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Palestine in the British press: A Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This article examines the representations of the Israeli Palestinian conflict in the British press, starting from the premise that media representations in Britain should be analysed in relation to Britain's role as a postcolonial power. Focusing on Britain's colonial and postcolonial connection to this conflict, this study is based on the findings of a Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis of four British national newspapers (the *Guardian*, or *Manchester Guardian*; *The Times*; the *Daily Herald*, or the *Sun*; and the *Daily Mirror*) at four different points during the history of the conflict. The findings indicate that the classification of Palestine, Palestinians, Israel, Israelis, Jews, Zionists and Arabs as agents of political violence evolved over time, as violent acts and agents were perceived differently according to the dominant political discourse during each period. The contextualization of the conflict also provides insights into how the British press constructed its various ideological positions in relation to this conflict, and the extent to which the British Mandate remained visible in the later coverage of the conflict. The postcolonial approach adopted in this study indicates that the generalized lack of references to the historical facts that underpin Britain's role in the development of the conflict represents an attempt to move away from the historical responsibilities derived from colonial encounters. This framework therefore helps to restore the largely neglected historical connection of the British Mandate to its proper place in the analysis of these mediated events.

Keywords

Palestine

Israel

postcolonial theory

Critical Discourse Analysis

news discourse

classifications

Introduction

The Israeli Palestinian conflict, 67 years after the creation of the state of Israel, continues to create an international impact. Palestine provides one of the most important contexts for any study concerned with media representations, postcolonial theory and political violence. Proceeding from a strict definition of the postcolonial as ‘what comes after colonialism’ (Young 2001), 1948 would be considered by some postcolonial scholars as the temporal marker of postcoloniality between Britain and Palestine, as at that point Palestinian lands would no longer be ruled or administered by Britain. From this perspective, the end of the British Mandate meant that the colonial era had come to an end and a postcolonial period had begun.

However, Massad (2000: 311) points out that this diachronic presentation of the history of colonialism has ‘ignored the potential, if not the actual synchronicity, of these “two” eras in some contexts’, such as with the case of ‘settler colonialism’. The creation of the state of Israel, in 1948, is an example of settler-colonists declaring themselves to be independent, and therefore postcolonial, ‘while maintaining colonial privileges for themselves over the conquered populations’. Although the end of the

Mandate led to the simultaneous creation of Israel, Britain's postcoloniality in relation to Palestine should not be confused with the settler-colonist situation that still exists in Israel (Massad 2000). At this point, it is important to clarify the fact that this article is not primarily concerned with the relation between Palestine and Israel, but with Britain's colonial and postcolonial relation with Palestine and the ongoing conflict.

This article examines the representations of the Israeli Palestinian conflict in the British press, starting from the premise that media representations in Britain should be analysed in relation to Britain's role as a postcolonial power. In this respect, Brunt and Cere (2011: 3) have argued that Britain's role as the colonial 'centre' is strongly intertwined with British contemporary media cultures, and thus these media cultures should be explored through the lens of postcolonial theory. Drawing upon a variety of discursive material, Said (1978) had previously stated that in nontotalitarian societies, certain cultural forms predominate at the expense of other cultural forms, which are excluded. In his view, this cultural leadership is what gives Orientalism (the notion of 'us' Europeans standing against or in contrast to all 'those' non-Europeans) its durability (Said 1978: 7). Indeed, the term 'Orientalism' refers to the idea that European identity is superior in comparison with all the non-European cultures, which are presented as backward and dependent. In addition, there are numerous media analyses that are concerned with the representations of race and ethnicity in the western media (Hall 1997; Macdonald 2011; Poole 2002; Poole and Richardson 2006). Hall (1997) also makes explicit connections between colonialism and the use of binary opposites, such as 'civilized' and 'uncivilized'. Thus, the links between discourse and the postcolonial have already been explored at length under different guises.

This is the debate to which Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) seeks to contribute. PCDA should be understood as a theoretical and methodological advance on previous discussions, and as an additional alternative to research that concentrates on the connections between the media and postcolonial legacies (Sanz Sabido forthcoming). PCDA draws upon postcolonial theory and Critical Discourse Analysis with the objective of exploring past and contemporary discourses that are impregnated with postcolonial political, economic and social structures. It also examines the ways in which linguistic classifications are used to divide societies into groups on the basis of differences. In this article, I apply this framework in order to analyse some of the ways in which colonial and postcolonial relations between Britain and Palestine have emerged in the news coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict since 1948, the moment when the British Mandate of Palestine came to an end.

Palestine and the postcolonial

Since the early days of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the struggles between Palestinians and Israelis have been about territoriality, identity, ethnicity and religion, economics, competing nationalisms, colonialism and imperialism (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2008: 22). This means that the conflict is multifaceted due to the wide range of factors that have complicated the situation. It follows therefore that the conflict may also be subjected to a multifaceted form of analysis. All the aspects mentioned here, along with others, have played some part in the development of the conflict, which by no means can be understood solely in terms of its colonial and postcolonial elements. However, it is worth paying attention to this aspect of the

development of the conflict, particularly when it comes to the media representations of acts of political violence and its agents, in order to identify the extent to which (post)colonial history and responsibilities are visible in contemporary discourses about the conflict from a British perspective.

