

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al Jazeera's Reporting of the 2021 Israel-Palestine Crisis

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Abstract: This study is a critical discourse analysis of news coverage of the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis as reported by Al Jazeera English. In this corpus-based study, 50 news reports were analysed using Van Dijk's 'ideological square' as the theoretical framework. The findings suggest that the Al Jazeera reporters reflected their personal ideology in their lexical choices, or lexicalisation, displaying either a positive or negative stance towards the crisis, with Palestinians being the 'in-group' and Israelis the 'out-group'. The news reporters also framed the Palestinians—'us'—as the innocent victims of colonisation, while the 'other' Israelis were negatively represented as victimisers, racists, and colonisers through an emphasis on syntactic agency. One key observation is that the Al Jazeera reporters emphasised the Palestinian narrative while also radiating personal feelings and attitudes towards the crisis. At the same time, the Israelis were silenced and derogatorily portrayed.

Keywords: Al Jazeera network, corpus analysis, critical discourse analysis, ideological square, 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis

1. Introduction

The media plays an integral role in rallying support for an issue or influencing attitudes towards a case or opinion through lexicalisation which reveals its ideological stance. The way in which the media, especially in the Middle East, has framed the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis is under-researched, particularly in the fields of discourse and corpus-based analyses. One of the most influential news networks in the Middle East is Al Jazeera English and, as such, this news network was selected to investigate how it framed the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis. The study explores the network reporters' ideology and attitudes through lexicalisation and syntactic agency within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis. In the next two sections, we provide an overview of Al Jazeera and the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

1.1 Background to Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera is a public news network founded in 1996 in Qatar, Doha, by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad ibn Khalifah Al Thani. As Abdulmajid (2019) observed, it is a mouthpiece for the Qatari government and a protector of its political interests. In 2006, it expanded and launched Al Jazeera English, which has three centres in Doha, London, and Washington DC (Britannica 2021). It has a wide network of journalists and bureaux in more than 50 countries worldwide (Al

Jazeera 2021). Al Jazeera is considered a pro-Arab network and takes a hostile stance toward the Israeli occupation. It asserts that many of its journalists have suffered in diverse ways, such as detentions and killings, because they were attempting to tell the truth and then paid the price for their trailblazing journalism. For example, during the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis, an Israeli air raid demolished a building that housed international media offices, including the Al Jazeera office, and some of Al Jazeera's journalists were arrested and assaulted, including Al Jazeera Arabic's Jerusalem correspondent, Givara Budeiri (Ziv 2021). Israeli forces were also accused of killing many Al Jazeera journalists. More recently, Al Jazeera accused Israeli forces of fatally shooting Shireen Abu Akleh, a long-time TV correspondent for Al Jazeera Arabic, while she was documenting Israeli military incursions in the West Bank city of Jenin (Al Tahhan 2022).

Al Jazeera was selected as the data source in this corpus-based study because it has wide reach and credibility, especially in the Middle East. In addition, it is a rich source that covers world issues and conflicts in detail. It covered all the news on the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis in both written and spoken media. The following section presents an overview of the crisis as reported by Al Jazeera.

1.2 Background to the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis

The 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis is considered to be the most violent episode between the two sides since the 2014 Gaza War. There were daily clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians during the 2021 holy month of Ramadan due to the former's practice of limiting the latter's access to Old City Holy sites. The tension and protests between Israelis and Palestinians escalated in East Jerusalem and its surrounding neighbourhoods over an Israeli march through Jerusalem, during which there were chants of 'Death to Arabs', as well as other incidents, such as a drive-by shooting and stone-throwing. The situation escalated on 10 May, 2021 over an official decision by the Israeli Supreme Court to evacuate dozens of Palestinians from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. On this day, the Al-Aqsa compound was raided by Israeli police, who fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at the Palestinians. The conflict ended with an official ceasefire on 21 May, 2021 (Barron 2021; Al Jazeera 2021). However, in reality, clashes remain ongoing as long as the Israeli occupation continues.

The focus of this paper concerns news reports on the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis, examining how Al Jazeera reporters reflect their own ideology. The following section defines key terms related to the study, such as media discourse and critical discourse analysis.

1.3 Definition of key terms

1.3.1 Media discourse

Media discourse refers to spoken or written interactions via a broadcast forum, whereby the discourse is targeted at a non-present audience of readers, viewers, or listeners. The discourse is characterised by its public, documented, and manufactured nature, although it is not designed to serve a particular case without paying attention to broader considerations. A crucial consideration in investigating

media discourse is the ideology of the speakers or authors of specific texts. This constitutes the core of critical discourse analysis, defined in Section 1.3.2 (O’Keeffe 2011: 441). Bednarek (2006: 11–12) lists eight approaches to media studies: the critical approach, the narrative/pragmatic/stylistic approach, the corpus-linguistic approach, the practice-focused approach, the diachronic approach, the socio-linguistic approach, the cognitive approach, and the conversational approach. The current study blends the critical approach, defined next, and the corpus linguistic approach, introduced in Section 3 in the data and methodology.

