen, 2008) and referential strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) to conduct its bottom-up analysis. The results of this study reveal that marginal ideologies at both ends of the ideological spectrum in Israel compete with a hegemonic Zionist discourse. More interestingly, the study reveals some discursive differences between the hegemonic ideology on the one hand and the marginal ideologies on the other. While the former depends on common public knowledge, thus backgrounding much contextual information, the latter mainly function via the extensive contextualization of events.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Israeli Media, Ideology, Gaza War.

ملخص

لا يقل الصراع على التمثيل الاعلامي في الاعلام الفلسطيني والاسر ائيلي أهمية عن الصراع على الارض (ولف سفلد، 1997). وعلى الرغم من الاهتمام البحثي بموضوع الصراع على الاعلام، الا أن معظم الدر اسات قدمت تحليل محتوى (انظر مثلا كيمب وشينار، 2014) يتجاهل كثيرًا من التفاصيل والاختلافات الدقيقة والمهمة. غالبًا ما توظف هذه الدراسات منهجيات تحليلية تبدأ من التركيب الاجتماعي والسياسي نزولا نحو النص، والتي تقود الى نتائج متوقعة تتمثل في صورة الأنا الايجابية والاخر السلبية. وعليه، تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلا لغويا نقديا لثلاث صحف الكترونية اسرائيلية خلال الحرب على غزة عام 2014، وهي هارتس، ويديعوت احرونوت، و جير و ز اليم بوست. تقوم الدر اسة بتحليل مقالات اخبارية من هذه المنصات الاعلامية التي تمثل المشهد الاعلامي في اسرائيل. وبالتالي، تقدم الدراسة اضافة جديدة للمجهود البحثي الذي يركز على الاختلافات والتشققات في التمثيل بدل طرح السؤال التقليدي الذي يبحث عن التشابهات. ولتحقيق اهدافها، توظف هذه الدراسة التحليل النقدي للخطاب كاطار نظري عام، كما تستخدم ادوات تحليلية على مستوى الجملة للحصول على تحليل دقيق ببدأ من النص صعوداً الى المركبات السياسية والاجتماعية. تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة بأن الايديولوجيات الفرعية في المجتمع الاسرائيلي (ما بعد الصهيونية والصهيونية الجديدة) تنافس الايديولوجيا الصهيونية المهيمنة كما تظهر الدراسة بأن كل من هذه الايديولوجيات تستخدم استراتيجيات خطابية مختلفة حسب موقعها على الخريطة السياسية في اسر ائيل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الاعلام الاسرائيلي، الايديوجيا، حرب غزة.

Introduction

The role of the Israeli media in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been investigated in different fields of study. The vast majority of the research that dealt with this issue focuses on how different political and media discourses line up with the dominant political institution to produce nationally-based representation of actions and actors (Dajani, 2003;

Daraghmeh, 2003; Dor, 2004, 2015). However, with the growing tendency in critical discourse studies that focuses on irregularities and tensions in representation (see Kelsey, 2014; Macgilchrist, 2014), there is a need to focus on internal conflicts within Israeli society to unveil latent political and ideological conflicts that direct the struggle and form part of its future practices. This study, therefore, is a critical language analysis that aims at providing new insights about the way political and ideological conflicts in Israel are covertly articulated via news discourse. The choice of journalism to identify ideological tensions is based on the assumption that journalism, under the disguise of objective reporting of reality, constructs perspectivized world views, thus having a role in reproducing ideologies that regulate social actors' knowledge and attitudes towards actors' and actions (Fowler, 1991).

Framework and methods of analysis

This study adopts critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its general framework. It attempts to find the correlation between media discourse and the wider socio-political context in Israel. This is meant to bring into consciousness the (conflicting) world views that motivate the different *realities* constructed in a number of Israeli newspapers about the 2014 Gaza War.

To achieve its objectives, this study is designed in a way that brings together the discursive functions of different linguistic choices to see whether different *stories* arise in the Israeli newspapers while reporting a very sensitive socio-political event, and what ideologies motivate and are reproduced by these differences in representation. The study adds to the effort which approaches media discourse to detect fissures and dissonances, rather than identifying stabilities and symmetries, which is a crucial step in developing methodologies that investigate latent ideological tensions in news reporting.

In a highly sensitive and controversial context, such as the Gaza war(s), every linguistic choice is made to fit the news outlets' vigilant political and ideological objectives. Therefore, this study employs three clause-level discursive features to analyse the representation of *Actions*

and *Actors*. Actions are analysed using transitivity (Halliday, 1985; Halliday&Matthiessen, 2004), while actors are analysed using the social-actor model (van Leeuwen, 2008) and referential strategies (Reisigl&Wodak, 2009).

