

U.S. Media Coverage of the Situation in Jerusalem: A Discourse Analysis Study

التغطية الإعلامية الأمريكية للوضع في القدس: دراسة في تحليل الخطاب

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ملخص الدراسة

تحلل هذه الدراسة التغطية الإخبارية من أهم صحيفتين أمريكيتين (النيويورك تايمز والواشنطن بوست) للإنتهاكات الإسرائيلية بحق الوجود العربي والإسلامي في مدينة القدس. اعتمدت الدراسة في تحليلها على منهج تحليل الخطاب النقدي، حيث تكونت عينة البحث من جميع التقارير الصحفية التي نشرتها الصحيفتان خلال شهرين. على مستوى التحليل النصي ناقشت الدراسة محتوى هذه التقارير والمفردات التي اختارها المرسلون والافتراضات التي اعتمدوا عليها في تغطيتهم للوضع في القدس. ركزت الدراسة أيضاً على أساليب انتقاء الخبر أو حذفه أو تسليط الضوء عليه أو تخفيف حدته. أيضاً حلت الدراسة السياقات السياسية والاقتصادية والثقافية المؤثرة على التغطية الإعلامية للصراع في الشرق الأوسط. تظهر الدراسة اتجاه دائم في أساليب انتقاء الأخبار والمعلومات والمفردات عادة ما يكون متناغماً أو مؤيداً للرواية والمبررات الإسرائيلية حيث أغفلت الصحيفتان المعلومات التي تتعلق بالممارسات الإسرائيلية بحق القدس والتي تعتبر مناقضة للقانون الدولي وقرارات الأمم المتحدة. كذلك تظهر الدراسة أن التغطية الإخبارية للوضع في القدس تجاهلت ذكر سياقاته التاريخية والسياسية المؤثرة. تختتم الدراسة بتقديم عدد من التوصيات على المستوى الفلسطيني والإسلامي والعربي والدولي بشأن حماية القدس ومقاومة الهجمات الإسرائيلية التي تستهدف الوجود العربي والإسلامي في مدينة القدس المحتلة، كما تقدم الدراسة نصائح بخصوص الدور الذي يتوجب أن تلعبه أية صحافة دولية مسؤولة في تغطيتها لأخبار الصراع في الشرق الأوسط.

Abstract

This study examines the way the two most influential U.S. newspapers (the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*) covered Israel's colonial practices targeting Arab and Muslim presence in Jerusalem. A text corpus was collected of all news reports published over a two-month period. The methodological framework used for this study is based on the *Critical Discourse Analysis* Approach, which looks at discourse at textual, intertextual and contextual levels. Texts were analyzed for propositional content, lexical selections, presuppositions and patterns of inclusion, exclusion, emphasis and mitigation. Contextual analysis involves accounting for political, economic and cultural contexts which influence the way the two major newspapers cover the situation. Analysis shows a consistent pattern of selection, inclusion and exclusion that largely favours Israeli rationales and terminology. No mention was made in these newspapers of Israeli measures targeting the holy city which are in violation of international law and UN resolutions. The study also shows lack of situating the coverage in its political and historical contexts. A call for action at Palestinian, Arab and Muslim and international levels is suggested to protect Jerusalem and resist Israeli Zionist attacks targeting Arab Muslim presence in the occupied City. Suggestions are also offered about the role of principled journalism in covering news of the Middle East conflict.

1. Introduction

The question of the Zionist occupation of Jerusalem since the 1967 War continues to occupy a central role in the collective consciousness of the *umma* (the Pan-Islamic community) for the religious, symbolic and nationalist significance Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque occupy in the collective consciousness of the *umma*. The Zionists' Judaizing practices in Jerusalem targeting Palestinian citizens, land, houses and

property have been part of a colonialist scheme aimed at erasing the centuries-old Islamic and Arab presence in Jerusalem by displacing its Arab residents. Such practices included seizing Arab property and land confiscation, denying Arab Jerusalemites' building permits, expelling residents and their representatives from the city, excavations under the foundations of Al-Aqsa Mosque and eradicating Islamic landmarks, the most recent of which was the bulldozing of the Muslim Cemetery of "Ma'man Allah". A host of other oppressive legislations and laws have been adopted with the goal of a slow ethnic cleansing of Arabs in Jerusalem and changing the demographic composition of the city by imposing a Jewish majority there. Jewish Zionist fanatics have been persistent in the scheme of Judaizing the City and establishing the alleged Solomon Temple on Al-Aqsa Mosque's location and ashes. These practices are in gross violation of acceptable moral codes and principles of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and UNSC and UNGA resolutions which prohibit changing the demographic make-up and physical character of the holy city of Jerusalem.

This study takes as its object of study the coverage by the two most influential U.S. newspapers (namely, the *New York Times*, *NYT*, and the *Washington Post*, *WP*) of the situation in Jerusalem and the Israeli colonizing activities in the holy city and its outskirts. Our interest in examining these newspapers derives from the fact that these newspapers enjoy a reputable national and international standing and a wide readership in the U.S. The discourse(s) of these newspapers on the Arab-Israeli conflict would find its way into discussions by policy-makers and politicians and is likely to set the public mood, and perhaps agenda, regarding key issues and attitudes towards the conflict and the different parties involved in it.

Therefore, it is fitting to closely analyze these newspapers' coverage since they are likely to influence the way Palestinians and Israelis and their actions are perceived in the U.S. Such perception is likely to have material consequences through influencing, shaping or endorsing U.S. or other parties' policies, a matter that will inevitably impact the individual and collective lives of the peoples living in the region. A second equally important objective is to bring attention to the role U.S. news media play in the ongoing conflict in occupied Palestine.