1.3.2 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the process of investigating the relationship between the way the participants of the discourse use language and the socio-political context in which it occurs. Issues such as cultural differences, gender, ideology, and ethnicity can be explored, and the way these issues are mirrored and structured in texts examined. Through CDA, we can investigate the way social relationships are constructed in language, by considering the hidden ideologies reflected in the texts and noticing the specific biases authors present through language (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Rogers 2004; Paltridge 2012). Rogers (2004: 5) asserts that language use is always social, and discourse mirrors and constructs the social world. CDA investigates how text and talk ratify, reproduce, and legitimise social power abuse and inequality in the social and political contexts (van Dijk 2015: 446).

Ideology is a key term within CDA, and indeed the media is a rich source for the investigation of a speaker/author’s ideology. Ideology is defined as the ‘belief systems’ or ‘ideas’, including social representations, which determine a group’s social identity, as well as regulating and integrating other socially common beliefs (van Dijk 2006: 116). Fairclough (2001) maintains that ‘a text’s choice of writing’ relies on, and assists in, creating social relationships between participants, and the speakers/authors’ choice of expression is ideologically vital (Fairclough 2001: 97). Teun van Dijk, a forerunner in the area of discourse analysis studies, presented a concept that has had a significant impact on the theory of ideology as a multidisciplinary approach. This methodological concept, widely known among academics as van Dijk’s ideological square, offers the foundation for nuanced ideological analysis and as such it is the method of data analysis employed in this research. This four-dimensional perspective enables the characteristics of the ideology to be revealed, as follows:

- Author expresses/emphasises positive characteristics or information about *us*
- Author expresses/emphasises negative characteristics or information about *them*
- Author suppresses/de-emphasises negative aspects about *us*

- Author suppresses/de-emphasises positive aspects about *them* (van Dijk 2001: 44).

These four discursive dimensions are part of an overarching approach including positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The positive-negative perspectives reflected in the ideological discourse indicate contention between 'us' and 'them.' While the term 'us' is primarily connected with positivity for the in-group in a social setting, the term 'them' tends to be negatively associated with the out-group in a derogatory manner. The substance of the aforementioned principles applies to semantic and lexical discourse analysis. Writers or speakers may deploy various discursive strategies to accentuate or de-emphasise specific facts or ideas. For example, they may decide whether to: expand or restrict the focus on 'our' favourable traits or 'their' disagreeable ones, either overtly or indirectly; provide short or long descriptions; use euphemisms or hyperbolas; or, use conspicuous or more subtle headlines. Each of these aspects can reveal the reporters' ideology.

Van Dijk (1995: 22–31) presented discourse structures for the communication of ideological meaning, concentrating on discourse qualities that convey the beliefs, viewpoints, stance, and other characteristics of groups. This is particularly true when there is a competing interest, when events can be viewed or judged differently or in opposition. The surface structures of discourse relate to changeable forms of expression at the level of the graphical and phonological realisation of syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, or other abstract discourse structures. Exceptions notwithstanding, such surface patterns of text and speech have no clear meanings of their own; they are only the surface expressions of deeper meanings. As with screaming newspaper headlines, extra emphasis or large written text can be purposefully employed. A huge title banner can emphasise a biased account of a news event, such as a race riot. This often necessitates the marking of such surface features, which must be unusual and defy communication conventions or principles, i.e., those of standard-sized headlines. Particular graphical or phonological emphasis may also be used to control the significance of information or beliefs, such as hierarchical organisation models in which the most significant information is put at the top. In contrast, meaning may be downplayed by non-prominent graphical or phonological structures used to communicate meanings incompatible with the speaker's interests.

It has been repeatedly shown that the word order and transactional structure of a sentence can encode underlying semantic agency. The grammatical subject and starting position are linked to the responsible agency, indicating that ideologically-regulated beliefs about accountability for socially good or harmful activities can be conveyed in various syntactic ways. The agency of in-group members who participate in negative activities will be syntactically diminished via the use of passive sentences, and their involvement may be entirely hidden in agentless passives.

Lexicalisation is another significant aspect of ideological expression and persuasiveness, as suggested by the well-known pair 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter'. Depending on the discourse genre, and personal context (mood, opinion,

perspective), social context (formality, familiarity, dominance relations), and sociocultural context, language users typically have multiple options for referring to the same people, groups, social relationships, or social issues (language participants, dialect, principles, and morals). Many of these circumstances are motivated by ideology.

Discourse topics unilaterally determine the material in the discourse that the speakers consider to be most pertinent. Hence, topicalisation may also be vulnerable to ideological control. In-group speakers may be expected to de-topicalise material that conflicts with their interests or positive self-image, and to topicalise information that highlights negative out-group characteristics. Topics may be organised by typical schemata (superstructures), such as those that constitute an argument, dialogue, or news article. Schemata can also convey significance or relevance. The primary goal of news headlines, for example, is to represent the issue at the top of the macrostructure hierarchy and, thus, the most essential content in a news story. Subordinate subjects (topics that organise little local information in the text) may be semantically enhanced and placed in the headline, giving them more emphasis. Certain rhetorical discourse structures, such as surface structure repetition (rhyme, alliteration), or semantic figures such as metaphors, reflect ideological stances when unfavourable information about 'us' is made less prominent, while unfavourable information about 'them' is emphasised.

