Political and Ideological Tensions in Palestine: A critical language analysis of news reporting of the 2014 Gaza war

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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 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 Palestinian news websites, which publish in English, during the 2014 Gaza war. These news websites are indicative of the media landscape in Palestine, and the choice of these outlets is intended to present a range of possible views. The study adds to the effort that approaches media discourse to detect fissures and dissonances, rather than identifying stabilities and symmetries. It aims at revealing some discursive aspects of the way marginal ideologies compete with the dominant discourse in Palestine. This is intended to shed light on the latent change in the Palestinian political culture and how it is discursively articulated. Within the framework of critical discourse analysis, the study 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 study finds that Palestinian news websites subtly exploit representations of actions and actors in their struggle for power, representativeness and legitimacy. More importantly, the results of this study reveal that a marginal ideology in Palestine is growing and competing with hegemonic national narratives. While the hegemonically dominant ideology depends on common public knowledge and backgrounds much contextual information, the marginal ideology mainly functions via the extensive contextualization of events, which takes a bottom-up discursive direction in relation to the prevailing socio-political culture.Keywords: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory; conflict; Shakespeare; Chinese Daoism; education

Introduction

Massive amounts of research have been conducted to study the different aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The vast majority of this research focuses on the competing narratives between both societies, leading constantly to demonstrating practices of positive Self and negative Other representation. This becomes particularly true during violent confrontations, where 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, it seems that the methodological synergies of these studies reproduce the same findings about this conflict, as most of these studies adopt content analysis (see Kempf& Shinar, 2014) with top-down analytic features. They start from basic narratives entrenched in the socio-political structures in both societies, and then move down to see how they are articulated via different practices, such as media discourse. 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 the Palestinian and Israeli societies to unveil latent political and ideological conflicts that direct the struggle and form part of its future practices. This study, therefore, aims at providing new insights about the way political and ideological conflicts in Palestine 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).

Critical Discourse Analysis, Journalism, and Ideology

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a methodological approach that investigates the correlation between discourse and social structures (Wodak, 1996). One of its major interests is to identify ideologies and political interests as they are overtly or covertly articulated in discourse (van Dijk, 1995a). Therefore, media discourse has become a focal interest of CDA in order to uncover how media language plays an important role in the formation of people's perceptions of social realities (Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough &Wodak, 1997; Hart, 2014). Within the theoretical and methodological framework of CDS, this study introduces the ideological role of journalism discourse and then suggests how a textual analysis might reveal some discursive aspects of the way ideologies function in a given society.

One prominent model for the analysis of ideology was developed by van Dijk (1995a). His methodology proved to be useful in analysing specific kinds of texts in specific contexts, such as opinions in newspapers articles that discuss topics related to already discursively constructed groups, e.g. white/ black, Westerners/ (Middle) Easterners etc. But the methodology does not indicate how the implicit ideological tensions within the same group can be spelled out via discourse structures. More importantly, van Dijk assumes that ideologies have a top-down direction where mental representations as attitudes and knowledge 'feature the overall evaluative concepts that also influence lexical choice' (ibid., p. 143). He seems to believe that this mechanism of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation applies to dominant as well as marginal ideologies. One problem with this suggestion is that not all tensions in a society are explicit and classified on a dichotomous scale of representation. For instance, all Palestinians during violent military confrontations identify with the collective in-group. It is unlikely then to find explicit discourse structures that distinguish between different groups of the same collective body.

As marginal ideologies do not have solid and widespread bases in social structures, their challenge to the hegemonic ideology may take a bottom-up direction. Journalism discourse that serves marginal ideologies may change the *attitudes* of people by constructing events differently, especially events which are not explained satisfactorily by the hegemonic ideology. Eventually, constructing different attitudes/ evaluations of a certain social reality may lead to changing people's *knowledge* about it. That is why detecting competing ideologies needs a rigorous and systematic analysis that reveals how alternative discourses influence people's evaluations without challenging their frames of interpretation.

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 Palestinian news websites 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 that approaches media discourse to detect discrepancies and dissonances, rather than identifying stabilities and symmetries, which is a crucial step in developing methodologies that investigate latent ideological tensions in news reporting.