In his preface to Fairclough (1989: viii-ix), Christopher Candlin recognizes the necessity of selecting texts which do not "fall off the back of trucks and bear no special social significance", rather he stresses the importance of studying texts which

“evidence crucial moments in discourse where participants may be placed at social risk during communication, suffering disadvantage in consequence of the inequalities of communication.” The role of language is something one can not afford to neglect especially in our times when language has crucially become a central means of effecting and legitimizing war, economic and social instability, physical destruction and death. This could not be more relevant than in subjecting the coverage of these influential newspapers to critical analysis with the aim of sensitizing readers’ consciousness to the ways in which language can be used to exercise and perpetuate control and domination since in Fairclough’s (1989: 1) words “consciousness is the first step towards emancipation.”

In the following section, we situate the study in its political contexts by providing a brief discussion of the ongoing Zionist practices in Jerusalem and the attacks targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque and Arab Jerusalemites. In section three, we present the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. In section four, we discuss the findings of the study and provide illustrations from the analysis. In the final section, we conclude by offering recommendations on how to protect Jerusalem and the role of the *umma* regarding this holy city. We also offer suggestions on the role principled Western Journalism should take on in its coverage of Israel’s colonialism in occupied Palestine.

2. Political Background

Since the occupation of Jerusalem in June 1967, Israel has adopted a policy of ethnic cleansing of the Arab residents of the holy city through a matrix of practices, legislations and laws in an attempt to radically change the demographic make-up of the city in favour of Jews. The following is a brief summary of some of these practices and violations:

1. Issuing no less than 25 laws and a range of legislations and policies to confiscate Palestinian land and real estate in Jerusalem. The most serious of these laws is the Absentees' Property Law, the Law of Green Earth, the law of confiscation for the public interest, the Tax Law, particularly the arnona tax imposed on land and real estate, and the law of natural reserves.
2. Adopting a policy of denying Arab Palestinians new housing permits in the City and preventing them from expanding their housing either horizontally or vertically. Human Rights Watch has called this policy "discriminatory, arbitrary and an unlawful

interference in the home under international human rights laws." (Human Rights Watch, 2009)

3. There has been a systematic policy of home demolition under the pretext of not having building permits. According to the United Nations, more than 660 Palestinians have been evicted from their homes in 2009. Human Rights Watch (2009) has called such home demolitions a violation of international law and called on Israel to stop this policy.

4. Land confiscation, settlement expansion and the construction of and expansion of the Apartheid Wall with the explicit goal of removing Arab communities outside Jerusalem and annexing or expanding Zionist settlements to Jerusalem. This will make the Jewish-held territories more than the Palestinians owned territories (see, e.g., a report by Land Research Centre, 2007).

5. Withdrawing the identity cards of a large number of Jerusalem citizens under flimsy legal pretexts as a means for reducing the number of Arab Jerusalemites, thereby effecting a slow but steady demographic change.

6. Pressuring Jerusalemites and forcing them to migrate and expel them outside the holy city by force, as what happened with 160 families in Al-Salam suburb in Shua'fat neighborhood and other 40 families in Burj al-Amud near Bab Al-Amud area. More than 17,000 Jerusalemite emigrated from Jerusalem to countries outside Palestine since the Zionist occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, and about 12,000 Jerusalemite had to move to areas inside Palestine.

7. Repeatedly attacking both the sanctity of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and Muslim worshippers. These attacks totaled no fewer than 500 attacks since the Israeli occupation of the mosque in 1967. The most famous of these attacks are:

1. Burning of Al-Aqsa mosque in 21/8/1969. The arson burned a large part of its southern side, especially Salah Al-Din Alayuby platform, as well as the repeated attempts to burn the holy shrine.
2. Shooting fire repeatedly by soldiers, police and Zionist settlers at Muslim worshippers inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This caused a large number of martyrs and wounded; one of such serious attacks was on Friday 9/2/2007.
3. Preventing Muslims of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank from entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque for prayers.

8. Increasing excavations underneath Al-Aqsa Mosque and its holy yards. The Israeli occupation authorities started these excavations right after occupying East Jerusalem in the June War of 1967. Over the past twenty years, the Israeli occupation forces have been digging tunnels of different lengths to the west of Al-Aqsa mosque, i.e.

from Al-Buraq Wall up to the interior part of the holy city to the north-west. In addition, a number of tunnels have been discovered recently to the east, precisely in the Ein Selwan district, which are 600 meters long. The most recently discovered tunnel extends underneath Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Cup area. This is about ten meters deep. In other areas it reaches some 20 meters deep. Its shaft is no less than 5 meters to allow cars, vehicles and bulldozers to enter inside the tunnel.

9. Israeli colonial settlers managed to occupy 75 estates close to the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, in addition to ten prosperities, which are subject to be occupied unless they are rescued for their landlords.

10. Zionists managed to usurp thousands of acres in a number of districts of Jerusalem under draconian laws for the construction or fattening of Jewish colonies; Maaleh Adumim, the largest settlement in Jerusalem, has expanded so widely that it borders the Red Khan area which is located midway between Jerusalem and Jericho.

11. The Israeli occupation authorities have almost completed the construction of the Apartheid Wall such that Jerusalem is completely severed from the West Bank cities and villages.

12. The Israeli occupation is trying to increase the number of Jewish settlers in the holy city to reach one million settlers through the fulfillment of a decimal plan which ends in year 2010. The Israeli occupation is trying intensively to achieve this objective as soon as possible through the enforcement of unlawful laws, policies and procedures against the Palestinian residents of the holy city.

3. Research Design: A Critical Discourse Analytic Approach

In our highly mediated, complex world, the news media are ubiquitous and influential sources of knowledge-gaining, agenda-setting and opinion-shaping. The media play a significant role in the dissemination and inculcation of a social group's values, beliefs and ideologies, and at the same time they are profoundly pivotal in constructing, influencing or challenging how one social group – in a broad sense – perceives, relates to, and represents 'other' social groups. Journalists are not detached from the broader cultural, socio-political, economic and institutionalized conditions and contexts within which they operate and make sense of the world (see also Henry and Tator, 2002: 5). On this view, journalists are inherently selective as they often make deliberate choices, for example, about what information to include, exclude, foreground or background, which lexical selections to describe and evaluate news

actors and events, for instance, whether to describe Palestinian actors as ‘freedom fighters’, ‘terrorists’ or ‘gunmen’, or whether to call the territories Israel occupied since 1967 ‘occupied territories’, ‘disputed territories’, ‘Judea And Samaria’ or ‘territories’. At the same time, journalists take into consideration what their target audience is and which socio-political, cultural or professional values and contexts to draw on and function within. These various dimensions of news production and reception necessarily contribute to the construction of versions (i.e. representations) of reality which bear the ideological imprints of their producers and the social institutions and cultural milieus in which they operate.