After defining the key terms and the theoretical framework of the study, the following section presents previous studies on media discourse, especially those conducted on crises.

2. Literature review

Since this study adopts CDA as the theoretical framework for analysing the media discourse of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis, and investigates how ideology is revealed in media discourse through lexicalisation and other discursive strategies, this section sheds light on previous studies which applied CDA in their investigation of ideology and explores the way the media discourse is approached. A considerable number of studies have analysed the media coverage of conflicts and crises (Lindquist 2003; Amer 2009; Kandil 2009; Jarrar and Akter 2018; Abdulmajid 2019; Rababah and Hamdan 2019; Nwankwo et al. 2020). Few studies have examined the media representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Lindquist 2003; Amer 2009; Kandil 2009; Rababah and Hamdan 2019; Panayotova and Rizova 2021; Majzoub 2021; Suwarsono 2022; Arifuddin 2022). Kandil (2009) conducted a comparative study of how media discourse represented the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in a corpus-based study, by examining three corpora extracted from the Al Jazeera Arabic, CNN English, and BBC English news websites. After determining the recurring topics in the corpora covering the conflict, Kandil found that 'terrorism', and 'settlements' were the most frequent. His analysis revealed that the CNN focused more on terrorism than other news agencies and attached it to Palestinian groups. There was little focus on 'terrorism' by Al Jazeera, and a cautious use of this lexical item by the BBC. Al Jazeera

concentrated on the issue of 'occupation', which was downplayed by the BBC and CNN. Rababah and Hamdan (2019) conducted a contrastive CDA of the speeches of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to the United Nations General Assembly regarding the Gaza War (2014). The study investigated the depiction of 'self' and 'other' in connection with the conflict, and it was found that the depiction of these terms in speeches was significantly different. The Gaza War was seen from two conflicting, ideologically-driven views. The 'self' was seen as 'strong,' 'human,' and 'honourable,' whereas the 'other' was viewed as a 'grave menace' and 'destructive agent' by both speakers.

Amer (2009) explored how Thomas Friedman's discourse delegitimised the second Palestinian Intifada. Friedman is an American columnist at the New York Times, as well as a writer and novelist. In this view, legitimacy is tied to power, which confers the capacity to 'define the circumstance,' and hence the authority to judge what is right and wrong, what is legitimate and justified, and what is not, according to Parsons' interpretation (1986). Amer examined how the Intifada was discursively formed in a piece for the op-ed page, the New York Times' opposite editorial page, from a CDA perspective. The paper analysed Friedman's delegitimising construction of the Intifada's argumentative structure and actions, demonstrating how the political actors' legitimisation, including self-legitimation, is inextricably related to Friedman's reasoning. Amer observed that an overarching discourse approach of positive in-group and negative out-group presentation prevailed in Friedman's discourse. This occurs within an underlying epistemological framework which denigrates Palestinians as aggressive, disoriented, and imprudent, while legitimising Israelis as peaceful, prudent, and versatile.

Two studies by Jarrar and Akter (2018) and Abdulmajid (2019) conducted a comparative discourse analysis of the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya news networks. Jarrar and Akter (2018) explored the 'protest paradigm' by describing both networks' coverage of the Egyptian Uprising between June 2013 and June 2014, and the shifts and variations in how the protests were framed. They found that the news negatively portrayed the uprising regarding injustice, contempt, the delegitimation of the protest paradigm, accountability, and sympathy. Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya were found to have shifted their compliance with the protest paradigm, in line with the foreign policies and ideological tendencies of their benefactor nations. They suggested that the two networks abandoned their commitment to independent journalism by supporting pan-Arab debates and opposing authoritarian governments and their propaganda. Likewise, Abdulmajid (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, limited to an analysis of just eight articles using the CDA theoretical framework. He adopted the methodological framework of Blass' manipulative strategies (omission, commission, or propaganda strategies) (2005) and van Dijk's ideological square (2001). The findings revealed the overt influence of political agendas on the discourse and editorial policies of each corpus, reflecting subjectivity and violating the journalist's ethical commitment to objectivity. Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya were

found to have engaged in various manipulative techniques when reporting the news. Blass' basic manipulative tactics (2005) were recognised as crucial discursive practices that were overtly deployed by both news agencies. Additionally, 'discursive ideologisation' has evolved, demonstrating the usage of ideological aspects that assist the agendas of the ruling parties at both media organisations. Discursive ideologisation involves the integration of biased sociopolitical ideologies into media discourse, which is intended to be serve society objectively, particularly during news coverage operations (Abdulmajid 2019: 5). Following regional news on Al Arabiya includes examining the region through the lens of a Saudi strategist and educating people about current events through Saudi Arabia's aspirations and strategic objectives. In brief, the politicisation of news reporting is an attempt at the ideological indoctrination of the addressees, to advance the political agendas and strategic objectives of a dominating party. In Al Jazeera's case, this is the Qatari government and in Al Arabiya's case it is the Saudi government, as Abdulmajid observed.