The use of transitivity is motivated by its ability to investigate the 'world view' that is constructed by grammar choices in a particular context (Fowler, 1991; Halliday, 1985; Hart, 2014; Richardson, 2007). It reflects 'goings on' as they take place in the inner or outer worlds of language users (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) by identifying three elements in each clause: *processes*, *participants* and *circumstances* (Hart, 2014, p. 22). The social-actor model and the referential strategies, on the other hand, look into how a specific role is variably constructed in a text by different linguistic realizations. They are concerned with the functions particular linguistic choices have in relation to the distribution and presentation of social roles.

Frameworks of systematization and interpretation: aspects of representation and macro-strategies of representation

Since the study is based on detailed language analysis of news, I suggest aspects of representation and macro strategies of representation as features that systematize the linguistic choices and link them to the wider socio-political contexts. Aspects of representation are mappings of all the grammatical configurations and linguistic choices that have the same discursive functions in relation to a specific group of actors or specific event. Each aspect of representation is the sum of micro-textual choices distributed in and across texts.

All similar aspects of representation are summed up to form macrostrategies of representation. The term is borrowed from Unger (2013) and refers to groupings of discursive strategies which may eventually lead to particular constructions of actors, events and social phenomena. Macrostrategies link the discursive to the context. In other words, they identify the contextual function of aspects of representation based on the discursive function itself (e.g. foregrounding vs. backgrounding) and on the analyst's awareness of the context.

Criteria for data selection

The 2014 Gaza War lasted for 51 days. Hundreds of news reports were produced by each news outlet's English website to cover the war's rapidly unfolding events. For an in-depth qualitative analysis, the study chooses to focus on a key event in the war: the ground invasion of Shejayyah neighbourhood on 20 July 2014. The study is interested in investigating how the Israeli newspapers, Haaretz, Ynet, and Jerusalem Post, differ in their representations of this major event. It does not matter whether the news articles from each news outlet are representative of its general tendency or not. The concern of this study is with how each outlet deals with this event and the war in general, in light of its complicated military, political and human realities. The ground invasion was a very controversial event and linguistic choices are believed to be deeply entrenched within the political and ideological objectives of both newspapers and news websites. The focus on a limited number of articles relating to one specific event enables me to examine how - analytically independent - microlinguistic choices package different aspects of the same social reality.

I choose to analyse 12 news articles from each news outlet taken from the first three days of the ground invasion: 20–22 July 2014. The choice of articles is based on their chronological appearance in the newspapers, so the first four articles are chosen from each day. The articles should be directly related to the events of the war. Other articles that deal with the war indirectly, such as international reactions and demonstrations in some Arab and Western countries, are excluded.

Analysis and discussion

As mentioned earlier, this study is interested in investigating the micro-linguistic choices of three Israeli newspapers, *Haaretz*, *Jerusalem Post (JP)* and *Yediot Aharonot (Ynet)*, and the discursive functions of these choices and their political and ideological relevance. Emphasis is put on the differences between these newspapers in order to identify how they compete in the political and ideological context of Israel.

For the sake of a smoother and engaging presentation of the study, I start with the salient macro-strategies in order to highlight the differences

between the newspapers. Each macro-strategy is explained in terms of its aspects of representation, while reference is made to the linguistic choices that make up the aspects of representation by providing indicative examples.

The war is an inevitable, legitimate and efficient military action against a threat from Hamas

The first salient macro-strategy features variably in *JP* and *Ynet* and represents the war as a legitimate action against an imminent danger from Hamas. It also advocates military action as leading efficiently to desirable results by protectingthe Israeli people. As the different aspects of representation below show, this macro-strategy constructs a complex, and sometimes contradictory, image for Israel; although Israel is threatened by a serious enemy, it enjoys military superiority allowing it to act efficiently to counter the threat.

Hamas is posing an imminent threat.

The central aspect of representation that legitimizes attacking the Gaza Strip is the representation of Hamas as posing an imminent threat to Israel. Different grammatical and lexical choices in *JP* and *Ynet* emphasize two of Hamas's actions associated with violence and danger: launching rockets and using tunnels. The first and most typical realization is material processes in which Hamas is a doer of actions directed at Israeli civilians. The processes are mostly quoted from Israeli military and political officials. They do not represent specific events but refer to a general and undifferentiated threat against *all* Israelis.

- (1) [Ynet] Hamas {Agent} starts rocketing {Material Process} Israel {Goal}.
- (2) [JP] "Rockets {Agent} are attacking {Material Process} it (Israel) {Goal}".

The collectivizing metonymical reference *Israel* conceals important contextual information about the Goal. It does not say when, how or whom is particularly affected by the actions. Rather, it confines the threat to collectivized Israelis by transferring "isolated situations of experience with

individuals to a whole group" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001a, p. 109). *Ynet* refers explicitly to *Hamas* as a doer of the action and uses the verbal complex *starts rocketing* that suggests a sequential order of events: Hamas starts its violent actions, then Israel reacts. *JP*, on the other hand, focalizes the danger of Hamas's actions by substituting the actors with the instrument *rockets*. The present continuous verbal group *are attacking* emphasizes the immediacy and urgency of the action, and thus legitimizes the Israeli reaction.