The conception and treatment of “news” as *discourse representation* could not be more evident than in reading a news item about a high-impact political event say, a Palestinian attack against Israelis or an Israeli army incursion into occupied Palestinian territories in news coverage of the Intifada by *The New York Times*, the British daily *The Guardian*, the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Ayyam* or the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*. What we would see in these papers are predictably different and possibly competing ‘representations’ of the same reality; each representation has its specific frames, meanings, structures and conditions of news production and reception.

New conceptions of discourse and a politicized view of language, particularly since the early 1970’s, have given rise to diverse approaches within discourse analysis which have focused on the interplay between language, meaning making and social structures. Widdowson (1995: 158) points out that discourse is “in vogue and vague”. This popularity and vagueness of *discourse*, according to Jaworski and Coupland (1999), can be related to two simultaneous developments. The first involves “a shift in epistemology, in the theorising of knowledge” (p. 3), whereby many disciplines do not simply see language as “a neutral medium for the transmission and reception of pre-existing knowledge”(p. 4), but rather as playing a central role in the construction of knowledge. Jaworski and Coupland point out that this shift in epistemology is generally referred to in the social sciences as the "*linguistic turn*". The second development is due to the expanding scope of linguistics as it has moved away from being “an inward-looking discipline” (p. 4) that tended to focus on providing grammatical and sentence-level descriptions of language *to* the broader and contextualized study of language in its socio-historical, political and cultural formations and contexts.

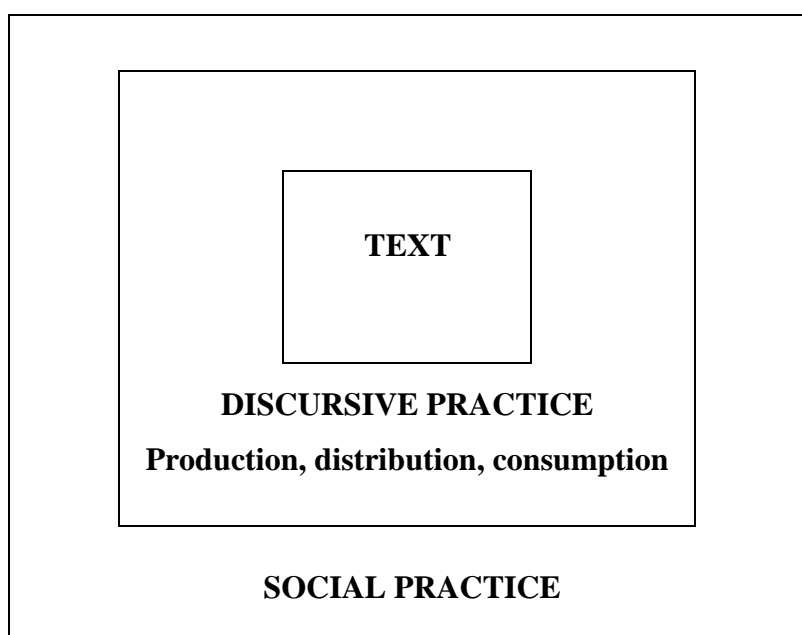
A particularly influential approach to discourse analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is not a single method or a unitary approach but tends to be thought of as an *umbrella approach* within which different research paradigms can be used for the analysis of text and talk. CDA is a discourse analytic approach that critically examines how social power, inequality and control can be expressed, legitimized, enacted and/or challenged in text and talk. Wodak (1996) contends that given the complexity and the multidimensional nature of the interplay between discourse practices and social structures, a multidisciplinary approach based on CDA can effectively uncover various facets of such relationships. Thus, methodological paradigms informed by CDA have drawn on various analytical categories from systemic functional linguistics, pragmatics including speech act theory, conversational analysis, social semiotics, rhetoric and argumentation theory, among others.

Despite various significant distinctions in methodological focus and fields of interest, the emancipatory, interventionist position of CDA is seen as the driving force for research by many CDA practitioners who align themselves with those groups negatively affected by social and political inequality and domination, which are largely expressed and perpetuated in and through discourse. According to Wodak et al (1999: 8), taking a socially neutral stance towards issues of power relations and inequality, as would be the case in much mainstream linguistic work, “assists in maintaining an unjust status quo”. For this reason, CDA proponents, according to Kress (1990), openly acknowledge the political nature of their work since issues of power, ideology and bias in texts manifest themselves in the realms of public discourse. Van Dijk (2001: 96) holds that CDA is a discourse analysis “with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power”. Therefore, it is fitting to subject the discourse of U.S. news media to close analysis given the influential role these media play in influencing, shaping or endorsing U.S or other parties' policies and practices. This will inevitably impact the individual and collective lives of the peoples living in the Middle East.

This study examines how the two most influential U.S. newspapers (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) covered the situation in Jerusalem and Israeli attacks and measures in the holy occupied city. The analytical framework proposed for this study is mainly modeled after Fairclough's (1992, 1995 and 2003) CDA model for the analysis of discourse in society. This model is based on the view that

any discursive event consists of three layers: (1) it is a spoken or written text, (2) it is an instance of discursive practice which involves the production and interpretation of the text and (3) it is an instance of social practice (see Figure 1.1 below). Fairclough (1992) argues that any analysis of a discursive event should go through these three dimensions.