In the literature, there are few studies on the discourse of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis (Majzoub 2021; Panayotova and Rizova 2021; Arifuddin 2022; Suwarsono 2022). Panayotova and Rizova (2021) examined the language and images utilised by worldwide internet news media in May 2021 to portray the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The study analysed 270 online news headlines featuring lead photos on the English news websites of CNN, the BBC, and Al Jazeera. The research identified the framing adopted by these channels and assessed the breadth of their coverage. The principles of agenda-setting, framing, and media representation led the investigation to detect the discursive strategies used. A combination of Barthes' visual semiotic analysis (1972) and Pan and Kosicki's textual framing analysis (1993) constituted the theoretical framework. The findings suggested that the commencement of the Israel-Palestine conflict in 2021 was chiefly presented via the lens of 'war'. Varying patterns were also found in the framing of the dispute across the three media channels. These variations reflect and connect with the journalistic practices and media outlet-specific peculiarities.

Majzoub (2021) conducted a content study of the 2021 Israeli-Palestine crisis in a comparative analysis of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. The framing methods were coverage frequency, quoted sources, and word choice. During the crisis, Al Jazeera's tweets on Palestine were almost quadruple those of Al Arabiya. Al Jazeera's coverage was more prolonged and prevalent than that of Al Arabiya a few days before the aggression of the occupying troops escalated. This frequency and timeliness might suggest that the senior producers at Al Jazeera gave Palestine-related stories a higher priority, resulting in more comprehensive coverage of the developing events in Palestine. Al Arabiya was less likely to depend on self-reporting, but Al Jazeera relied more heavily on self-reporting. Al Jazeera's capacity to dedicate a large number of field reporters and resources may stem from the fact that it is not a profit centre, but Al Arabiya is owned by the MBC group, a commercial enterprise, which may restrict resources. Moreover, although Al Arabiya was more likely to quote Israeli sources than Palestinian ones, Al Jazeera

relied heavily on Palestinian sources. Al Arabiya thus favoured the Israeli narrative, while Al Jazeera favoured the Palestinian.

Suwarsono (2022) investigated how the Gulf News and Jakarta Post respectively portrayed the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis. She compared and contrasted the framing of the crisis in news pieces from Indonesia and the UAE. According to the findings, the majority of the Gulf News stories contained a humanitarian perspective as their portrayal of the events of the conflict was compassionate and exhibited sorrow towards the Palestinians. The Gulf News provided numerous reports on the death toll and number of missiles fired, in addition to the destruction of homes, to emphasise the devastation experienced by the Palestinians. On the other hand, the Jakarta Post presented two distinct perspectives on the event: one humanitarian and one pointing to Israel as the primary source of the strife. In 50% of the Jakarta Post stories which had a humanitarian focus, the primary objective was to inspire compassion and sadness for those impacted by the conflict, mostly civilians.

From this survey of previous studies analysing media discourse, it can be noted that researchers found traces of authorial bias and ideology towards the issue in focus or the participants of the discourse. Authors reveal their ideology either overtly or covertly, positively or negatively. To investigate media discourse in this area further, this study blends the critical approach with the corpus-linguistic approach to examine the output of Al Jazeera English on the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis. This area has received little attention from discourse analysts, especially in a corpus-based study. I argue that, since they work for a pro-Arab news network, Al Jazeera's journalists are biased against the Israelis and supportive of Palestinian issues. This argument is based on the conclusions of previous media discourse studies (Kandil 2009; Jarrar and Akter 2018; Abdulmajid 2019). To test this argument, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. In the context of van Dijk's ideological square, do Al Jazeera English reporters reveal any ideological bias towards the Israelis or Palestinians by (de)emphasising the positive or negative characteristics of us and them?
2. How do the reporters describe Palestinians and Israelis? Was there a representation of the dichotomies of power struggle (victim/victimiser, colonised/coloniser) during the crisis?

After surveying the previous literature related to the study, the following section introduces the data and methodology used for analysis.

3. Data and methodology

How the media, especially in the Middle East, framed the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis has received little attention from discourse analysts, especially in a corpus-based study. Unlike previous studies, which conducted comparative analyses of media coverage of specific issues using a limited number of news reports, this study focused on one news network, Al Jazeera, as a case study and used a reasonably sized corpus, with the main focus on news covering the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis. The study included 50 news reports (12,863 words) from 1 May, 2021 to 26 May, 2021, as reported by Al Jazeera English. During this period,

tension arose between Israelis and Palestinians and then escalated until a few days after the official ceasefire, as mentioned in Section 1.2. The sample selection was limited to news reporting and discussing the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis. These reports are available online at the newspaper's official website (Al Jazeera 2021). The Antconc Software was used to identify the frequency of lexical items related to the crisis, such as Palestine, Gaza, Sheikh Jarrah, Palestinian(s), Israel, Israeli(s), and settler(s), to investigate how these lexical items are represented and framed in the news. Moreover, the collocations of these words were also examined to determine the positive or negative representation of these items. The theoretical framework of van Dijk's ideological square (2001), discussed in Section 1.3.2, was adopted to analyse how the news writers reflected their ideology through their use of language. The study further explores how the dichotomy of 'us' and 'others' is ideologically represented in the corpus. In so doing, I examined whether there is any bias towards one side over the other through lexicalisation. For example, the study investigates whether the reporters emphasise or de-emphasise the positive or negative attributes of one side of the conflict over the other. There is also a consideration of whether the reports provided lengthy or concise descriptions of the characteristics of the two sides and their actions, as well as how ideology is revealed through emphasising syntactic agency.