The postcolonial nature of the Israeli Palestinian conflict is a complex one for various reasons. In addition to the debates surrounding the definition and use of the term 'postcolonial' (Gandhi 1998; Harper 2001; Loomba 1998; Prakash 1995; Young 2001), the postcolonial history of Palestine is intrinsically connected to the history of Israel, as one cannot be separated from the other. Hence, there is a need to clarify that this article is concerned with the postcolonial relation between Palestine and Britain, rather than the settler-colonist situation that exists between Palestine and Israel (Massad 2000). Nevertheless, the fact that Palestinian history has been determined by Israel from the moment of its creation is also acknowledged.

The analysis of media representations from a postcolonial perspective is complicated further in this case by the fact that the role of Britain in Palestinian postcoloniality was superseded by the intervention of the United States in the conflict. The United States always supported the creation of the Jewish homeland and, especially after the official proclamation of the state, became the most prominent source of power in the international arena in terms of this conflict. Therefore, while the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized is usually thought to be the basis of postcolonial relations of power (JanMohamed [1985] 2003), the direct intervention and support of the United States for Israel affected the ensuing postcolonial relation between Britain and Palestine.

The role of the United States must also be understood in relation to the Cold War and the development of political and military connections that were used to support its presence in the Middle East, and to protect its interests against the Soviet threat. Therefore, the frame of this major international conflict also had an effect on the ways in which the Israeli Palestinian conflict evolved, because the United States supported Israel while the USSR supported some of the Arab states. Britain, in the meantime, maintained its strategic interests in the Middle East (as highlighted during the Suez Crisis), which conforms to a typical aspect of postcolonial relations: the continued presence, in one way or another, of the original, dominant metropolis in those territories. However, we must bear in mind that British postcolonial relations with Palestine (and, hence, with Israel) were, from the early days, marked by the British intention to ally itself with the United States. Consequently, regardless of the British attitudes towards the creation of the new state, and regardless of the fact that Britain was officially the former colonial power in those lands, these aspects were reformulated in the 1950s within the context of international relations.

Discourse, classifications and the postcolonial

Said's (1978) *Orientalism* introduced the concept of 'Othering' to identify the ways in which western agents expressed their understanding of the non-western world. Said based his thesis on the analysis of a wide variety of sources and genres, arguing that the Orient only comes into existence when the Occident animates it, so that the features of its existence depend solely on the ways in which the Occident characterizes its own creation (Said 1978: 208). Therefore, orientalist discourse

‘invents or orientalises the Orient for the purposes of imperial consumption’ (Gandhi 1998: 88), and it is based on a system of representations that was constructed and deeply learned by the West (Said 1978: 202–03). Orientalism thus constitutes a ‘great divide of mutual misunderstandings’ (Sardar 1999: vii), in which the ‘Other’ entity is never truly known, and any apparent knowledge of it is based on imagination and power-related categories. These categories are based on the separation between ‘us’ and the ‘Other’, and all the positive attributes associated with ‘us’ contrast with all the negative attributes associated with ‘them’.

The ways in which these entities, ‘us’ and ‘them’, are classified are closely connected to the ways in which power is divided. Derrida (1972: 41) points out how, in this violent hierarchy of binary oppositions, one of the two entities governs the ‘Other’, and it is the entity with the power to create the classification in the first place that manages to subdue the ‘Other’. Although this subjugation is by no means only discursive, it is indeed supported by discursive processes that include the representation of the ‘Other’ as helpless and in need of assistance, and as unable to catch up with modernity.

Similarly, Hall (1997: 258) agrees that stereotyping and the use of binary opposites tend to occur ‘where there are gross inequalities of power’. He points out that this form of power is closely connected with the practices of what Foucault called ‘power/knowledge’, as orientalist discourse ‘produces, through different practices of representation (scholarship, exhibition, literature, painting, etc), a form of racialised knowledge of the Other (Orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of power (imperialism)’ (Hall 1997: 260). By classifying people according to a norm (under the

category 'normal') and constructing the excluded as an 'Other' (under the category 'deviant' or 'abnormal'), accepted standards of normality are fixed in order for the ruling groups 'to fashion the whole of society according to their own world-view, value system, sensibility and ideology', until this world-view appears as 'natural' and 'inevitable' (Dyer 1977: 30).