Figure 2.1: Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse (1992: 73)



The first level in this CDA model involves a description of the formal features of the text which covers traditional levels of linguistic structures such as phonology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics as well as textual organization such as cohesion between sentences and other aspects of textual structures above the sentence. In the second level, discursive practice is seen as mediating the relation between text and sociocultural practice. Here critical analysts probe into processes of text production, distribution and reception. Fairclough (1992) takes an intertextual view of text that relates to the various traces of other discourses, genres and voices, etc, drawn upon in the production and comprehension of a text. The third level in Fairclough's model focuses on explaining the interplay between discourse as a social practice and other social practices and structures. Here analysts examine the situational, institutional and wider socio-political and cultural contexts and practices in which the text is embedded. Power relations, hegemony and ideological processes are particularly scrutinized in their relation to the particular discursive event.

Given the scope of the study, the proposed analytical framework examines the newspapers' coverage at textual and contextual levels. Data analysis will specifically

focus on (1) examining topics and propositional content communicated in the texts, (2) examining discourse meanings, namely, lexical selections, presuppositions and implications as well as patterns of exclusion, inclusion, emphasis and mitigation, and (3) linking (1) and (2) to their ideological, political, cultural and institutional contexts.

For purposes of analysis, all news reports published during the months of September and October 2010 mentioning Jerusalem and Zionist settlements were selected. The sampled news texts formed a total of 32 news reports. Upon compiling the data corpus, texts were first coded for standard categories such as text type, day and month of publication, reporter's names, etc. Then, texts were read for propositional content, lexical choices, presuppositions and implications and particular processes of exclusion, inclusion, emphasis and mitigation. At the same time, notes about the situational contexts of the coded materials were also added wherever appropriate.

4. Discussion of Findings

Analysis of the news texts shows a consistent trend in the newspapers in representing the issue of Jerusalem and the roles different parties play in it. A number of central themes dominate the coverage that provide a particular representation of the situation. These themes largely reflect the position of the U.S. administration regarding Jerusalem, but there are also subliminal themes which reflect the editorial policy each newspaper has for the conflict. This policy is linguistically reflected in a specific pattern of selection of references, inclusion and exclusion. Such linguistic practices are likely to result in a specific construction of the situation. As we shall illustrate below, this construction is largely favorable to Israeli rationales and positions on the issue of Jerusalem while the Palestinian perspective and references are either pushed into the background or opted out.

4.1 Jewish colonization in Jerusalem: Housing construction and neighborhoods

The Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem during the War of 1967 marked a beginning of Israel's colonialist activities in the eastern part of the city and the surrounding areas. This occupation is deemed illegal under international law and pertinent UN resolutions which regard Israel's settlement activities in the City illegal. Further, the vast majority of the world countries do not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the occupied part of Jerusalem in 1967.

In stark breach of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and UN resolutions, Israel continues its illegal colonial construction in Jerusalem and a slow depopulation of the Arab population in the city. Since its occupation, Israel has built a number of colonies inside the city and its surrounding areas. However, there seems to be a pattern of referring to the colonies built in the city as "neighborhoods" or "settlements" or "housing construction" as illustrated in the extracts below.

1. Israel ended an unofficial construction freeze in Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem on Friday, announcing plans to build 238 housing units...The Housing Ministry's announcement for a new set of construction tenders across the country included units in two Jewish neighborhoods built in areas of East Jerusalem conquered by Israel in 1967. A spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed the plans for the neighborhoods, Ramot and Pisgat Ze'ev (The New York Times, October 15, 2010)
2. Israel has ended its unofficial building freeze in east Jerusalem, giving the green light for hundreds of new homes in Jewish neighborhoods of the traditionally Arab sector of the city - and dealing another potential blow to U.S.-led efforts to salvage peace negotiations... Israel's Housing Ministry signed off on the construction of 238 new homes in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods of Ramot and Pisgat Zeev as part of a larger announcement allowing developers to bid on thousands of housing contracts across Israel (The Washington Post, October 15, 2010)
3. The president's ill-advised attempt to force a freeze of Israeli housing construction in Jerusalem and the West Bank could cause the breakdown this weekend of direct talks on a final settlement, only a month after they began (The Washington Post, September 15, 2010).
4. For many in Ariel, the growing boycott is something of a surprise. Ariel, an elongated urban settlement that lies about 12 miles inside the West Bank, has long been labeled in Israel as part of the "consensus" — local code for settlements destined to be included within Israel's borders under any peace deal with the Palestinians. It often appears as one of the regular dots on Israeli weather maps (The New York Times, September 9, 2010).

Here it is worth noting that references such as "neighborhood", "urban", "housing construction", "housing" and "homes" are likely to trigger images of 'peacefulness' and 'civility' and leave the implication that 'building houses and homes' is a social and human necessity, and not a colonial and deliberate scheme to usurp Palestinian land and property which is prohibited under international law. In addition, the word "settlement" generally has favorable connotations in European and American cultures and does not evoke negative meanings for Palestinians living in the occupied territories. These colonial settlements are built in stark contradiction with the actual reality of these places which are heavily fortified areas, which as Friel and Falk (2007) point out, are largely positioned near Palestinian densely populated areas thereby creating daily points of friction between Palestinians on the one side, and the Israeli army and armed settlers, on the other. These colonies have some of the most extremist and hard-line of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories who deny any rights for Palestinian Arabs and Muslims in the holy city. Add to that, failing to refer

to these places as colonial constructions built on Palestinian confiscated land takes away from the reader's radar the illegal nature of Jewish presence in East Jerusalem.