JP uses further grammatical constructions that associate the collective Israelis with danger. First, the newspaper includes transitive and intransitive material processes in which Israeli civilians are the Agent. The processes are mostly involuntary and describe the displacement of actors due to military action.

- (3) [JP] Residents of the council's 15 kibbutzim and 13 moshavim {Agent} are facing {Material Process} different levels of danger {Goal} based on their location {Circumstance}.
- (4) [JP] As much as 75% of the residents {Agent} have relocated {Material Process} to areas farther from the Gaza Strip and the rockets, mortars, and tunnel threat {Circumstance}.

In example (3), the Circumstance *based on their location* associates proximity to the Gaza Strip with danger; the closer civilians are to Gaza, the more danger they face. This function is also served in example (4). The place *Gaza Strip* is grammatically equivalent to *rockets*, *mortars* and *tunnel threat*, assuming the same functional role of these semantically different references. Moreover, the use of the spatializing metonymy *Gaza Strip* to refer to Palestinians confers the alleged threat of one group of social actors onto collective Gazans. Representing the Strip as a monolithic threatening entity, while referring at the same time to smaller Israeli towns and cities, obfuscates the fact that the Gaza Strip is only 1.7 per cent of Israel's size (based on Israel's borders before the 1967 War).

In contrast, *Haaretz* refers to specific actions and represents their direct effect on Israeli civilians. For instance, the process was killed

represents an action in one time and place that affects an individualized and identified Goal *her father*.

(5) [Haaretz] Her father {Goal} was killed {Material Process} in a rocket attack {Circumstance}.

Second, the three Israeli newspapers use transitive material processes in which Hamas acts on an inanimate Goal *tunnels*. Some processes in *JP* and *Ynet* passivize Israeli civilians as indirect receivers of actions.

- (6) [JP] Hamas has ordered {Initiator} its members {Actor} to use {Material Process} remaining tunnels {Goal} for immediate cross-border attacks {Circumstance} against Israeli civilians and military targets {Recipient}.
- (7) [Ynet] [A terrorist organization {Agent} has seen fit to dig {Material Process} tunnels {Goal}] [and come {material} through those tunnels {Circumstance} with handcuffs and tranquilizer drugs {Circumstance}], [prepared to try to capture {Material Process} Israeli citizens {Goal}].

Finally, *JP* and *Ynet* associate Hamas with a threat by using relational processes. These processes frame the *realities* represented by material processes and introduce them as propositions. For instance, the Attribute *obvious* in example (11) represents the threat as a state of affairs. In example (12), the process proposes the action required to counter this threat by establishing a causative relationship between Hamas's actions and Israel's war.

- (8) [JP] For the council head {Circumstance} the threat {carrier} is {Attributive Relational Process} obvious {Attribute}.
- (9) [*Ynet*] The aim {Value/ Identified} is {Identifying Relational Process} to remove the threat of terror {Token/ Identifier}.

The Israeli army is mainly acting against sources of threat.

Another salient aspect of representation in *JP* and *Ynet* that serves to legitimize the war is the representation of the Israeli army as acting mainly against sources of threat. This aspect is basically realized by transitive

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material processes that foreground the Israeli army and its agency over actions targeting Palestinian fighters.

- (10) [JP] The IDF {Agent} has struck {Material Process} 2,600 Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets {Goal} since the start of Operation Protective Edge {Circumstance}.
- (11) [Ynet] "We {Agent} hit {Material Process} the leadership of Hamas' military wing {Goal}".

Similar processes in *Ynet* foreground Israeli agency and represent the Palestinian fighters as submissive. For instance, the verbal group *caught* in example (15) represents the action as non-challenging and constructs the army as militarily superior to submissive fighters.

(12) [Ynet] "In the last day {Circumstance} we {Agent} caught {Material Process} 13 terrorists {Goal}".

JP also includes processes that represent high-tech military equipment and its role in protecting Israeli soldiers and civilians. This is mainly realized by material processes with metonymical Agents, such as the system and the Iron Dome system in the following examples, in which the instrument replaces the actors.

- (13) [JP] The system {Agent} successfully blocked {Material Process} an anti-tank missile {Goal}.
- (14) [JP] At least two rockets {Goal} were shot down {Material Process} by the Iron Dome system {Agent} over metropolitan Tel Aviv {Circumstance}.

In the following example, the action of intercepting rockets is nominalized and represented by the Phenomenon *rocket interception*.

(15) [JP] Rocket interceptions {Phenomenon} were also heard {Mental Process} above Bat Yam, Holon, and Rishon Letzion {Circumstance}.