The image that Europe constructed of the Orient was stereotypical, as it was not based on a reflection of those countries, but on a discourse through which Europeans were able to manage and produce the Orient 'politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (Said 1978: 7). Said argues, in both *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), that the construction of these categories is closely connected with imperialism and colonialism. He contends that both imperialism and colonialism are

Supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as 'inferior' or 'subject races', 'subordinate peoples', 'dependency', 'expansion, and 'authority'. (1978: 8)

Although Said also acknowledges the empires built by other countries such as Spain, Portugal, Holland and Russia, among others, he pays more attention to Britain and France. He is primarily concerned with exploring the ways in which the move to

form empires beyond the European continent became – by the latter part of the nineteenth century – a consistent, continuous enterprise (Said 1978: 9). He acknowledges that these expansions were attributable to the goal of increasing profits, which included obtaining supplies of spices, sugar, slaves, cotton and other materials, as well as investing in related enterprises, markets and institutions (1978: 10). However, Said further argues that the commitment to expansionism was motivated by more than just the prospect of financial profits. He refers to this as a ‘commitment to circulation and recirculation’, which allowed decent men and women ‘to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples should be subjugated’, while it also ‘replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the imperium as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples’ (1978: 10). Thus, the enterprise of forming empires away from Europe was based on the very idea of ‘having an empire’ (1978: 10). The ruler and the ruled begin to be defined in relation to the imperial association that joins them, which becomes part of both the colonizer’s and the colony’s society.

More recently, Krishna (2009: 29) has pointed out that ‘capitalist colonialism has rendered our understanding of the world Eurocentric, and we are unable to think outside the categories and concepts that emerged in post-Columbian Europe’. He argues that answers to regional, national and international inequalities can only be understood and reversed through ‘the relentless focus on the world historical experience of capitalist colonialism and its contemporary manifestations everywhere’ (2009: 29). In order to achieve this, ‘an act of profound decolonisation’ is necessary in order to ‘reverse the political, social, intellectual, and cultural interactions with the colonial world over the past few centuries’ (2009: 29). In brief, the purpose of

postcolonialism is to allow the conditions for a human development that is based on a true decolonization and a fundamental move away from Eurocentrism.

The significance of these arguments does not simply lie in the exposure of the negative nature of discursive representations of the Orient but also in the fact that, beyond those orientalist discourses, policies and actions have also taken a similar approach, through which 'Others' must and can legitimately be mastered and controlled for 'our' purposes (Jensen 2012: 216). Ghandour (2010: 58), for instance, explores the discourse that informed the creation of the legislation and approach to Palestine during the British Mandate. She points out that native Palestinians were represented as 'characterised by debris and a load of atrophied concepts and theories' during the British Mandate. The fact that this orientalist discourse ultimately had direct institutional implications on the decisions that were made about Palestine illustrates the extent to which orientalist classifications remain at the heart of this conflict.

More specifically, Ghandour quotes Bunton (1999: 81) to review the ways in which Ernest Dowson, who had a significant influence on the British Mandatory administration and on the formulation of land policy in Palestine, assessed the Palestinian agricultural system after a visit in November 1923, in order to advise the British administration on landholding and agriculture (Ghandour 2010: 58). He described the land and the system as useless, and employed a language of disease and degeneration to define it. Ghandour reviews how Dowson used words such as 'derelict', 'lack', 'apathy', 'evil', 'deadening', 'rubbish', 'sickness', 'unhealthy',

'afflicting', 'disability', 'annihilated' and 'blighted' in his report (2010: 59). In her analysis, Ghandour contends that

The pioneering Dowson is very 'masculine'. His tone is robust, commanding and sure-footed, even as he blunders over quite important things. Dowson harbours no ambivalence or reservations regarding his superior status/heroic role. He is a potential saviour, if only his advice were heeded. Convinced of this and his mind reform, he has come to cleanse, or in his own words, to purge. When he suggested a registration system for Palestine, it was one which would facilitate the dual role of the State: as a custodian of Public land, and as steward of its exploitation. (2010: 60)

Said (1978) also describes Orientalism as 'masculine', as it views the Orient as a 'geographical space to be cultivated, harvested, and guarded', which led to sexualized images of agricultural care and of the colony in general. In other words, a weaker or more inferior entity (the Orient) was viewed as something inviting British or French 'interest, penetration, insemination – in short, colonisation' (Said 1978: 219). In this case, Dowson sought to be the custodian of the land and its exploiter at one and the same time.

It is also worth considering that orientalist attitudes are not only seen in the British relationship with Palestine, but also in the ways in which Israel treats the remnants of the Palestinian polity. In this respect, considering the creation of citizenship, Israel represents a political system that combines democratic institutions with the dominance of one ethnic group (Peled 1992). In this political system, which

consists of two types of citizenship – the Jewish citizen and the Arab citizen –, the rights of Arab citizens are much more restricted than those held by Jewish inhabitants of the region, not to mention the complete *lack* of rights of the non-citizen Arab. Said (1978: 47) states that the Palestinian, in his resistance to foreign colonialists, was presented as a ‘stupid savage, or a negligible quantity, morally and even existentially’. On the basis of this conception of Palestinians, only Jewish citizens could be granted full civic rights, including the right to return to their homeland. Arabs, being ‘less developed’, are given fewer rights, and do not have the right to return, even though they are the original inhabitants of the land. According to Said (1978: 306–07), ‘Orientalism governs Israeli policy towards the Arabs throughout’ the course of their relations and, based on the same principle, ‘there are good Arabs (the ones who do as they are told) and bad Arabs (who do not, and are therefore “terrorists”)’.