Methods of Analysis

This study focuses on how values and ideologies that underlie news language differ with different forms of expression. In a highly sensitive and controversial context, such as the Gaza war, every linguistic choice is made to fit the news outlets' vigilant political and ideological objectives. Therefore, this study employs three clause-level discursive features: transitivity, social-actor model and referential strategies, which are used to analyse a relatively small number of texts.

Analytical Methods at the Clause Level

The analytical body of this study has two complementary sections: the representation of *Actions* and the representation of *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).

Transitivity

For the analysis of actions and events, the study adheres to Halliday's (1985) transitivity model which is a subsystem of systemic functional grammar (SFG), a

conceptualization of the role of grammar in creating meaning.

Transitivity has been widely used in CDA due to its analytical potential for uncovering the relationship between grammar and ideology (Fowler, 1991; Halliday, 1985; Hart, 2014; Richardson, 2007). It 'provides systems of resources for referring to entities in the world and, crucially, the way that they interact with or relate to one another' (Hart, 2014, p. 22).

Simpson (1993, p. 88) argues that transitivity encodes people's perceptions of reality in terms of a set of processes. These choices necessarily involve a structuring of the contextual elements in a way that conveys the writer's point of view. Unchosen grammatical potentials would then have different constructions of the same *reality*.

Transitivity is the 'foundation of representation', the way the clause is used to analyse events and situations as being of a certain type (Fowler, 1991, p. 71). It reflects 'goings on' as they take place in the inner or outer worlds of language users (Halliday &Matthiessen,2004). It can 'enable us to see how, by making certain grammatical choices rather than others, the producer of a text is able to 'foreground' certain meanings in discourse while others are suppressed' (Chen, 2001, p. 190). It can unveil a world view encoded by linguistic choices and provide a method of analysing ideologies that construct these world views (ibid.).

Transitivity includes three main elements: *processes*, *participants* and *circumstances* (Hart, 2014, p. 22). Halliday distinguishes between six types of processes based on two main characteristics: whether the process takes place in the inner or outer world of the speaker/ writer, viz. whether it happens in or outside their mind, and whether it represents a dynamic action (actual doing) or a state of being (static relation). These processes are:

- material processes;
- relational processes;
- verbal processes;
- mental processes;
- behavioural processes;
- existential processes.

The processes that appear in my data are the material, the relational, the verbal, and the mental processes. Below I give brief explanations of these processes. As for the behavioural and existential processes, they are almost missing from the analysed data. More about their linguistic components and semantic functions can be found in Halliday &Matthiessen (2004).

Material Processes:

Material processes are to a greater or lesser degree the ones that demonstrate physical actions. They represent an entity doing an action (on/to another entity). Material processes, therefore, are the ones primarily investigated to see how changes are brought about in the (real) world which involve issues of agency and responsibility

Relational Processes:

Relational processes establish a more or less static relationship between two concepts, with the process signalling this relationship. A typical realization includes two nominal phrases in which one characterizes or identifies the other by the process 'be' (including is, was, are and were).

Verbal Processes:

Verbal processes, or verbs of saying, are intermediate material and mental processes: 'saying something is a material action that reflects mental operations' (Thompson, 2004, p. 100). Every verbal process includes a Sayer participant, the one who or which sends the message. It can also include a Receiver, the participant to whom or which the saying process is directed, a Target, which is the entity at which the message of the verbal process is directed, and the Verbiage which is the message itself.

Mental Processes:

Mental processes represent 'goings on' as they happen in the internal world of the mind and reflect some aspects of the mental states of actors. They are classified into four sub-types: processes of *emotion* (feeling), processes of *cognition* (deciding, knowing, understanding etc.), processes of *desideration* (wanting) and processes of *perception* (seeing, hearing etc.). These processes involve two main participants: the *Senser* in whose mental world the process occurs, and the *Phenomenon* which is the entity that triggers the happening of the mental process.

Social-Actor Modeland Referential Strategies

Van Leeuwen's (2008) social-actor model is a comprehensive inventory developed to analyse the representation of social actors by a network of socio-semantic categorizations. This inventory starts from the social and investigates how a specific role is variably constructed in a text by different linguistic realizations. It is thus concerned with the functions particular linguistic

choices have in relation to the distribution and presentation of social roles.