The next section presents an analysis of the news coverage of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis within the framework of CDA in this corpus-based study.

4. Results and discussion of Al Jazeera news reports of the 2021 Israeli-Palestinian crisis

This section introduces the analysis of the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis within the theoretical framework of CDA. It presents the frequency of lexical items related to the crisis, such as Palestine, Palestinian(s), Gaza, Sheikh Jarrah, Israel, Israeli, settler(s), race, and racial, to investigate how these lexical items are represented in the corpus. Moreover, the collocations of these lexical items are presented to explore how they are framed and represented in the corpus. How reporters reveal their ideology in the media discourse of Al Jazeera news network in English is investigated according to van Dijk's ideological square (2001).

The analysis showed that the lexical item 'Palestine' was only used 19 times, while 'Israel' was used 156 times. The noun 'Palestine' was little used in the corpus, but 'Gaza' was frequently used, as 150 tokens were found. This is because the Gaza Strip is considered the heart of the tension and is the headquarters of Hamas (an Arabic acronym for the *Harakat Muqawamah Islamia*) or the Islamic Resistance Movement and Al-Qassam Brigade, which provide *Hamas* with armed support. Therefore, the Gaza Strip is targeted by Israeli attacks because it is the Palestinians' backbone of resistance. The following is an example from the corpus:

- (1) **'Gaza 2021: An apartheid déjà vu.** Today's assault on Gaza may be **Palestine's Sharpeville massacre.** It may well trigger the beginning of the end of **Israeli apartheid'** (24 May 2021).

In the surface structure, '**Gaza 2021: An apartheid déjà vu**' is a headline that is purposefully used by the reporter to attract attention to the points he wanted to emphasise. The expression '*déjà vu*' is originally French, which means 'already seen' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021). The writer compares the massacre caused by Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip to apartheid, the racial segregation system employed in South Africa against Black South Africans, and to the 'Sharpeville massacre'. In the Afrikaans language, 'apartheid' means 'apartness', denoting segregation and bias. Further, '60 people' were innocently killed by police officers during the 'Sharpeville massacre' when they peacefully protested against burdensome pass laws on March 21, 1960. These passes were a kind of internal passport which limited the movement of Black South Africans and restricted where they could live and work (McRae 2021). This comparison reflects the ideology of the writer; Palestinians are portrayed as victims and the Israelis as victimisers, the ones to be blamed for the tension between the two parties, as exemplified in (2) below:

- (2) '**Israel** continued its relentless bombardment on the besieged enclave' (20 May 2021).

The reporter emphasised the responsible agency of the 'out-group' (Israel) for attacking the Palestinians with artillery. 'Israel' is the doer of the action as the subject of the sentence, and the side which initiated the violence. 'Relentless' (bombardment, bombing) was repeated four times in reference to Israeli attacks on Palestinians and was used to blame Israelis for the destruction. It also emphasises that the Israelis are the real cause of the tension between the two parties. The writer described the situation in Palestine as suffering from 'occupation', 'apartheid', 'settler-colonialism', and 'ethnic cleansing' (9 May 2021). The lexical item 'apartheid' was repeated nine times in the corpus and five times in one report, to hammer home the idea that this is the Israeli policy and to stir the audience's emotions. Lexicalisation is thus a key aspect that reflects the reporters' ideology by emphasising the 'others' negative wrongdoings (the Israelis) and framing them as victimisers.

To understand the previous text and why the author compared the situation in Gaza to the 'Sharpeville massacre', analysts should consider the broader context and read beyond the text to obtain more ideas on the topic; this facilitates an understanding of the similarities between the situation in Gaza and the 'Sharpeville massacre'. This is the core of discourse analysis, in which, as readers or analysts, one delves into the text and its context to understand what is meant by certain ideas and explore the real meanings and messages the writer wants to convey. This is called homophoric referencing; that is, an item's identity cannot be understood by reference to the text alone, as a deeper cultural knowledge is required (Paltridge 2006: 132). Lexicalisation is essential to achieve the goal of stirring the audience's emotions. The word '**massacred**' was intentionally used to express the writer's

stance because it refers to the killing of helpless or unresisting humans under circumstances of atrocity or cruelty (Merriam-Webster 2021). Thus, by comparing Israeli attacks on Palestinians to the ‘Sharpsville Massacre’, the writer is emphasising that the Israelis killed the Palestinians without mercy; they undertook wanton or inhumane attacks on civilians, as the lexicalisation demonstrates. This emphasis of the negative attributes of the ‘out-group’, the Israelis, reveals the author’s condemnation of what happened due to the tension between the two sides.