In order to provide a proper context for my argument, it would be useful to consider the orientalist traits of Zionism and Israeli discourse and policy, even though this article is concerned in the main with the postcolonial relations between Britain and Palestine. Britain, in accepting the state of Israel and considering it to be the legitimate source of power in the region – at the expense of Palestine – reproduces a similar perspective, which will be evidenced by the empirical findings discussed in the following section. In any case, we must not forget that Palestinian history ‘tends to be viewed solely in relation to Israeli history or narrative’, and that ‘the story of the Palestinians, as ordinary human beings subjected to violent forms of power, remains a largely hidden one’ (Matar 2011: xi). This indicates that there is an intrinsic dependency between Palestine and Israel, as they are ‘often talked about as a political, national, collective or resistant identity that has been constructed [...] as a category of

being in relationship to a significant “Other” (Matar 2011: xi). This approach to Palestine and the history of Palestinians is in itself orientalist, as Palestine does not exist, in any way, as an entity in its own right: not as a state, but also not discursively, or even in terms of the historical accounts recorded in the literature on the region.

Sample and methodology

PCDA consists, as a methodological framework, of an adaptation of historical approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis. Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach is particularly useful because it takes into account the historical socio-political circumstances within which texts are produced. Considering that the postcolonial is grounded in history, a framework that focuses on the postcolonial context for the study of media representations benefits from taking a Discourse-Historical Approach, since it helps to place media discourse within its relevant postcolonial context.

From a methodological perspective, PCDA combines the qualitative and interpretive nature of Critical Discourse Analysis with the quantitative and systematic tools provided by Content Analysis. Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001) Discourse-Historical Approach contemplates the possibility of applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches, although it prioritizes qualitative analysis. In the analysis presented in the present article, the first stage is quantitative in order to quantify the frequency of pre-selected units of meaning that will lead, in the second stage, to further qualitative analyses of a smaller sample. Thus, for example, this article is based on the findings of a larger empirical analysis of 931 articles, including a majority of news articles and

a smaller selection of columns (Sanz Sabido 2013). All these pieces were analysed quantitatively, while approximately eleven per cent of this material was subjected to qualitative analysis. The quantitative approach served to measure the frequency of the terms 'Palestine', 'Palestinian', 'Israel', 'Israeli', 'Jew' or 'Jewish', 'Zionist' or 'Zionism', 'Muslim', 'Arab' and 'British Mandate'.

The combination of Critical Discourse Analysis with a quantitative approach has the advantage of testing a given hypothesis by providing evidence 'through numbers that express the frequency and prominence of particular textual properties' (Schrøder 2012: 109). The main drawback of this approach is the decontextualization of these numbers, which reduces the ability to interpret the meanings associated with these terms within the texts (Schrøder 2012: 109). However, this particular methodological weakness is addressed through the implementation of a qualitative approach. Furthermore, the numerical data is particularly useful for historical studies that seek to trace the evolution of media representations, as quantitative data can be compared easily across different historical periods (diachronically) as well as across newspaper titles (synchronically). The ease with which data can be compared in Content Analysis does not resolve the shortcomings of decontextualization, but it compensates for it in part because the data are useful in making comparisons and monitoring trends in media or press coverage (Deacon et al. 1999; Krippendorff 2004). This is a crucial element in creating the historical component of PCDA.

The ensuing discussion is based on the analysis of four historical periods that took place after the end of the British Mandate of Palestine in 1948, a date which provides Britain's official temporal postcolonial marker in relation to Palestine.

Although several authors have contested the term ‘postcolonialism’ (as they have different opinions as to when the postcolonial era begins, and whether the postcolonial has ever begun at all), I propose that the official date of independence be used. This is not intended to ignore the fact that the decision to end the British Mandate had been made much earlier, and that the perception that the Mandate was nearing its end had existed for months before its official disappearance (Goldsworthy 1971). Therefore, to enable the discussion to progress, I consider 14 May 1948 as the postcolonial marker between Palestine and Britain, as the British Mandate of Palestine officially ended on that day. We must not forget that this is also the date when the creation of the state of Israel took place. Matar describes this date in 1948 as the moment when ‘Palestinians were denied their land and, most importantly, their commonality with other human beings’ (2011: xi–xii). Although I would of course acknowledge the settler-colonist relationship that exists between Palestine and Israel, this project remains focused on the postcolonial link between Britain and Palestine (and, by extension, between these entities and Israel).