Van Leeuwen proposes a detailed network of socio-semantic roles which account for the most occurring social roles and their textual realizations. The network is comprehensive and detailed; different studies choose relevant categorizations and exclude others. Van Leeuwen developed his categories based on other specific texts. I have chosen the categories that occur in my data. These include *Exclusion/ Inclusion*, *Activation/ Passivation*, *Functionalization/ Identification*, *Objectivation*, *Nomination*, *Indetermination*, *Individualization* and *Collectivisation*. It is worth mentioning here that these categories are in a hierarchy, so some of the distinctions only apply to one specific category of actor representation.

Referential strategies, on the other hand, (Reisigl&Wodak, 2009) are linguistic and rhetorical tools with which individuals and groups are identified (Richardson, 2007). The analysis of referential strategies is assumed to reveal *what is in a name*. The main distinctive characteristic of analysing referential strategies is a detailed account of all possible denotations and connotations a noun phrase that refers to social actors may have.

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 macro-strategies 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. Macro-strategies 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

This study chooses to analyze news reports from the Palestinian Information Centre (*PIC*), which is affiliated with Hamas, and Palestine News and Information Agency (*WAFA*), which is affiliated with Fatah. The study also analyzes news reports from *Maan*, an independent news agency, in order to compare its discourse with the factional discourse. This is intended to provide a systematic comparison that reveals consistencies in representing actions and actors.

I analysed 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 and on news websites, so the first four articles are chosen from each day.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis in this study is organized into three main salient macro-strategies which are realized by different aspects of representation, while linguistic choices are demonstrated by using indicative examples. As we will see below, the analysis could reveal subtle differences between the three Palestinian news websites in representing pivotal aspects of the struggle. These differences are mapped together to show how they reflect deep political tensions in Palestine. They also refer to some important changes in the Palestinian political culture, especially in relation to the notion of resistance and the role of civilians in the violent conflict with Israel.

Palestinian Civilians are the Main Victims of the War: *WAFA*, *Maan*, and *PIC*

The most salient macro-strategy on the three Palestinian news websites represents Palestinian civilians as the main, if not the only, victims of the war. This may not be surprising in light of the large numbers of Palestinian civilian fatalities. It is also not surprising in light of the Palestinian media tendency to construct a victim 'Self' and perpetrator 'Other' image in violent confrontations (Daraghmeh, 2003). However, this macro strategy involves varying micro choices that build into differing aspects of representation, in which each news website, especially the factional *PIC* and *WAFA*, shows subtle and ideologically-motivated exploitation of the notion of victimhood.

The three media platforms share an essential aspect of representation in which the Palestinian civilians are represented as the main/ only receivers of the Israeli military action. The major difference, however, lies in the varying

emphasis the news websites put on the doer and the receiver of the actions.

First, *Maan* and *WAFA* massively focus on the victimhood of Palestinian civilians by using passive processes that leave the doer unmentioned, as the following example from *WAFA* shows.

(1) [*WAFA*] [At least 11 people {Goal} were killed {Material Process}] [including {Identifying Relational Process} 7 children {Token/ Identifier}] [and more than 20 others {Goal} were injured {Material Process} mostly in critical situation {Circumstance}].

Palestinian victimhood is further emphasized in *WAFA* by using pre-modifiers that foreground the victims' powerless status, such as *innocent* in the following example.

(2) [*WAFA*] More than 50 innocent civilians {Goal} were killed {Material Process} today on Sunday {Circumstance} in Shuja'iyya neighbourhood to the east of Gaza city {Circumstance}.

WAFA and *Maan* also emphasize the suffering of Palestinian civilians by representing their own actions. This is basically realized by material processes in which civilians are Agents of involuntary actions. For instance, the process *fled* in both clauses below is not a happy choice by civilians to move from one place to another, but an involuntary action due to the military action inflicted on them.

(3) [*Maan*] Residents who {Agent} fled {Material Process} their homes in Shujaiyya {Circumstance} "under fire" {Circumstance} to the hospital for shelter {Circumstance}.

The focus on the Palestinians' victimhood in *Maan* and *WAFA* is also realized by extensive spatial contextualization of the processes. As the examples below show, many of the constructions include more precise references to places where actions were carried out. Such contextualization informs the reader about the circumstances of actions and adds more information about the victims, which mostly indicates their innocence.