5. As if to illustrate that warning, Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces in and around the Old City of Jerusalem on Wednesday after an Israeli security guard fatally shot a Palestinian resident of Silwan, a volatile and hotly contested East Jerusalem neighborhood where a few hundred Jewish settlers live among tens of thousands of Palestinians. (The New York Times, September 22, 2010)
6. Israel has ended its unofficial building freeze in east Jerusalem, giving the green light for hundreds of new homes in Jewish neighborhoods of the traditionally Arab sector of the city - and dealing another potential blow to U.S.-led efforts to salvage peace negotiations... Israel's Housing Ministry signed off on the construction of 238 new homes in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods of Ramot and Pisgat Zeev as part of a larger announcement allowing developers to bid on thousands of housings contracts across Israel (The Washington Post, October 15, 2010)

In extract 5, the reporter uses the epithet "hotly contested" to refer to the Arab Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in "a volatile and hotly contested neighborhood". Note also the use of the present simple verb "live" which connotes that this presence of these settlers in occupied Jerusalem is a natural and normal presence that has been there for a long period of time. Referring to Israeli occupation forces in Jerusalem as "security forces" adds to the overall impression the reporter seems to leave of a normal and unproblematic Jewish presence in the occupied City of Jerusalem. All of these references put the illegal Jewish presence and the continued attacks against Arab Jerusalemites on an equal footing with the legitimate concerns of its Arab residents who have been defending their suburb. To the uninformed reader, this may leave the implication that the two sides have competing claims on the same area. Amnesty International has called settler attacks in the Silwan area and Israeli army attacks a violation of human rights. Failing to mention the context of the illegality of Jewish settlement activities in the occupied city weakens the legitimacy of Palestinian claims and actions against settlers' activities. That is, it may prejudice the reader's understanding of the situation in terms of a border conflict and not an occupying force illegally confiscating Palestinian land.

In a related vein, it is important to take notice of not only what is included in the news report, but also what is excluded or missing from the same news text. The pattern of including or excluding specific information may be ideologically motivated in the sense of channeling a reader's understanding of a particular event in a certain direction. The omission of important contextual information from the texts dealing with the question of Jerusalem seems to be consistent across news texts in the two newspapers. For instance, in extract 7, the reporter avoids mentioning the fact of the

illegality under international law of Israel's annexation of Jerusalem. In fact, there seems to be a misrepresentation of the Palestinian position regarding the situation of Jerusalem which the Palestinians want as the capital of their future state in case of any agreement with the Zionist entity.

7. Both East Jerusalem and the Golan were officially annexed by Israel through parliamentary votes, so by Israeli law they count as Israeli territory. That is not true of the West Bank, which the Palestinians want as their future state and where Israel has settled more than 300,000 Jewish citizens. But Israel is expected in any peace deal to hold on to some settlement blocks and to give over to the Palestinians parcels of its own land in exchange. Under those circumstances, the bill in question would seem also to require approval of such an exchange by referendum (The New York Times, October 11, 2010).

While Israel's annexation of Jerusalem is not recognized by the majority of the international community which regards this Zionist step as illegal under the principles of international law and in violation of Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention (c.f. Friel and Falk, 2007: 17), the question of Israeli colonial activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank is largely presented as an obstacle to U.S. efforts to save the peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis.

8. Israel has ended its unofficial building freeze in east Jerusalem, giving the green light for hundreds of new homes in Jewish neighborhoods of the traditionally Arab sector of the city - and dealing another potential blow to U.S.-led efforts to salvage peace negotiations... Israeli settlement slowdown imposed last November in the West Bank did not officially include east Jerusalem, which Israel considers part of its capital. The issue of Israeli settlement building is threatening to derail recently renewed Mideast peace talks. (The Washington Post, October 15, 2010)

Thus, Jewish settlement construction is criticized for practical reasons, namely, endangering the two-state solution. Israeli's colonization activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank are contrary to international law, something which is difficult to understand in the context of this article. Israel has refused to abide by international law provisions and a host of UNSC resolutions and a ruling of the International Court of Justice on the Apartheid Wall, all of which clearly prohibit any settlement activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank. In all of these articles, Israel's responsibility for the current political impasse and the violations of international law and Palestinian human rights are not clearly established in legal terms.

4.2 Lack of reference to reports by human rights organizations and the international law

It is important to note that respectable human rights organizations have consistently reported on violations of human rights committed by Israeli occupation forces and settlers in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank. These organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Israeli Information Center for

Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (a.k.a. B'Tselem) are regarded as authoritative organizations whose work focuses principally on documenting human rights abuses by Israel.

It is striking to notice that despite the extensive and regular reporting by these organizations on the situation in the occupied territories and Israel including Israeli violations in Jerusalem targeting its Arab Jerusalemites and its Muslim antiquities and shrines, there is no reference to their reportage in the two newspapers. One can safely say that there seems to be a consistent avoidance of any reference to the periodical reporting of these organizations. The ostensible reluctance to draw on the reports published by these organizations is ideologically striking since these violations have been committed by the Israeli military. The suppression of quite extensive and available information on Israeli violations may be driven by editorial policies given that the inclusion of any such information would have definite political implications. That is, reporting on Israeli violence as documented by human rights groups would call into question the U.S. military, diplomatic, political and moral support for Israel and would contradict an attack-retaliation frame that posits Israel as 'victim' of Palestinian violence.

The failure to draw on reports by respected human rights organizations is not the only dimension that is missing in the two newspapers' coverage. In fact, the paper fails to contextualize and frame the conflict in relation to the terms of international law and the numerous UNSC resolutions on the situation in Jerusalem and Israel's illegal activities in the holy city. For instance, United Nations Security Council Resolution 474, which was issued in 1980, condemned Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and stated that,

Deplore[s] the persistence of Israel, in changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, Gravely concerned over the legislative steps initiated in the Israeli Knesset with the aim of changing the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem... 3. Reconfirms that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War ... 4. Reiterates that all such measures which have altered the geographic, demographic and historical character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council....

The point we would like to make here is that in failing to anchor the conflict in international law and by excluding reportage on human rights violations, the newspapers maintain a dominant representation of the situation in Jerusalem which largely ignores Israel's responsibility for the deteriorating situation of the City's Arab population and the illegal and oppressive measures targeting them.