The four historical phases that have been selected for analysis are the following: (1) the end of the British Mandate and the beginning of the First Arab-Israeli War (henceforth, the 1948 sample), including news articles published between 15 May 1948 and 12 June 1948; (2) the 1967 War (from here on, known as the 1967 sample), comprising news articles published between 1 June 1967 and 15 June 1967; (3) the beginning of the First Intifada (henceforth, the 1987 sample), which consists of news articles published between 25 November 1987 and 24 December 1987; and (4) the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009 (designated as the 2009 sample), which includes news articles published between 27

December 2008 and 20 January 2009. The articles were extracted from four British national daily newspapers: the *Guardian* (or *Manchester Guardian* until 1959), *The Times*, *Daily Mirror* and the *Sun* (or *Daily Herald* until 1964).

Palestine in the British press

The diachronic analysis of the selected news articles reveals that the representations of the conflict evolved over time according to the dominant political discourse in each sampled period. The extent to which different agents in the conflict are visible (or not) in the articles help us to identify how ideological shifts have been reproduced discursively in the British press. We must remember that although ideological formations are ‘relatively stable’, they are not fixed and are therefore subject to change (Trew 1979: 141–42).

1948

The analysis has identified the fact that, in 1948, the mainstream British discourse was positioned against Zionism because British authorities in Palestine were the target of Zionist violence. However, beyond this more simplistic explanation, we must also remember that Zionists were not recognized as a legitimate power at the time, and even after the proclamation of the state of Israel and the dissolution of the British Mandate, there was a period of readjustment that meant that Zionist identities remained suspect. In essence, the British were depicted in moral terms as right, and the Zionists as fundamentally wrong, as illustrated, for example, in the following passage published by *The Times* on 15 May 1948:

The Egyptian Government issued the following communiqué at midnight: 'Orders have been given to Egyptian armed forces to enter Palestine with the object of restoring security and order in that country, and putting an end to the massacres perpetrated by terrorist Zionist gangs against the Arabs and against humanity. (Correspondent 1948a: 4)

In this context, the term 'Arabs' was counted 807 times in the sampled articles, whereas the terms 'Jews' and 'Jewish' were mentioned 1539 times. The fact that the terms 'Zionist' and 'Zionism' occurred 124 times is also significant, particularly when compared with the findings in later samples, in which these terms will practically disappear from the discourse. These frequencies do not specify whether these entities appeared as agents or as recipients of political violence, but they indicate that these are, by far, the most common ways of referring to the various protagonists within the selected sample. In contrast, 'Palestinians' only appeared seventeen times, 'Muslims' ten times and 'Israeli' seven times. It is noteworthy that, even though the conflict arises because Palestinians need to defend their rights, they rarely appear either as agents or victims in the narrative. The scarcity of 'Muslims' is also significant when compared with the use of the terms 'Jews' or 'Jewish' (1539 occurrences), which is the primary option used to describe one side of the conflict. However, the fact that 'Israeli' only appears seven times is not surprising, bearing in mind that Israel had only been created as a new state and the 'Israeli' entity had not yet been fully established.

Moreover, the British Mandate was mentioned 38 times in the 1948 sample. The *Manchester Guardian* was responsible for 25 of these occurrences, whereas *The Times* referred to the Mandate nine times, and the *Daily Herald* used it four times. Although the frequency with which the Mandate was mentioned may appear to be low in relation to the number of analysed articles (213 articles in 1948), we must bear in mind that most of these articles reported directly on the violent clashes that took place during this period, and thus only some of these articles would need to refer to the Mandate authorities and the fact that the Mandate had ended. Having said this, and in connection with the postcolonial framework presented in this article, it is also noteworthy that the narrative does not include any references to a ‘colonial’ occupation. Whenever the British Mandate is mentioned, it is always done to refer to an official, recognized entity, but the fact that the British Government was in charge of administering these lands was never, within the analysed sample, presented as a ‘colonial’ endeavour. The term ‘colony’ was used, nonetheless, in the context of Jewish settlements. The following excerpt, published by *The Times* on 24 May 1948, illustrates this use of the term:

The Egyptians, in announcing their entry into Bethlehem, add that they have linked up with the Arab Legion. The Syrians claim to have raided and damaged old Jewish colonies at the south end of Lake Tiberias.
(Correspondent 1948b: 4)

1967

If in 1948 Zionists were represented negatively, a similar process of delegitimation took place in the other sampled periods from 1967 onwards, although by 1967 the side of the conflict that was represented as morally right was Israel. While in the past Zionist groups had exercised resistance against Britain, Israel later began to assert itself in its right to exist and was by this time considered the legitimate power in the conflict. Therefore, Palestinians became the ones who resisted the impact of Israeli actions and policies in relation to their lands. Israeli acts of violence were no longer considered to be negative, while supporters of the Palestinian cause acquired the position of the 'terrorist' enemy acting against Israel as the established authority.

In the 1967 sample, the most frequent term used is 'Israel', which was counted 1025 times, while 'Jews' and 'Jewish' are no longer the most popular options, being replaced in effect by references to 'Israelis' (584 occurrences). This is in clear contrast with the frequency with which 'Palestine' appears within the sample (31 times). Furthermore, 'Israel' often appears as the agent of actions and decisions, although it is also sometimes used to refer to a place or location. However, the scarce references to 'Palestine' always signify a location, never a form of agency capable of making decisions, and they only appear when providing historical accounts about the conflict, never as a reference to a contemporary entity.