(4) [*Maan*] His brothers Muhammad, 30, and Hamzah, 21 {Goal}, were killed {Material Process} in al-Juneina neighbourhood of Rafah {Circumstance}.

(5) [*Maan*] Bilal Abu Daqqa and Abdul-Rahman al-Qarra {Goal} were killed {Material Process} in an airstrike {Circumstance} on the al-Mughrabi family home east of Khan Younis {Circumstance}.

Another closely related aspect of representation in *Maan* and *WAFA* represents hospitals and medical staff in Gaza as being unable to deal with the mounting numbers of the Palestinian casualties.

(6) [*WAFA*] Cancer, thalassemia and kidney patients in Gaza hospitals {Carrier} are also facing {Attributive Relational Process} severe difficulties {Attribute} due to mass shortage of medical supplies and drugs {Circumstance}.

With the absence of a wider contextualization of the event, in which Israel is directly responsible for the blockade that prevents medicine from getting into Gaza, the war seems to be the only reason for civilians' suffering. This is particularly distinctive of *WAFA's* reporting, which excludes any reference to Palestinian military 'achievements'. Relying merely on extensive representation of civilians' suffering constructs provocative images and a state of urgent human crisis. The war, therefore, is constructed as being between a very powerful and advanced Israeli army and helpless and passive Palestinian civilians. This representation does not address major constructs in the Palestinian political culture, such as resistance, which are part of the Palestinians' *knowledge*. They do, however, target people's attitude towards immediate contextual realities that impose a challenge for the hegemonic macro narratives. As the following example shows, *WAFA* represents stopping the suffering of civilians as the ultimate goal of political and diplomatic endeavours, downplaying the political significance of this suffering as part of the national struggle.

(7) [*WAFA*] Presidential spokesperson, Nabil Abu Rdainah {Initiator} demanded {Process:-} the Israeli government {Actor} to stop {Material Process} its aggression {Goal} on the Gaza Strip {Circumstance} immediately {Circumstance}.

WAFA adopts what Chouliaraki (2006) calls a mode of representation that evokes empathy with the sufferers by focusing on their state and explicating their suffering. This representation provokes an emotional affiliation of the audience to the victims but not indignation towards the persecutor (Boltanski, 1999), which overemphasizes feeling 'at the expense of rationality' (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 179). Central political issues, such as the siege imposed on the Strip, thus remain irrelevant given the urgent need to stop the human crisis resulting from the war.

The representation in *WAFA* is sharply contrasted by a systematic reference in *PIC* to the brutality of the doer, which shifts readers' focus from the human crisis of Palestinians into the violent actions of the Israeli army and

the wider political context of the war. This is mainly realized by a major aspect of representation that represents the Israeli army as brutally and intentionally acting on Palestinian civilians.

> (8) [*PIC*] Israeli forces {Agent} had targeted {Material Process} al-Qassas family {Goal} to the west of Gaza City {Circumstance} with a direct rocket {Circumstance} without a prior warning {Circumstance}.

Unlike the extensive contextualization of resultative attributes of the victims on *WAFA*, the Circumstances in these processes explicate the actions themselves to emphasize that they were meant to kill civilians.

> Other processes include adverbs that modify processes and represent them as intentional in the sense that they are meant to achieve specific goals, such as the adverb *deliberately* in example (9). Others use pre-modifiers that highlight the violence of the doer, such as *vicious* in example (10).

> (9) [*PIC*] [Israel {Agent} is deliberately targeting {Material Process} Gazan civilians and children {Goal}]

> (10) [*PIC*] The Israeli army's vicious attack {Agent} on the Palestinian people {Recipient} in Gaza {Circumstance} ruthlessly {Circumstance} targeting {Material Process} civilians and their homes {Goal}.

The same applies for the adverb *ruthlessly* which modifies the process *targeting*; while *targeting* represents the intentionality of the action, *ruthlessly* intensifies its brutality and inhumanity.

> It seems that the representation of the effects of the military action on *PIC* is mostly contingent; the Palestinian suffering is consistently associated with the Israeli military brutality. *PIC* seems to be preoccupied with ascribing a criminal role to the Israeli forces more than a victim role to Palestinian civilians. It is a presentation that mobilizes 'indignation towards the unfairness of the event' (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 157), rather than evoking the emotions of the reader towards the sufferers. This mode of representation is oriented towards action, in that it necessitates the identification and accusation of the persecutor (Boltanski, 1999).