Another example in which the author’s ideology is revealed through lexicalisation and syntactic agency can be seen in (3) below:

(3)

- a) And now apartheid Israel has decided to launch yet another **murderous campaign of bombardment** against one of the most densely populated areas on earth, the Gaza Strip.
- b) The victims include **innocent civilians: children, women, and men** (17 May, 2021).

The reporter emphasised that ‘Israel’ is the doer of the actions of killing and assaulting Palestinians in (3a). ‘Israel’ is the grammatical subject and responsible agency. On the other hand, the Palestinians are portrayed as innocent and victims of Israeli transgression through the use of the passive form and foregrounding of the number of Palestinians killed, as represented in (3b). The reporter expressed the negative attributes of Israel and the Israelis in their lexicon. The lexical item ‘**murderous**’ is intentionally used because it denotes the crime of unlawfully and intentionally murdering individuals with animosity (Merriam-Webster 2023). The choice of ‘**murderous**’ instead of ‘killing’, reveals the writer’s ideological intention to portraying the ‘others’ negatively as the ‘out-group’. In contrast, the writer expressed sympathy towards the Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, by giving an elaborate description of the situation as a very populated place and describing the people killed in the Israeli attacks as victims and innocents.

Another reason why the lexical item ‘Palestine’ was not frequently used in the corpus is that it is not the main focus of attention as a whole country; instead, the focus is shifted to ‘Sheikh Jarrah’. In searching the corpus, 40 lexical tokens for ‘Sheikh Jarrah’ were found. Sheikh Jarrah is a Palestinian district in occupied East Jerusalem, whose inhabitants faced impending Israeli deportation; it is situated less than a kilometre north of the historic walls of Jerusalem’s Old City. The neighbourhood’s name alludes to the personal physician of the Islamic leader Saladin, who was supposed to have moved there after Muslim soldiers seized the city from Christian crusaders in 1187 (Abu Sneh 2021). Sheikh Jarrah was the main reason for the escalation in the tension between Israelis and Palestinians as the Palestinians protested against the evacuation order. ‘Sheikh Jarrah’ is thus

another lexical item used in the corpus that reveals the hidden ideology of the news reporters, as demonstrated in (4).

(4)

- a) Dozens of **Palestinians** are facing imminent dispossession from their homes in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of **Sheikh Jarrah**.
- b) The Jerusalem District Court ruled at least six families must vacate their homes in **Sheikh Jarrah** on Sunday, despite living there for generations (1 May, 2021).

Here, the writer is emphasising the Palestinians' rights to the properties in Sheikh Jarrah by highlighting that they have lived there '**for generations**' and repeating '**homes**' many times. By contrast, he accuses the Israelis of evacuating the local residents and trying to take over the area through the use of the lexical item '**dispossession**', which implies the deprivation of Palestinian propriation rights. In this way, the Palestinians are portrayed as victims of colonisation, and the Israelis are negatively depicted as victimisers and colonisers. This lexicalisation thus reflects the reporters' ideological sympathy with the 'in-group', the Palestinians, and condemnation of the 'out-group', the Israelis.

Table 1. Lexical frequency of 'Palestine', 'Gaza', 'Israel', and 'Sheikh Jarrah', by corpus percentage

Lexical Item	Frequency	Percentage
Israel	156	1.21
Gaza	150	1.16
Sheikh Jarrah	40	0.31
Palestine	19	0.14

The reason why the lexical item 'Israel' can be frequently found in the corpus is to highlight 'their' negative characteristics and deeds. An examination of the context in which the lexical items 'Israel' and Israeli(s) are used reveals that 'they' are framed as killers and victimisers, responsible for the expulsion of the Palestinians from their own homes and the destruction illustrated in (5).

- (5) 'The situation is very miserable. Palestinians have the right to fight the occupation because **Israel kills** many of our people and **drives people from their own land**' (18 May 2021).

The country of 'Israel' is used to refer its people, a technique known as metonymy. This semantic figure of speech emphasises the negative behaviour of the 'out-group'. In addition, syntactic agency is emphasised in '**Israel kills**, ... and **drives**', as Israel is the doer of the actions of killing and expelling the Palestinians from their homes. Another example in which Israel is portrayed as a victimiser can be seen in (6 a–b) below:

(6)

- a) Al Jazeera strongly condemns **Israel's destruction** of Gaza offices. Al Jazeera condemns in the strongest terms the bombing and destruction of its offices by the Israeli military in Gaza and views this as a clear act to stop journalists from conducting their sacred duty to inform the world.
- b) Al Jazeera promises to pursue every available route to hold the **Israeli government responsible for its actions** (17 May 2021).

The reporter highlights Israel's responsibility for the transgressions and devastation imposed on Palestine and Palestinians. A search in the corpus for the frequency of the lexical items 'Palestinian', 'Palestinians', 'Israeli', and 'Israelis' showed that 'Palestinian' was used 130 times and 'Palestinians' 129 times. In contrast, 'Israeli' was used 196 times and 'Israelis' only 10 times.