The fact that both 'Palestine' and 'Palestinian' (with only ten occurrences) have such a low presence in the representations of the conflict is rather telling in terms of the visibility and invisibility of different groups and social forces. Palestine, not only as a term but also as an entity in its own right, has nearly disappeared from

the contemporary discourse in 1967. It is also significant that the terms 'Zionist' or 'Zionism' only occur 21 times within the sample. This contrasts with the 124 instances of this term in 1948, which indicates a wish to move away from the negative connotations animated by the memory of this expression. As before, the frequency of these occurrences does not discriminate between these entities as agents or as recipients of the violence. However, these findings indicate that these are the most common ways of referring to the groups involved in the conflict.

While the analysis of the 1948 sample indicates that the British Mandate was often mentioned in the press coverage of the 1948 events, in the 1967 sample the British Mandate seems to disappear from the narrative. The British Mandate was only mentioned on two occasions (once by *The Times*, discussed above, and once by the *Daily Mirror*). We may argue that newspapers were bound to mention it in 1948, when the Mandate was just coming to an end. However, we can also argue that this is an indication of a lack of historical contextualization of the conflict. While the events of 1948 were mentioned on 25 occasions in twenty articles (two articles published by the *Daily Mirror*, four published by *The Times*, ten published by the *Guardian* and four published by the *Sun*), none of these articles acknowledged the British Mandate. However, the Suez crisis of 1956 was mentioned 47 times in 28 articles (six articles published by the *Daily Mirror*, six published by *The Times*, thirteen published by the *Guardian* and three published by the *Sun*). On the basis of these quantitative findings, we can conclude that the historical contextualization of the discourse in 1967 was more concerned with the interests that Britain had invested in the Suez Canal and the ramifications of the Suez crisis, than with refreshing memories about Britain's colonial connection with Palestine.

What is more, it is possible to observe a significant shift in the way in which the historical contextualization is presented in the narrative. The article published by the *Guardian* on 6 June 1967, 'Struggle for Israel: the 1948 and 1956 campaigns', serves to illustrate the ways in which the 1967 War was contextualized in the press in relation to the historical background of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The article begins by describing the 1956 Suez campaign, when war had 'erupted along the Suez Canal on October 29 eleven years ago' (Fairhall 1967: 9). The Israelis had launched an attack in the Sinai Peninsula 'with the declared aim of eliminating the Fedayeen (Egyptian commando) bases along their southern border'. The reason for this Israeli attack, the article points out, was that the Fedayeen had killed 24 Israelis and wounded more victims in the previous fortnight. By this point, we begin to see how the discourses around Israel and Palestine have changed since 1948. While in the previous historical sample the Arabs' fight for the Palestinian cause was seen as justified (and Zionist efforts were seen in a negative light), now Arab forces are seen as a threat to Israel's existence. The article also tells us that the Israeli army had managed to recapture the town of Gaza eight years after the Egyptian army had taken it on the day when 'the State of Israel came into existence'. This is when the article shifts its attention from 1956 to 1948, pointing out that

The Israeli declaration at midnight on May 14 and the departure of the British security forces from what had until then been Palestine were the signal for an Arab invasion on several fronts.

The Arabs claimed they were out to destroy Zionist terrorist bands rather than the Jews of Palestine and indeed, the previous months had punctuated by

widespread and serious terrorist attacks, reprisals, and counter-reprisals.

(Fairhall 1967: 9)

The mention of the British security forces, rather than the British Mandate, is noteworthy, together with the lack of a fuller contextualization of the British role in the policies and decisions that led to the eventual proclamation of Israel. In addition, while in the 1948 sample there is some degree of reticence in fully accepting the creation of the new state, the reference to Palestine in this text (what had until then been Palestine) carries an implicit acceptance of its disappearance. Although this is followed by an acknowledgement of the fact that Arabs were fighting against Zionism, the article concludes that

During this period the Zionists were mainly on the defensive and already showing the superb fighting spirit which characterised the Israelis 1956 campaign. They had an abundance of small arms but lacked artillery armour or aircraft. (Fairhall 1967: 9)

These descriptions of the Zionist cause and their efforts to create and protect their homeland are very different from the descriptions we have observed in the 1948 sample. What we see in this example is how a newspaper article published in 1967, within the context of the 1967 War, takes a look back at a key moment in the history of Palestine and Israel, 1948, and retells the story from a different point of view. Moreover, the article includes the following passage:

When a second ceasefire was arranged on July 18 [1948] the Zionists could display a list of successes, and tens of thousands of Arabs had been driven from their homes. (Fairhall 1967: 9)

Having previously emphasized the Israelis' 'superb fighting spirit' two paragraphs earlier, the fact that thousands of citizens had been driven out of their homes is effectively presented here as one in a list of Zionist successes. What is also remarkable, though, is that these citizens are not referred to as Palestinians, but as Arabs, who have not only been dispossessed but have also been denied even a meaningful presence in the discourse.