The War is Between Two Military Sides: *PIC* and *Maan*

> In contrast with the suppression of the Palestinian fighters in *WAFA*, which leads into a representation of the

war as being between the Israeli army and the Palestinian civilians, *PIC* and *Maan* represent the fighters as a very influential social group in the war. This is basically realized by an aspect of representation that constructs the Palestinian fighters acting on Israeli soldiers or on material objects associated with the army, as the following examples show.

> (11) [*Maan*] [The armed wing of Hamas {Sayer} claimed {Verbal Process}] [it {Agent} kidnapped {Material Process} an Israeli soldier {Goal}].

> (12) [*Maan*] Palestinian militants {Agent} have engaged {Material Process} the Israeli military {Goal} in fierce fighting {Circumstance} across the Gaza Strip {Circumstance}.

> In this respect, however, a major difference between *Maan* and *PIC* arises. The former uses some processes from Israeli and Palestinian military sources, conferring a sense of objectivity on reporting or at least a sense validation of what is reported. It is quite surprising, however, that some lexical choices have negative connotations in representing Palestinian actions. The verbal group *kidnapped* in example (11) above is associated with immoral unacceptable criminal actions, usually against civilians. In example (12), the reference *militants*, which refers to the Hamas fighters, backgrounds the political legitimacy of the actors by merely identifying them based on what they do. This deviates markedly from the hegemonic political values in Palestine which tend to glorify the image of the *fighter* (Jamal, 2003). In contrast, the macro political structures seem to inform *PIC's* representation of the same events. The news website uses the verbal group *captured* instead of *kidnapped*.

> (13) [*PIC*] [He {Sayer} said {Verbal Process}] [that the soldier {Goal} was captured {Material Process} in the battle {Circumstance} in Shujaia suburb {Circumstance}].

The semantic meaning of this choice is different as it draws on legitimate military action. It is thus pragmatically, and morally, acceptable.

> The above examples show that *Maan* maintains a clear distinction between Palestinian civilians and Palestinian fighters. Although this might not be surprising, the distinction between the two groups is later compared with a completely different representation on *PIC*. Furthermore, some instances on *Maan* blur the Israeli intentionality of targeting civilians. For example, the Palestinian civilians in the following example are foregrounded as the Goal. The Circumstance *in ongoing fighting* contextualizes the event as resulting from military action between two military sides: Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters. The process does not provide any clues about who is responsible for killing

civilians, which obfuscates Israeli agency and intentionality in doing the action.

> (14) [*Maan*] Three others {Goal} were killed {Material Process} in ongoing fighting {Circumstance} in the besieged Shujaiyeh neighbourhood of Gaza City {Circumstance}.

The claim here is not that *Maan* criminalizes the Palestinian fighters. Instead, it seems that the news websites emphasizes the distance between Palestinian fighters and civilians. This makes the killing/ suffering of the fighters more predictable and less emotionally provocative, as they are intentionally taking part in military actions.

> *Maan* is also distinguished by representing the Palestinian military actions affecting Israeli civilians. As the following process shows, the moral superiority of the Palestinian fighters is problematized in *Maan*, though infrequently.

> (15) [*Maan*] Two Israeli civilians {Goal} have also been killed {Material Process} by rocket fire {Agent}.

> Moreover, *Maan* is the only news website that includes material processes in which the Israeli forces have the Agent role while the Palestinian fighters have a Goal role. Most of these processes are reported from Israeli military sources in which some lexical choices convey the political and ideological connotations of the source by using the functionalizing reference *terrorists* to refer to Palestinian fighters and the abbreviation *IDF* to refer to Israeli forces, which contrasts sharply with *PIC's* attempt to circulate the counter-argumentative nomination *Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF)*.

> (16)[Maan] [IDF {Agent} intercepted {Material Process} and killed {Material Process} more than 10 terrorists {Goal}]," [Lieutenant Colonel Peter Lerner {Sayer} wrote {Verbal Process} on his official Twitter feed {Circumstance}].

> *PIC*, in contrast, excludes completely the representation of the Palestinian fighters as receivers of military actions. Instead, the news website maintains a systematic representation of the fighters as militarily, and morally, superior.