The mental process *heard* represents the action from the (inner) view of the Israeli civilians. It puts them in close proximity to the Iron Dome and its success in preventing an imminent danger.

The war is causing huge damage to civilian society in Gaza

A macro-strategy in *Haaretz* and *Ynet* highlights the effects of the war on civil society in Gaza. The newspapers include an aspect of representation that shows the effects of Israeli military action on Palestinian civilians. However, *Haaretz* and *Ynet* put variable emphasis on the victimhood of civilians. While *Ynet* adopts a generalizing and less informative representation of the victims, *Haaretz* covers different aspects of the civilians suffering. It refers exclusively to civilian victims due to the ground invasion of Shejaiyeh, emphasizing that most of the victims belong to vulnerable social classes.

Civilians are receivers of military action

Different grammatical constructions in *Haaretz* and *Ynet* represent civilians as receivers of military action. First, the newspapers include transitive material processes in which Palestinian civilians are the Goal. Almost all of the processes in *Ynet* are devoid of emotional references. For instance, although the Goal *at least 60 Palestinians* in the following clause is generic and may inclusively refer to civilians, the action of killing is not problematized.

(16) [Ynet] Israeli attacks {Agent} on Gaza {Recipient} have killed {Material Process} at least 60 Palestinians {Goal}.

The doer of the action is substituted by the nominalization *Israeli attacks*, which contains another process, *attacking*, about which little information is provided. Although the Israeli agency over both actions, *attacking* and *killing*, can still be recovered from the co-text and the context, the nominalization leads to a conceptual shift of reference. Knowing that no other processes emphasize the agency of Israeli forces, the process represents the action as having no particular purpose (see Section 3.2.1.1). The civilians are thus 'collateral damage' of an unintentional action. This representation hinders any involvement on the

part of the reader because, as Chouliaraki (2006) explains, recipients of news feel powerless about misfortune to other actors when the doer of the action and their purposes are not clearly stated.

Similarly, *Haaretz* uses processes that background the agency and the intentionality of the forces regarding the actions. As the following examples show, some processes appear in passive constructions with Agent deletion, while others have nominalizations as Agent.

- (17) [*Haaretz*] 436 Gazans {Goal} had been killed {Material Process} since the beginning of the operation {Circumstance}.
- (18) [*Haaretz*] The strike {Agent} also wounded {Material Process} 25 people {Goal}.

The Goals of some of these processes provide further information about the victims. For instance, the Goal in example (49) is modified by the proper name *Ahmed Abu Sanima*, which highlights the experience of those actors and brings them closer to the reader.

(19) [*Haaretz*] The third and fourth (warning missiles) {Agent} hit {Material Process} the house of Ahmed Abu Sanima {Goal}.

Similarly, the Goal in the following example is referred to by the classification categorization *two men, their wives, and six children aged 9 months to 15 years*. It associates civilians with social classes that are clearly illegitimate targets, which highlights their innocence and vulnerability.

(20) [*Haaretz*] Two men, their wives, and six children aged 9 months to 15 years {Goal} were killed {Material Process}.

More surprisingly, *Haaretz* includes material processes in which Israeli forces are foregrounded as a doer.

(21) [*Haaretz*] The Israel Air force {Agent} killed {Material Process} 35 members of two Gaza families {Goal} in separate strikes {Circumstance}.

Foregrounding the doer does not necessarily mean that the action is intentional and aiming at a specific goal, but it does not exclude such an interpretation either. Furthermore, the nomination *families* emphasizes the innocence and vulnerability of the victims, which may raise questions about how the army is conducting military action.

Highlighting the effect of actions on civilians also appears in material processes which have inanimate Goals. In *Ynet*, the processes completely background the civilians affected. For instance, the process *damaged* below represents an action affecting the Goal, *several houses*, with no reference to the civilians who live in these houses. This, in Chouliaraki's (2006) terms, is a scene of suffering without a sufferer that excludes the resultative attributes of the victims.

(22) [*Ynet*] Tank shells {Agent} damaged {Material Process} several houses {Goal} along the eastern border of the territory {Circumstance}.

The metonymical Agent *tank shells* substitutes the actual doer and backgrounds its intentionality in causing damage to civilians' houses. The action is thus not problematized. Similarly, the only process in *Haaretz* of this kind backgrounds Israeli intentionality by using the metonymy *fighter jets* in an Agent role.

(23) [Haaretz] [Fighter jets {Agent} blew up {Material Process} the home {Goal} on Sunday night {Circumstance}] [while the family {Agent} was eating {Material Process} its Iftar meal {Goal}].