(7)

- a) It is disappointing, although not surprising at all, that American politicians choose to use such language that obfuscates the reality of the **Israeli occupation** of Palestinian lands.
- b) This is the language that has long been entrenched and engineered by **the powerful Israeli Lobby** in the US to whitewash the Palestinian reality by presenting the Israeli apartheid and colonialism as an issue of 'conflict resolution and mediation'. By focusing on 'peace' as a matter of negotiation between two sides engaged in a 'conflict', this rhetoric obscures the imbalance of power between the occupier and the occupied and muffles Palestinians calls for justice for **Israeli colonisation and crimes** (9 May, 2021).

As can be noted from the previous extract, lexicalisation plays a key role in revealing the reporters' ideology. Palestinians are associated with 'their lands' and being 'muffled' and 'whitewashed' by the Israelis. They are framed as victims, colonised, blindfolded by the colonisers, and having less power. In contrast, the 'Israelis' are associated with occupation, colonialism, apartheid, crime, and power. The reporter intentionally used the lexical items 'whitewash' and 'muffles', which highlight the Israelis' attempt to conceal or camouflage reality. The Israelis are framed as victimisers, colonisers, and powerful through their enforcement of ethnic segregation. Thus, the author expresses feelings of sympathy towards the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, pointedly negative characteristics are attributed to the Israelis.

Table 2. Lexical frequency of 'Palestinian(s)', 'Israeli(s)' and 'settler(s)' by corpus percentage

Lexical Item	Frequency	Percentage
Israeli	196	1.52
Palestinian	130	1.01
Palestinians	129	1.00
Settlers	24	0.18
Israelis	10	0.07
Settler	7	0.05

Table 2 presents the frequency of the lexical items ‘Palestinian(s)’, ‘Israeli(s)’ and ‘settler(s)’, and the percentage in the corpus. The semantic choices of the lexical items ‘settler’ and ‘settlers’ were deliberately used to refer to Israelis. The meaning of the word ‘settler’ means someone who goes to live in a new region or colony and uses the land (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The authors express their attitude using the lexical item ‘settler(s)’, whose connotative meaning implies that ‘Palestine’ is not their land; the Israelis came as intruders or colonisers. The analysis reveals that the lexical items ‘settler’ and ‘settlers’ collocate with the word ‘Jewish’; the collocation ‘Jewish settler’ was used once, but the plural form ‘Jewish settlers’ was repeated 12 times in the corpus, as exemplified in (8).

(8)

- a) Dozens of **Jewish settlers**, flanked by heavily armed Israeli Special Forces, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem in the early morning, further raising tensions hours after Palestinian worshippers were beaten and assaulted by Israeli police.
- b) Israeli police had earlier on Sunday assaulted Palestinian worshippers who were performing dawn prayers at the mosque and ‘excessively beat’ them in order to make way for Israeli Jewish settlers to storm the compound Islam’s third-holiest site (23 May, 2021).

The writer’s ideological stance towards ‘them’ is evident. The negative representation of the Israeli assaults on Palestinians is demonstrated and highlighted through lexicalisation and syntactic agency. The lexical item ‘settlers’ determines the syntactic agency as the subject of the sentence. The ‘settlers’ are described as violent actors who ‘excessively beat’ people, and are thus the agents of destruction. In contrast, the Palestinians are described as the victims of such assaults, who were attacked while praying. Therefore, the writer’s stance is sympathy towards the Palestinians and anger and indignation about the Israeli assaults. Moreover, there is an attempt to stir the audience’s feelings towards the event as the writer evokes ‘Islam’s third-holiest site’. This is because the Al-Aqsa Mosque is considered a very sacred place for Muslims as it is where the Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, experienced the miracle of what is called ‘*Al-Isra’ wal-Mi’raj*’, which translates as ‘the night journey and ascension’. He was transported from Al-Haram Masjid in Mecca to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds, and from there he ascended to heaven and into the Divine Presence as a reward for the Prophet as he had undergone many hardships (Faruqui 2019). Abu Hurayrah relates that the Prophet said, ‘Do not undertake a journey to visit any Mosque, but three: this Mosque of mine, the Mosque of al-Haram and the Mosque of Aqsa’, and Abu Darda relates that the Prophet said, ‘A prayer in Al-Aqsa Sanctuary is worth 500 times more reward than anywhere else’ (Al Masjid Al Aqsa 2021). This shows the holiness of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and is the reason why the author highlighted its significance in the report, to evoke feelings of sorrow and distress because its holiness was infringed.

A search of the corpus shows that the lexical item ‘settler(s)’ is associated with violence, colonialism, hardliners, illegal claims, the burning of Palestinian possessions, attacks against Palestinians at funerals and while praying, and the expression of hatred towards Arabs. All these terms are used to highlight the negative characteristics of the ‘others’ and reflect the reporters’ ideology, as exemplified in (9).