> (17) [*PIC*] [Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigade, {Sayer} said {Verbal Process} on Sunday {Circumstance}] [that it {Agent} managed to capture {Material Process} an Israeli soldier {Goal} during the heavy clashes east of Gaza city {Circumstance} Saturday night {Circumstance}].

The complexity of the action at the operational level is constructed in the verbal group *managed to capture* and in the Circumstance *during the heavy clashes* which represents the fighters as an adversary to be reckoned with. It is important to mention here that this action is one of the very few cases in which reference is made specifically to Hamas fighters, precisely *the Qassam Brigades*, and not to *Palestinian resistance* as the following macro strategy shows.

Hamas' Military Action is Legitimate and Representative of all Palestinians: Passive and Active Forms of Resistance: *PIC*

This macro-strategy is mainly found on *PIC* and involves all aspects of representation that foreground one or more of the reasons that deem Palestinian military action to be legitimate. Not only do these representations draw on immediate contexts, but they also draw on macro out-of-context political narratives that provide fixed and flat interpretation of events and actions.

The first aspect of representation in this macro strategy represents the Palestinian resistance aiming at achieving legitimate human and political needs. The Palestinian involvement in the war is contextualized in the wider context of a struggle in which the political and human needs of Palestinians are at stake. For instance, the verbal process *affirmed* in the following example expresses the authoritative position of Hamas in dictating its conditions, while the relational process identifies these conditions as *stop the Israeli aggression* and *meet the resistance's demands*.

> (18) [*PIC*] [Hamas Movement {Sayer} has affirmed {Verbal Process}] [that its top priority at present {Value/ Identifies} is {Identifying Relational Process} to stop the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people and to meet the resistance's demands {Token/ Identifier}].

PIC emphasizes that these needs are not merely human, e.g. stopping the Israeli operations, but also political. In this respect, Hamas is represented as pursuing collective Palestinian rights.

In another ideological representation, the demands are represented not only as aiming to serve the Palestinian people, but also as being dictated by them. The following example is a relational process that is followed by three material processes. Each of the material processes identifies one of the Palestinian demands.

(19) [*PIC*] [Deputy Chairman of Hamas's political bureau Ismail Haneyya {Sayer} said {Verbal Process} Monday {Circumstance}] [that the Palestinian people's demands for ceasefire {Carrier} are {Attributive Relational Process} clear {Attribute}]: [stop {Material Process} the aggression {Goal}], [do not repeat {Material Process} it {Goal}], [and lift {Material Process} the siege on Gaza {Goal}].

As the above demands are legitimate, the human losses on the Palestinian side are perceived to be understandable when aiming at supreme collective aims. This is made explicit by the following relational process. The speaker, a Hamas official, vows that Palestinian fatalities will never stop the pursuit of Palestinian demands. Palestinian victims are referred to by the national/ religious nomination *martyrs*, which in itself implies that the victims voluntarily or involuntarily sacrifice their lives for supreme goals.

(20) [*PIC*] "[Our martyrs' blood {Carrier} will never go {Attributive Relational Process} in vain {Attribute}]" [Hamas {Sayer} said {Verbal Process}].

The second aspect of representation in *PIC* that gives rise to the macro strategy of representation at hand represents the Palestinian resistance as an inclusive Palestinian body. When the line between fighters and civilians is blurred, the actions of the resistance are legitimized as having a wide national affiliation. For example, *Palestinian resistance* appears as the Sayer in the following verbal process, while the projected relational process states a *fact* about the losses of the Israeli army.

(21) [*PIC*] [Palestinian resistance {Sayer} said {Verbal Process}] [that Israeli casualties {Carrier} are {Attributive Relational Process} far greater than declared {Attribute}].

Although the audience could work out that Palestinian resistance refers to Hamas' military wing, the reference presupposes that this group of actors represents all Palestinians. As Druckman (2001, p. 228) suggests, the use of different, but logically equivalent, lexical choices create a 'considerable change in the preference of the audience when the same issue is being produced and presented in different vocabularies'. This also sends a clear message to Israel that Hamas is 'an adversary to be reckoned with, rather than an unrecognized regime that can be forcibly removed' (Joudeh, 2012).