However, the subsequent clause while the family was eating its Iftar meal, which represents the civilians as doers of a domestic action, contextualizes the first process. It describes a vulnerable domestic action (eating a meal after a day of fasting) during which the family was attacked and killed. This instantiates what Chouliaraki (2006, p. 99) calls a conceptual complexity, 'semantic relationships that explain, elaborate on and evaluate the events'. Although the violent military action blew up affects an inanimate Goal, the conceptual complexity served by a subordinate clause, as well as the reference the family, emphasizes the civilians' innocence, vulnerability and detachment from any military

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action. Only one process in *Ynet* refers to civilians. However, this reference is embedded in a coordinate clause and represented as unproblematic.

(24) [Ynet] [The IDF {Agent} bombed {Material Process} the house {Goal}] [in which he {Agent} was staying {Material Process}], [and his wife and son {Goal} were also killed {Material Process}].

While the intentional process *bombed* is active, the process that describes the killing of the wife and son is passive. The processes could have a different function if introduced, for instance, as *the IDF bombed the house in which he was staying and killed his wife and his son*, in which the processes are part of one clause instead of being realized in two clauses with different functions. Moreover, the relational identifying refe9rence *his wife and son* identifies the victims in terms of their relationship to the legitimate target (a Hamas leader). This represents the victims as unavoidable collateral damage.

In addition, *Haaretz* includes mental processes that represent the inner world of the victims and expose their states of mind. For instance, the mental process below represents the confusion of the families in responding to the alleged warning missiles and their failure to act properly. It highlights further aspects of their suffering and associates them with weakness, innocence and victimhood.

(25) [Haaretz] None of the three families {Senser} knew {Mental Process} which of the families the missiles were meant to warn {Phenomenon}.

In sum, *Haaretz* and *Ynet* are distinguished from *JP* by referring to the effects of the military action on Palestinian civilians. However, *Ynet* does not include representations that influence the legitimacy of the war and a positive image of military action in terms of solving the 'security' threats. This is realized by keeping a considerable distance from the victims and backgrounding the Israeli intentionality over the actions. In contrast, *Haaretz* includes processes that highlight important contextual information about the victims. It also includes some processes that subtly foreground the intention of the Israeli forces in targeting civilians, which may give the audience solid reasons to stand against the war.

The war is a normal social practice

Another pivotal macro strategy in *JP* and *Ynet* normalizes the war and constructs it as a necessary aspect of the sociocultural fabric of Israel. The different aspects of representation background the undesirable consequences of the war for Israeli society, especially soldiers, and conceptually shift negative actions into positive and socially-appreciated practices. As the analysis below shows, some aspects of representation reveal the ideological objectives of the newspapers by identifying the narratives they draw on and reproduce.

The military roles of Israeli soldiers are socially appreciated: decontextualized representation

This aspect of representation assigns killed soldiers military roles that the Israeli public appreciate, which backgrounds the context of their death. It is first realized by relational processes that represent military roles positively without referring to actual undesirable events. The following examples are indicative of the majority of these processes, which are quoted from the friends and relatives of killed soldiers and include evaluative nominal Attributes.

- (26) [JP] "Rahav {Carrier} was {Attributive Relational Process} a lone soldier {Attribute}".
- (27) [*Ynet*] "Yuval {Carrier} became {Attributive Relational Process} a commando like the rest of the family {Attribute}".

In an editorial published on 23 July 2014, JP defines lone soldiers as 'men and women who leave "the good life" in the Diaspora to defend the Jewish state'. This definition has its roots in the Zionist celebration of the 'new Jew' who returns from the diaspora to defend Israel (Almog, 2000; Israeli & Roseman-Stollman, 2015). Similarly, Ynet's Attribute a commando like the rest of the family draws on public appreciation for militarism. Since the majority of Israeli people serve in the army, military service is considered an important shared experience for social actors to validate their national commitment and transcendence from adulthood into maturity. It is military service that identifies their collective identity and

classifies who is a 'good' citizen (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Israeli &Roseman-Stollman, 2015; Klein, 1999).

More ideologically, *JP* includes processes that conceptually shift negative actions into positive practices. In the following process, the undesirable action of *killing*, in which soldiers are the Goal, is substituted by the desirable action of *sacrificing* in which the soldiers are the Agent. The voluntary process *made* and the positive Scope *the ultimate sacrifice* background the undesirable consequences of the action and construct, instead, a socially appreciated act of heroism.

(28) [JP] "They {Agent} made {Material Process} the ultimate sacrifice {Scope}".

Soldiers are successful civilians.

A more ideological aspect of representation in *JP* and *Ynet* represents killed soldiers as successful civilians. The representation backgrounds all undesirable events associated with soldiers' death and constructs an image of successful, lively and loved young people. Since representations are part of war reporting, they are not completely dissociated from the military role of soldiers. Rather, they establish a contingent relationship between militarism and social success. This is first realized by material processes in which soldiers are doers of domestic civilian actions. These processes are mostly reported from ordinary people and describe actions of physical or academic success. For instance, the processes below represent a killed soldier as an *athlete* and a *student*, respectively.