This is not an isolated instance, but it illustrates what can be described as a process of recontextualization of previous stages of the conflict. For example, an article published by the *Daily Mirror* on 8 June 1967 begins by stating that 'the fighting spirit of the Israelis today is the heritage of years of persecution, danger and struggle' (Falk 1967: 11). It recalls the history of oppression and struggle that Jewish people have endured throughout history, and the beginning of the Zionist movement and the waves of immigration that occurred before the creation of Israel. The article refers to the role of Britain in the fight against the Ottomans and in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which supported the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, despite the promises made by the British Government to their Arab allies that they would receive land as a reward for their support in the war against the Turks. The article points out that, despite the promises made, a Jewish home was not created, and it was only after World War II, 'with all its horror for the Jews', that more pressure was put on the success of this movement while clashes between the Arabs

and the Jews increased. The article justifies the use of violence in the context of the struggle of the Jewish people, stating that they ‘had to struggle for the creation of their nation and then to bring prosperity out of the desert’ and that

above all, they worked hard. Their achievements are tremendous. Today Israel is a strong and prosperous nation – even though it has always lived under the threat of an invasion from the surrounding Arab nations. (Falk 1967: 11)

1987

By 1987, the overall stance towards Israel is rather similar to that described above, although the analysis indicates that there are some differences in the coverage. ‘Israeli’ (328 occurrences) and ‘Israel’ (212 occurrences) are the most frequent terms for naming agents involved in the conflict, although, once again, the quantitative analysis does not distinguish between the agents and victims of violence. However, one of the most significant findings is the fact that ‘Palestinian’ has become the third term with the highest frequency (197 instances), which is in sharp contrast with the seventeen occurrences in 1948 and ten occurrences in 1967. Therefore, there is a change in the preferred way of identifying this group in comparison with the previous historical sample (even though we still find the term ‘Arabs’ 133 times), so that Palestinians are given some visibility in the discourse. However, the visibility that Palestinians have gained is not a positive one, as they only appear in the discourse in order to be described negatively. It can be argued that the term ‘Palestinian’ is used more often in 1987 because Palestinians are direct agents of the events that were unfolding (and because Arafat and the PLO had taken over Palestinian affairs, which

had previously been dealt with by Arab states), while in 1967 other Arab countries, namely Egypt, took the lead in the conflict. In addition, 'Palestine' only appears fifteen times, a frequency rate that is closer to the 31 instances counted in 1967 than to the 487 instances counted in 1948, which confirms that the increased frequency of 'Palestinians' in the discourse does not respond to a change in the stance towards the recognition of Palestine as an entity in its own right.

The analysis of the 1987 sample has also shown that the British Mandate was not acknowledged in any of the selected articles. However, 1948 was mentioned in two articles published by the *Guardian*, which also made references to 1967. One of these articles, published on 21 December 1987, reports on the protests of 'Arab citizens' that were taking place on that day against the handling by Israel of the 'unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that has left 19 Palestinians dead' (Black 1987a: 1). The article states that

Hundreds of thousands of Israeli Arabs – those who remained in the Jewish state after mass exodus of 1948 – are expected to stay away from work and schools in solidarity with their fellow Palestinians living under military rule in the occupied territories. (Black 1987a: 1)

This article is particularly interesting because of the rare reference to 'Israeli Arabs', the Palestinians who acquired the Israeli citizenship, as opposed to those Palestinians (explicitly named as such) who remained in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The article states that these minorities had remained 'docile' but were now undergoing a process of 'Palestinization' in response to the calls by the PLO to

identify with their fellow Arabs. The description of the 1948 events as a ‘mass exodus’ is also striking: the representation of the creation of Israel and the consequent forced eviction of Palestinians is remarkably decontextualized and fails to acknowledge the causes and consequences of these movements. On the following day, the *Guardian* published another article on the protests that had happened the previous day. This article states that

The protest by Israel’s 750,000 Arab citizens – those Palestinians who stayed behind in the Jewish state after the 1948 war – was dubbed by organisers as a ‘day of peace’, but it was accompanied by several clashes with the security forces, although these were on a much smaller scale than those across the pre-1967 ‘green line’ border. (Black 1987b: 1)

Here, the reference to the 1948 war is also decontextualized, and the historical significance of the pre-1967 ‘green line’ border is not explained either. Israeli Arabs are described as Israel’s Arab citizens and as Palestinians ‘who stayed behind’, which leads to a similar lack of historical understanding as regards the disappearance of Palestine, not to mention the experiences of Palestinians after the handling of the conflict during the British Mandate.