More ideologically, *PIC* uses references that completely blur the distinction between the civilian body and the resistance body. For instance, the following relational

process includes the synecdoche *Gaza* to refer to fighters. The process does not represent a particular event but introduces a proposition in which *Gaza* encompasses all Palestinians.

(22) [*PIC*] "Gaza {Carrier} is {Attributive Relational Process} a graveyard for its invaders {Attribute}".

In sum, *PIC* emphasizes that Hamas is a resistance movement, which is a basic reason for the movement's popular legitimacy (Hroub, 2006). However, at this critical moment, its legitimacy is enhanced by representing military resistance as a popular Palestinian choice. This, in addition to legitimizing Hamas's actions as being representative of all Palestinians, backgrounds its discrete decision to go for a large-scale military confrontation with Israel, which is a major conflictual point between Hamas and Fatah.

Another focal aspect of representation in *PIC* represents the passive and the active forms of resistance as contingent. The news platform legitimizes Hamas's military actions and normalizes civilian losses by the interplay between the voluntary actions of fighters and the involuntary actions of civilians. In many cases, the boundary between the two groups is obfuscated and so one collective body of Palestinians is constructed. One of the typical linguistic realizations of this aspect of representation is the use of the inclusive pronoun *we*.

(23) [*PIC*] "[We {Agent} decided to end {Material Process} Gaza siege {Goal} by our blood and resistance {Circumstance}]", [he {Sayer} said {Verbal Process}].

The process *decided to end* describes a voluntary action carried out by the Agent *we*, which does not draw a clear boundary between Hamas/ fighters and other Palestinians. Moreover, the Circumstance juxtaposes the suffering of civilians, *by our blood*, with the military action of the fighters, *resistance*, representing them as one action that represents all Palestinians. The verbal complex *decided to end* associates the mental state of the actors with their material action. It represents the deliberate involvement of civilians in the war, as if they voluntarily chose to sacrifice their lives to end the siege.

The above correlation between the two forms of resistance make a basic structural concept in the Palestinian national discourse. *PIC* is reproducing this political value in a critical moment where the lives of hundreds of thousands are at stake. It explains the immediate events by referring to national narratives and values that are accepted by the massive majority of Palestinians. For instance, the following process contextualizes the war in the Palestinian quest to liberate Jerusalem.

(24) [*PIC*] "[Gaza {Identified/ Token} is {Identifying Relational Process} the bridge to the liberation of Jerusalem {Identifier/ Value}]", [he {Sayer} said {Verbal Process}].

Jerusalem, which is a key element of the Palestinian national identity, functions here as an ideological symbol that links military action with national aspirations that invoke collective Palestinian experiences (Singh, 2012, p. 536). This forms the 'symbolic capital' from which the group and its leaders derive authority (Singh, 2012, p. 534).

Since civilian suffering is represented as part of the resistance, the success of Palestinians is measured by the continuity of their defiance regardless of the large numbers of fatalities. This appears in the following negated process *failing to score* which underlines the main goal of the Israeli operation by the Scope *any military achievement*.

(25) [*PIC*] Israeli occupation forces {Agent} failing to score {Material Process} any military achievement {Goal}.

PIC backgrounds Palestinian suffering and foregrounds the notion that Palestinian military defiance remains intact. This is an Israeli failure and, of necessity, a Palestinian success. In other words, the civilian losses are not considered strategic losses as long as the resistance still has its military capability.

Conclusion

The analysis of Palestinian news websites showed that *WAFA*, *PIC* and *Maan* proliferated different discourses and thus constructed different *realities* concerning the war and its human and political implications. Each newspaper had different discursive strategies that may index its journalistic objectives, as well as its position in the socio-political structure.

First, *WAFA* adopted a humanizing mode of representation that focused mainly on civilian victims and their suffering. However, *WAFA* did not problematize the brutality of military action as much as it put emphasis on the vulnerability of civilians. More surprisingly, the news website completely excluded any representations of Palestinian fighters, whether as doers or receivers of military action.

Hardly ever did *WAFA* associate civilians' suffering with the Palestinian political struggle against the occupation. It excluded important contextual factors, such as the Israeli siege of the Strip, and focused instead on the consequences of military action. Stopping the war and saving civilians was associated with the political endeavours of the Palestinian

Authority which was represented as the only legitimate representative of Palestinians to take responsible actions.