- (29) [JP] He {Agent} won {Material Process} a national championship {Goal} as the captain of KiryatTivon {Circumstance}.
- (30) [Ynet] He {Agent} graduated {Material Process} from Herzog high school {Circumstance}.

Second, *JP* and *Ynet* use attributive and identifying relational processes that characterize and identify killed soldiers with positive attributes and social roles. The majority of attributive relational processes are intensive; they characterize soldiers by using adjectival and nominal

Attributes. The adjectival Attributes are emotional and lively. They are dissociated from the military context in which the soldiers were killed.

- (31) [JP] "He {Carrier} is {Attributive Relational Process} happy {Attribute}".
- (32) [Ynet] "You {Carrier} are {Attributive Relational Process} angry with me {Attribute}".

The recurrent pronoun *you* in *Ynet* is indicative of an informal conversational style (Tannen, 2005). It produces an emotional representation with less informative functions. On the other hand, the nominal Attributes represent soldiers as kind and soft *boys* and *young* actors. Both references are examples of classification categorization. They associate the soldiers with social classes based on their (young) age.

- (33) [JP] "Sean {Carrier} was {Attributive Relational Process} a gentle kind boy {Attribute}".
- (87) [Ynet] "Adar {Carrier} is {Attributive Relational Process} a young man with a huge soul {Attribute}".

Although this might suggest vulnerability on the part of soldiers, another set of processes challenge this vulnerability and represent soldiers as role models and heroes. This draws on the image of the mythical new Jewish Israeli who is soft on the inside but thorny on the outside (Klein, 1999).

- (34) [JP] "Sean {Carrier} was {Attributive Relational Process} a sweet and kind example to everyone else {Attribute}".
- (35) [Ynet] "You {Carrier} are {Attributive Relational Process} a leader from birth, responsible and a true patriot {Attribute}".

Similarly, the majority of identifying relational processes in *JP* and *Ynet* are intensive and circumstantial identifying processes. Intensive relational processes have a decoding mode of identification in which soldiers are identified by general semantic categories. The processes are quoted from ordinary people and represent soldiers as *boys*, *sons* and *heroes*.

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(36) [JP] Carmeli {Token/ Identified} was {Identifying Relational Process} the son of Israeli parents, Alon and Dalya {Value/ Identifier}.

(37) [Ynet] "You {Token/ Identifier} are {Identifying Relational Process} our hero {Value/ Identifier}".

Value participants in these processes background the military context and exclude the undesirable image of soldiers as receivers of military action. More importantly, relational processes reflect representational ambivalences due to incorporating tough and soft elements in representing killed soldiers. They represent soldiers as *boys* and *sons*, who are presumably vulnerable social actors, and as *heroes*.

Researchers have suggested different explanations for these ambivalences. For instance, Klein (1999) believes that there is a tension between the growing role of parenting in the military in Israel on the one hand, and Zionist culture that creates pressure for heroism on the other. He argues that Israeli journalism discourse draws on ideological narratives but at the same time adapts to new social values. Similarly, Israeli and Rosman-Stollman (2015) attribute the combination of soft and tough elements to universal changes in the perception of masculinity and militarism. The authors argue that tough elements prevail in high-level intensity conflicts such as the 2014 Gaza War, whereas soft elements prevail in low-level intensity conflicts such as the 1982 Lebanon War. However, Israeli and Stollman (2015) do not link these external factors to the dynamics of ideology or the political orientations of the different media outlets they investigate. They do not examine any potential differences between newspapers, nor do they subdivide soldiers into fine categorizations (e.g. killed vs working soldier) to see if each sub-group is represented differently.

This study, in contrast, shows that combining soft and tough elements in a *hero* image appears only in *JP* and *Ynet* in their representations of killed soldiers. Their representations invoke the image of the mythical new Israeli Jew who is best incarnated by the Israeli soldier (Israeli &Rosman-Stollman, 2015), which normalizes the soldiers' suffering in order maintain public consent for further wars (Almog, 2000; Gavriely-Nuri,

2010). Civilian characteristics, therefore, are not completely dissociated from militarism. Rather, they reflect how the 'public experience is enveloped in ceremonial endeavour dominated by soldiering and military professionals' (Kimmerling, 2008, p. 138). Characteristics such as *leader* and *patriot* indicate how the orientations of the public are defined in terms of readiness for war. This is a cultural aspect of militarism which reflects its centrality in Israeli society (Klein, 1999). Ultimately, the representations construct wars as necessary and unavoidable societal processes (Kimmerling, 2008, p. 138).

In addition to the above representations, *JP* is also distinguished by highlighting the image of 'returning Jews' and their positive role in Israel. This appears in material processes which have killed soldiers as Agents.

(38) [JP] He {Agent} returned {Material} to Israel {Circumstance}.