2009

The analysis of the 2009 sample has also shown that ‘Israel’ and ‘Israeli’ are, once more, the most frequent terms, with 2109 and 1655 occurrences, respectively. As observed in previous samples, ‘Israel’ is used both as a location and as an agent in

its own right, which takes actions and makes decisions. The following excerpt, published by *The Times* on 8 January 2009, illustrates this point:

Photographic evidence has emerged that proves that Israel has been using controversial white phosphorus shells during its offensive in Gaza [...].

There is also evidence that the rounds have injured Palestinian civilians, causing severe burns. (Evans and Frenkel 2009: 6)

In this excerpt we also observe the term ‘Palestinian’, which is the third most frequent term to refer to actors within the conflict (966 instances). Thus, ‘Palestinian’ has now become more visible, although ‘Palestine’ (70 occurrences) is, once again, mainly excluded from the discourse. ‘Zionist’ (30 occurrences) has also nearly vanished from the news coverage, partly because of the negative connotations associated with the term, and because ‘Israel’ and ‘Israeli’ are the preferred, recognized options to refer to this side of the conflict.

References to the British Mandate in the 2009 sample were very rare. In fact, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Guardian* and the *Sun* did not mention it, while *The Times* only referred to it on two occasions. One of these articles, published on 29 December 2008, stated that ‘ Hamas is committed ideologically to the destruction of the Jewish state and its replacement with an Islamic alternative over the full territory of the British mandate of Palestine’ (Beeston 2008: 6), without adding any further details regarding the British role in the early development of the conflict. The reference to the Mandate is, in fact, only mentioned in relation to the role of Hamas, with the sole intention of discrediting the latter, as though the ‘British mandate of Palestine’ were simply a

'territory'. With the lack of critical references to the (post)colonial connections with Britain the conflict is, in this respect, decontextualized. This process of decontextualization also affects the subsequent post-1948 history of Israel and Palestine. While some of the key dates in the conflict are mentioned in the narrative, this only happens occasionally and without critical engagement.

Conclusions

Overall, this study has provided insights into the ways in which the British press has stood in relation to the Israeli Palestinian conflict after the end of the British Mandate. The analysis has identified the fact that transformations have occurred in the ways in which the conflict has been reported in Britain. One of the study's main revelations is that the visibility and invisibility of certain terms to denote agents in the conflict has evolved over time, depending on the dominant political discourse and the specific interpretation of events evident in each sampled period. The diachronic evolution of these representations demonstrates that meanings and ideological positions are not fixed.

The historical approach of PCDA highlights the importance of exploring the contexts in which news articles were published, both in terms of the contemporary socio-political conditions of their production, and in terms of the discursive contextualization of those events in the news.

The analysis has also shed light on the ways in which each of the selected historical periods were contextualized discursively in relation to previous historical

events, other more recent happenings and, particularly, in relation to the historical connection with the British Mandate. We have observed that in the coverage of the Israeli Palestinian conflict events and actors have been contextualized, and sometimes recontextualized, differently in each sampled period. This contextualization, which has been achieved by reinforcing certain aspects of the conflict while overlooking other areas, goes hand in hand with the way that the media have represented the actors in the conflict. As discussed above, the clearest illustration of a substantial ideological shift in the sample took place between 1948 and 1967, when the 1948 events were reviewed and narrativized from a perspective that contrasted sharply with the ways in which they had originally been covered in 1948.

We can also draw some conclusions regarding the application of PCDA to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. First, we can recognize the ways in which the concept of ‘Orientalism’ applies to the media representations of Palestinians, including both negative representations as well as their exclusion from the discourse (as seen in the post-1948 samples). Indeed, the British coverage of the conflict takes the Israeli perspective as the ‘us’ position in the system of binary opposites (Hall 1997; Said 1978; van Dijk 1984), while Palestinians are discursively represented as ‘them’ or the ‘Other’, particularly in those articles in which the Palestinian viewpoints are absent from the narrative. The oversimplification of the complex history of the conflict, and the very fact that it can be rewritten by certain powers at certain moments, are themselves indicators of orientalist thought.

Moreover, the retelling of past events from different perspectives can be partly explained by the postcolonial nature of those representations. Indeed, the fact that the

British Mandate vanishes from the discourse and, when it is mentioned, is presented in a 'recontextualized' form tells us something about the ways in which the press in Britain recasts the nation's past responsibilities as colonial power and, consequently, reformulates its central role within the conflict. As discussed, this reformulation means, in the majority of cases, that there is a lack of reference to the British Mandate and the historical facts that underpin Britain's role in the development of the conflict before 1948. This represents an attempt to move away from the historical responsibilities derived from colonial encounters, and amounts to an impulse to defend contemporary political, financial and strategic interests. In sum, the orientalist perspective promoted by the western media cannot represent a comprehensive view of the identity and history of the 'other', as this approach can only offer an orientalised and more simplistic view that does not recognize the complexities of the situation. In effect, the superficial news coverage of the Palestinian history impedes an accurate understanding of contemporary struggles for political recognition and, above all, the deeper meaning of the urgent debates taking place in the mediated public sphere.

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