Since an explicit denunciation of resistance was not possible, *WAFA* relied on extensive contextualization of human suffering. It did not openly challenge the Palestinian political culture in which resistance is an essential means of liberation. Instead, it highlighted the destructive consequences of the war and provided a challenging evaluation of particular events.

In contrast, *PIC* constructed a different image of the war based on hegemonic narratives and collective Palestinian political and strategic objectives. It was a war between Israel, an occupying force, and all Palestinian people. The war was represented as massively affecting Palestinian civilians. However, *PIC* employed a political mode of representation that was based on denouncing the perpetrator – Israeli occupation. Actions were consistently associated with their political and military context.

In its representation of the Palestinian military action, *PIC* drew on national narratives that represent resistance as a collective Palestinian decision. The involuntary passive role of Palestinian civilians was constructed as a voluntary action of steadfastness and defiance. This normalized Palestinian fatalities as having supreme national objectives, such as lifting the siege and liberating Jerusalem.

Finally, the *Maan* news website represented the war as being between Hamas and Israel but referred to civilians as the main party affected by military action. *Maan* highlighted the human aspect of the war by explicating the Palestinian civilians' suffering. However, *Maan* represented Palestinian fighters as doers and receivers of military action. A more political representation appeared in the distinction the website established between *the people of Hamas* and the rest of Palestinians. Unlike *PIC*, *Maan* did not frame Hamas' actions within super national narratives, but it showed their immediate impact on current Palestinian issues. It was thus left to the reader to evaluate the war in light of the political and strategic objectives it may achieve.

The above findings made it possible to uncover some aspects of the discursive strategies that hegemonically dominant and marginal discourses in Palestine employ, especially in sensitive and controversial contexts. First, the hegemonic discourse, represented by *PIC*, adopts top-down discursive strategies. It draws on popular macro narratives in representing events and (de)legitimizing actions. Therefore, *PIC* tended to use presuppositions in representing events and explaining their political relevance. Its representations are goal-oriented; they undermine some contextual peculiarities by linking actions with ultimate desirable (national) goals.

This can blur the line between what happened and what was meant to happen. Consequently, people do not evaluate events based only on their contextual relevance, but also according to already established categorizations of social relations and social roles, which leaves considerable space for stereotypical and essentialized representations. For instance, *PIC* presupposed that Palestinians were willing to support the military resistance because it is essential in the Palestinian national struggle. The war was thus represented as a consensual Palestinian decision, which backgrounded crucial contextual information about the role of Hamas as the responsible authority in the Strip. These presuppositions were basically realized by language choices that constructed external realities, such as *Palestinian resistance*, which have national connotations.

In contrast, marginal and alternative discourses, represented by *WAFA*, seem to employ bottom-up discursive strategies in relation to the social structure. They rely on extensive contextualisation of events in a way that shakes people's attitudes towards a particular sensitive reality, especially when people's personal interests are stake, without challenging their knowledge. In the long run, this may lead to basic changes in the way people think, especially if hegemonic discourses fail to provide satisfactory explanations. For instance, with *WAFA's* consistent comparison between the huge human losses and the very limited achievements of the war, Palestinians may change their attitude towards military resistance as a sufficient strategy to deal with Israel, at least for the time being. In the long run, they may adopt different frames of interpretations that support, for instance, political strategies which do not involve them in disproportionate wars.

Finally, it is interesting to find that less ideological news platforms employ different discursive strategies in reporting important events. As the analysis of *Maan's* reporting shows, such platforms rely on a wider process of contextualization, where almost all aspects of the war are referred to. *Maan*, for instance, referred to the macabre consequences of the war on Palestinian civilians, but it did not use a highly sensationalized tone of representation. On the other hand, it referred to the Palestinian resistance but avoided any rhetorical discourse that draws on national sentiments.

It could be argued, therefore, that the position of the media outlets in the political and ideological landscapes decides much of their discursive tendencies. The closer the newspapers are to social structures, the more they rely on macro-narratives in representing actions and actors. By the same token, the further they are from social structures, the more they rely on extensive context-bound representations that produce different *realities* but without overtly

challenging what people believe to be true. I emphasize here that these findings were based on comparing nuances of representations at the clause level. It was the method, a detailed linguistic analysis that made it possible to capture these nuances.

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