The process of 'returning' is not merely a physical act of changing one's location. Instead, the 'returning Jew' plays an essential role in the nationalistic-religious discourse of Zionism and, more recently, neo-Zionism (Pappe, 2003; Ram, 2003). Since the soldier's place of birth is the US, his *return* to Israel means a Jewish return to Jewish land. In a mental process, the state of mind of the soldier is exposed, revealing his commitment to return despite the distractions in the diaspora.

(39) [JP] "Beaches and parties {Phenomenon} could not distract {Mental Process} a native-son {Senser} from returning home {Range}".

Such representations frame militancy within romantic narratives and obfuscate the relevant socio-political and economic realities. For instance, while *JP* introduces a national and religious explanation of why some Jews choose to fight in the Israeli army, it massively backgrounds the fact that Israel offers those soldiers special financial and social privileges which might be the reason for their service.

Other processes in *JP* represent the role of those soldiers after they come to Israel. For instance, the processes *helped turn* in example (94) below describes a positive social role for a soldier that positively influences his local community. The reference *the Carmelis* collectivizes

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the soldier with other family members, meaning that his role is not only military but also social and shared by other social actors. The process highlights the civilian role of killed soldiers and subtly contextualizes his death, constructing a contingent relationship between success in civilian life and service in the Israeli army.

(40) [JP] The Carmelis {Agent}helped turn {Material Process} the small town {Goal} into a tight-knit community {Resultative Attribute}.

Unlike *JP* and *Ynet*, very rarely does *Haaretz* quote ordinary people's characterizations of soldiers. As the following macro-strategy shows, almost all processes are confined to the military context and do not have any positive or evaluative characterization.

The war has negative consequences for Israel

In a stark contrast to *JP* and *Ynet*, *Haaretz* does not have macrostrategies that normalize the war. On the contrary, the newspaper includes a counter macro-strategy that highlights the negative consequences of military action for Israeli soldiers. To a lesser degree, some representations in this strategy are also found in *Ynet*. This adds to previous findings that *Ynet* has the most representational ambivalences that may reflect ideological uncertainties.

Palestinian fighters act on Israeli soldiers

This aspect of representation is context-bound and represents soldiers as variably affected by the military action. Undesirable consequences are foregrounded, either by representing a challenging military context or by representing resultative attributes on the part of soldiers. *Ynet* and *Haaretz* represent the hardships encountered by Israeli soldiers in the first days of the ground invasion by using relational processes. For instance, the Attribute *involved in massive fighting* in the following example provides contextual information about the Carrier *the Ergoz unit*. The challenging context is inferred from the adjective *massive*.

(41) [*Ynet*] TheErgoz unit {Carrier} was involved {Attributive Relational Process} in massive fighting {Attribute}.

Similarly, the following clause from *Haaretz* represents a military action by a relational process which backgrounds the doer and the resultative attribute of the soldier. Yet, the subsequent material process *hit* and the Circumstances *at the battle in Gaza's Shujaiyeh neighbourhood* indicate, though indirectly, that the soldier is affected by the military action.

(42) [Haaretz] [The 21-year-old Golani sergeant {Carrier} was {Attributive Relational Process} in a vehicle {Attribute}][hit {Material Process} at the battle {Circumstance} in Gaza's Shujaiyeh neighbourhood {Circumstance}].

Other relational processes foreground the undesirable consequences of the war by representing the collective losses of the Israeli army. This is different from the image constructed in *JP* which represents Hamas as the main party that suffers damage to its military capability.

- (43) [*Ynet*] The army {Carrier} suffered {Attributive Relational Process} more losses {Attribute}.
- (44) [Haaretz] The infantry brigade {Token/ Identified} suffered {Identifying Relational Process} the heaviest casualties {Value/ Identifier}.

Haaretz and *Ynet* are also distinguished from *JP* by reporting a controversial and sensitive event: capturing an Israeli soldier. Interestingly, both newspapers represent the event by using material processes quoted or reported from a Palestinian military source.

- (45) [Ynet] [Hamas' military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades {Sayer} claimed {Verbal Process} Sunday evening {Circumstance}] [that the organization {Agent} had successfully kidnapped {Material Process} an Israeli soldier {Goal} in the Gaza Strip {Circumstance}].
- (46) [Haaretz] [Hamas' military wing {Sayer} said {Verbal Process} Sunday {Circumstance}] [that it {Agent} had abducted {Material Process} a soldier {Goal} during the battle in Shujaiyeh {Circumstance}].

They use neutral references as they are used by Palestinians, *Hamas' military wing (the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades*), and foreground Palestinian fighters as the doer of the action to the Israeli soldier. This is one of the most disturbing images for the Israeli public that the army and politicians had tried to avoid. For instance, a process reported in *Haaretz* shows how an Israeli official backgrounds much of the undesirable event. He employs a relational process that backgrounds the doer of the action and hedges its undesirable consequence by using the Attribute *missing* instead of *captured*.