4.3 Lack of providing the historical and political contexts

This brings us to another important dimension which has been largely absent in the coverage of the situation of Jerusalem. It relates to the extent to which the NYT and the WP contextualize their coverage in historical and political contexts. Little argumentation is needed to reason that for the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a historicization of current episodes of the conflict is necessary to achieve an informed understanding of the situation; it helps to ensure that readers have a much broader perspective on the structural causes and origins of this long-standing conflict and how and why we got to this stage of the conflict. These origins primarily include the war of 1948, the massacres against the Palestinians and the concomitant establishment of the State of Israel, the disintegration of Palestinian society and the flight and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of the remaining parts of historic Palestine, the concentration of Palestinians in refugee camps in the Occupied Territories and across the Middle East, the issue of right of return for these refugees in accordance with UNGA's resolutions, the first Intifada and its aftermath, the so-called Oslo peace process and the Camp David summit in July 2000.

It is striking to observe that the coverage is reported in *a historical* way, and there seems to be a noticeable absence of these central events and issues, even in news analysis articles and background features. Further, references to the aforementioned events seem to be rather selective, incomplete and de-emphasized as core issues that explain the current Israeli behavior in Jerusalem. Of course, a total and detailed account of the conflict's historical trajectory is rather difficult to include in one news report, yet averting to situate the current situation in its political and historical contexts of the broader conflict, readers would be constrained, or even misled, in how they approach the situation and understand the roles and actions of the various participants in it.

At the same time, our analysis reveals a predilection to weigh up particular interpretations of events over others. For example, the conflict in Jerusalem is often

problematized as posing obstacles to the peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis. Other alternative explanations, which frame the situation in terms of Israel's colonial activities and ethnic cleansing of the Arabs and Muslims and the latter's political struggle for self-determination, seem to be given marginal attention in the newspapers. Philo and Berry (2004: 245) note that:

The absence of key elements of Palestinian history makes it difficult to understand their perspective. Their actions could appear without context and in consequence they may be seen as 'initiating' the trouble... the fact of the military occupation and its consequences is crucial to an understanding of the rationale of Palestinian actions.

This scant reference to the past and lack of historical background knowledge in explicating the underlying causes of the conflict have also been noted in a study by Philo and Berry (2004: 221) which examined coverage by the BBC1 and ITV of the second Palestinian Intifada and the viewers' perceptions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict during the second Intifada. They note a paucity of historical background knowledge and point out that "without any understanding of the origins or history of the conflict or the rationales of those involved, the dispute could be seen simply as an argument between 'bad neighbours' or just an undifferentiated mess of inexplicable violence." They point out that Palestinian perspectives, narratives and explanations are underrepresented and on occasion are totally missing from the journalists' accounts of the Intifada.

5. Contextual Analysis: Factors Influencing the News Coverage

An analysis of the newspapers' coverage needs not only to examine the discourse meanings and how they are mapped onto linguistic structures, but also needs to look at the broader contexts which shape and influence these meanings and structures. Here we I attempt to answer the key question why journalists of the NYT and WP report on the situation in Jerusalem they way we have shown above. Answering this question requires an explanation of a set of interrelated influences which, we argue, play a central role in the overall determination of the newspapers' coverage. These include political, cultural and economic factors.

The way U.S. news media cover the Middle East conflict relates directly to domestic political and cultural contexts and influences. The NYT and the WP are influential media outlets which obviously operate within a political culture that is constituted and influenced to a large measure by its relations with U.S. government policy-making circles, other media industries, political elites, lobbying and special

interests groups and by financial and consumerist considerations (cf. Bagdikian, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McChesney, 2002; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Page, 1996; Slater, 2007). It needs little argument to conjecture that such relations largely determine and influence how the two newspapers report on and explain the Intifada. McChesney (2002) holds that one of the structural limitations of U.S. professional journalism is its reliance on government and credentialed sources as the basis of news coverage. Such reliance gives the news an 'establishmentarian' bias to the extent that any journalist who steps outside what is discussed in official circles, or raises issues that those in power prefer not to discuss, tends to be considered as "unprofessional" or "dissident".

Investigating the various mechanisms the Israel Lobby puts in place to maintain an unconditional American support for Israel in the media, Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) argue that a central objective of the Israel lobby in the media is "to ensure that public discourse about Israel echoes the strategic and moral rationales" which are used to justify strong U.S. support to Israel (p. 168), and "to make it less likely that mainstream media organizations will report information or events that portray Israel negatively." (p. 175) This might be due to the fact that "an open, candid discussion of Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories, Israeli history, and the lobby's role in shaping America's Middle East policy might easily lead more Americans to question existing policy towards Israel and to call for a relationship with Israel that more effectively serves the U.S. national interest." (p. 168). Fear of coming under fire from powerful pro-Israel groups in the U.S. or being called "anti-Semitic" is likely to play a role in the NYT's and WP's decision to tone down their criticisms of Israel's action or to exclude or background explanations and information which present Israel unfavourably.

Add to that, in the age of commercially-driven journalism and media conglomerates, a newspaper's orientation towards making profits and increasing revenues has a considerable influence on how it covers a particular event and the perspective from which it approaches this event. Any newspaper coverage is determined in part by the audience on whom the newspaper depends for its sales and by the sources of money it receives from particular interest groups and advertisers. These factors are also necessary for an understanding of why the two newspapers cover the Palestinian question they do. In this respect, ownership of media outlets plays a part in shaping and influencing media output in a way which serves the

interests of the owners, shareholders and investors. McChesney (2002) points out that an important structural limitation of the U.S. media relates to the concentration of the media into a handful of conglomerates and corporations which are oriented to profit-making and less to independent journalism.

Take, for instance, the NYT which is not different in this sense from the major U.S. media corporations with the expectation that its news coverage is shaped in part by its relations with its owners, major financial contributors and subscription base. Predictably, as a private, profit-seeking business, the NYT has a vested interest in courting certain sections of society, especially these sections which are powerful, affluent and well-resourced. It is predictable that coverage of the situation in Jerusalem and other situations and events would be tailored in a way that aims to placate or win over influential segments of its readership. The scale of distribution and the interest in increasing sales rates play an important factor in determining what is included or excluded in the NYT's discourse and choosing what is fit and not fit to print.