(9)

- a) Fadi Abu Kishek, Hassouna’s neighbour in Lydd, told Al Jazeera that **settlers** are coming from outside the city and burning Palestinian cars, attacking the mosque, vandalising our cemetery, and marching in areas where Palestinians live.
- b) **The settlers incite and attack**, the Palestinians respond by defending themselves, [and] the police arrive on the scene and start throwing sound bombs and arresting Palestinians, he said.
- c) Other cities have witnessed attacks by mobs of **Jewish settlers**, some of whom have marched in the streets under the protection of Israeli police, shouting ‘Death to Arabs’ (16 May 2021).

Emphasising the syntactic agency reveals the writers’ ideology. The ‘settlers’ are portrayed as the doers of the actions of violence and destruction, as well as the victimisers, since they are the subject of the sentence. In contrast, the Palestinians are framed as victims who only defend themselves. The reporter accuses the Jews of torching Palestinian vehicles and possessions, attacking the mosque, and trespassing on burial grounds.

One main topic covered under the umbrella of CDA is racism. Lexical items such as ‘racism’, ‘racial’, and ‘race’ were investigated to examine how often they were present in the corpus. It was found that the lexical items ‘race’ and ‘racial’ were used to spotlight the negative side of the ‘others’, as illustrated in (10).

(10)

- a) For years, Palestinian residents have complained of institutional **racism**, which fuels marginalisation and poverty (16 May 2021).
- b) Palestinians are engaged in a struggle for national liberation against a decades-long illegal and immoral occupation, and the imposition of a regime of **racial and ethnic discrimination** (16 May 2021).
- c) The US is very much like Israel: in both countries, your rights and opportunities are inescapably decided by your **racial or ethnic background** (9 May 2021).

As can be noted from these extracts, the Israeli side was accused of being racist. The writer’s stance is revealed in the detailed description of Israeli misconduct and the accusations made against them. Consecutive negative attributes are assigned to the Israelis; they are accused of racial discrimination, marginalising Palestinians, being hardliners, illegally and immorally occupying Palestine, and committing apartheid, among other characteristics. In addition, Israeli discrimination is compared to racial discrimination in the United States.

This parallel is drawn because America is considered the leading supporter of Israel and to emphasise that Israelis are racists, like their supporters. This supports the authors' attitudes towards the Palestinians' cause. The Palestinians are portrayed as victims, and the Israelis as victimisers. This aligns with van Dijk's ideological square (2001), as discussed in Section 1.3.2. The writers express pity towards the Palestinians, 'us', and resentment towards the Israelis' intentional wrongdoings, the 'others'. They also try to arouse the audience's sympathy for the Palestinians and exasperation with the Israelis.

One key observation about how writers reveal their ideology is by giving voice to one side but not the other. For example, it was found that the writers of the news reports emphasise the Palestinians' narrative and provide elaborate details of their feelings by describing what happened to them during the tension between the two sides. The reporter quotes Palestinians' suffering during the crisis in (11).

(11)

- a) 'My family is originally from Haifa but were driven out by the Israelis during the first Arab-Israeli war and were forced to flee abroad,' Randa, who took part in the demonstration with her children and grandchildren, told Al Jazeera.
- b) '**The situation is very miserable.** Palestinians have the right to fight the occupation because **Israel kills many of our people and drives people from their own land.**'
- c) **Seven-year-old Ahmed Alian, from Jelazon camp near Ramallah, was dressed up in military uniform and holding a fake gun.**
- d) 'We are here today because of the **deaths in Gaza**, especially those of children, and the situation in East Jerusalem' (18 May, 2021).

The reporters of Al Jazeera frequently emphasised the Palestinian narrative by shedding light on their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes towards what was happening during the tension. In contrast, the Israelis were silenced, and the reporters de-emphasised the Israeli narrative; instead, the main focus was on their criminal acts, as shown in the data. This reflects the authors' support for Palestinian rights and causes, as they are portrayed as victims. Reaching this conclusion depends on extensive reading and qualitative analysis of the data, which shows that the reporters spotlighted the Palestinians' feelings, opinions, and attitudes by describing their suffering under the occupation due to maltreatment by the Israelis. This reveals the writers' sympathy for Palestinians and their right to live peacefully.

5. Concluding remarks

This paper contributes to the study of critical discourse and corpus studies of media discourse, especially the discourse of the Middle East. By focusing on how news reporters reveal their ideology following van Dijk's conception of the ideological square (2001), the study has demonstrated that the sampled authors reflected their

own ideology through lexicalisation, such as by emphasising the positive attributes of the 'in-group' and the negative characteristics of the 'out-group'. Moreover, their focus on the responsible syntactic agency of the 'out-group' revealed the reporters' ideological stance by representing Israelis as victimisers. The analysis also showed that the writers gave a voice to 'us' (the Palestinians) by focusing on their narrative and shedding light on their feelings and suffering. In contrast, they silenced the 'others' (the Israelis) and de-emphasised both their narrative and attitudes. Instead, Israelis were negatively framed as criminals, racists, and victimisers. It is key in the analysis of media discourse to have cultural knowledge for a better understanding of the discourse. Discourse analysts go beyond the scope of the word, sentence, paragraph, and text to gain a clearer idea about the topic and provide better analysis. This critical analysis of the corpus reveals that the sampled Al Jazeera news writers' ideological stance permeates the language they chose.

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