(47) [Haaretz] [The army {Sayer} also declared {Verbal Process}] [that the seventh soldier, identified as Sgt. OronShaul, {Carrier} is {Attributive Relational Process} "missing" {Attribute}].

Haaretz and Ynet also include frequent processes that represent specific events in which soldiers are killed. The majority of these processes are passive constructions. For instance, the following processes foreground the Goal and highlight the results of the action, while the doer is activated in subsequent processes.

- (48) [*Haaretz*] [Four {Goal} were killed {Material Process} by terrorists {Agent}] [who {Agent} infiltrated {Material Process} Israel {Goal} from Gaza {Circumstance} through a tunnel {Circumstance}].
- (49) [Ynet] [He {Goal} was killed {Material Process} in the incident {Circumstance} Monday morning {Circumstance}] [in which {Circumstance} terrorists {Agent} infiltrated {Material Process} Israel {Goal}].

This is a roundabout representation of actions. A more direct representation, for instance, would be *terrorists infiltrated through a tunnel and killed the soldier(s)*. Nonetheless, the link between killing soldiers and infiltrating through tunnels can still be recovered. Although the processes do not negate the possibility that the tunnels are used for other purposes, it is important to notice how they represent what actually happened. In contrast, as the first macro-strategy above shows, *JP* includes external realities that represent tunnels as merely targeting civilians.

Conclusion

The analysis revealed that the Israeli official discourse operated variably across the three Israeli newspapers. This was realized either by an overt adoption of the hegemonic narratives to explain events, or by abstaining from articulating counter macro narratives that could provide a completely different understanding of events. However, the detailed analysis revealed that *Ynet* was the only newspaper that adopted a full-scale Israeli official discourse. *JP*, on the other hand, adopted a more fanatic discourse, while *Haaretz* adopted a humanizing discourse with little emphasis on the political and ideological complexities of the conflict.

First, news reporting in *Ynet* seemed to fit perfectly with the hegemonic ideology in representing the war and its socio-political context. The newspaper was committed to a national role for Israeli media in times of conflict and avoided any kind of criticism of Netanyahu or his government. Internally, *Ynet* included a set of representational fissures due to incorporating main stream Israeli and universal values in representing the effect of the war on Israeli soldiers. Finally, the analysis shows that *Ynet's* news reporting reflected and reproduced a mainstream discourse in emphasizing a secular Zionist identity. The newspaper did not focus on the religious aspects of Jewish identity as a distinctive characteristic of a collective 'Self'. Rather, it adopted the prevailing national construction of Israeli identity that incorporates religious elements, but within an overall primordialist discourse. As a newspaper that has a wider range of readership, *Ynet* adopted a general perspective which is, more or less, inclusive of the different Jewish groups in Israel.

Second, JP adopts an extremist discourse in the representation of these pivotal aspects of the struggle. The newspaper's reporting is characterized by political unrealism and fanaticism which excluded even the basic human rights of Palestinians. It revived some narratives that normalized the war and represented it as an essential social practice. JP was also distinguished by emphasizing religious elements in the construction of Israeli/ Jewish identity. The religious characteristic was not merely one value of Israeli identity; it was also an important driving force of everyday practices that build up a desired social fabric. This was also enhanced at a

global level by establishing a close relationship between Judaism and Zionist nationalism; Jewish people around the world validate their true Jewishness by 'returning' to the land of Israel. It is important to notice here that these representations were quite detached from the context of the war. They primarily relied on out-of-context narratives that assumed shared knowledge amongst the readers.

Haaretz, in contrast, seemed to stand at the other end of the ideological spectrum. Its reporting expresses the uncertainties and fissures of a marginal discourse that has an ambivalent relationship with the main stream ideology. It is consistent with the Israeli official discourse which does not articulate any political rights of Palestinians. Nonetheless, the newspaper gave a much more moderate representation of the war that articulated some basic human rights of the Palestinian people. It is important to reiterate that these representations did not denounce Israeli actions. In other words, Haaretz did not explicitly problematize Israeli responsibility for these actions. Rather it explicated in some detail contextual information about Palestinian civilians and the devastating circumstances under which they lived. This built into a humanizing discourse that associated Palestinian civilians with victimhood, without emphasizing the agency of the Israeli army. Another prevailing discursive feature in *Haaretz* highlighted the negative consequences of the war for Israel, especially by referring to killed and wounded Israeli soldiers. Haaretz deviated from sociocultural narratives that represent soldiers as heroes. Instead, it maintained a context-bound representation that foregrounded their suffering.

This study, as such, provides further evidence on the correlation between news reporting and the ideological and political dynamics in Israel. As much as (critical) discourse analysts are concerned, the insights about the ideological and political tensions that appear in news reporting give credit to the tendency to study socio-political phenomena from a language point of view.

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