Piety (1983: 125-26) holds that the pro-Israeli "bias" in the NYT is partly explained by the fact that New York City has the second largest Jewish population outside of Israel. Further, the Jewish population, according to Piety, is mainly concentrated in urban areas and is largely affluent, highly professional and relentless when it comes to defending Israel's concerns and actions. Such constituencies are sensitive to any coverage perceived to be critical of Israel and obviously have a vested interest in promoting a particular view of the Middle East, Zionism and Israel's relations with the Palestinians and the Arabs. This is likely to put constraints on the tone and scope of criticism the NYT may level on Israeli violence, particularly if such criticisms might incur boycotts and threats of subscription cancellations, withholding contributions, losing advertising money, lawsuits, letter writing campaigns to editors and journalists or other forms of economic and social pressures.

Finally, journalists as individuals and active social actors are not detached from the cultural environment in which they work. They internalize and supposedly share with their audiences similar cultural schemas, values, lifestyles and ways of doing and saying things and understanding the world. In this respect, two main factors may well explain the generally favourable presentation of Israel in the NYT. The first relates to an age-old negative representation of the Arab and Muslim Orient in dominant western discourses. A network of themes, tropes and images that have long

dominated western discourses on the Arab Muslim Orient are those of violence, irrationality, rage and terrorism (Karim, 2003; Ghareeb, 1983; Richardson, 2004; Said, 1978, 1997). Second, at the opposite end of this spectrum, Israel has often been positively constructed as part of the 'us' camp. The identification with Israel may be driven by a perception of it sharing with the U.S. similar core cultural values, historical beginnings and the foundational myth of nation building, liberal democratic institutions, capitalist free market economy and a common belief in Judeo-Christian heritage. Journalists are socialized in this cultural climate which makes *some* of them amenable to Israeli rationales, economic and cultural values and lifestyles than to the Palestinians, Muslims and Arabs who are supposedly different culturally, linguistically and politically.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has examined the coverage by two major American newspapers of the question of Jerusalem and Israel's illegal practices targeting the city's Arab Muslim presence. The analysis shows a tendency by these newspapers to background or avoid any mention of Israel's colonizing activities in the city. This has been largely implemented through failing to report on these Israeli violations although various human rights organizations reported regularly on these violations. In a closely related theme, reporters largely ignored the illegal nature of Israel's practices in Jerusalem which are in contravention of international law and U.N. resolutions. Rather reporters seem to problematize Israel's settlement activities in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank on the ground that they are detrimental to the so-called peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Our linguistic analysis shows that lexical selections and patterns of inclusion and exclusion are largely attuned to Israeli rationales and perspective with reference to the situation in Jerusalem. For instance, Jewish settlements in east Jerusalem and the surrounding areas are predominantly referred to as "neighborhood" which mystifies the illegal nature of these colonies and the threat they pose to the Muslim and Arab presence and character of Jerusalem. Reporters' failure to contextualize the current clashes between Arab Jerusalemites, on the one hand, and Israeli army and settlers, on the other, in the contexts of Israel's occupation of the eastern part of the city since 1967 and its persistent attempts since then to Judaize the city, is ideologically motivated as it contributes to an overall editorial policy favorable to

Israel. At the same time, the political and historical contexts of the Middle East conflict and Palestinian rationales and narratives in explaining their political violence are barely mentioned in the newspaper. Consequently, Palestinian actions may appear to some readers as unjustified or inexplicable. The study holds that this pattern of omission, inclusion and emphasis is ideologically motivated and is largely attuned to Israeli positions and rationales.

Against the background of these relentless Zionist efforts and draconian measures targeting the city, multiple duties are required from all Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and the international community. These can be summed up as follows:

At the Palestinian level:

1. The Palestinian people is called upon to rally up their energies and powers to remain steadfast in resisting by all means available the Zionist occupation in Jerusalem, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque, and in all of occupied Palestine. To achieve this, it is imperative for all Palestinians in Palestine and in the Diaspora to form a united front in fighting the Israeli occupiers. In this respect, national unity is a first indispensable step in the collective struggle to protect Jerusalem and our Arab and Islamic heritage and history in it. The Palestinians must stop internal divisions and stand side by side against instigators and those who sow disunity, hatred and conflict.
2. The Palestinian leadership and factions as well as Palestinian civil institutions and forces must work urgently to support the steadfastness of our people in Jerusalem who are at the forefront in defending the City. This support must be translated into practical measures and steps. A collective effort must be made to prosecute Israel before international legal bodies such as the International Court of Justice, the UN Human Rights Council and in individual countries. Material and moral support should be made available to employ highly experienced lawyers to expose the abhorrent, colonial face of Israel and to show the justice of the Palestinian cause.
3. The Legislative Council, the Cabinet and the Presidency must do their best in contacting the Arab, Islamic and international parliaments to act quickly and decisively to denounce and stop the Israeli war crimes against our people and his sacred places.
4. Journalistic practice is fundamentally a social practice which is inextricably embedded in social contexts, economic interests and cultural and ideological values. A sensitized awareness of this relationship and the potent role the media plays begs

the question about what Palestinian journalists, students of media and communication and English could do to address Western public opinion in a way to improve the latter's approach to covering news of occupied Palestine. Below we list of these essential things:

4.1 Providing specific courses to Palestinian journalists and students of media and communication and English which explore the institutional structures including processes of western media production and reception processes journalists and students of media and communication and English.

4.2. The inclusion of courses in *critical media literacy* and *discourse analysis* in university curricula, especially to students of English and media. Through critical media literacy and discourse analytic programs students learn to examine, problematize and critique media representations, images, frames and meaning-making processes by which the media help reproduce and promote existing power relations and structures of domination. Readers, including students, need to approach news texts critically and to bring along a repertoire of skills and parameters to identify and unpack the hidden meanings and ideologies in media texts. These skills can be acquired through answering the following key questions:

1. What actors are involved in the texts and how are they constructed?
2. What worldviews and perspectives and ideologies are presented in the texts?
3. What are the linguistic realizations of these ideologies and perspectives?
4. How does the journalist position himself or herself in relation to the readers and to the actors and events reported?
5. Which opinions and assumptions are presented as natural, commonsensical, categorical or presupposed?
6. How are oppositional perspectives framed or delegitimized?
7. What are the possible readings of the text?
8. How and why a particular reading is dominant and more readily available than the other readings?

4.3 Knowledge of the mechanisms and processes involved in the manufacturing of public opinion in the West and how to effectively influence this public opinion in ways which serve the Palestinian people's interests.

4.4 Specialized training workshops to Palestinian media spokespeople and commentators on strategies and language including proper vocabulary and expressions used to approach western media and public. This involves a keen awareness not to repeat the vocabulary, expressions and language pro-Israel advocates use in Western media and political circles.

4.5 Here it is worth noting that Israel's Foreign Ministry has poured millions of dollars on its propaganda machine (hasbarah) been producing manuals for its advocates in the West directing them on using specific frames, vocabulary, stereotypes and references when addressing Western audiences. Therefore, this Zionist propaganda needs to be countered by manuals or handbooks which instruct Palestinian journalists and media students on the effective strategies and language used to address Western audiences.

At the Arab and Islamic levels:

1. The Arab and Islamic masses must support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in confronting the Zionist enemy and defending the holy Aqsa Mosque and protecting it by all means. Here Arabs and Muslims must employ financial, diplomatic and moral support to the Palestinian people who are defending the first Qibla and third holiest mosque in Islam. All means of print and visual media need to be employed in the service of raising peoples' awareness of the threats facing Jerusalem.

2. Arab and Islamic countries must utilize resources that put the issue of Jerusalem and Israeli violations of international law at the forefront of world issues in the UNSC and World Court. Decisive actions against the Zionist entity need to be taken to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people and their sacred places. This can be done by taking the following steps:

A – Arab states should sever all diplomatic and trade relations with Israel

B – Arab and Muslim states should provide material and moral support to the Palestinian people in resisting occupation and Zionist aggression on the holy sites.

C – The Arab League and the Islamic Conference Organization must shoulder their responsibility by taking practical steps to alleviate the serious situation facing Arab Jerusalemites and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

3. Arab funds need to be provided to own media outlets which have influence on various Western audiences in a way which serves Arab and Palestinian causes and present the true picture of Israel's colonial practices in occupied Palestine. Alternatively, money needs to be made available to publishing newspapers and TV stations which reach out to various groups and constituencies in the U.S. and Europe and present the Arab, Muslim and Palestinian issues and concerns.

At the International Level:

1. Conscientious people all over the world should support the steadfastness of the Palestinians in defending their Islamic and Christian sanctuaries and landmarks and assist in restoring the legitimate political and national rights of the Palestinian people.
2. Governments worldwide must pressure the Israeli occupation state to stop its unjust aggression on Jerusalem, the holy sites and the Palestinian people.
3. The international organizations must react positively with the just demands of our people and take the necessary decisions to stop the Zionist enemy from practicing its brutal and immoral crimes against our people, land, holy places and history.
4. People all over the world need to continue the campaign for imposing boycott, sanctions and divestment on Israel. This boycott must target all academic, economic, political and cultural sectors of the Zionist entity so as to force Israel to comply with the provisions of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

By and large, journalists need to take into account the full complexity of the political and historical context of the events being reported. Simply focusing on the here-and-now is likely to restrict the scope of understanding of the conflict and ultimately results in favoring one particular worldview over another. This does not mean that journalists must include the complete history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they need to make judicious efforts to include all relevant information that would enable readers to have an informed understanding of the conflict. Ze'ev Chafets rightly states that

The Middle East is an area that produces a great deal of news – but very little information... A national debate on the wisdom of American involvement and the parameters of American policy in the Middle East depends on the flow of reliable, comprehensive and balanced information from the area. It is the job of American press to provide that information...anything less will distort America's view of the region. (1984, cited in Barranco & Shyles, 1988: 178)

This recommendation is as relevant today as it was in 1984. Therefore, journalists have a responsibility towards their readers to explain the political, cultural and historical contexts and conditions within which conflicts take place and to realize the effects of their language on the way readers are positioned to understand the events reported. This is largely because “the average citizen depends on printed and broadcast news and should not have to run to the reference section of a library every time he or she reads or watches the daily news.” (Bagdikian, 2004: 102)

It might be argued that such a contextualization may be untenable in news television which is overwhelmingly orientated towards sound bytes, snapshots, easily digestible and recognizable frames and advertising time. This may not necessarily be the case in print news, particularly with editorials, op-eds and background features which are not equally bound by such constraints. It necessitates the provision of more space for a fuller and more in-depth account of the contexts of the event reported in order to provide the readership with enough information to form well-informed opinions about the event.

In addition, journalists are active social members who are in a privileged position to speak to all members of society. Therefore, it is their responsibility to question the authority of the establishment, to speak truth to power, to interrogate the established order and conventional wisdom, to ask questions that those in power do not want to answer and to be skeptical about what the government and its affiliates present as the 'truth'. They need to seek alternative media voices and sources which do not often get to be heard in the mainstream media and which are much less influenced by the economic and political constraints of their mainstream counterparts. It is within such a responsible journalistic climate that the press and the news media in general function as a watchdog to hegemonic power and other powerful social players.

In international conflicts there are at least two sides to every story and there are even divisions of opinion within each side. Hence there is always a need to rely on information and reports from largely neutral and credible sources. In this respect, journalists should rely on reporting from human rights organizations and on international law in providing context to situations in which conflicting claims and accounts exist and in which propaganda machines are going into high gear. In fact, international law and human rights bodies should constitute universally accepted and largely independent benchmarks for journalists to draw upon.

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